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There is an overwhelming amount of evidence to support the inclusion of children with disabilities as best practice in early childhood education (ECE) programs (Council for Exceptional Children, Division of Early Childhood (DEC)/National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), 2009; Green, Terry, & Gallagher, 2014; Strain & Bovey, 2011; Rafferty, Piscitelli, & Boettcher, 2003). Unfortunately, data indicates that a majority of preschool children with disabilities receive special education services in separate settings (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). While a wealth of research provides evidence of how teachers can support inclusion in their classrooms, there is very little research exploring how leaders in the field promote inclusion within their programs. The purpose of this phenomenological case study was to gain insight into the perspectives of early childhood leaders about practices that facilitate inclusion. Leadership theory was used as a framework to explore data collected in the form of interviews, observations, and documents that revealed descriptions of contexts in which participants led as well as emerging structural and textural themes for and across participants to capture the essence of leadership practices in inclusive ECE programs. Implications for practice and directions for future research are discussed.

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: PRACTICES
AND PERSPECTIVES OF PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS

by

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Committee Chair

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This dissertation is dedicated to my children, Wren and Oliver, my parents, Olive and William Jordan, my sister, Carol Jordan, and my husband, Jeff Smith.

Thank you for all of your love, support, and encouragement through this process, for keeping our lives together through it, and for being there for our children.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation, written by Mary Credle Jordan, has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

In my experiences as an early childhood educator and administrator, I have found my position as an advocate for inclusive education to be rewarding, fulfilling, challenging, and controversial. I have found that many professionals and parents do not share my value of inclusive education, despite that inclusion is recommended as best practice, promoted by national organizations, and evidenced through research as beneficial to all children. Because of the overwhelming amount of evidence to support inclusion as best practice (Council for Exceptional Children, Division of Early Childhood (DEC)/National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), 2009; Green, Terry, & Gallagher, 2014; Rafferty et al., 2003; Strain & Bovey, 2011), together with the data that shows that a majority of preschool children with disabilities receive special education services in separate settings (U.S. Department of Education, 2013), and the resistance to it that I have personally experienced, I have struggled to understand the phenomenon of inclusion and others' perspectives of inclusive education. I have found that the work of being a program administrator in an inclusive early childhood education (ECE) program requires delicate negotiation with a variety of stakeholders and active advocacy on behalf of individuals with disabilities and their families. The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the perspectives of early childhood leaders about practices

that facilitate inclusion. Overall, the goal of this research is to add to the literature regarding inclusive leadership to expand access, participation, and supports for inclusive education for children with disabilities and their families. Research regarding early childhood education program administrators' perspectives on inclusion can inform standards for practice, policies, and future research directions.

Statement of the Problem

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA, 2004) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990) are two of the most relevant federal laws that protect the rights of individuals to participate in early childhood education programming. IDEA grants children with disabilities the rights to free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment (LRE). According to the DEC/NAEYC (2009),

LRE requires that, to the extent possible, children with disabilities should have access to the general education curriculum, along with learning activities and settings that are available to their peers without disabilities. Corresponding federal legislation applied to infants and toddlers (children birth to 3) and their families specifies that early intervention services and supports must be provided in “natural environments,” generally interpreted to mean a broad range of contexts and activities that generally occur for typically developing infants and toddlers in homes and communities. (p. 5)

When a family chooses to participate in an ECE program that is outside of the public education setting, such as the programs from which participants were recruited for this study, IDEA ensures that services are delivered in that context.

The ADA further protects the rights of children to be served in ECE programs because it extends rights to participation in private settings. The ADA provides the most

comprehensive protection covering a broad range of services and environments within which discrimination commonly occurs on the basis of disability status. Private nursery schools, day care programs, and other places of education are considered public accommodations for the purposes of the ADA unless they meet requirements for exemption as operated by a religious organization. Additional exemption from ADA can be established if an entity can prove that provision of accommodations would require fundamental alteration of the program or would result in undue burden (42 U.S.C. § 12181(7); 42 U.S.C. § 12187), positions that have rarely held up in court (see *A.P. v. Anoka-Hennepin Independent School District 11*, 2008; *Brandon Richard Roberts v. KinderCare Learning Centers, Inc.*, 1996; *Burriola v. Greater Toledo YMCA*, 2001). In short, these laws support the inclusion of children with disabilities in programs with their typically developing peers unless extreme circumstances preclude them from being so.

In addition to these established mandates, the Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) with the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (USDOE, OSERS) (2015) have drafted a policy statement on the inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood education programs. Though currently under review, this policy has the potential to effect early childhood education programs by highlighting inclusion a priority on the federal education agenda, recognizing the legal and scientific foundations for inclusion, providing a unified definition of inclusion, and creating a platform for providing federal funding to support systemic change to promote inclusion.

Finally, the Council for Exceptional Children, Division of Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), two leading national organizations related to educating young children have released a joint position statement in which inclusion is promoted as best practice in early childhood education settings. The statement acknowledges inclusion as the embodiment of “values, policies, and practices that support the rights of [children and families] to participate . . . as full members of families, communities, and society” (DEC/NAEYC, 2009). According to the position statement, the defining features of inclusion are access, participation, and supports. An investigation into program characteristics fits in to the DEC and NAEYC’s definition of supports as “broader aspects of the system such as professional development, incentives for inclusion, and opportunities for communication and collaboration among families and professionals to assure high quality inclusion” (DEC/NAEYC, 2009). Because broader system-level supports are considered to be one of the most critical features of inclusion, we need more specific information about how they operate. This study sought to provide such information through investigation of inclusive ECE leadership.

Despite that the inclusion of children with disabilities in ECE programs has been promoted in the early childhood community and by organizations such as the DEC and NAEYC (2009), access to high-quality inclusive programming remains insufficient. This is evidenced by the extremely high rates of expulsion in early childhood, an indication that children with disabilities and other children with behaviors that would result in expulsion are not having their needs met in a large number of settings (Gilliam, 2005). A

better understanding of what administrators do in their roles to promote inclusion can inform practitioners, teacher educators, families, and policy advocates for expanding standards, policies, knowledge, and practices that support inclusion. Although research has identified some of the qualities and practices of teachers that contribute to the successful inclusion of children with disabilities, more research is needed to determine how leaders in ECE contribute to this end.

Research Questions

Using a phenomenological case study design, this study explored ECE leaders' perspectives of their practices, roles, and priorities in inclusive programs. This qualitative study investigated the following questions: (a) How does the practice of ECE Leaders (reflective of each of Bolman & Deal's leadership frames) promote the inclusion of children with disabilities in ECE programs? (b) What are ECE Leaders' perspectives of the challenges they face in practicing inclusion in ECE programs? (c) What are ECE Leaders' perspectives of how they overcome challenges in practicing inclusion?

Definitions

Child with a Disability. To qualify as a "child with a disability" for the purposes of this study, the child must have been receiving services through either the North Carolina Infant Toddler Program, a program of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, with an Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP), or through the Guilford County Schools Department of Exceptional Children's Preschool Program with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) (PL 108-446, IDEA, 2004).

ECE Program. For this study, ECE programs were defined as programs that serve children aged birth through 5 years, or a subset of children in that age range, that had a Child Care Center facility license from the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education (NCDCDEE).

Inclusion. Inclusion in ECE as defined by the DEC/NAEYC (2009)

embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential. The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are access, participation, and supports. (p. 2)

Practices. Practices are what professionals read, write, think, act, and do to pursue the goods, valued ends, and aspirations of their work (McIntyre, 2007; Sumbera, Pazey, & Lashley, 2014).

Program Administrator. Program administrators in ECE programs are defined as program directors or other administrators that work directly with program staff and families. For this research, administrators met at least the minimum requirements outlined by the state of North Carolina (i.e., administrators hold a Level 1 Administration Credential with the state of NC; NCDHHSDCD, 2007). The term “director” is used interchangeably with “program administrator.”

Summary

The statement of the problem, research questions, and definitions have been presented in this overview. A review of the literature related to this research is provided in Chapter II. Chapter III presents the design of the study, including the rationale for research methodology, data sources, and a detailed description of the data collection and analysis. What follows in Chapter II is a theoretical framework based on Bolman and Deal's (2013) leadership theory that serves as a foundation from which literature is reviewed to expose research gaps and research methods were developed for this study. A review of the literature relevant to inclusive education and leadership practice is provided next in Chapter II.

CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP LITERATURE

In this chapter, a theoretical context for leadership studies is provided as a foundation through which relevant literature is analyzed. The literature is examined to uncover gaps related to inclusive ECE leadership as a rationale for conducting this study.

Theoretical Context for Leadership Studies

Theoretical and evidence-based contexts provide a framework through which inclusive ECE leadership can be examined to develop and support a research agenda. These contexts include a theoretical framework based on Bolman and Deal's (2013) concepts of leadership for organizational change and a review of research related to best practices in inclusive education and leadership. Leadership is a complex phenomenon because so many factors are in play in comprising various definitions of leadership. For example, Burns (1978) describes leadership as a special form of power. To Burns (1978), power relationships are viewed as a collective process involving variables such as motives and resources of power wielders, motives and resources of power recipients, and the relationship among all these. He states that "Leadership over human beings is exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological, and other resources so as to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers" (Burns, 1978, p. 18). Bolman and Deal's (2013) leadership theory encompasses each of the ideas expressed by Burns, and

further expands concepts of leadership into frames or lenses with which leaders engage to achieve mobilization and motivation of followers. For example, in the human resource frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013), the relationships between leaders and their followers are the focus. In the political frame, competition, conflict, and resource management are the focus (Bolman & Deal, 2013). In the following section, Bolman and Deal's (2013) leadership theory will be explained as it provides a framework for developing an understanding of inclusive ECE leadership practice. Also, a rationale for using leadership theory in ECE will be provided.

A theoretical framework provides an overall orienting lens, for qualitative research and can be used as a broad explanation of behavior and attitudes (Creswell, 2014). Leadership theory was used as a basis for developing an understanding of leadership practices in inclusive ECE programs in this study. Because program administrator practices in inclusive ECE programs are the focus of this study, a theory that details leadership practices was used as a lens through which to examine the literature and to further explore this phenomenon. This study examined how leaders engaged these various leadership frames within the context of inclusive ECE programs. After a brief description of Bolman and Deal's (2013) leadership theory, the literature is examined using this leadership theory as a framework for highlighting gaps in the research.

Bolman and Deal's (2013) leadership theory describes multiple frames, rooted in leadership wisdom and social science research, that serve as filters for finding meaning in organizations, developing change agendas, and leading through creative problem-solving.

Bolman and Deal (2013) posit that effective leaders engage in meaningful organizational analysis and action through the use of these various frames that provide leaders with multiple perspectives. The authors emphasize that each of the four frames is engaged by leaders at various times and in various situations, and that the four frames are sometimes engaged independently. They posit that through engagement in the various frames scholars and leaders are better able to develop a comprehensive understanding of complex organizational systems and processes. The four frames described by Bolman and Deal (2013) include the structural frame, the human resource frame, the political frame, and the symbolic frame.

The structural frame provides a lens through which effective leaders focus on the architecture of organizations, with attention to design, rules, roles, goals and policies, for example (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Leaders engaging the structural lens increase organizational efficiency through specialization and appropriate division of labor within the boundaries of an organization's goals, technology, workforce, and environment. In structurally-focused organizations, coordination is guided by rules, policies, standards, strategic planning, and standard operating procedures and is achieved through meetings, task forces, coordinating roles, matrix structures, and networks. In this study, practices reflected in the structural frame included providing direct support as an administrator role, making program accommodations, providing oversight to teachers and related services providers, and setting expectations for teacher practices.

The human resource frame is engaged when leaders focus on understanding people and relationships, individuals' strengths and goals, human needs, personalities,

and motivations (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Effective leaders seek to find a good fit between individual needs and organizational goals, with the understanding that people need organizations and vice versa. Specific practices that illustrate human resource principles include hiring the right people, rewarding members and empowering members through sharing power, and creating development opportunities, for example (Bolman & Deal, 2013). When a mismatch between organizational goals and human goals exists, one or both suffer; on the other hand, a good match results in benefits for both (Bolman & Deal, 2013). In terms of educational organizations, leaders working from the human resource lens provide professional development opportunities in response to teacher needs, develop relationships with teachers that can serve to motivate and support teacher practices, and seek buy-in from teachers in implementing change. As the literature will illustrate, leaders have many opportunities to impact inclusive practices through the employment of the human resource frame.

When the political frame is engaged, leaders view organizations as “competitive arenas of scarce resources, competing interests, and struggles for power and advantage” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, pp. 21–22). Leaders utilizing the political frame understand when to engage their powers and with whom, and know how and when to negotiate and bargain for interests. The authors describe several key leadership skills of strong political managers that require balancing political power with interests, including setting an agenda for change, mapping the political terrain, networking and building coalitions, and bargaining and negotiating with allies and adversaries. In inclusive ECE programs, practices that can be categorized as outcomes of engagement in a political frame might

include negotiations with county service providers, finding, securing, and distributing resources, developing networks within school districts and/or non-profit groups, and advocating for inclusive services.

Finally, the symbolic frame centers on meaning, belief, and faith as created by humans in pursuit of making sense out of chaos and ambiguity (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Effective leaders create powerful symbolism within organizations through the use of myths, rituals, humor, ceremonies, and heroes and heroines, for example. Leaders facilitate the development of strong organizational identity that is rooted in a shared vision. In education, school cultures, teaching philosophies, attitudes towards individuals with disabilities, and inclusive values correlate to the symbolic frame. School leaders engaging the symbolic frame in implementing inclusive education have strong inclusive values that translate to inclusive school cultures. Specifically, the expression of expanded views of disability and philosophies that valued inclusion represented practices reflective of the symbolic frame in this study.

Bolman and Deal (2013) emphasize that effective leaders engage each of these frames in leadership activities and that reliance on any one frame to the exclusion of the other three is risky. This theory for leadership provides an appropriate and productive framework for analyzing leadership practices in ECE programs. In the literature review that follows, inclusive practices are examined as a basis for developing an understanding of how leaders in ECE programs work to support inclusion. Examples of practices of inclusive leaders from the literature are illustrated within the framework of leadership theory described by Bolman and Deal (2013), and are organized to reflect each of the

leadership frames and commonly cited areas of practice within those frames. Finally, Chapter 3 includes descriptions of how the methodology of data collection and analysis procedures incorporated each of the frames as a way to envision leadership practices in inclusive ECE programs.

The inclusion of children with disabilities in ECE programs has long been supported by rational, legal, empirical, and moral arguments (Bailey, McWilliam, Buysse, & Wesley, 1998; USDHHS/USDOE, OSERS, 2015). Inclusion continues to be promoted as best practice by national organizations including the Council for Exceptional Children and the NAEYC. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, many programs and practitioners have yet to embody the elements of inclusion as described by the DEC/NAEYC (2009) Joint Position Statement on Inclusion. This study intends to provide the field with specific and detailed information regarding the practices of leaders in inclusive ECE programs with the goal of expanding the literature base regarding practical applications to support inclusion. Leaders have the potential to expand access, participation, and supports for children with disabilities in ECE by demonstrating practices reflective of the structural, political, human resource, and symbolic frames as described by Bolman and Deal (2013). Through the use of their leadership theory as a framework, practices of leaders in inclusive ECE programs can be better described and understood. Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical framework as it relates to this study. Inclusive ECE leadership practice is at the center, with practices each of the leadership frames contributing to the overall research focus.

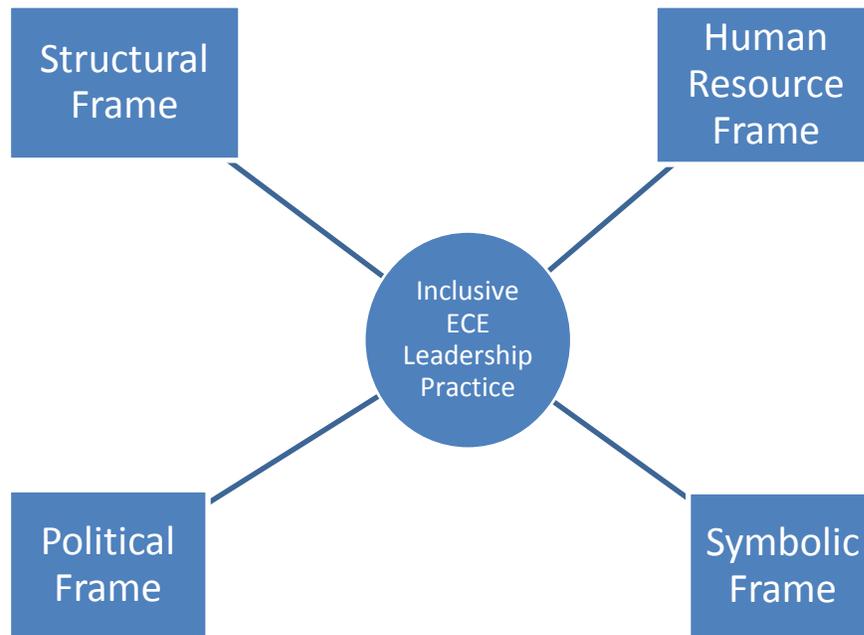


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework.

Inclusive Leadership Literature Review

Educational rights have been mandated and guaranteed for individuals with disabilities since the 1970s (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, P.L. 91-230, P.L. 94-142). P.L. 94-142, which protected the rights of children with disabilities for access to education provided by state and local governments, was arguably the most important piece of legislation related to the education of children with disabilities. As interpretations of this law and others that are related to it (i.e., IDEA, NCLB, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act) continue to evolve, so do services for children and families, policies within schools and programs, understandings of best practices for inclusion, and attitudes toward individuals with disabilities. Because leaders have the ability to impact services, policies, professionals' practices, and attitudes of their

workforce (Bolman & Deal, 2013), educational leadership research is reviewed in this section. Specifically included is literature related to elements of educational leadership practice related to the inclusion of children with disabilities.

The literature reviewed is organized into practices that reflect each of the leadership lenses as described by Bolman and Deal (2013). Those include the structural frame, human resource frame, political frame, and symbolic frame. These areas of the literature inform the current study by providing evidence of leadership practice that facilitate inclusion across each of the leadership frames described by Bolman and Deal (2013). This literature base provides a rationale for further exploration into the practices of early childhood leaders in inclusive programs as well as providing a background for understanding the impact of practices within each of the leadership frames. This study sought to expand the knowledge base in these areas by focusing on the practices of leaders in inclusive early childhood programs. Because the concept of practice in this study included the activities in which leaders engaged to pursue the goods, valued ends, and aspirations of their work (McIntyre, 2007; Sumbera et al., 2014), evidence of practices within the structural frame (i.e., instructional and service delivery models, resources, etc.), the human resource frame (i.e., professional development, support, etc.), the political frame (i.e., collaboration, community support, etc.), and the symbolic frame (i.e., attitudes toward inclusion, shared vision, etc.) informed the methods.

Additionally, the literature in these areas feature elements of access, participation and supports as defined by the DEC/NAEYC (2009) Joint Position Statement on Inclusion, and serves as a basis for practice and program evaluation, teacher education

and professional development, and policy development. For example, if we know that the abdication of care and education of children with disabilities to assistant teachers and support staff is a practice that is least valued by families as Purdue (2009) found, then program evaluation tools, program policies, and professional development can incorporate specific elements related to leadership practices to support clear assignment of roles and responsibilities and valued models of service delivery. An administrator's impact transverses access, participation, and supports. Early childhood education leaders have the ability and power to tailor their programs to facilitate access by influencing program philosophies (e.g., symbolic frame) and setting standards for practices enacted by teachers (e.g., structural frame). For example, administrators can include policies that require teachers to offer to attend IFSP/IEP meetings with families in their employee handbooks. Administrators are often in the role of approving or providing classroom and learning materials that teachers need to facilitate participation (e.g., structural frame). Teachers need support from administrators to access professional development training and continuing education related to inclusion (e.g., human resource frame), which are commonly cited needs for enacting successful inclusion (Bailey & du Plessis, 1997; Bond, 2010; Leatherman, 2007; Mohay & Reid, 2006). Moreover, administrators have the ability and power to create and utilize hiring criteria for teachers who exhibit a philosophy that embraces or excludes children with disabilities (e.g., political frame, human resource frame, or symbolic frame). In order to develop ways to bridge gaps that exist between a philosophy focused on the inclusion of children with disabilities, its promotion as best practice, and implementation of inclusive practices, we need to know

more about early childhood leaders' perspectives of inclusion. Through such inquiry, it is possible to describe practices of ECE leaders that support inclusion as outlined by the DEC/NAEYC (2009).

The following review of the literature related to inclusive leadership practice provides a basis for developing research regarding inclusive early childhood leadership. Specific structural frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013) practices have been identified that illustrate success in facilitating inclusion in terms of providing access, participation, and supports. Variables explored in the literature include service delivery models, instructional practices, infrastructure, policies, division of labor, and prioritization and provision of resources. Specific human resource frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013) practices are highlighted in the literature as well. Variables explored include educational attainment, professional development, relationships, collaboration, shared leadership, and leader interpersonal skills. Political frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013) practices covered in the literature include collaboration, community support, hiring practices, and building partnerships with stakeholders. Finally, symbolic frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013) practices included attitudes toward inclusion, inclusive core values, and development of shared vision. Educational leaders' attitudes towards inclusion, including perceived benefits, challenges, and associated needs for supporting inclusive education are explored. The conceptual framework that guides this study is included at the end of this chapter and illustrates the research gaps that emerged through synthesis of the relevant literature.

Practices Reflected in the Structural Frame

According to Bolman and Deal (2013), leaders engaging the structural lens attend to organizational structures in approaching leadership activities. The authors state that “the structural perspective argues for putting people in the right roles and relationships” (p. 45). Clearly defined goals and objectives, authority, rules and policies, planning and control systems, division of labor, and meetings are examples of elements in place to support structure within organizations. Bolman and Deal (2013) explain that there is no one best structural design for organizations, but rather a best structural fit depending on variables such as goals, strategies, technology, people, and environment. The employment of structured means of communicating with families (Salisbury, 2006) and systemized plans for assessing professional development needs and for implementing professional development training (Purcell, Horn, & Palmer, 2007; Salisbury & McGregor, 2002) are examples of practices that can be implemented by leaders in inclusive programs. In the inclusive leadership literature, most commonly occurring variables that reflect practices within the structural frame include service delivery models, enrollment and placement of children with disabilities, instructional practices, and resources, including personnel and time.

Service delivery models, enrollment, and placement decisions. Service delivery models, enrollment, and placement decisions are discussed together as they represent potential limited access to general education settings and curricula for children with disabilities. A variety of services are provided to children who have IFSPs or IEPs, depending upon team decisions regarding support needs (PL 108-446, IDEA, 2004).

Services may include speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and/or special education therapy (PL 108-446, IDEA, 2004). As children enter public schools, administrators are involved in making placement decisions that represent a continuum of options, with the least restrictive environment (LRE) as the goal (PL 180-446, IDEA, 2004). LRE encompasses options for service delivery ranging from 100% of time spent in the general education classroom to a separate school or setting. While the DEC/NAEYC (2009) supports the availability of a continuum of service delivery options for children birth through age eight, the following research provides evidence of successful inclusive models, factors related to placement decisions, as well as stakeholder values regarding service delivery.

A study by DeVore and Russell (2007) illustrates expanded access to inclusive services as it details the creation and sustainability of inclusive early education options in one rural community. The authors interviewed service providers and a family member and conducted site visits over the course of a year in a preschool classroom in which inclusive services were provided. The process of transitioning a team of professionals from self-contained to inclusive education practices revealed key features that led to a successful transition and expansion of services within the community. Collaboration among stakeholders proved essential in implementing the expansion of services. The collaboration that was required of these professionals in the delivery of inclusive services is indicative of the inclusion feature of supports as described by the DEC/NAEYC (2009), and is reflected in the human resource frame described by Bolman and Deal (2013). However, this key practice specifically included the delivery of services side-by-

side. The authors describe a service delivery model wherein all children, regardless of disability status, were educated together. All of the educators interacted with all of the children rather than dividing children into target intervention groups or otherwise limiting interactions between specific professionals and children. Each of the professionals involved in direct instruction, regardless of professional title, engaged in role sharing. For example, the speech-language pathologist included children who were typically developing in sessions with children who were on her case load in order to facilitate social interaction and a sense of community, a practice that could be replicated in other inclusive settings when appropriate if it were promoted. Administrators working to support inclusion can use this knowledge to examine and establish service delivery models detailing roles of professionals in inclusive classrooms, for example.

In a study that illustrates a specific service delivery model facilitated by collaborative partnerships, DeVore, Miolo, and Hader (2011) outline steps taken by a team of professionals in order to form and implement a plan to support the inclusion of a child in a preschool setting. A model of collaborative consultation is described wherein professionals such as speech-language pathologists, occupational and physical therapists, early childhood special educators, early childhood educators, and families work together to build relationships, determine roles and responsibilities, gather information, identify goals and strategies, implement strategies, and monitor progress. In this case, co-consultants included the various related services providers and the consultee was the early childhood educator. The planning and implementation of this model were anchored by weekly meetings to evaluate each child's progress and make service delivery changes

as deemed necessary by team members. In this case, a lead consultant served as a liaison between co-consultants and the consultee, a strategy that these authors suggest is explored in the early phases of implementation of this model in order to streamline information sharing and progress (DeVore et al., 2011). As interventions are implemented, the team meets weekly to discuss successes and challenges, and changes are made as deemed necessary.

Purdue (2009) included the findings of three case studies to identify barriers to and facilitators of inclusive early childhood education in New Zealand. Information in one case was gathered through the use of open-ended questionnaires and verbal statements made in group discussions over the course of seven professional development workshops related to participants' views and center culture, policies, and practices related to serving children with disabilities. The other two cases involved document analysis, participant observation, and interviews of teachers, children, families, support staff, and related services providers at a kindergarten and a child care center over the course of 10 months. Purdue (2009) categorized the results as relating to understandings, policies, practices, and resources. A number of findings from this study illustrate practices reflective of the structural frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013). For example, Purdue (2009) identified as a barrier to inclusion the abdication of care and education of children with disabilities by classroom teachers to support staff, including assistant teachers and/or related services providers. Moreover, when related services providers, taking on "expert" approaches, pulled children out of classrooms or focused their interventions on single

children, children were isolated, labeled as “different” or “special,” and were not experiencing the same level of access to learning opportunities within programs.

Salisbury (2006) investigated principal’s perspectives related to definitions and implementation of inclusive education in elementary schools. Principals in eight schools across three states who were involved in developing inclusive public elementary schools were interviewed and observed. Part B data along with school quality and ecological context measures were used to collect data related to inclusiveness. Contrary to previous findings, results of this study revealed that schools that yielded the highest quality ratings also included students with disabilities in general education classrooms for the least amount of time. The author argues however, that the tools used to measure quality in combination with Part B data to yield this result are insufficient to illustrate inclusive school implementation (Salisbury, 2006). Therefore, principal interviews were used to gather more descriptive data related to principals’ perspectives of inclusion and its implementation in their schools. Among the results of this study that reflect the structural frame are the finding that principals employed a structured means of communicating with families. Following a second interview with participants, the author subsequently categorized participating schools as either partially inclusive, that is, serving children with disabilities in age-appropriate general education classrooms with some instruction provided outside of the general education classroom for some part of the day, or integrated, wherein children with disabilities were based more often outside of the general education classroom and were served more often in separate self-contained classrooms. Furthermore, self-contained classrooms were no longer used or were used

extremely rarely in the partially inclusive schools. In contrast, in integrated schools, placements of children with disabilities in general education classrooms were conditional and pull-out service delivery models were used frequently. Decisions related to placements of children with disabilities can be considered practices that reflect the structural frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2014) conducted observations and interviews with two public elementary school leaders with inclusive change as a focus of their leadership practices. One of the challenges reported by participants was related to district placements of children with disabilities. Specifically, one school worked hard to reassign placements of students from self-contained into general education classrooms, only to have the district assign more students to fill the self-contained classroom spaces. This study additionally yielded results that inform inquiry regarding challenges to implementing inclusive education, as in this case with the ongoing enrollment of students with disabilities. This finding provides insight into the possible challenges faced by inclusive leaders in public elementary schools related to enrollment. More research is needed to understand whether inclusive ECE leaders face similar challenges and how they overcome them if so.

An important contribution was made to the literature related to the priorities held by families of children with disabilities and professionals for inclusive early childhood settings by Hurley and Horn (2010). In this investigation, Hurley and Horn (2010) elicited the input of families and professionals from settings that employed a variety of service delivery models ranging from a self-contained classroom to an itinerant model in

which services were provided once a week from a visiting professional to a child who was included with typically developing peers for the entire day. The authors employed a Q-sort along with interviews to determine the most and least valued characteristics of inclusive programs as perceived by their sample. The least valued characteristics establish potential indicators of non-inclusive practices that can be used to craft exclusion criteria in studies or evaluations attempting to illustrate models of inclusive practice. Many of these practices are indicative of enrollment and placement practices of program administrators and service delivery models. The least valued characteristics that reflect the structural frame related to placement were: (a) program requires children with disabilities to meet a set of criteria to participate in program, (b) program maintains classes with equal numbers of children with disabilities and those without, (c) program only includes children with mild or moderate disabilities, (d) program provides therapies for children with more significant needs outside of the classroom, (e) program has a full-time early childhood special educator in every classroom, and (f) program places children with similar disabilities in the same classroom with peers who do not have disabilities.

In a study of elementary school administrators, Brotherson, Sheriff, Milburn, and Schertz (2001) conducted two rounds of focus groups with sixty-one principals serving young children with disabilities. The purpose of this study was to determine the challenges to inclusion in public ECE programs from the perspective of the principals and to determine their perceived needs in serving as effective leaders for inclusion in early childhood programs. Surveys of principals were conducted between the two rounds of focus group discussions as one way to verify the findings. The major ideas that

emerged from the data relating to perceived challenges to inclusion were a perceived increase in the numbers of children served in special education and greater range in the types and severity of disabilities represented in this population.

There are a variety of opportunities for exploration in future research based on the findings in the literature related to placements and service delivery models. For example, are there possibilities for program policy development related to the delivery of services by related services providers in classrooms, when appropriate? While a range of service delivery models should be available to children (DEC/NAEYC, 2009), these studies represent evidence that inclusive models often support the delivery of services and placements within the general education classroom.

Instructional practices. Access to a variety of instructional practices benefit children who learn in different ways, through a wide assortment of activities, experiences, and approaches (Foundations: NC Learning Standards). The DEC/NAEYC (2009) states that “depending on the individual needs and priorities of young children and families, implementing inclusion involves a range of approaches—from embedded, routines-based teaching to more explicit interventions—to scaffold learning and participation for all children” (p. 2). The following examples from the literature illustrate instructional practices that have been used by professionals in implementing inclusive education.

In the study by DeVore and Russell (2007), the employment of embedded learning instruction based on IEP goals was valued as a contributing factor in the successful transition and expansion of inclusive services within the community. The key

practice of designing embedded instruction in response to individual needs fits within the DEC/NAEYC's (2009) description of participation. For example, learning opportunities in this program were embedded into regular classroom routines and were based on IEP goals.

DeVore et al.'s (2011) description of a collaborative consultation model offers approaches for developing goals and implementing and monitoring progress of interventions to facilitate the inclusion of a child with disabilities in a preschool program. Teams employing this model may include a variety of assessment approaches and should include a number of team members. The authors describe a Routines-Based Interview (RBI) as one method of gathering information across developmental domains in order to determine priorities for targeted interventions (DeVore et al., 2011). Team members develop interventions that are easily embedded into naturally occurring routines and activities. The key contribution of this research is the intentional and systematic approach to including a child with a disability by a team of committed, collaborative professionals, elements that reflect the structural lens (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

In an example of a broader model that emphasizes an inclusion-focused infrastructure, Darragh (2007) proposes a framework of Universal Design for Early Childhood Education (UDECE) that promises equity and access to high quality early childhood education for all children through a synthesis of best practices in early childhood education and special education. The author describes several components of the UDECE framework including: multiple means of access, multiple means of representation, multiple means of engagement, multiple means of expression, and

accountability for equity and success (Darragh, 2007). Multiple means of access refers to children and families having various opportunities to access high quality care and education. Access is supported by the components related to representation, engagement, and expression. Children are provided with multiple means of representation when learning is understood to be acquired through a variety of methods, including those that enable them to access all senses and when a wide variety of programs, educational approaches, and philosophies are represented in care and education options for families. Children are provided with multiple means of engagement when they have opportunities to learn in environments and through curricula that encourage development across domains while supporting the development of the classroom community as a whole. Multiple means of expression emphasizes that children are given multiple and varied opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and growth through the use of a variety of assessment strategies to support the development of individual needs. Finally, the component of accountability for equity and success relates to the outcomes relevant to larger societal values, a message that is mirrored in the DEC/NAEYC position statement (2009); individual children's goals are addressed along with state and national standards related to learning. The structures described within Darragh's (2007) framework parallel access, participation, and supports described by DEC/NAEYC (2009) as features of high quality inclusive early childhood education. The use of a framework for instruction in inclusive education programs such as the one described by Darragh (2007) reflects a structural architecture that can be employed by leaders in inclusive ECE programs. However, as Bolman and Deal (2013) suggest, reliance on one frame alone can be risky;

timing of the application of the structural frame would have to be considered in implementing a UDECE design, including assessment of human resource, political, and symbolic contexts within the organization, to ensure that leadership practices within the structural frame would benefit the program. Nevertheless, the implementation of a UDECE design has the potential to serve as a blueprint for leaders in designing and evaluating practices to facilitate inclusion.

In Purdue's (2009) study, practices that supported the inclusion of children demonstrated the active reflection and planning by teachers to implement accommodations and supports to ensure that children with disabilities were granted their rights to participate and learn. Teachers who modified curriculum and practices to meet the needs of individual children were including children successfully. Furthermore, professionals who recognized the importance of play and who embedded learning opportunities into the everyday experiences of children were exemplars of successful inclusion. Similarly, Salisbury (2006) found that children with disabilities in the partially inclusive schools were served in general education classrooms and instruction was differentiated within those classrooms to meet the needs of all students, with appropriate support personnel in place in the classrooms.

In their study to determine the most and least valued characteristics of inclusive programs as perceived by their sample, Hurley and Horn (2010) found that the most valued characteristics that fit within the structural frame and reflect values related to instructional practices were: (a) program personnel ensure that children with disabilities are active participants in all classroom routines and activities, (b) program is a high

quality early childhood program, and (c) program provides accommodations and adaptations to meet the needs of individual children. Least valued characteristics related to instructional practices were: (a) program expects children to spend most of their day in teacher-directed activities, and (b) program only makes adaptations that are unobtrusive. What practices of ECE leaders ensure that teachers and related services providers work to embed learning opportunities into everyday experiences of children?

Resources. The organization and administration of resources within educational settings is leadership practice reflective of the structural frame, especially when related to staffing and providing time. Additional funding and staff have been frequently cited needs to facilitate successful inclusion, (Mohay & Reid, 2006; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014). Utilization of key personnel has also been cited as a practice to support inclusion (Purcell et al., 2007). Other research included here provides evidence of resourcing needs in terms of time.

For example, Salisbury and McGregor (2002) used a variety of methods to collect data related to principal practices that promote inclusiveness. Teachers and principals in model inclusive elementary schools completed surveys and participated in observations and interviews. Participating schools qualified as models of inclusion based in part on data related to the ranges of disabilities represented by students along with their placements in general education classrooms. Several relevant findings that illustrate practices reflective of the structural frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013) emerged. For example, principals in these schools facilitated time for collaboration and teaming.

Additionally, these principals made decisions about how to organize resources within their schools based on data about where and how children with disabilities were served.

One major concern of the model described by Devore, Miolo, and Hader (2011), despite its promise as a model appropriate for replication in inclusive programs, is the amount of time this model requires of the professionals involved. In order for a program to implement the model described, program administrators would be charged with managing the time availability of team members on staff. Whether this is a priority in inclusive early childhood programs remains to be seen. Future research can explore the extent to which program administrators in inclusive early childhood education programs plan and schedule time and staff members based on the individual needs of children with disabilities, practices that fall within the structural frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2014) found that resources within inclusive schools may need to be added or shifted, specifically in terms of professional development and personnel to provide time for teachers to plan and train. The provision of time for teachers reflects the structural frame. Inclusive leaders operating from this frame must attend to scheduling, staffing, and budgeting in order to ensure that schools can support professional development and planning time so that teachers can plan instructional practices to support students with disabilities. The principals in this study supported inclusive practices within their schools by providing time (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014).

Brotherson et al. (2001) found that principals felt that major pieces of the inclusion puzzle were missing. Specifically, they cited the lack of funding, space, and

time as challenges, each of which reflect challenges to be addressed within the structural frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The need for funding was related to making changes, training, planning, and purchasing materials. Several principals expressed a desire for more space within their schools for early childhood programs instead of working with community-based programs as one way to streamline services. Additionally, these principals felt that they needed more training related to evaluating the quality of programs. Administrators suggested housing early childhood programs in elementary schools as one solution. However, locating early childhood programs within elementary schools, thereby limiting access to a variety of settings available to children and families would be directly contradictory to what is promoted in the DEC/NAEYC's (2009) statement as best practice regarding access. While this study included elementary school principals as participants, their perspectives regarding challenges to inclusive leadership warrant further investigation, especially in the ECE sector. With an agenda to expand access to inclusive options for children with disabilities, this research sought to understand ECE leaders' perspectives of challenges to inclusion and how they overcome those challenges. If funding, space, and time are perceived challenges of ECE leaders as they were for these principals, how do they overcome those challenges? What practices that reflect the structural frame facilitate inclusion?

Clear goals and roles. In the study by Devore and Russell (2007) key findings that illustrate practices reflective of the structural frame included the establishment of a clear goal (i.e., transition from self-contained to inclusive model) and clearly defined roles for professionals involved in service delivery. Purdue (2009) also found that clearly

defined roles and responsibilities of teachers along with a willingness to collaborate with other professionals were cited by participants as contributing to their success.

Clearly communicating expectations for working with children with disabilities is another practice reflective of the structural frame in which leaders can engage. For example, with regard to policies, Purdue (2009) found that program documents often included clauses of conditionality for including children with disabilities. Additionally, verbal statements and practices reflected conditionality and illustrated the denial of rights outlined in national and early childhood policies. Therefore, one facilitator of inclusion was found to be the explicit inclusion of statements in policies informing program staff of their legal obligation to include all children. Program administrators have the ability to affect policy changes to explicitly address including children with disabilities, providing clarity regarding expected practices of professionals in their programs.

Practices Reflected in the Human Resource Frame

Bolman and Deal (2013) describe the human resource frame as centering on “what organizations and people do to and for one another” (p. 113). A good fit between employee and organization benefits both. Successful leaders engaging practices within the human resource frame have the impact of hiring and retaining talented and driven employees for organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Research that informs the human resource frame is related to motivation, including human needs related to safety, purpose and affiliation, and achievement and recognition. The human resource frame also relates to relationships, investing in people, and hiring and retaining the right people for the job. In the education leadership literature, several practices reflect the human resource frame.

Collaboration, shared leadership, shared decision-making, professional development and training in response to teacher needs, and the perception of moral support are examples of practices within the human resource frame reflected in the literature. Additionally, literature related to education, experience, and dispositions informs human resource frame practices related to hiring the right people.

Collaboration. According to Friend and Cook (2007), collaboration involves a “direct interaction between at least two coequal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal” (p. 7). Collaboration among professionals and other key stakeholders is cited by DEC/NAEYC (2009) as vital for implementing high-quality inclusive education for young children. Collaboration is included in the human resource frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013) because of the interpersonal and professional skills required of individuals engaging in collaborative practices. The following findings related to collaboration among professionals support the importance of collaborative practices as key in implementing inclusive education.

For example, in the study by DeVore and Russell (2007) in which a process of transitioning a team of professionals from self-contained to inclusive education practices, findings revealed several features reflective of the human resource frame that led to a successful transition and expansion of inclusive services. As described by the authors, the professionals’ collaborative practices facilitated mutual respect and trust. Specifically, the collaborative practices in which these professionals engaged included changing roles, recognizing each other’s skills, sharing information, and building trust. The specific instructional practices in place, an element reflective of the structural frame,

facilitated social interaction and a sense of community in the classroom and among professionals. Moreover, one of the professionals in this study sought out additional education related to inclusion and resources, possibly indicating that more training in this area would be beneficial. Leaders engaging the human resource frame have the potential to recognize and respond to the educational and training needs of their workforce. Additionally, this study illustrates the impact on practices within the human resource frame that structural frame practices can have. In this case, collaboration influenced professionals' sense of accomplishment.

Responding to the needs of personnel. Leaders in inclusive schools have the ability to exhibit responsiveness to the needs of their workforce through a number of specific practices. The literature provides examples of these in terms of providing training, professional development, physical resources like learning materials, and in terms of moral support.

Training and educational needs. Research that reveals training and education needs of teachers informed this study in terms of developing an evidence base for understanding leadership practices related to providing training to meet the needs of teachers in inclusive ECE programs. For example, Brotherson et al. (2001) reported that principals expressed that they needed specific training about early childhood education and noted that they relied on their teachers for knowledge of practices and curriculum that support inclusion.

In Mohay and Reid's (2006) study, wherein staff members and directors from seventy-seven childcare centers provided information regarding their comfort,

willingness, experience, and training related to including children with disabilities, additional training was one of the most frequently cited needs to facilitate successful inclusion. Sixty per cent of respondents stated that they were not really confident in their ability to include children with a disability in their program despite that only 11 percent responded that they had no training related to children with disabilities. It is apparent that efficacy was an issue for these teachers and administrators. Future studies can address the development of a sense of effectiveness among teachers and administrators in working with children with disabilities in inclusive settings. In programs where teachers feel effective, in what ways are they supported by administrators to develop efficacy? Research conducted by Leatherman (2007) yields detailed qualitative information regarding the attitudes and impressions of inclusive early childhood education by in-service teachers. Eight teachers responded to open-ended interview questions about their experiences, successes, and supports in inclusive early childhood classrooms. Themes were derived from transcripts of all of the interviews through qualitative analysis procedures, several of which reflect practices indicative of the human resource frame. Teachers reported that they needed additional education related to serving children with disabilities. The findings of Mohay and Reid (2006) and Leatherman (2007) in terms of educational needs again highlight the potential for program administrators to impact inclusive practices within programs. For example, as noted in other studies (Bailey & du Plessis, 1997; Bond, 2010), additional training was identified as a need. This finding illustrates a significant opportunity for leaders to engage in the human resource frame in

response to personnel needs. In what ways are leaders in inclusive ECE programs supporting the needs of their teachers?

In another example of research that demonstrates practices within the human resource frame, Hoppey and McLeskey (2010) conducted an in depth qualitative case study of one principal in a model inclusive elementary program. The purpose of the study was to ascertain the perspective of the principal in regards to his role in supporting a school and its teachers to improve in an era of high-stakes testing. The school qualified as a model of inclusive education as evidenced by the percentages of children with disabilities enrolled, the range of disabilities represented, the increases over time in the portion of the school day in which these students were included in the general education classrooms, and by test score data that illustrated improvements in math and reading skills for students with disabilities in this school when compared to state and district data. The authors used a variety of data sources including interviews, participant observation, and dialogical or informational conversations to develop an understanding of the principal's experiences, activities, key events, and the meanings of those events from his perspective. This principal promoted teacher growth by providing high-quality professional development, including one program specifically related to inclusive school reform, and through creating opportunities for teacher leadership in roles like curriculum specialist or department chair. Again, providing professional development in response to teacher needs for education reflect the human resource frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013). This research provides an example of one principal who was investing in his workforce through engagement in leadership practices reflective of the human resource frame and

demonstrates how adopting the human resource frame in approaching leadership has the potential to impact specific practices that support inclusion.

Bond (2010) provides a glimpse into the perspectives of ECE teachers and program administrators regarding their beliefs about including children with disabilities and perceptions of their skills and related training needs. In this study, Bond (2010) surveyed 16 early childhood program administrators and 39 teachers in five rural counties in Florida to gather information. Participants responded to a Likert-type scale about six belief statements on inclusion and to 16 items describing inclusive skills, (e.g., “I am aware of the services provided by related professionals,” p. 72). Bond also asked participants to rate their training needs related to each of the belief statements and to each of the inclusive skills. Beliefs related to inclusion and children with disabilities will be discussed in the section related to the symbolic frame. A large majority of both administrators and teachers indicated a need for training related to strategies and adaptations to assist all children with disabilities. Both teachers and administrators rated effective assessment as an area in which they need more training. The author suggests that this finding could be influenced by the participants’ understanding of assessments as formal and standardized (Bond, 2010). Disagreement between teachers and administrators was present when rating training needs related to observation. Specifically, over three fourths of administrators rated this as a training need; whereas, only one third of the teachers did. Despite high confidence in skills in environmental arrangement, a majority of administrators (87.5%) reported needing training in this area; whereas, only 30% of teachers identified this as a need. Administrators and teachers in

this study rated their skills in collaboration highest of all skills included in the survey. Again, administrators' ratings related to skills in collaboration were higher than those identified by teachers. The same was true in the items related to behavioral intervention skills and strategies. Over 80% of teachers and administrators rated their ability to implement positive and effective behavioral strategies with all children, but 75% of the administrators cited this as an area of need for training while only 40% of the teachers did. Regarding the development and implementation of an IEP, again, participants rated their skills as high but they also identified it as an area of need for training. All participants reported needing additional training in the skills relating to working with children with significant disabilities, (e.g., familiarity with alternative forms of communication and their use, characteristics of children with motor impairments, positioning children with motor impairments).

Bond (2010) found overall that administrators rated more areas of need for training than did the teachers. She speculates that administrators are more likely to identify training needs of staff members because of their tendency to seek out professional development opportunities. She also notes that training needs may have been higher for these participants due to their location in rural communities. It is unclear whether these administrators were rating their own training needs or the training needs of their staff. Furthermore, no data were collected to determine whether there was a match between reported skills and practices. A survey of families served, for example, could have revealed whether there was a match between teacher and administrator reported skills and families' perspectives on practices. Additionally, qualitative research methods

have the potential to reveal a deeper understanding of administrators' perspectives regarding inclusive practices, including whether administrators' perspectives in this research reflected their perceived training needs or those of their staff. Further investigation into the practices and perceptions of program administrators regarding their understanding of and response to the education needs of their staff can inform practice standards, preparation programs, and policies to expand families' and children's access to inclusive early childhood education programs.

Resource needs. Attitudes toward inclusion were influenced by perceived access to resources in the cases explored by Purdue (2009). She found that the need for resources, including modifications of physical settings, materials, and personal support were cited as reasons to exclude children with disabilities. She argues however, that these reasons do not stand up to the evidence that inclusion can be implemented without significantly different funding or resource constraints. As Purdue notes, resources are an issue regardless of inclusive status of early childhood education programs (Purdue, 2009). It is clear that perceived access to resources is an area of influence on which leaders in ECE programs can have in response to the expressed needs of personnel. Leaders operating from the human resource frame respond to personnel needs (Bolman & Deal, 2013). It would be largely beneficial to the field of early childhood education to have concrete examples of how administrators are able to prioritize and provide support in terms of providing resources in inclusive ECE programs.

Moral support needs. Respondents in Leatherman's (2007) study also cited the need for support from administrators and related services providers. Specifically,

teachers talked about moral support and strategies disseminated by administrators as keys to their success. They also expressed feelings of support when related services providers shared their strategies and knowledge. Future studies can explore these practices in detail from the program administrator's point of view to determine how exactly these supports are provided. With more detailed information about support from administrators comes an increased likelihood that they will be replicated and disseminated across early childhood education settings and that the quality and availability of inclusive educational services will grow.

In Salisbury and McGregor's (2002) study, in which they surveyed, observed, and interviewed teachers and principals in model inclusive schools, several of the significant results reflected practices reflective of support needs of staff. For example, across the five participating schools, teachers reported that principals displayed "supportive behavior," including reflecting a basic concern for teachers, listening to and being open to teacher suggestions, giving praise genuinely and frequently, handling criticism constructively, respecting professional competence of their staffs, and exhibiting a professional and personal interest in each teacher. It is clear that the practice of exhibiting genuine care and concern for teachers has the potential to support inclusion. In what ways and to what extent are leaders in inclusive ECE programs able to respond to personnel needs for support?

In the study by Hoppey and McLeskey (2010), the results indicated that this principal saw his primary role as "lubricating the human machinery;" in other words, he saw his role as one of creating a supportive setting for teachers. The essence of this role

aligns closely with Bolman and Deal's (2013) concept of the human resource frame in terms of leadership practices. This principal cited relationships, showing care, taking care of people, and personal investment as examples of ways that he provides support. Caring for and personally investing in teachers by displaying trust, listening to ideas, concerns, and problems, and treating staff fairly was one major theme that emerged as a primary role of this principal.

In the study by DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2014), wherein observations and interviews with two public elementary school leaders with inclusive change as a focus of their leadership practices were conducted, findings reflected the human resource lens. Specifically, principals provided regular feedback and time to teachers regarding instructional practices and planning. Additionally, collaboration was highly valued, and scheduling regular opportunities for staff sharing and feedback were intentionally provided to this end.

Sharing power. Several examples from the literature illustrate the leadership practice of sharing power. For example, in Salisbury's (2006) study with inclusive school principals, results indicated that principals relied on shared decision making. Leaders in ECE programs have the ability to utilize shared decision making and shared leadership practices in order to empower teachers, promote buy-in, and as a means of providing support.

For example, in Leatherman's (2007) study, teachers described their desires to be included in decisions about inclusive classrooms. Specifically, two teachers regretted not being included in the program administrator's decision making process to include

children with disabilities as a program policy. Getting buy-in from inservice teachers in developing program policies related to inclusion promoted positive attitudes among teachers in this study (Leatherman, 2007), and is a practice within the human resource frame that can be explored in future research.

Finally, in Salisbury and McGregor's (2002) study, principals in model inclusive schools cited efforts to include stakeholders in decision-making. Sharing decisions in this case was one strategy employed as a means to build coalitions of support, illustrating overlap with the political frame. It is clear that practices within the human resource frame were evident in the model inclusive schools involved in this study. Future research can explore the extent to which similar practices are evident in leaders in ECE programs.

Hiring the right people. Finally, a number of studies provide evidence of personnel qualities that should be considered in hiring both program directors and by inclusive ECE leaders in making teacher hiring decisions. For example, Mohay and Reid (2006) found that program directors with more experience and training in the area of disability were more likely to be currently including children with disabilities in their programs. Also, participants with more training and experience expressed more positive attitudes toward disability. Leatherman (2007) found that teachers agreed that the more experience they had with successfully including children, the stronger was their teaching. One teacher cited experience as an intern in an inclusive setting as a positive influence on her attitude toward enacting inclusive education at her own program. Finally, Hurley and Horn (2010) found that stakeholders valued programs that hire teachers who are open to working with children who have disabilities and valued programs that foster

collaboration among families, teachers, administrators, and other professionals. Are these elements taken into consideration by leaders in inclusive ECE programs? What practices related to hiring the right people are evident in ECE leadership?

Practices Reflected in the Political Frame

According to Bolman and Deal (2013), “the political frame views organizations as roiling arenas, hosting ongoing contests of individual and group interests” (p. 188). Five propositions summarize the perspective:

- 1) organizations are coalitions of different individuals and interest groups,
- 2) coalition members have enduring differences in values, beliefs, information, interests, and perceptions of reality,
- 3) most important decisions involve allocating scarce resources—deciding who gets what,
- 4) scarce resources and enduring differences put conflict at the center of day-to-day dynamics and make power the most important asset, and
- 5) goals and decisions emerge from bargaining and negotiation among competing stakeholders jockeying for their own interests. (p. 188)

Organization goals evolve as the coalitions within them compete for power and win influence both within and outside of the organization. Authority is one form of power, and partisans are coalition members that supply power, thereby holding power themselves. Sources of potential power are numerous and include position, control of rewards, coercive power, information and expertise, reputation, personal power, alliances and networks, access and control of agenda, and framing, or control of meaning and symbols within an organization in such a way to influence the way in which things are viewed. In the political frame, conflict is viewed as a natural part of the collective nature of organizations, and is viewed as a catalyst for creativity, innovation, change, and

reflection when handled well. Leaders who bargain, negotiate, and build alliances within and around organizations, who set agendas and strategize to meet goals, and who make it their business to understand the political context within which they lead illustrate political frame savvy.

In educational leadership, schools are certainly political arenas in which competition for limited resources is unmistakable. When children with disabilities enter the picture, the provision of resources becomes even more competitive, especially in terms of personnel, assistive technology, and time for planning. Leadership practices that ensure a good fit between needs and available resources reflect the political frame. Leaders operating from the political frame in inclusive educational contexts would need to have a clear strategy for implementing inclusion, would need steps outlined to meet goals, and would have to have a clear understanding of the political arena related to children with disabilities. Furthermore, in terms of resource provision, leaders would have to build coalitions both within school and within the larger community. The following literature provides examples of leadership practices that reflect the political frame, particularly in terms of building alliances to garner internal and external support for inclusion.

Mapping the political context to build coalitions. Leaders engaging the political frame in implementing inclusive education will have to have an understanding of the sources of support in and around schools. These might include families of children whom they serve, service providers, and agencies providing services to children in their ECE programs. Additionally, leaders will need to have skills in developing partnerships

with these sources of support. Some of the literature reviewed illustrates the impact of these practices.

For example, in Devore and Russell's (2007) case study regarding the transition from a self-contained educational setting to an inclusive setting, access was provided when these professionals responded to families' wishes for integrated services and established two fully inclusive classrooms within a childcare facility with the backing of the school district. A variety of stakeholders were involved in this transition, and the collaborative model that was implemented was supported by many. In this case, the professionals involved clearly recognized the importance of building coalitions and leaders were successful in recruiting support from the school district. A number of key practices reflect other leadership frames as described in other sections, but the importance of mapping the political context with success in generating higher level support, both within and outside of the program, is apparent.

In another example of practices to consider within the political frame, Purdue's (2009) findings from case studies to identify barriers to and facilitators of inclusive ECE in New Zealand yielded important considerations. First, family members reported stress and frustration over their constant need to advocate and battle for their children's rights. Leaders in inclusive ECE programs need to understand the political contexts within which their programs exist. Family's perspectives related to advocacy can provide leaders with details of the political terrain. Additionally, Purdue (2009) found that stakeholders did not value "expert" approaches displayed by related services providers. Politically, this approach has the potential to alienate stakeholders, rather than building

coalitions. More research is needed to understand ways in which ECE leaders in inclusive programs gain support from stakeholders. If necessary, how do leaders in inclusive ECE programs build partnerships with the surrounding community?

In the study by Salisbury and McGregor (2002), wherein staff at schools that were models of inclusion participated, one of the key findings exemplifies the political frame. Principals reported that they felt that they were expected and supported to create change within their schools and/or districts. This is another example that illustrates the significance of having internal and external support to implement inclusive leadership practices. Are there external supports that facilitate leaders' inclusive practices in ECE programs?

A study conducted by Purcell et al. (2007) is one of very few available that addresses inclusive leadership in ECE programs. Participating schools in this research were chosen in part due to their status as programs that "had to address a range of challenges in implementing and maintaining inclusive preschool education" (p. 87). Individual and focus group interviews were conducted with key informants, most of whom were administrators. Results yielded a set of key components that support or challenge initiation and continuation of inclusive ECE programs. A number of findings illustrate practices within the political frame including developing collaborative relationships, both within schools and across agencies that work to serve children with disabilities, community influence, and family support and partnership. One of the distinctions between Purcell et al.'s (2007) study and this study is the inclusion of Head Start Programs as recruitment sites: Each of the programs included in this study were

funded by Head Start. Because the inclusion of children with disabilities, specifically at a rate of 10%, is required of Head Start funding recipients, this study excluded Head Start programs as one way to narrow potential participants to those who led in programs that included children with disabilities absent financial incentives, with the objective of identifying programs who chose to include children with disabilities for reasons that were linked to an inclusive philosophy. Nevertheless, more research is needed to understand specific practices reflective of the political frame. For example, how do leaders in inclusive ECE programs build coalitions across agencies that serve children with disabilities? What leadership practices lend to building partnerships with families?

In the study by Brotherson et al. (2001), in which two principals in ECE programs were interviewed to determine their perceived needs in serving as effective leaders for inclusion, two of the three major needs illustrate considerations reflective of the political frame. First, these principals felt that families needed to be supported earlier through education and connections to family services. The principals suggested the formation of family resource centers to better prepare their children for school. Principals expressed concerns related to this need in terms of adding to their already full workloads. The authors note that the administrators' ideas about family support seemed to be geared toward the idea of reducing the need for inclusive schooling and placing blame and accountability on families. A second theme focused on the need for more collaboration with communities to support families. Principals cited needs for coordination, funding, and time for working with multiple agencies. These findings reflect ECE leaders' perspectives regarding challenges to enacting inclusion that speak to political frame

practices like providing support for families through building coalitions across family services agencies. In inclusive ECE programs, are leaders experiencing similar challenges? If so, how are they able to overcome those challenges?

Buffering teachers from external pressure. While gaining support from external sources, leaders in inclusive programs are concurrently challenged by external resistance. For example, in the study by Hoppey and McLeskey (2010) which centered on one principal in a model inclusive elementary school, one of the major themes illustrated practice reflective of the political frame. Specifically, this principal expressed his role in buffering teachers and staff from external pressure. He described practices that lent to buffering external pressure such as the use of data to define goals and standards. Additionally, he cited building partnerships with the surrounding community (e.g., building coalitions) as another specific strategy to protect teachers and staff. Are leaders in inclusive ECE programs experiencing similar pressures from external sources? In what ways are leaders in inclusive ECE programs able to overcome these challenges? If necessary, how do leaders in inclusive ECE programs buffer their teachers from pressures imposed by external sources?

In another example of the potential challenges faced by inclusive leaders that demonstrates the benefit of addressing the political frame, DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2014) conducted observations and interviews with two public elementary school leaders with inclusive change as a focus of their leadership practices. Results yielded a number of important and complex considerations for social justice work related to inclusion. For example, the authors discuss the temporary use of segregation of students with severe

emotional and behavioral disabilities in cases where jeopardizing the safety of students and teachers would go against social justice. Barriers experienced by these leaders that reflected the political frame included community pressure to exclude children with certain disabilities (i.e., emotional and behavioral disabilities), reluctance from parents to include their children with disabilities in general education classes, and ongoing enrollment of children with disabilities. Questions arise from this research regarding the balancing of a social justice agenda for inclusion within the context of discouraging external and internal challenges. Future research is needed to describe the practices and challenges of social justice leaders in inclusive ECE programs in order to better understand relevant avenues worthy of pursuit in leadership preparation. Implementing inclusive education is a feat that will require savvy political internal and external negotiation to garner support, and resistance in the case of DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2014) came from both directions.

Practices Reflected in the Symbolic Frame

Bolman and Deal (2013) explain that organizations create and experience unification through the use of symbols. Myths, vision, values, heroes and heroines, stories and fairy tales, ceremony, and rituals are some examples of the ways in which symbols take form in organizations. According to the authors, these symbols “explain, express, legitimize, and maintain solidarity and cohesion” around intangible values that characterize what an organization stands for (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 249).

Organizational culture is viewed as both a product and a process, and can be shaped by leaders who understand and make use of the power of symbols.

In educational leadership research, attitudes toward disability and inclusion are frequently explored and noted as important contributors to inclusive school culture. The literature supports the notion that attitudes and philosophies play a role in how inclusion is enacted and that program administrators set the overall tone in programs (Bradley & Kibera, 2006; Hurley & Horn, 2010). The literature additionally exemplifies practices reflective of the symbolic frame related to qualities of leaders in inclusive schools. Inclusive core values are also recognized as important foundations reflecting the symbolic frame.

Understanding and valuing children with disabilities. It is not enough to have an infrastructure in place within early childhood programs that supports inclusion. Personnel must be willing, able, and eager to try including children with disabilities (Purdue, 2009). The attitudes of practitioners toward implementing inclusive practices are arguably the most important piece of the inclusion puzzle. Professionals' dispositions toward inclusion align with the DEC/NAEYC (2009) position statement on inclusion in terms of support. Without positive attitudes toward inclusion, successful implementation and equity in education will remain unattainable. It is vital to understand the factors that contribute to the acquisition of positive attitudes toward inclusion, to be able to identify them in practice, and to foster the development of such attitudes among practitioners and program administrators that influence program policies and cultures.

To begin, Purdue (2009) found that a person's understanding of disability was shown to be significant in their successful implementation of inclusive education. Specifically, Purdue (2009) identified as barriers the framing of disability as "special"

and “different,” and views that children with disabilities were “better off having their educational and care needs met by outside agencies and experts who have the qualifications, skills and techniques to treat, manage or solve their problems” (p. 135). She found that attitudes varied according to the type of disability, the teachers’ views of their responsibilities, concern for other children, and the perceived extent of resources and changes needed to serve children. What practices of leaders support teachers to develop inclusive values?

Echoing these findings, Mohay and Reid (2006) found that respondents were more willing to work with children with mild or moderate disabilities than children with more severe disabilities. Moreover, sixty per cent of respondents stated that they were not really confident in their ability to include children with a disability in their program despite that only 11% responded that they had no training related to children with disabilities. In this case, a lack of training did not necessarily matter in terms of affecting attitudes and efficacy related to serving children with disabilities. It is possible that the missing piece in these cases were related to the symbolic frame in terms of developing inclusive culture.

For example, in the study by Salisbury and McGregor (2002) principals revealed in interviews their views of inclusion as a core value of the school. Respondents felt that principals facilitated a sense of direction. One of the major themes that emerged from the interview data that reflects the symbolic frame was the use of big picture strategies that were “designed to influence the core beliefs and operating principles of schools, and hence, deeper levels of change” (p. 268).

Salisbury (2006) found that principals referenced a similar set of core values in describing their school's culture. However, interviews with participants revealed differences in the ways in which inclusive education was implemented, resulting in the author's distinguishing between partially inclusive and integrated schools. Partially inclusive school principals spoke about inclusiveness as part of underlying values and principles that comprised an inclusive philosophy. Integrated school principals used language and examples that were characterized by the author as more restrained and that illustrated a conditional view of inclusion. In integrated schools, inclusion was viewed as a place rather than a value. Not surprisingly, schools were more inclusive when principal's attitudes about inclusion contributed to a strong philosophy (Salisbury, 2006).

In an example of research that reveals the ways through which administrators' attitudes can affect educational experiences for children with disabilities, Praisner (2003) surveyed elementary school principals to explore the connections between attitudes toward inclusion and training, education, and potential placement decisions. Principals were asked to suggest placements for students, based on their disability eligibility category, on a scale that represented placements from segregated settings (representing the most restrictive environment option) to settings in which children with disabilities were included in regular education classrooms with support (representing the least restrictive environment option). Eleven of the 408 principals declined to participate in this section of the survey because citing their belief that placement decisions should be made on an individual basis. It is alarming that so many of the participants agreed to make placement decisions based on eligibility category alone with no other information

about the student. This raises many questions related to administrators' understandings of disability, the impacts of labeling, and individualizing placement decisions.

Furthermore, the authors failed to analyze this set of data to determine the relationship between attitude and those who refused to participate in selecting a placement best suited for individuals based solely on their label. This information would have been noteworthy considering the finding that positive attitudes toward inclusion were positively correlated with more inclusive placement judgments (Praisner, 2003).

For those who did participate in Praisner's (2003) study, survey questions related to placements based on eligibility category, full-time regular education classrooms with support were chosen most often, the setting that represented the most inclusive option. Overall, a majority of the principals expressed uncertain feelings about inclusion as 21% were clearly positive and 2.7% were clearly negative. It was also apparent that principals felt that inclusive placements were more appropriate for certain types of disabilities and not for others. Specifically, students with autism/PDD, MR, neurological impairment, and multiple handicaps (their terms) were more likely to be hypothetically placed in more restrictive settings by these principals (Praisner, 2003). This apparent conditionality toward including students with disabilities, (i.e., it is right for some and not for others), mirrors the findings of Bailey and du Plessis (1997). If administrators do not fully support inclusion attitudinally, then they are not as likely to make it a priority within school communities, budgets, and cultures.

Also of particular significance was the finding that administrators who had completed more credit hours also held more positive attitudes toward inclusion (Praisner,

2003). Administrators' positive attitudes toward inclusion were highly correlated to the number of special education credits, inservice hours, specific topics taken, and their experience. While these findings are not surprising, it would be interesting to explore whether similar relationships were reported by ECE program administrators in settings outside of the public sector. The implications could impact policy, administrator education, and credentialing.

While the literature includes some studies related to administrator's perspectives on inclusion, the majority of these involve elementary or high school principals. Bond (2010) however, provides a glimpse into the perspectives of early childhood program administrators regarding the inclusion of children with disabilities. In this study, Bond (2010) surveyed 16 early childhood program administrators and 39 teachers in five rural counties in Florida to gather information regarding their beliefs about including children with disabilities and perceptions of their skills and related training needs. Participants responded to a Likert scale about six belief statements on inclusion and to 16 items describing inclusive skills, (e.g., "I am aware of the services provided by related professionals," p. 72). Bond also asked participants to rate their training needs related to each of the belief statements and to each of the inclusive skills. Overall, the participants in this study held positive beliefs about inclusion. Specifically, 80% of respondents reported feeling that children without disabilities benefit from being in early childhood settings alongside children with disabilities. Positive attitudes toward inclusion are evidenced by this study, but more information is needed to explore whether there are specific practices in which leaders can engage to promote inclusion. Also of note, when

rating the ease of providing adaptations and strategies to include children, administrators and teachers in this study disagreed: 80% of administrators agreed that these were easy to plan and implement for most children, whereas only 43% of teachers did. This finding highlights a potential mismatch between administrators' understandings of teacher attitudes and actual teacher attitudes toward inclusion. Either way, knowing that attitudes impact inclusive education, it is important for leaders to engage in practices reflective of the structural frame to influence school cultures. This research provides specific information about what those might be.

Leaders' characteristics. A review of Ingram's (1997) study of principals in inclusive kindergarten through twelfth grade public schools, though conducted prior to the current IDEA and culture of high-stakes testing in public education programs, provides a glimpse into the early literature related to inclusion and principal leadership styles that fit within the symbolic frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The findings are relevant here in that they illustrate characteristics of principals that were shown to influence teacher motivation. The authors argue that teacher motivation is critical for success when large scale changes occur within schools and districts; for example, an increase in the inclusion of children with disabilities in general education classrooms, either in the time spent in general education classrooms or an increase in the variety and ranges of disabilities represented by included students. This study sought to gather teacher's perceptions of their principal's leadership styles and whether leadership styles affect teacher's perceived motivation. The *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Form 5R* was distributed to teachers in five school districts under the supervision of 23

principals. This tool measured teacher ratings of leadership behaviors, motivation, leader effectiveness, satisfaction with the leader and his/her methods, demographics, and perceived accuracy of this instrument. Specifically, leadership factors including charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, contingent reward, management-by-exception, and laissez-faire were measured. A composite mean score of charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration yielded a definition of transformational leadership, while composite mean scores of contingent reward and management-by-exception factors yielded a definition of transactional leadership. The authors hypothesized that leaders in these inclusive schools would display more transformational leadership styles through which attitudes and assumptions of organizational members are influenced toward building commitment to the organization's mission. Transactional leaders on the other hand, influence behaviors through the use of extrinsic rewards. As predicted, leaders in schools in which children with more moderate and severe disabilities were educated in regular classrooms were perceived by teachers to display more transformative leadership behaviors than transactional leadership behaviors. Charisma was found to be the strongest influence on teacher motivation to perform beyond expectations. Charisma, individualized consideration, and inspiration were very closely associated factors of transformational leadership, and the findings related to charisma suggest that leaders' characteristics can be influential in enacting inclusion, perhaps due to leaders' abilities to inspire and motivate staff members. The authors conclude that a principal with transformative leadership qualities that focuses on developing shared vision, beliefs, meanings, and

commitments to common goals is more likely to motivate teachers, change or build school culture, and facilitate collaboration, all of which aid in successful implementation of inclusive school practices. While several of the elements of transactional leadership as described by Ingram (1997) are reflective of the symbolic frame (i.e., developing shared vision, beliefs, meanings, and commitments), the outcome of these practices in influencing teacher motivation reflect the human resource frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013). This study again demonstrates the potential impact of leadership practices across frames, as symbolic frame elements like charisma, beliefs, and commitment influenced motivation, an element reflected in the human resource frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

Gaps in Educational Leadership Research

The studies described in this review provide information about key practices that support the inclusion of children with disabilities in educational programs alongside children who are typically developing. It is clear that attitudes in support of inclusion and positive experiences with inclusion and with children with disabilities influence the employment of best practices in inclusion. We also know that a majority of administrators' perspectives in studies reflect their belief that inclusion is a right and beneficial to children with disabilities, yet their perspectives reflect a lack of full support for inclusion as the best option for all children. Nonetheless, they often make or influence decisions about student placements, teacher professional development training, and resource attainment and distribution. This is especially relevant in light of the numerous studies that reveal that resources in terms of training, continuing education, time, funding, and additional staffing are perceived by teachers and other professionals as

best practices in inclusive education (Bailey & du Plessis, 1997; Bond, 2010; Leatherman, 2007; Brotherson et al., 2001). Furthermore, administrators have the power to set the philosophical tone and expectations in educational programs (Purcell et al., 2007; Salisbury, 2006). If foundational support and prioritization from administrators for research-based practices is missing, inclusive practices will not be enacted fully as intended by DEC/NAEYC. More information is needed about early childhood program administrators' perspectives and experiences to support them in obtaining relevant knowledge and developing necessary skills and positive dispositions toward inclusion.

In order to better understand the impact of administrators on the implementation of inclusion in early childhood education programs, detailed investigation into inclusive ECE leadership is needed. Through this research, leaders within inclusive early childhood education programs provided their perspectives of how they support inclusive practices in early childhood settings, including ways in which administrators ensure access, participation, and supports to stakeholders.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the perspectives of leaders in inclusive ECE programs regarding the inclusion of children with disabilities. The following research questions guided the study: (a) How does the practice of ECE Leaders (reflective of each of Bolman and Deal's leadership frames) promote the inclusion of children with disabilities in ECE programs? (b) What are ECE Leaders' perspectives of the challenges they face in practicing inclusion in ECE programs? (c) What are ECE Leaders' perspectives of how they overcome challenges in practicing inclusion?

The vision for conducting this particular research study was to expand inclusive early childhood services for children with disabilities and their families. This in-depth description of inclusive early childhood leadership practice can inform administrator preparation programs, specifically related to the inclusion of children with disabilities. Research related to practices of early childhood leaders working to include children with disabilities can inform in-service program administration standards. Additionally, this study adds to the early childhood literature base by contributing research detailing the perceptions of early childhood program administrators in inclusive programs regarding practices that promote inclusion. Findings from the current study can inform administration preparation, professional development, and program standards. Further,

findings from this study add to the current body of literature related to inclusive leadership from which the inclusive early childhood leader has been omitted.

Participants in this study were early childhood program administrators recruited from 5-Star Licensed inclusive early childhood education programs in one metropolitan area in North Carolina. Data sources included interviews, observations, field notes, and documents to describe the daily practices of program administrators related to including children with disabilities, their perspectives related to what they do in their daily roles related to inclusion, and challenges they face related to including children with disabilities. Interviews and observations provided thick, rich data regarding administrators' practices and their perspectives of their practices that relate to including children with disabilities. Program documents including websites, family handbooks, and policies were used to describe sites as well as to illustrate whether and to what extent inclusion was valued by these programs and administrators. In this chapter I will (a) offer an explanation of the selected qualitative research methodology, particularly phenomenology and case study, (b) review my personal experience and position related to inclusive leadership, (c) present the methods for the study including site and participant selection procedures, and (d) outline details of the data collection and analysis procedures.

Research Framework

Qualitative research methods were used to investigate inclusive ECE leaders' perspectives about inclusive practices and barriers. Qualitative approaches to research, specifically reflective of a transformative worldview are appropriate when the inquirer

seeks to examine an issue related to oppression of individuals (Creswell, 2014). A transformative worldview holds that marginalization of individuals should be confronted with an agenda for change and that the research agenda seeks to address specific social issues of the day (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research methods used in this study included specifically the use of phenomenological methods to guide the case study investigation, with a goal to reveal the perspectives of participants.

Moustakas (1994) suggests that phenomenological research seeks to capture the wholeness of a phenomenon in order to uncover the essences of experiences. He explains that “the empirical phenomenological approach involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). In phenomenology, experiences of individuals about a phenomenon are described, “culminating in the essence of the experiences of several individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). It is through phenomenological methodology, including Epoche, Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction, and Imaginative Variation that the lived experiences of participants are captured to represent knowledge (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl described the process of Epoche as one through which the researcher suspends prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas in order to look at things, events, and people anew (as cited in Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) explains the process of Epoche as requiring absolute aloneness with full concentration on what is appearing and what is in one’s consciousness, recognizing and reflecting on what comes to mind, in order to target all energies onto only what appears. The goal is to

intentionally recognize all feelings, thoughts, or ideas about an issue and to then let go of them in order to become open to seeing an issue with a fresh and clear conscience.

At the same time, the researcher engages in the process of Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction. Through this process, the researcher experiences the phenomenon through the voices of participants, making corrections to perceptions previously held (Moustakas, 1994). In reviewing data, the researcher brackets any relevant ideas, comments, observations, or activities representative of the phenomenon under study. Bracketing enables the researcher to focus only on the phenomenon related to the topic and research question(s). Horizontalization is engaged throughout reduction, a process of recognizing each contribution relevant to the phenomenon as having equal value, with the goal of disclosing a given phenomenon's nature and essence. Moustakas (1994) states that

Throughout, there is an interweaving of person, conscious experience, and phenomenon. In the process of explicating the phenomenon, qualities are recognized and described; every perception is granted equal value, nonrepetitive constituents of the experience are linked thematically, and a full description is derived. (p. 96)

Next, in the process of analyzing the data, horizons are organized into clustered themes to provide a coherent textural description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Imaginative Variation requires that the researcher consider all possible variations for perception and experience of a given phenomenon, approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives with the goal of exposing the "underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98). Following

Imaginative Variation, the researcher seeks to synthesize the data to create a unified description of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole.

Epistemology

Because phenomenology seeks to uncover the voices of participants, a goal of the researcher was to balance participants' expressions of perspectives with the use of specific data collection procedures and through protocols for data analysis. Individuals with disabilities continue to be marginalized, particularly in terms of receiving equal access to ECE programs. The rights of individuals with disabilities are included in United Nations Human Rights Conventions including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, specifically related to inclusive education. The conventions state that "States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels," and that "persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live" (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], 2015, "Article 24 – Education," 1, 2[b]). The rights outlined by the United Nations represent global acknowledgment of disability rights as human rights that need specific and intentional recognition. The purpose of the present research is to acknowledge and recognize ECE leadership practices that support this right of individuals with disabilities in ECE settings.

As leaders in inclusive ECE programs are viewed as advocates on behalf of this marginalized group, their voices as participants in this research served as the primary source of information. Research goals for this study were guided by the researcher's position as a strong advocate for inclusion, a leader in an inclusive ECE program, and as

a beneficiary of inclusive education for children. These elements of researcher position informed the questions and methods of this study. The researcher's unique position was viewed as beneficiary for this research in terms of having a well-developed understanding of participants and the experiences and perspectives this research yielded. Observation and interview were employed as the primary sources of data to access participants' perspectives of practices. Data collection and analysis protocols were employed as one way to ensure validity of research interpretations.

Qualitative research necessitates the cultivation of collaborative partnerships among participants and investigators (Tracy, 2010). For this reason, an evaluation of whether reported practices aligned with observed practices, for example, could have potentially violated relational ethics (Tracy, 2010), in that the consequences of reporting negative findings could potentially harm participants professionally and/or personally. Additionally, a view of what is not working in inclusive education would not be helpful to those wishing to understand and emulate practices that facilitate inclusion. Guided by a strengths-based philosophy, wherein a focus on what works well yields useful information for the field, the present study sought to explore and describe perspectives of administrators regarding practices that promote inclusion.

Positionality

As the researcher in this study, I was employed as an instrument of data collection, and the findings are colored by my perspectives as an administrator in an inclusive early childhood education program. I see the inclusive options for families and children with disabilities as inadequate in both number and quality. In my experience,

families of children with disabilities are often excluded from early childhood education programs, often because programs cite a poor fit between child and program. There is little data available to evidence this phenomenon, probably because a majority of private early childhood education programs are free from oversight in terms of enrollment procedures and practices related to enrolling children with disabilities. There is however, evidence to support the exclusion of children from preschool programs at an alarming rate (Gilliam, 2005). Undoubtedly, children with disabilities are included among those expelled from preschool programs, and potentially at a disproportionately high number when compared to children who are typically developing based on the perception of many that children with disabilities require programming that is substantially different than children who are typically developing. As a result of experiences I have had related to the frequency with which children with disabilities are asked to leave early childhood education programs along with the alarming expulsion rates for prekindergarten, I conducted this study with the goal to provide information to expand inclusive early childhood education services and the quality of those inclusive services.

One route to expanding inclusive services is by addressing access. According to the DEC/NAEYC (2009) access is provided when a variety of early childhood programs, learning opportunities, and activities are available to children with disabilities and their families. Early childhood leaders have the ability to impact access by providing programs that intentionally include children with disabilities. Furthermore, leaders have the power to influence program culture, hire teachers, provide professional development, and secure resources to support inclusive practices. This study sought to explore these

and any emerging leadership practices within the framework for leadership provided by Bolman and Deal (2013). By gaining an understanding of the perspectives of leaders in inclusive early childhood education programs, the potential for the field to develop inclusive leadership dispositions and practices will expand.

I brought to the research my experience as an early childhood educator. I have had experience in administrative roles within an inclusive program that I co-founded in the same community from which I recruited my participants. Thus, I have experiences with issues and challenges that come up for administrators and for teachers. I have experienced parents' concerns, both parents of children with disabilities and parents of children who are typically developing in inclusive programs. I have heard first-hand from families who have children with disabilities about their experiences in being asked to leave ECE programs. I have worked to support teachers to develop inclusive practices and I have worked to provide professional development workshops related to inclusive practices. I have worked to develop inclusive culture within my own program and I have hired and evaluated teachers anchored by a strong philosophy for inclusion. I have had to pursue resources specifically for supporting children with disabilities and I have worked to develop partnerships with related services providers as a teacher and as an administrator. I have worked to develop policies related to including children with disabilities including policies for teachers, related services providers, and families to outline partnership roles and expectations in collaborating to meet children's individual needs. All of these experiences add to the lens through which I developed this research agenda and these methods.

Furthermore, these experiences were beneficial for me in building rapport with my participants. My role as the researcher was to observe and interview participants. I participated as I observed and interacted with these participants, and listened to their stories as a colleague. I used my status as a colleague to build rapport, and my position added depth to the process through which I described and understood their perspectives about including children with disabilities, what it takes, what they do specific to including children, what challenges they face, and how they overcome them. It was a goal for the research experience to be collegial.

Research Design

In this section, the research design is explained in detail specifically related to the research topic. This study employed phenomenological case study design to describe inclusive ECE leadership practice. The research design was informed by a transformative worldview (Creswell, 2014), wherein individuals with disabilities are considered a marginalized group for which ECE leaders serve as educational rights advocates.

The researcher position, as a leader in ECE, brought a depth of experience and understanding to the phenomenological study, a research model through which the researcher arrives at essences through intuition and reflection (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) posits that the researcher has “a personal interest in whatever she or he seeks to know” (p. 59). This researcher’s personal interest is described in detail in the previous section, *Positionality*. Phenomenological research was well-suited to the research questions under investigation, which required the elicitation of leaders’

perspectives as data to develop descriptions and understandings of leadership practices in ECE. According to Creswell (1998), qualitative methods are appropriate for inquiries of *how* and *what*. This study investigated *how* the practices of ECE Program Administrators promoted the inclusion of children with disabilities, *what* practices reflected the leadership lenses described by Bolman and Deal (2013), *what* leaders perceived as challenges in practicing inclusion, and *what* leaders perceived as ways to overcome challenges.

Including case study design elements within this phenomenological design was an appropriate approach for investigating these research questions. Case study research assumes a close interaction between and among a contemporary phenomenon and the contexts within which the phenomenon occur (Yin, 2014). A case study was an appropriate method to employ in order to explore and describe early childhood leaders' perspectives of their inclusive practices. Case studies are in fact a preferred method for exploratory and descriptive research (Yin, 2014). Additionally, case studies are apropos when examining contemporary events when relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated (Yin, 2014), and was thus appropriate for this research wherein the phenomenon of early childhood inclusive leadership practice were explored in ECE programs. Cases can be bounded by activity (Creswell, 2014), and in this instance, the case under investigation was inclusive early childhood leadership practice.

Qualitative research methods are appropriate to use when an issue needs to be explored in detail, and when studying individuals in their natural setting (Creswell, 1998). The researcher in this study observed and interviewed participants in their natural

setting (i.e., at their programs during work hours), in order to provide detailed accounts of program administrators' practices. Because it has been shown in previous research related to inclusive leadership that quantitative measures of inclusiveness do not capture the details and intricacies of the implementation of inclusive education (Salisbury, 2006), the current study employed qualitative methods as a means to describe early childhood leadership inclusion practices.

The practices and perspectives of ECE program administrators in inclusive programs were recorded through observation, interviews, and document analysis procedures. Observations provided evidence of participants' practices relevant to including children with disabilities. Observations occurred in participants' natural environments, in their ECE programs and provided details necessary for site descriptions and data analysis regarding practices and valued ends of participants' work.

In phenomenological research, it is a goal to capture the lived experiences of participants through first-person accounts (Moustakas, 1994). Semi-structured interviews provided an avenue for ascertaining participants' perspectives. Interviews also provided information relevant to each of the research questions, as participants had the opportunity to share their ideas about inclusive practices and challenges to enacting inclusive education. Program documents were used as a data source to describe sites, to provide detail for descriptions of programs and the natural contexts in which the participants worked. Additionally, the program documents provided data that illustrated "goods, valued ends, and aspirations" of participants, the ends for which leaders work (Burns, 2010). In some cases, the documents provided evidence of practices in terms of written

policies related to inclusion. Document analysis was used in this study as one way to triangulate the data uncovered through observations and interviews.

Research Methodology

This section includes descriptions of participants, data collection sites, and recruitment procedures employed in this study. Participants were limited to include inclusive ECE program administrators, individuals who were best suited to provide perspectives regarding the phenomenon of inclusive ECE leadership. A rationale is provided for participant selection and site selection procedures. The recruitment procedures are described in detail.

Data Collection Sites

Research was conducted in inclusive early childhood education programs in a mid-sized metropolitan area in North Carolina. Purposeful sampling was used to identify participants in this study and is appropriate for phenomenological research studies (Maxwell, 2005). ECE programs were included as recruitment sites if they identify themselves as inclusive of children with disabilities and had achieved a 5-star quality rating from the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education (NCDCDEE). For this study, early childhood education programs were defined as programs that served children aged birth through 5 years, or children in that age range, that had a Child Care Center facility license from the NCDCDEE. Family child care homes and summer day camps were excluded from this study, both of which are licensed through the DCDEE, in order to focus the inquiry onto the perspectives and practices of child care center administrators.

Additionally, programs were chosen that were not public school programs. The researcher chose to exclude public programs in order to attempt to isolate programs that made decisions about inclusion based on program philosophy. The assumption was that public schools were more likely to include children with disabilities because they were more heavily influenced by law. It was assumed that public school programs and personnel were more familiar with laws regulating the education of children with disabilities including the IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. For example, research regarding the expulsion rates of children in early childhood education programs reveals a large gap when compared to grade school expulsion rates (Gilliam, 2005). Nationally, the preschool expulsion rate is more than 3 times the rate of that found in Kindergarten through 12th grades (Gilliam, 2005). The fact that so many children are expelled (either with or without disabilities) in early childhood programs speaks to their independence from more organized and institutionalized systems of education, such as those found within the public sector. It is possible that the likelihood for expulsion in grade school decreases significantly because of legal protections in the form of Section 504 plans or Individualized Education Plans.

Furthermore, programs that received funding from state programs Head Start and Early Head Start were excluded in this research as sites from which to recruit participants. The reason to exclude these programs was to attempt to isolate programs that did not receive financial support or other incentives to include children with disabilities. The assumption was that programs that do not receive incentives to include children with disabilities are likely including children with disabilities for reasons related

to a program philosophy. It was the goal of this researcher to locate and include administrators from programs that chose to include children with disabilities for reasons other than financial incentive (Head Start Act, Section 640 (d)(1)). These criteria informed the site selection process in order to narrow the sites from which to recruit participants; however, because this study was a phenomenological and in keeping with the epistemological lens, judgment regarding the qualification of sites as *successfully* inclusive were suspended. Data collection in the form of observations and interviews took place at each of the administrators' programs. In one case, data collection occurred at two different locations, because the program administrator ran two different early childhood education programs. Detailed descriptions of each of the sites are included in Chapter IV of this study. Table 1 shows inclusion and exclusion criteria for sites from which participants were recruited for this study.

Table 1

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Operates in Guilford County	Public School Programs
Categorized by NCDCDEE as a Child Care Center	Recipients of funding through Head Start or Early Head Start
Licensed by the NCDCDEE with a 5-star Center License	Categorized by NCDCDEE as a Family Child Care Home or a Summer Day Camp
Via phone interview, self-reports as a program that serves children with disabilities*	Licensed by the NCDCDEE with 1 to 4 Star Center License
Willing to participate	Via phone interview, self-reports serving no children with disabilities
	Unwilling to participate

*Additional information provided via phone interviews was used to select sites that most closely match desired features of inclusive programs (see *Recruitment Procedures*).

Participants

The researcher recruited participants in Guilford County, North Carolina, who are program administrators of early childhood education programs. A total of seven participants were recruited. For this research, administrators were recruited who met at least the minimum requirements outlined by the state of North Carolina (i.e., administrators that held a Level 1 Administration Credential with the state).

Administrators from programs that had achieved a 5-star rated license, the highest quality rating assigned in the state, were recruited for this study. Research has shown that quality in early childhood programs is related to effective leadership (Bloom & Sheerer, 1992). A goal for this study was to describe leaders' practices in high-quality inclusive programs. Using the Star Rated License as a measure of quality and selecting participants from those who scored the top rating was one way to limit participation to high-quality programs.

Recruitment Procedures

A list of potential recruitment sites was obtained from the NCDCDEE website (<http://ncchildcare.nc.gov/general/home.asp>). Programs that were housed within public schools were eliminated as potential sites. The remaining programs' administrators were contacted via telephone and were asked to complete an initial telephone questionnaire. The full results of the telephone questionnaires are presented in the Results section in Chapter IV. The goal of this process was to isolate programs that identified themselves as inclusive in order to narrow the field of participants to include only administrators from programs that likely practice inclusion as a reflection of a philosophical value.

Recruitment phone calls were made in attempt to reach each of the remaining potential site program directors. Phone calls were made from the researcher's home office, from a cellular phone. If the program administrator was reached, the researcher read the initial recruitment script for telephone, included in Appendix D. Each administrator's consent to complete the telephone questionnaire was given orally. Once consent was given via the phone conversation, the researcher read through each of the telephone questionnaire questions and wrote the answers given on the telephone questionnaire response form (Appendix E).

Initial telephone questionnaires were used to verify programs' enrollment of children with disabilities, their status as a private program, and their status as independent of Head Start/Early Head Start. To qualify as a "child with a disability" for the purposes of this study, the child must have been receiving services through either the North Carolina Infant Toddler Program, a program of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, with an Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP), or through the Guilford County Schools Department of Exceptional Children's Preschool Program with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Although public schools were excluded from this study as programs from which to recruit participants, county school itinerant service providers deliver related services to children with IEPs in community child care settings (IDEA, Part B). County schools administer IEPs and provide services such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and special education services through itinerant service providers.

Administrators were asked to provide the number of children enrolled in their programs overall. Additionally, they were asked to provide the number of children in their programs who have IFSPs or IEPs. These figures were used to calculate a ratio of children who were typically developing to those who had disabilities. This ratio was used as one way to narrow recruitment of participants to programs representing best practices for inclusion (DEC/NAEYC, 2009; Irwin, 2009). Administrators from programs with ratios that most closely represented a natural proportion of children with disabilities were recruited first. According to the DEC/NAEYC (2009), “the principal of natural proportions means the inclusion of children with disabilities in proportion to their presence in the general population” (p. 3). Irwin (2009) asserts that the natural proportion in the general population is between 10 and 15%. A detailed description of the participating programs’ reported ratios of children with and without disabilities is provided in the Results section.

Following initial phone questionnaires with potential participants, the researcher analyzed phone questionnaire responses to narrow the pool of recruiting sites to those with the most desired features. Each of the nineteen completed phone interviews was read through. The responses to the telephone questionnaires were entered into a data table. A column was included in which to calculate the percentage of children with disabilities represented within total program enrollment to illustrate adherence to natural proportion (10–15%; Irwin, 2009). To calculate this figure, the total number of children with IEPs or IFSPs respondents provided was divided by the total number of children enrolled respondent’s provided. This number was then multiplied by 100 to yield a

percentage. The percentages are presented in Table 6 located in Chapter IV. Of the nineteen potential participants who completed the telephone questionnaire, two administrator's responses yielded percentages that fell into the range representing a natural proportion of 10% to 15% (Irwin, 2009).

Administrators were asked whether children with disabilities were served in the same classroom settings as children who were typically developing in order to ensure that children were included among peers within programs. A program did not meet desired site features if children with disabilities were served in a separate, segregated space or classroom. All 19 administrators responded that children with IEPs and IFSPs were served in the same classrooms as children who were typically developing.

An additional question in the telephone questionnaire inquired as to whether the program had a policy related to including children with disabilities. The existence of a program policy related to inclusion is an additional indicator of inclusion quality (Irwin, 2009) that was used to select programs from which to recruit participants. In response to the question, "Does your program have any written policies related to including children with disabilities?" twelve of the directors responded "yes," four responded "no," one director said "maybe," one director said "not sure," and one director said "yes, for the NC Pre-K classrooms."

A final question in the initial telephone recruitment questionnaire probed whether the program had been unable to enroll children with any types of disabilities. The purpose of this question was to get an indication of whether a program enrolled children with disabilities across categories and/or disability severity levels. According to Irwin

(2009), “in fully inclusive child care centers, all children are welcomed regardless of type or level of disability” (p. 24). A program that served only children with Autism and not children with visual impairment, for example, was less desired for this study.

Additionally, a program that served children with what were considered “mild” or “moderate” disabilities and not those children with what were considered “severe” disabilities was less desired for this study.

In response to the question, “Are there children with any types of disabilities that your program has been unable to enroll?” directors had a variety of responses. Those who responded with a “no” or who expanded their responses with comments such as “there is always a way” were categorized as meeting most desired site features ($n = 9$).

The next most desired responses to this question included statements like “we evaluate it on a case by case basis, but not since I’ve been here,” or “No, we really haven’t had anyone come to us that we couldn’t handle” ($n = 5$). These responses reflected a position that was more flexible in making decisions to enroll children with disabilities, and were therefore, categorized into a second tier of desirability.

A third tier of desirability was categorized for programs who reported having to exclude children on rare occasions ($n = 3$), and a final least desired tier was used to categorize programs whose administrators responded “Yes” ($n = 2$). In the cases where administrators responded with “yes,” examples given included children who needed feeding tubes, who had diabetes and required insulin shots, and for children who did not pass screening procedures in place to evaluate academic achievement.

A most desired program from which to recruit participants served a natural proportion of children with disabilities in classrooms with children who were typically developing, had a written policy regarding the inclusion of children with disabilities, and enrolled children with a wide variety of types of disabilities across severity levels.

Table 2

Desired Site Features

Desired Site Features
Children with disabilities enrolled at or close to natural proportion (10-15%)
Children with disabilities served in same classrooms/spaces as children who were typically developing
Program had a policy related to including children with disabilities
Program enrolled children with all types of disabilities/across disability categories
Program enrolled children across all disability severity levels

Administrators from programs meeting all five of the desired site features were recruited first, followed by programs meeting four, three, two, or one of the desired site features, in that order. Specific site features, including details regarding site selection pertinent to desired features, are described in the Results section of this study. From the narrowed list of potential sites, participants were contacted via phone and asked to participate in the interview and observation phase of this study.

Administrators whose responses to the telephone questionnaire met most desired site features were contacted first for recruitment into the interview and observation phase of the study. Of the top eight programs, four were recruited as participants. An

additional three participants were recruited who met fewer of the desired site features. Table 6 in Chapter IV shows the site features as described by program directors in the telephone questionnaire.

Data Collection

Once participants qualified and agreed to participate in observation and interview portions of this study, a date and time was agreed upon for data collection to proceed. Consent forms were signed by participants at the time of the initial interview. Table 3 shows the various sources of data included in the study, along with the process through which data was collected, and with the information each source of data provided related to the phenomenon, inclusive ECE leadership practice.

Table 3

Data Sources

	Source	Information	Links to Theoretical Framework
Interviews (initial and follow-up)	Program Administrators	how, what, why, with whom, do leaders practice inclusion in ECE programs	Illustrate perspectives of practices within the 4 frames and challenges
Observations	Program Administrators, people with whom they interact	what, how, with whom do leaders practice inclusion in ECE programs	Illustrate practices within the 4 frames and challenges
Field Notes	from observations from interviews	developing insights; developing descriptions of participants/sites	Insights link data to the 4 frames and challenges
Document Analysis	websites family handbooks employee handbooks policies mission statements other	developing insights; providing details for descriptions; evidence of value, practice; triangulation	Policies provided evidence of practices within the 4 frames and provided contextual information

Initial Interview

An initial interview was conducted with each of the participants prior to observations. Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte (1999) assert that open-ended exploratory interviews are the best way for a researcher to gain deeper knowledge in a particular area. The initial interview protocol is included in Appendix A and included open-ended questions to elicit participants' perspectives of the meaning of inclusion, their practices that support inclusion, challenges they have faced related to including children with disabilities, and their perspectives of how they have overcome challenges. Initial items in the interview elicited demographic and contextual information. Interviews provided specifics regarding the administrator's educational background, personal experience with disability, the program philosophy, and the administrator's typical daily activities. Each of the interviews was recorded using two hand-held recording devices. Transcriptions of all interviews occurred throughout data collection procedures. Participants were provided with summaries of the interviews for member checks. The initial interview took about an hour to complete and laid the foundation for questions included in the subsequent interview (Glesne, 2011).

Each of the questions included in the initial interview served to aid the researcher in developing an understanding of leaders' perspectives of practices related to including children with disabilities in ECE programs. Questions were developed to be open ended in order to allow for a wide variety of responses, with prompts to guide interviewees toward specific details and to expand ideas. Several of the questions were included to collect demographic information to be used in developing thick, rich descriptions of sites

and participants. Additionally, demographic questions were positioned first in the interview as a means to build rapport. Table 4 shows each of the interview questions, provides a purpose for the question, links each interview question to one or more of the research questions under investigation in the study, and highlights relevant related research that provides a rationale for inclusion of the question.

Table 4

Initial Interview Question Matrix

	Initial Interview Questions	Purpose	Corresponding Research Question(s)	Literature
1.	How long have you been an administrator in this program?	demographic; to be used in description		Yin (2014)
2.	Do you have any other experience in administration?	demographic; to be used in descriptions		Yin (2014)
3.	Tell me about your education. a. What type of degree or license do you have? b. Did you take courses in special education? c. What types of courses were they?	demographic; to be used in descriptions		Yin (2014) Education level influences inclusive philosophy/practice: Praisner (2003)
4.	Do you have a teaching license? a. What type of license is it?	demographic; used in descriptions		Yin (2014) Praisner (2003)

Table 4

(Cont.)

	Initial Interview Questions	Purpose	Corresponding Research Question(s)	Literature
5.	Tell me about any personal experiences you have had with individuals with disabilities (i.e., do you or a child in your family or other family member have a disability?)	demographic; used in descriptions; symbolic lens = philosophy	What practices reflect the symbolic lens?	Bolman and Deal (2013) Mohay and Reid, (2006) Praisner (2003)
6.	Tell me about any experiences you have had in inclusive settings other than this program	symbolic lens = philosophy	What practices reflect the symbolic lens?	Bolman and Deal (2013) experience literature: Mohay and Reid (2006)
7.	Can you tell me about your program structure? 1. Is this program a non-profit or for-profit program? 2. How is your program funded? 3. Who oversees this program? 4. Is there a Board of Directors or other governing body?	demographic; used in description; speaks to political lens (in terms of decision-making, power), to structural lens (organizational structure, funding)	What practices reflect the structural lens? What practices reflect the political lens?	Yin (2014) Bolman and Deal (2013)

Table 4

(Cont.)

	Initial Interview Questions	Purpose	Corresponding Research Question(s)	Literature
8.	<p>Tell me all the ways you include children with disabilities in this program.</p> <p>a. Is there anything else?</p> <p>b. Tell me more about _____. (selecting a few of the responses the individual mentions regarding the ways they work to include children with disabilities in their program in order to solicit more specific information)</p> <p>c. How does that work?</p> <p>d. What is your role in _____? (selecting a few of the responses the individual mentions regarding ways they include children with disabilities in their program)</p>	<p>To develop descriptions of how PA's perceive and define inclusion and inclusive practices; to add detail to site descriptions; to ascertain PA's perceptions of their roles</p>	<p>How does the practice of ECE Program Administrators promote the inclusion of children with disabilities in ECE programs?</p>	<p>definitions may be the same, but implementation is different for different leaders (Salisbury, 2006)</p>

Table 4

(Cont.)

	Initial Interview Questions	Purpose	Corresponding Research Question(s)	Literature
9.	Of the ways you include children with disabilities in your program that you discussed, which of those are the <i>most important</i> to ensure that children with disabilities are included in your program? a. How do you help that happen?	to explore priorities regarding inclusive practices; to add depth to perspectives;	How does the practice of ECE Program Administrators promote the inclusion of children with disabilities in ECE programs?	
10.	Describe any specific activities or duties (in your role as program administrator) that require your intentional focus on children with disabilities.	to explore perceptions regarding practices specific to supporting inclusion	How does the practice of ECE Program Administrators promote the inclusion of children with disabilities in ECE programs?	
11.	Are there any specific things that you do or parts of your job that require you to think or plan intentionally about/for children with disabilities? What are those?	to explore perceptions regarding practices specific to supporting inclusion	How does the practice of ECE Program Administrators promote the inclusion of children with disabilities in ECE programs?	

Table 4

(Cont.)

Initial Interview Questions	Purpose	Corresponding Research Question(s)	Literature
12. What are the challenges that you face in including children with disabilities in your program? a. How do you work through challenges when possible?		What are ECE Leaders' perspectives of the challenges they face in practicing inclusion in ECE programs? What are ECE Leaders' perspectives of how they overcome challenges in practicing inclusion?	DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2014) Brotherson et al. (2001) Purdue (2009) Hoppey and McLeskey (2010)
13. What do you think programs need in order to include children successfully?	to add depth to perceptions regarding overcoming challenges	What are ECE Leaders' perspectives of the challenges they face in practicing inclusion in ECE programs? What are ECE Leaders' perspectives of how they overcome challenges in practicing inclusion?	DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2014) Brotherson et al. (2001) Purdue (2009) Hoppey and McLeskey (2010)
14. Is there anything else that you would like to share about including children with disabilities in early childhood education programs?	open-ended question to explore additional perceptions or concepts the interview may have missed	all 3 RQ's	Moustakas (1994)

Interviews took place in a location agreed upon by the researcher and the participant, most often in a space within participants' ECE programs. The interview questions were asked in order as provided on the interview protocol (Appendix A). Initial interviews took approximately one hour to complete.

Observations

Following the initial interview, two observations took place with each of the participants, except for one participant who declined to continue the research following the initial interview and one observation. An Observation Protocol is included in Appendix B. Observations were planned to last for approximately two hours per visit and were conducted at times that were convenient for the participants. The participants were asked to suggest a time for subsequent observations to occur following the first observation, preferably during a time that they were interacting with teachers. The observations were limited to approximately two in hopes of reaching saturation and in order to increase the likelihood that participants found participation in the research manageable.

Data collection procedures for the observations were guided by an observation protocol. Notes were kept by the researcher in running record form recording the activities observed of program administrators and those with whom they interacted. Activities included conversations with teachers or other co-workers, responding to emails, tracking financial data, school tours with the researcher, providing support to teachers by working directly with children, conducting an intake interview with a newly enrolled family, conducting a staff meeting, and conversations regarding daily activities

and program features. The running record of activities was subsequently analyzed for data relevant to the research questions and those were categorized into practices that reflected the frames of leadership described by Bolman and Deal (2013). Observation notes were recorded by the researcher and transcribed directly following the observations.

Field Notes

Field notes were also made directly following observations and interviews and served as a means of recording researcher insights, thoughts, and ideas. Field notes were used to inform questions for the second interview. Field notes were recorded on the researcher's computer in data files, excluding identifying information. Field notes included the researcher's general impressions of the interviews and observations. The researcher detailed any contextual information, including background such as the weather, the day of the week, any unusual events that occurred (e.g., celebration during staff meeting), and other relevant information that was helpful in providing detailed accounts of the participants and the sites. Field notes were used as one way to document research insights and impressions for later analysis.

Follow-up Interview

A follow-up interview was held with each of the participants, except for one who declined to participate, following the observations. A framework protocol for the second interview is included in Appendix C. The purpose of the follow-up interview was to gain clarity and/or to expand on concepts, experiences, or perspectives to deepen the complexity of data. Questions for this interview emerged from observations and responses to the initial interview. These interviews served as one means of deepening

and member-checking the themes that emerged from document analysis, observations, field notes, and the initial interview.

Document Analysis

Program documents were requested from participants during observations or following the final interview. One participant did not provide documents and did not have a website available for review. It is likely that documents were not provided by this participant because the interviews were conducted at another program, which was not under study in this research, and the documents for her program under study were not accessible at that site. Documents collected included marketing materials (flyers, pamphlets, brochures, etc.), websites, parent or family handbooks, employee handbooks, and other documentation that was deemed relevant and provided by participants. Marshall and Rossman (1999) support the use of documents as one way to ascertain the values and beliefs of participants in the setting. These authors' method of content analysis was employed in the current study (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). This method of analysis of documents requires methodological interpretation on the part of the researcher to determine where the greatest emphasis lies in terms of connections to research questions (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Documents collected as data in this study were used to develop detailed descriptions of sites and the contexts within which participants worked. Furthermore, documents were analyzed for content specific to the phenomenon of inclusive ECE leadership practice. For example, quality indicators of inclusive early childhood include the existence of program policies affirming the principles of zero-reject, natural

proportions, equality in enrollment practices, full participation, parent participation, and leadership and advocacy on behalf of individuals with disabilities, (Irwin, 2009). In this study, when possible, the researcher obtained copies of program policies related to partnering with service providers and documents related to enrollment procedures for children with disabilities. A full list of documents collected and analyzed is provided in Chapter 4. Each of the documents was read and information related to including children with disabilities was included in further analysis. For example, when policies existed within employee handbooks related to including children with disabilities, these documents served as evidence of a leadership practice demonstrating the use of policies to facilitate the inclusion of children with disabilities.

Data Management

A variety of data sources were accessed for this study. All of the information obtained from participants and potential participants was kept confidential. Individuals' names and identifying ECE program names were stored separately from data. Informed consent for in-person interviews and observations was acquired in person in written form at the time of the initial interviews. The consent forms were stored in a locked filing cabinet off the UNCG campus.

Data collected through the use of interviews (phone and in person) and observations did not include identifying information. Programs and participants have been given pseudonyms. A database was used to store pseudonyms with programs/participants on a password protected computer. The database was kept separate from the study data. No identifying information has been included in data or data

analysis. Audio recordings were recorded on a hand-held digital device and then downloaded onto a password protected computer. Digital recordings excluded identifying information. Transcripts of these interviews were stored on a password protected computer and excluded identifying information.

Interview data was stored on a password protected computer off of the UNCG campus and on a password protected digital drop box. No identifying information was stored in the same files as interview responses. Data and consent forms will be destroyed no later than 5 years after original collection date. Interviews were recorded on a hand-held digital voice recording device from which they were be uploaded onto a password protected computer. The audio recordings were deleted from the device as they were downloaded onto a password protected computer. Names and other identifying information were not included in the downloaded interviews (audio files) nor the transcripts. The recordings and their transcripts will be deleted from the computer in no more than 5 years after they have been collected.

Because the interviews were audiotaped, there was rare to infrequent risk related to the consequences of breach of confidentiality. To minimize the risk, audio recorded interviews and transcripts were stored on a password protected computer. Furthermore, audio recordings and transcripts of interviews did not contain identifiable information. The transcriptionist was required to sign a confidentiality agreement confirming the protection and security of audio taped and transcribed data.

Transcription

All interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. A transcriptionist was hired to transcribe the audio recordings with the understanding that the transcriptions were to capture the utterances as closely as possible as they were audio taped (Poland, 1995). The transcriber received an audio data file to play back from which he produced a typed computer document transcription of the words on the audio recordings. Additional sounds such as laughter were noted in brackets. As suggested by Poland (1995), during data analysis the researcher read through transcripts while listening to the audio recordings as one way to evaluate and verify the accuracy of transcripts. Additionally, the process of reading transcriptions while listening to audio-taped recordings was conducted in order for the researcher to connect nuanced language expressions such as tone of voice, silences, and emphasis to the transcribed data (Poland, 1995). Transcriptions were also analyzed with field notes that provided further contextual data regarding the interview process and event (Poland, 1995). Together, these data allowed for a rich description of the site, participants, and their perspectives regarding inclusive leadership in ECE.

Data Analysis

Data analysis procedures yielded both detailed site descriptions and essences of the phenomenon under study. Through data analysis, the researcher “determines the underlying structures of an experience by interpreting the originally given descriptions of the situation in which the experience occurs” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). Qualitative data analysis is both an inductive and deductive process, characterized by the researcher

building themes by organizing data from the bottom up, and then revisiting data to determine whether additional information supports themes and categories (Creswell, 2014). The data from each of the sources was compiled into reviewable formats (i.e., transcriptions, observations, field notes, and documents) for each of the sites. Each of the data sources was reviewed rigorously by the researcher in order to develop a deep understanding of the data. Interviews were replayed while transcripts were read. Documents, field notes, and observation notes were read. All of the data sources were reviewed at least once to get a general sense for the information and to reflect on its overall meaning (Creswell, 2014). Notes were added to the margins of transcriptions and field notes at this initial review as a way to capture the researcher's general ideas (Creswell, 2014). Each of the interviews and observations was read and pieces of each were organized into categories reflective of the four theoretical frames as described by Bolman and Deal (2013). An additional category was used for challenges. A list of emerging topics was compiled following this initial organization of the data. These topics were reviewed and clustered based on similarity of ideas (Creswell, 2014). A second review of the data followed, with each of the clustered ideas used as a basis for further review. The purpose of the second review of the data was to determine whether additional information could be included in each of the established themes, or instead be used to form new categories (Creswell, 2014). When data supported themes across multiple sources of data or across multiple participants, it was included in further analysis as a code (Creswell, 2014).

A peer debriefer was employed to review a portion of the data to ensure that researcher understandings and insights are trustworthy (Creswell, 2014). According to Creswell (2014), a peer debriefer reviews the study, asks questions, and is briefed throughout the process so that the account will resonate with people other than the researcher. In this study, the research goals and design were reviewed with a peer debriefer. The peer debriefer read through approximately 20% of the data, reviewed data storage and organization, reviewed and discussed the appropriateness and varied interpretations of the emerging and preexisting codes. Adjustments to the data analysis process were made based on feedback from the peer debriefer, including reassignments of codes to specific pieces of data in a few cases. In most cases, the peer debriefer agreed with codes assigned by the researcher, meeting a goal of the debrief as described by Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013). Peer debriefer input was engaged regarding the collapsing of codes that were repetitive or encompassing of others. For example, the code for political frame networking was collapsed into the broader code for political frame providing external resources.

Thick, rich descriptions of each of the sites are included in the results. Direct quotes are used from interviews to illustrate participants' voices (Moustakas, 1994). Quotes from documents are used to illustrate practices in terms of policies, values, and priorities of participants and sites when available. Additionally, the researcher took notes as the data was reviewed, to begin the process of inductive analysis (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher engaged the practices of Epoche, Transformative Phenomenological Reduction, including bracketing and horizontalizing as described by Moustakas (1994).

Table 5 provides an outline of how Moustakas's (1994) Transcendental Phenomenological Process was employed in data analysis in this study.

Table 5

Example of Use of Moustakas's (1994) Transcendental Phenomenological Process and Data Analysis

<p>A. <i>Epoche</i></p>	<p>Continuous reflection on my own practices as a leader in an inclusive ECE program; Identify potential assumptions and biases</p>
<p>B. <i>Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bracketing the topic or question 2. Horizontalization 3. Delimited horizons or meanings 4. Invariant qualities and themes 5. Individual textural descriptions 	<p>Explore the textural dimension: Describe what is seen related to the phenomenon under study; Create an individual textural description of every administrators' inclusive ECE leadership experiences</p>
<p>C. <i>Imaginative Variation</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Vary possible meanings 2. Vary perspectives of the phenomenon 3. Develop structural themes 4. Individual structural descriptions 5. Develop universal descriptions—emerging themes across participants 	<p>Explore the structural dimension of the phenomenon: how inclusive leadership is experienced by the administrators; if and how practices are reflected in the theoretical framework; how administrators' thoughts and feelings connected with their leadership experience; Gain an understanding of the meaning of the leadership experiences from the administrators' perspectives; Integrate the administrators' individual structural and textural descriptions into universal descriptions of the experience</p>
<p>D. <i>Essence</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Synthesis of textural and structural descriptions with emerging themes across participants 	<p>Combine the administrators' what (textural) descriptions, how (structural) descriptions, and emerging themes across participants; Arrive at the essence of leaders' experiences</p>

Epoche

In this study, Epoche was used to set aside the researcher's views of the phenomenon so that the perceptions of the participants would be regarded from a clear vantage point (Moustakas, 1994). To undertake Epoche the researcher recalled her own personal and professional experiences with leadership in the context of inclusive ECE through field notes, engaging in peer debriefing, and reflectively meditated on preconceptions and prejudgments, disconnecting from those memories, and setting aside any application she might have to this research. The process of Epoche was revisited throughout the study to ensure the researcher's own ideas, values, and experiences did not override that of the participants.

Horizontalizing

The process of horizontalizing is included as part of transcendental reduction, and is achieved when all data are reviewed and treated as equally valuable (Moustakas, 1994). The process continues to include the omission of data that are not relevant to the research focus, leading toward the recognition of repetitious or overlapping data, leaving only the horizons, or invariant constituents of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). An example of horizontalized data is included in Appendix F.

Clustering Horizons

A list of a priori and emerging codes was developed that illustrate convergence of recurring concepts across sites and data sources. Codes were developed based on the theoretical framework, the review of the literature, and an initial reading of all data. Interview transcripts were combined for each participant and uploaded onto ATLAS ti.

This software was utilized in applying codes to data and in viewing data across cases for further analysis. ATLAS.ti is a software program that can be helpful for managing and analyzing diverse forms of case study data (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2014). Code and retrieve functions were utilized to divide text into chunks, attach codes, and to find and display all instances of coded chunks, as described by Miles and Huberman (1994). Following an initial review of all of the data, initial codes were finalized and applied to each piece of the data, while the researcher, with feedback from the peer debriefer, engaged the process of Imaginative Variation to explore all possible meanings and perspectives (Moustakas, 1994). Data that did not fit a specific code were excluded from further analysis. Data that were not identified across multiple participants were excluded from the analysis across participants, but included in individual structural and textural descriptions. Internal homogeneity as well as external heterogeneity analysis methods were employed to evaluate whether data fit into specific categories and was distinct from other categories (Patton, 2003). Initial codes were collapsed to form themes from which essences were extracted. Although ATLAS ti software was used to assist in the management and analysis of data, it was not used to do automatic data analysis. The researcher examined software outputs related to coded families based on the theoretical leadership framework to further interpret emerging themes. Data synthesis yielded essences across sites. Triangulation of the data from multiple data sources was employed to bolster the trustworthiness of results (Creswell, 2014). Both within case analysis and cross-case analysis (Stake, 2006) were employed to develop individual site descriptions as well as to illuminate themes across participants. Table 6 shows an example of how

within case analysis was used to illustrate the emergence of themes across participants.

In this example, the themes of providing direct support and providing resources are illustrated across data sources.

Table 6

An Example of Within Case Analysis

Diane			
	Interviews	Observations	Documents
Theme 1: Structural Frame, Providing Direct Support	“just whatever unique thing was needed, you know, you know, the teachers are sometimes are really busy and so, you know, I am a extra person who is contributing to the flow of the classrooms and meeting the children’s needs.”	Diane was observed working with a child in a classroom, showing the child how to put metal washers into a coffee can	Not addressed
Theme 2: Political Frame, Providing Resources	“what this does tell us is that we should ask a professional who specializes in child development to do an assessment and just let us know if there’s more we could be doing or more supports that could be offered this child to boost this particular area instead of just saying we’ll just wait and see, let’s just ask.”	Not observed	Program Responsibilities: Assist families with the referral process if developmental concerns arise.

Table 7 shows an example of cross-case data analysis. In this example, themes are illustrated by direct quotes from interviews, documents, and observations of two of the participants. For example, when the theme emerged related to providing oversight, this type of analysis highlighted examples from the data across each of the participants that provided several examples of evidence for including this theme in coding.

Table 7

An Example of Cross-case Analysis

	Theme: Supporting Families through the Referral Process	Theme: Setting Expectations for Teacher Practices
Pam	“We continue to talk to the parents and sometimes we have to change the way we talk to the parent, you know, parent—at first if a parent is not receiving what we’re trying to tell them then we have to be creative and think okay, what is another way I can give them the same information but make it more positive almost, you know, it’s like instead of telling a child stop running, tell the child use your walking feet. [<i>Right.</i>] Instead of telling the child get down from there, put your feet on the floor. It’s the same thing, but you’re changing how you’re, how it’s coming across from a negative to a positive, and sometimes that works with parents, you know, they get more involved with what’s going on.”	“Being able to add those notes at the bottom after going through the lesson plan and knowing the limitations of certain children in your classroom, adding those notes at the bottom help everybody, even the teacher that’s filling the lesson plans out because we do them a month in advance, so by the time that activity comes around if you don’t write it down, you’re not gonna remember, oh yeah, this is what we were gonna do for little Robby so he will be included in the activity.”
Diane	“I think that’s probably what I actually do the most of is, you know, and guiding parents. Some parents go through that process very easily, for some parents it’s very difficult and takes a lot of time for them to wrap their mind around, you know, calling in	Excerpt from Family Handbook: The lead teacher is responsible for seeing that everything is ready on time as the team of teachers share the tasks of gathering supplies, writing the lesson plan, implementing activities, and

Table 7

(Cont.)

	Theme: Supporting Families through the Referral Process	Theme: Setting Expectations for Teacher Practices
Diane (cont.)	a specialist for anything for their child, you know, they have different fears like oh, there might be a label or oh no, I don't, you know, they have a bad experience with special ed. or some reason they don't want to go there, just all different kinds of things and so conversations about that, guiding parents and guiding my staff through that is I think a big part of how I, you know, support children with disabilities. A lot of programs are like afraid to tell parents or just don't feel like they have the time to make sure they're looking at every child's development."	recording notes/images for curriculum assessment.
Victoria	We track our children's successes. We have progress reports, we have parent-teacher conferences, we do the progress report three times a year, we do parent-teacher conferences twice a year, so it gives us this opportunity to sit down and talk with parents and address concerns and to let them know what we observe, so at least five times out of the year we're talking to them about this and we're asking them would you like for me to research some more information so you can take the child to get it assessed, and we just continue to do this, and we ask them have you noticed this at home, not saying that anything that we notice is abnormal because again, we can't diagnose, but we let them know it's a concern and we hope that they will take it further.	From Employee Handbook: Teachers must meet with children's service providers to discuss goals, IEPs, communication expectations.

Trustworthiness

It is important to note that the purpose of phenomenological research is to capture the first-hand experiences and perceptions of participants (Moustakas, 1994), and that the purpose of case study research is to be descriptive (Yin, 2014). The purpose of qualitative research is not to produce research that is generalizable (Creswell, 2014). A number of measures were incorporated in the current study to bolster the trustworthiness of this research. My personal views about inclusion and my experiences as a program administrator had the potential to influence my decisions related to what I included as data and how I interpreted it. A detailed description of researcher positionality is provided in Chapter III, including measures taken to monitor bias in data collection and analysis. This process mirrors Glesne's (2011) suggestion to clarify researcher bias. Through the process of bracketing, researcher position was reflected upon intentionally, with the goal of recognizing and suspending researcher bias. As one manifestation of my researcher identity, I designed this study to be a strengths-based description of ECE leadership practice. To address the possibility of my observing or otherwise uncovering findings that challenged my perceptions of the participant as a leader in inclusive ECE, I purposefully included a research question related to challenges. When I observed or collected data that countered my perception of the participants as leaders, those accounts were categorized as challenges. This design feature allowed for unexpected findings while maintaining integrity to a focus on leadership practices. Finally, I provided a comprehensive explanation of my data processing activities to ensure rigor (Tracy, 2010).

I also applied several strategies to ensure that what I am presenting as evidence is credible. First, I was deeply involved in the research process for an extended period of time. According to Maxwell (2005), “repeated observations and interviews, as well as the sustained presence of the researcher in the setting studied, can help rule out spurious associations and premature theories” (p. 110). Multiple interviews and observations were carried out in the data collection phase of this study.

Second, the multitude of interviews and observations provided robust data with enough detail to ensure an accurate representation of the phenomenon under study. My interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. I included direct quotes as data from observations and interviews. I also recorded detailed, descriptive notes of specific events observed (Maxwell, 2005). Adherence to observation, interview, and data analysis protocols was used as a method to minimize the effects of the researcher’s perspective on the data collection and analysis. The observation procedures are described below and followed a protocol, which is provided in Appendix B. The initial interview protocol is provided in Appendix A. While the initial interviews were semi-structured to allow flexibility in response to participant responses, the questions included in the protocol provided structure and ensured that each participant experienced a similar initial interview process.

Follow-up interviews were conducted following initial interviews and observation phases of the study. The purpose of these interviews was to clarify and extend concepts and experiences that emerged from the initial interviews and the observations. Although the content of these interviews was different for each participant

based on what emerged in initial interviews and observations, the questions were generated similarly, based on researcher curiosity and clarity.

As another way to be sure that my interpretations were accurate, I reviewed my understandings with my participant(s) throughout the course of the research. In order to do this, I added probes in follow-up interview questions about what I thought I heard or understood. Member checks of interview data were included as a process to strengthen the validity of research findings. For this process, a summary of the interviews was provided to each of the participants for review. The purpose of the participant review was to provide confirmation that the interview captured their experiences and perspectives accurately. Any misrepresentations or clarifications provided by participants were to be incorporated as data; however, no content changes were identified by participants. Field notes also served as one way to track my understandings, interpretations, questions, and uncertainties. This journaling process organized ideas so that follow-up and clarifying questions were included in follow-up interviews.

Finally, I collected data from multiple sources for each of my research questions. Multiple sources of data were collected in an effort to triangulate the data (Glesne, 2011; Creswell, 2014). According to Creswell (2014), validity is added to research when “themes are established and based on converging several sources of data or perspectives from participants” (p. 201). Multiple data sources add complexity and depth to the research findings (Tracy, 2010). I confirmed my interpretations of the document analyses through interview and observation data. Interview data was explored further through

observations. Observations were revisited and evaluated in interviews. Rich, thick descriptions (Glesne, 2011) were provided in order to detail the research context.

Ethics

Several ethical dilemmas had the potential to emerge as my research progressed. First, because I was dealing specifically with the inclusion of children with disabilities in an ECE program, there was the potential for my exposure to confidential information. Personal information about the employees, families, and children within the program were vulnerable to exposure. To address this issue, any identifying information regarding children, families, or employees was eliminated from data. Pseudonyms are used at all times in observation notes, field notes, and interview transcripts.

Second, as discussed in the validity section, my research design provided a way to frame potentially negative findings in terms of challenges. Unforeseen complications with this process were discussed and resolved with a research mentor (e.g., doctoral committee member) independent of this study.

Ethical dilemmas had the potential to emerge as a result of my status as an administrator of a similar program in the same county as the one from which participants were recruited for this study. I continuously reflected on ethical circumstances that emerged as a result of my relationships and the context (Tracy, 2010). These reflections were kept in field notes, shared with a research mentor external to this study and included in my data analysis and discussion as necessary.

Finally, in order to establish and maintain respect for the participants, I intended to develop reciprocal partnerships (Tracy, 2010). This was accomplished as I shared the

research goals and methods with my participants prior to initiating data collection, as well as sharing outcomes following completion of the research. As a means of compensating participants, I offered to those who complete the interview and observations phases of the study a gift certificate to a local retailer.

Overview of the Dissertation

In the following chapters, the process of data analysis is explained in detail. Descriptions of each of the sites and participants are included toward a comprehensive description of the phenomenon of inclusive ECE leadership practice. Themes and essences are demonstrated through analysis procedures including within case and across case analyses. Chapter IV begins with textural and structural descriptions to exemplify the data analysis process. Bolman and Deal's (2013) leadership framework is incorporated into analyses of each essence representing the phenomenon under study. Chapter V provides a synthesis of findings, including analysis of the leadership theory as applicable to ECE leadership practice, connections between findings and literature, implications for practice, limitations of the study, and future directions for research in the area of inclusive ECE leadership.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore the practices and perceptions of leaders in inclusive ECE programs to gain an understanding of practices that promote the inclusion of children with disabilities. Additional inquiry explored leaders' perceptions of challenges and perceptions of how to overcome challenges related to inclusion. Seven participants were interviewed and observed to gather data, and program documents were examined to provide information regarding the contexts in which participants worked and led. The names of participants and research sites have been changed to ensure confidentiality. In this chapter, results of 13 interviews, 13 observations, and nine documents are presented in the form of descriptions of each individual site and participant. Emerging textural and structural themes are presented for each participant. Analyses were then conducted using the theoretical framework based on the leadership theory of Bolman and Deal (2013) to frame findings across cases. Bolman and Deal's (2013) theory provided a lens through which to view leadership practices in terms of four frames: Structural, Human Resource, Political, and Symbolic. An important consideration in reviewing the results is the distinction between the structural themes and the structural frame. The structural frame refers to one of the lenses applied in the leadership theory, while structural descriptions represent outcomes of phenomenological data analysis. For example, leaders engaged in practices reflective of the structural frame

focus on organizational architecture (Bolman & Deal, 2013), whereas structural themes represent influences and underlying contextual elements that affect participants' experiences.

This chapter provides results of the phenomenological case study research. Following the identification and recruitment of participants and data collection procedures, data analyses ensued utilizing ATLAS ti software to code data. Analyses included the processes of transcendental reduction as described in Chapter III (Moustakas, 1994). A peer debriefer was employed to assist and guide the researcher through this process which included within and cross case analyses to develop emerging themes reflective of the theoretical framework, leading to the identification of essential themes reflective of the experience of inclusive ECE leadership for these participants. This chapter includes results of the telephone questionnaire, individual profiles, including detailed site descriptions, textural and structural descriptions of individual participants, and emerging themes across cases reflective of the theoretical framework.

Results of the Telephone Questionnaire

Following the initial recruitment phone calls to each of the potential sites remaining after elimination of public programs, a total of 20 program administrators were reached. One administrator declined to participate in the telephone questionnaire and nineteen administrators completed the questionnaire. Twenty-two additional programs were contacted, but administrators indicated they were not available to participate in the telephone questionnaire.

A total of three administrators reached declined to participate in the research. Two administrators reported that their programs were closed or were closing and declined to participate. Thirteen programs were never reached despite multiple phone calls. Eleven programs whose directors identified them as part of Head Start or Early Head Start were eliminated as potential participants in order to meet the inclusion criteria for this study. Eight programs whose directors reported did not serve children with disabilities were eliminated as potential participating sites, also to meet inclusion criteria for this study.

Following the telephone questionnaire, a total of 19 programs qualified as sites from which to recruit participants. These were programs that were not HS/EHS and that reported having children with disabilities enrolled.

Table 8

Responses to Questions in the Telephone Questionnaire Provided by Recruited Participants

Program	Percentage/ Natural Proportion	Written policies re: inclusion?	Children with types of disabilities you've been unable to enroll?
Childcare World 1	2.45%	Yes	No
Childcare World 2	3.70%	Yes	No, really haven't had anyone come to us that we couldn't handle
Child Zone	6.67%	Yes	No
Radiance Childcare	5.00%	No	Not yet

Table 8

(Cont.)

Program	Percentage/ Natural Proportion	Written policies re: inclusion?	Children with types of disabilities you've been unable to enroll?
Green Leaf Childcare	3.85%	Yes	Sometimes recommended to leave by therapists
Friendly Child Development	11.76%	Yes	Not that have applied
Evergreen Preschool	10.7%	Yes	1 case

Individual Participant Profiles

Individual participant profiles provide descriptive and demographic data for each of the 8 program administrators included in this study. The demographic data were obtained during initial interviews. Site descriptions are included for each participant to illustrate the contexts in which they worked. Individual and site names are pseudonyms to protect participants' and sites' confidentiality. Observations, documents, and follow-up interviews provided additional information used to create individual profiles and site descriptions. Table 9 shows the documents provided and analyzed. A summary of site descriptions is provided in Appendix G. Table 10 provides an overview of the demographic data of participants and sites.

Table 9

List of Documents by Sites

Site	Documents
Childcare World 1	Website; Parent Handbook; Employee Handbook
Childcare World 1	Website; Parent Handbook; Employee Handbook
Child Zone	None
Radiance Childcare	Parent Handbook
Green Leaf Childcare	Website; Letter to Families; SOP Manual; Parent Handbook
Friendly Child Development	Website
Evergreen Preschool	Website; Family Handbook

Table 10

Summary of Participants' Demographic Data

Participant/ Site	Education	Administration Credential	Experience in Administration	Experience in Teaching	Experience in Inclusive Settings
Pam at Childcare World 1	BA in Early Childhood Education; 3 courses related to disability	NC Level III	Over 5 years in current program	13 years in current corporation	Yes
Gladys at Childcare World 2	AA in Early Childhood Education; 1 course in Exceptionalities	NC Level III	2 ½ years in current program	2 year in current corporation; childcare home program before that	No
Sharon at Child Zone	BA in Social Science; AA in Early Childhood	NC Level III	8 years in current program; 2 years in another program	20 years	Yes

Table 10

(Cont.)

Participant/ Site	Education	Administration Credential	Experience in Administration	Experience in Teaching	Experience in Inclusive Settings
Lisa at Radiance Childcare	BA in History; 2 courses in Special Education	NC Level I	1 ½ years in current program	Some while in college	No
Victoria at Green Leaf Childcare	BA in Accounting; AA in Early Childhood Education; 1 course in Special Education	NC Level III	3 ½ years in current program	Many years as a child care home provider	Yes
Angela at Friendly Child Development	Undergraduate degree in Child Development; BA in Adult Education; multiple courses re: exceptional children	NC Level III	6 years in current program; previously an administrator at 2 other ECE programs	None reported	Yes
Diane at Evergreen Preschool Program	BA in Elementary Education; some courses toward Master's degree in Child Development/ Special Education; 1 course in Exceptional Children; 1 course in Abnormal Psychology	NC Level III	4 years in current program; 2 years in a different program; NC Pre-K administrator for 11 years; administrator for local child development agency; owner, family childcare home	As an owner of a family childcare home; NC Lead Teacher Equivalency teaching license	Yes

Textural and Structural Analyses

Data were analyzed through a variety of methods. First, all documents, field notes, summaries, transcripts, and audio files were read through or listened to (when in audio form) to get a general sense of the data. Atlas ti software was employed to code all interview data. All codes were discussed with a peer debriefer, as well as 20% of the coded data, to enhance the validity of the analyses. Coded data were examined and analyzed further to develop textural and structural profiles for each participant. Textural descriptions provide details regarding participants' experiences as leaders, including their reports of their job roles and responsibilities and practices observed and discussed. Structural descriptions provide contextual elements that underlie their experience as leaders, including program context, education, experience in inclusive ECE, and experience with individuals with disabilities, both personal and professional. Textural and structural descriptions are included as results in this section and were constructed using individual data sets. The individual textural and structural descriptions provided a basis from which subsequent cross-case analyses were conducted to determine emerging themes reflective of the theoretical framework.

Individual Textural Descriptions

In this study, textural descriptions included the experiences that program administrators reported in describing their leadership in inclusive ECE programs. Relevant phrases and observations included those referred to what "leadership" is, or to something that was consistently experienced in leading to promote the inclusion of children with disabilities within ECE programs. Each of the participants described work

roles and responsibilities that created comprehensive descriptions of the experience from their perspectives.

Individual Structural Descriptions

In developing structural descriptions, data were explored for indicators of context. These included the interrelated conditions in which something exists or occurs, including settings or physical or emotional situations. In this research, data related to administrators' past work experiences, in working with individuals with disabilities, and in inclusive programs, influenced their experiences as leaders. Additionally, personal experiences with individuals with disabilities influenced their perceptions as leaders. Finally, contextual details, including features of the programs in which these administrators served as leaders, contributed to their experience of inclusive ECE leadership. What follows are individual profiles, textural descriptions, and structural descriptions for each participant.

Pam at Childcare World 1

At the time of data collection, Pam had worked as the program administrator at Childcare World 1 for five years. She shared administrative duties with two other employees including an assistant director and an assistant in management. She had worked in the field of early childhood education with Childcare World for eighteen years. Pam started her career in the field as a pre-k teacher. She worked with toddlers for some years after that, and then returned to teach pre-k in an NC Pre-K classroom. Pam described her previous teaching experiences as inclusive of children with disabilities. She also reported having past experience as a trainer within her district with Childcare

World. She explained that she had led trainings related to curriculum, room arrangement, and licensing regulations. Pam had a BA in Early Childhood Education. She completed this degree recently and worked full-time while in college. She recalled taking three courses that were in the field of special education. She has a Level III North Carolina Early Childhood Administration Credential.

Childcare World 1 is one of two corporate childcare programs from which participants were recruited for this research. The Childcare World Corporation included over 200 child care programs across the Southeastern United States. This particular program served children ages 6 weeks through 12 years in 9 classrooms, 4 of which were NC Pre-K classes. There was an afterschool program included as well that children from area elementary schools and middle schools attended. The program accepted vouchers from DHHS that provided subsidies for childcare for eligible families. Additionally, the program's breakfasts, lunches, and snacks were partially reimbursed through the USDA Childcare Food Program. The program director reported that the program served approximately 197 students, approximately 5 of whom had either an IEP or an IFSP. She also reported that they served mostly families whose incomes were below the poverty line and some who did not speak English as a first language. The program was open weekdays from 6:30 am until 6:00 pm year-round, with some closings for holidays.

In this program, administration duties were shared among three employees: the director, an assistant director, and an assistant in management. A corporate office oversaw a large portion of the business administration aspects of the program. For example, the corporate office provided program documents including employee

handbooks and program policies. Further oversight was provided by the corporate office for managerial procedures related to budgets, administrative duties in providing feedback to teachers, and daily tasks expected of administrators.

Observations within this program provided information regarding the context within which the participant lead. The program was located in an urban area of a metropolitan city in the Southeastern United States, convenient to the city center. The housing properties near this program could be described as low income. The building was surrounded by fencing on one side and across the back, with a parking lot across the front and down the other side. A reception desk was located in the lobby just inside the front door. A kitchen area was located to the left and the director's office was located on the right just behind the reception desk, which was occupied by the Assistant Director. A long hallway led straight from the lobby area to the classrooms, which were located along both sides of the building.

Although observations the classrooms were somewhat limited due to the focus of the research, those that were observed included child-sized furniture arranged into play centers. Each room observed included displays of children's artwork. Children were observed mostly in organized, teacher-led activities including a group of children listening to a teacher reading story, a group of children seated at tables singing a song led by a teacher, and a group of children seated at tables completing an art project. In some of the classrooms, children were engaged in free choice play activities within the classroom. One group of children and teachers was observed in the outdoor play environment engaged in free play.

In the hallways, there were a number of decorations including bulletin boards that displayed children's art-work. There was also a poster that displayed each teacher's name within the program that recognized them as "Loving Owls." The director explained that each one of the Childcare World programs asserts their individuality by choosing a focus area. This particular program had the focus of "the Arts," and each classroom was named accordingly. For example, there were classrooms called "Dance" and "Photography."

Pam's textural description. Pam had served as the program administrator at Childcare World 1 for more than five years. She demonstrated leadership practices in a variety of ways evidenced in interviews and observations. She described communicating with families to gain an understanding of children's individual goals, supporting teachers by spending time with children and by providing materials, contacting local agencies to observe and assess children for whom teachers had concerns, collaborating with teachers to brainstorm strategies to employ when challenges arise, reviewing lesson plans, suggesting training for teachers, and observing teachers.

In an example of providing support, Pam said, "I have the material list, I go buy, I bring the materials. I love to take pictures. I love to participate, you know, and we can walk into any classroom and every child in there will know who I am." She also demonstrated her role in providing support in observations when she worked with one child in the classroom and in the office. Although the child observed with Pam did not have an identified disability, there were behaviors exhibited that were disruptive,

including running out of the classroom and not participating in a group activity, for which Pam and her teachers perceived there was a need for another caregiver.

Pam explained her role in supporting families through the referral process as well. Prior to making suggestions for families, she reported working with the teacher to collect observations of children for whom teachers had concerns. She said that she attended parent-teacher conferences and carefully made suggestions for families to contact their pediatricians or other agencies to determine whether children needed additional supports. She reported securing parent permission to contact Bringing out the Best, a local non-government organization that provides consultation to caregivers and families.

Moreover, Pam described her role in providing feedback to teachers by reviewing lesson plans and making suggestions for professional development. She explained,

Also, you know, we have the trainings that we offer our teachers, so say there's a teacher that just . . . got a child that just has been diagnosed with Autism. She can go right onto our website and there are many, many trainings that deal specifically with Autism, ways to help the child develop skills, ways to deal with certain behaviors that autistic children have, signs and symptoms, because you know, teachers come to me all the time saying you know, "I'm concerned about this child because, you know, when I call his name he doesn't listen or when he's looking at the board he's squinting his eyes or he just doesn't seem to be doing one plus one equals two." So and then we get the right help or go through the right procedures to have somebody come in to maybe observe that child and see if they think there may be, we may need to move forward with some other therapies or whatever.

The examples given here provide the textural description of how Pam experiences inclusive leadership in her ECE program. Pam's structural description in the next section will provide evidence of the contexts through which her experiences were formed.

Pam's structural description. Pam's experience as a leader in an inclusive program was influenced by the context in which she worked, her previous experience and education related to children with disabilities, and her previous personal experiences with individuals with disabilities.

At the time of data collection, Pam had worked as the program administrator at Childcare World 1 for five years. She had worked in the field of early childhood education with Childcare World for eighteen years. Pam started her career in the field as a pre-k teacher. She worked with toddlers for some years after that, and then returned to teach pre-k in an NC Pre-K classroom. Pam described her previous teaching experiences as inclusive of children with disabilities. She also reported having past experience as a trainer within her district with Childcare World. She explained that she had led trainings related to curriculum, room arrangement, and licensing regulations. Pam had a BA in Early Childhood Education. She completed this degree recently and worked full-time while in college. She recalled taking three courses that were in the field of special education. She had a Level III North Carolina Early Childhood Administration Credential.

In terms of program context, a corporate office oversaw a large portion of the business administration aspects of the program. For example, the corporate office provided program documents including employee handbooks and program policies. Further oversight was provided by the corporate office for managerial procedures related to budgets, administrative duties in providing feedback to teachers, and daily tasks

expected of administrators. Pam shared administrative duties with two other employees including an assistant director and an assistant in management.

Pam reported having personal experience with individuals with disabilities.

These experiences have largely influenced her experience as a leader in an inclusive ECE program. For example, Pam shared that she has a cousin who had Cystic Fibrosis. She disclosed,

I have a cousin who has Cystic Fibrosis. He is in a home now. He's never been able to live on his own. He's never walked. He's in a wheelchair . . . but he has the most positive, happy attitude. Every time we go see him . . . it's like he wants to jump out of the chair. He's just happy. He's energetic. For everything that he has going on in his life, he, his mind is just so positive. I mean, he doesn't worry about what he can't do or anything. Now, when he was little when we were growing up because we all played with him, even though he was in the wheelchair or whatever, he played right with us, everything that he did. He was mean and would cuss . . . even then he was happy, but he would cuss happy, but now that he's . . . older now, he still has that fun attitude and he's never lost it. And that's, that's one of the things that I've noticed about special needs children.

Pam applied her experience with her cousin to her understanding of children with disabilities in her program by recognizing the similarities in disposition. She also referenced her experiences with another cousin with a disability in the following example:

When I grew up I had a cousin that actually lived in [another city], which was a couple of hours away, so we only went to see him a couple of times a year. I'm not sure what it was he had but he didn't walk. He drug hisself with his arms and he would point and he didn't speak, he would go, "Agh, agh, agh," and as a child, that scared me to death. And it hurt me really, because anybody that was different than me, that memory would always flash in my head.

In addition to these personal experiences, Pam reported that one of her grandchildren had an IFSP. She did not initially report this personal connection, but made reference to the fact that her granddaughter's therapist served a child at Childcare World 1. It is unclear whether Pam identifies her granddaughter as having a disability, as questions regarding this subject were phrased in terms of receiving services. She elucidated,

She lost her hearing before she was a year old, but my daughter didn't realize that until some time had passed, and they—she went for a long time, she didn't talk. I mean she's going to be three years old in September and she is just now saying two-word phrases, like "in house," "out house," "love maw-maw." I mean, you know, that's where she is right now. She went and got tubes and it corrected her hearing. So she can hear now and that's why she's receiving the therapy, because you know, from what, age one to two, there's a part in there where the brain learns how to interpret information. She hears the information but she doesn't know how to make the connections yet in her brain.

Pam referenced her previous experience as a teacher in working with children who had special needs. Although the child reportedly did not have an identified disability, this experience also contributed to her perception of her experience as an inclusive ECE leader. She said,

When I was an NC pre-K teacher I had a child who never got diagnosed, but just from the experience . . . He was very, very smart. He was four years old. He could read on a sixth-grade reading level. I could give him the encyclopedia and he would read it. He did math, he did multiplication, he did division, addition, and subtraction in the mulch while everybody else was playing. He would take handfuls of mulch and go to the picnic table and he would put math problems . . . I mean he was that smart. Socially and emotionally, he kept to himself. Nobody really wanted to play with him. He didn't listen to his parents that much, but me and him connected and that's one of the things that's important with children with special needs. If you make a connection with them they'll love you forever, and you'll love them forever . . . He was just as smart as a whip, but socially and emotionally, he just never had any friends. And we actually had Bringing Out the Best come out and work with us a little bit to help him to promote some of his

social skills a little bit. We did it a little bit, but he was so smart that I don't know, I think he was just—thought he was wasting his time to play with anybody else because he was like, “I can already do all that stuff and y'all are just babies,” type thing . . . children with special needs, every year in some aspect we have some children, whether it's a behavioral issue, a physical issue, we see it all the time.

In Pam's case, her previous experiences with individuals with disabilities informed her experience as a leader in an inclusive ECE program, as did specific contextual features of Childcare World 1. Her education and experience in working in early childhood education for so many years shaped her experience as a leader as well.

Gladys at Childcare World 2

At the time of data collection, Gladys had been a program administrator at Childcare World 2 for two and a half years. She shared administrative duties with one other employee, a co-director. She had worked in the field of early childhood education for several years, two of which were in the Childcare World Corporation as a teacher working with two-year-olds. She also ran a home childcare with her sister prior to working for Childcare World. She reported having worked, prior to her current position as administrator, with children who were not formally diagnosed with disabilities, but who had individualized behavior plans. Gladys also referenced past experiences in managerial positions, serving as a receptionist and as a secretary. She had an AA in Early Childhood Education and recalled taking one introductory course in special education. She has a Level III North Carolina Early Childhood Administration Credential.

Childcare World 2 is one of two corporate childcare programs from which participants were recruited for this research. Childcare World Corporation included over 200 childcare programs across the Southeastern United States. This particular program served children ages 6 weeks through 12 years in several classrooms divided by age. The program offered afterschool care and summer camps for school-aged children. The program accepted vouchers from DHHS which provided subsidies for childcare for eligible families. Additionally, the program's breakfasts, lunches, and snacks were partially reimbursed through the USDA Childcare Food Program. Gladys reported that the program served approximately 108 children, approximately 4 of whom had either an IEP or an IFSP. She also reported that some of the families did not speak English. The program was open weekdays from 6:30 am until 6:00 pm, year-round, with some closings for holidays.

In this program, administrative duties were shared between two employees who serve as co-directors. A corporate office oversaw a large portion of the business administration aspects of the program. For example, the corporate office provided program documents including employee handbooks and program policies. Further oversight was provided by the corporate office for managerial procedures related to budgets, administrative duties in providing feedback to teachers, and daily tasks expected of administrators.

Observations within this program provided information regarding the context within which the participant provided program leadership. The program was located within a metropolitan city in the Southeastern United States in a suburban area on a busy

street near several business and retail stores. The building was located on a corner that led from a busy road to a residential area surrounded by low and middle income neighborhoods. There was a small parking lot in front of the building, and the exterior of the building was surrounded by chain-link fencing. Enclosed within the back fenced areas were large commercial play structures. Other fenced sections outside included a basketball court and a garden area. On the side of the building that faces the residential street was a narrow grassy area and a small concrete walkway onto which the classroom doors opened. Inside, there was a small entryway that opened into a larger front room that included one of the director's desks. There was a small table with chairs in this area as well as a copy machine. Behind this work space was an office area in which the other administrator worked. A doorway led from the front area to a long hallway off of which the classrooms were located.

Although observations in the classrooms were somewhat limited due to the focus of the research on the program administrator, there were some duties that were carried out in and around classrooms. For example, the program administrator provided oversight by counting a group of children prior to their exiting for outdoors. Another time she stepped into a classroom to give a teacher a bathroom break. She also visited one group of children outside to deliver a "Teacher of the Month" certificate to the recipient. Through these brief observations, the researcher was able to see classrooms including child-sized furniture arranged into play centers. Children were observed in a variety of activities including group activities on a large carpeted area, free play outside,

watching a video on a computer screen, and working on a Mother's Day art activity at tables.

As in the other Childcare World program visited as part of this research, the hallways were decorated with children's artwork. The director explained that this particular program has "Technology" as its focus. As such, she explained, the teachers use I-Pads to track data such as foods eaten and diaper changes in the infant room, and send frequent reports to families. The program has a "technology" lab in one room where, she explained, the older children come in the afternoons to work on computer games.

Gladys's textural description. Evidence of Gladys's leadership in her inclusive program revealed her roles in supporting teachers to make accommodations and to seek professional development; making staffing decisions, making program accommodations; communicating with families to understand children's needs; facilitating communication among staff, families, and related services providers; and communicating to families when children display challenging behaviors.

Gladys reported providing direct support for children in her role as inclusive leader. For example, she explained,

I love on them when they come in, I acknowledge them, I step into the classrooms and I'm always in the classrooms, but I step into the classroom to acknowledge when he's having a great day, not just when, you know, it's—he's off a little and they have to bring him to me, but when his day is steady I'll still, you know, hey you're doing awesome today, you got this many stickers, so I, I'll step in so that he knows it's not just my teacher, it's not just my bus driver, but we're a school family, so I step in and do that as well.

Gladys also shared with regards to her role in providing direct support, “I’ll do a lot of my paperwork after six o’clock and I’ll stay here ‘til eight. I’ll come in early . . . so that I have the time to go in the classrooms because it’s important that they see me. It’s important that the teachers see me as well.”

In providing professional development for staff, Gladys said, “based on the need, if we know, if we see that, you know, a teacher is lacking in a certain area we may specifically assign that to them.” She also shared, “They’ll come to us and say, ‘Hey, I don’t know how to deal with this. I don’t know what to do. What do we do?’ so then we’ll say take this workshop . . . if they need help they’ll reach out to us. If we see they need help, we’ll give it to them.”

Gladys also talked about working with her co-director to facilitate teachers’ accommodations for children with disabilities. She stated,

They usually know what they want when they come and ask me, is it okay to do a certain thing. So they’ll come and ask. If they don’t know, then we’ll brainstorm together and [my co-director’s] got 20-something years of experience, so she’s pretty good at saying, “This is okay, this is not. We can’t do this. Let’s ask the state. Let’s call somebody.”

She reported making staffing decisions based on the needs of children as well. She stated, “If we notice that . . . we have a child with disabilities and we notice that he’s having more interaction with just his normal teacher who knows how to deal with him, we may say ‘Okay, we’re gonna put you in this classroom for the summertime.’”

In her role as leader, Gladys also discussed practicing flexibility in applying the rules to children with disabilities. For example, she explained that there are program

rules that typically prevent program personnel from administering medication. However, Gladys reported that she would be willing to make an exception to this rule if a child needed medication. In addition, she described planning specifically for children with disabilities when field trips are planned. She explained that she made sure that families were aware and available on those days and that there were adequate staff available to support children with disabilities on field trips.

Gladys reported that she and her staff communicated with families to understand children's unique needs. She described that when a child displays skills or behaviors for which teachers have concerns, Gladys contacts the family to ask them questions and to make suggestions for making progress. For example, Gladys was observed talking with a teacher about a child whom was not feeding herself. Gladys assured the teacher that she would contact the family and ask whether they had given her opportunities to feed herself at home. She explained,

We want to show them, you know, when you get to school or when you get to a certain age you need to know how to do this and we're helping to develop those skills, so we need you on board . . . we make sure that when we talk to the parents you have to let them know, you don't want to make it—make them think it's their idea, but you do want to make them understand that it's a necessary procedure that we both have to do and I can't do it without you.

In working to facilitate communication among staff, families, and related services providers, Gladys reported providing notebooks in children's cubbies in which therapists leave notes for teachers and families to ask questions, communicate progress, and share ideas.

Gladys documented communicating with families within her program when concerns arise about children displaying challenging behavior. She stated,

Now other parents have said because of course their friends go home and say you tore up the room, he turned a shelf over, so of course they're thinking about their safety, so parents have come and say, what's the situation with this, and we let them know you know, we've talked to the mom, we call his dad in this instance, we take him out of the room just so he can calm himself and get his body right, so there's different things, and we will let know, we have strategies that we use. So there have been a couple of questions . . . just saying what you gonna do before anything happens, because there are moments where he has turned over shelves and knocked everything down and you know, is kicking everything on the way down the hallway and tearing up offices and doing all kind of things.

Thus, Gladys views her role as a leader as one who facilitates communication, provides resources, and provides support.

Gladys's structural description. At the time of data collection, Gladys had been a program administrator at Childcare World 2 for two and a half years. She shared administrative duties with one other employee, a co-director. She had worked in the field of early childhood education for several years, two of which were in the Childcare World Corporation as a teacher working with two-year-olds. She also ran a home childcare with her sister prior to working for Childcare World. She reported having worked, prior to her current position as administrator, with children who were not formally diagnosed with disabilities, but who had individualized behavior plans. Gladys also referenced past experiences in managerial positions, serving as a receptionist and as a secretary. She had an AA in Early Childhood Education and recalled taking one introductory course in special education. She had a Level III North Carolina Early Childhood Administration Credential.

In this program, a corporate office oversaw a large portion of the business administration aspects of the program. For example, the corporate office provided program documents including employee handbooks and program policies. Further oversight was provided by the corporate office for managerial procedures related to budgets, administrative duties in providing feedback to teachers, and daily tasks expected of administrators.

Gladys's experience of leading in her inclusive program stemmed largely from her understanding of families. For example, she said,

It is, and I'm going to cry about it, only because it means a lot. You have to care for these children, you know. It's hard for the parents, I mean she's at a point where I'm sure she doesn't know what to do, and she's looking for help. But if you're in denial then you can't really ask for help because what are you asking for help for if you don't need it. So it's hard for her. So we try to do all that we can, you know, and let her know that we understand. Sometimes she'll walk out or she'll be shaking her head and we'll go, "It's alright, tomorrow's another day." So just the nature of the business in this position. I have 110 kids. I don't just have 18. I don't have my grandkids, I—these are my kids.

Gladys demonstrated that she understood denial as a part of the grief process. She showed her belief that families needed understanding and support. She also viewed the children at her program as family.

In another example, Gladys demonstrates her perseverance in her approach to her work. She had had a particularly difficult morning at the time of this interview because a staff member had met with her to air some grievances and had resigned. She stated,

It hurts when people think that you don't care about them . . . and so what happened with my teacher this morning, you know, "You just used me." Never, ever would I use somebody. We didn't let you go. We kept you. We gave you a

chance . . . So it hurt my feelings this morning, but I'm good, I'm good, I know that I do good, so I don't worry about that, but it's a hard job. It's a lot to do. And sometimes I go home really late at night after 12 hours and say "Thank you Lord, for getting me through that day." Because it's hard. And I come back the next day and do it all over again, with a smile on my face. . . . I come in and I'm like, "You're not going to steal my joy, we're going to do this, it's going to be great," get them fired up, let's go, let's go, let's go! And they're like, "Oh, God, here she go again," but I want to give that positive energy off to them, to the children, and I have to do it for my staff. So it's very difficult. It weighs heavy on you because you carry all of that. And you carry all of that stuff that you have from your parents, all their struggles. You carry the struggles with the children, even the ones, especially the ones with the special needs and the exceptionalities, because what can you do? How can you help them? Why did it happen to them? How can these parents deal?

Gladys reported that she did not have personal experience with disability.

However, it was observed that her grandchildren attended the program in which she led.

At one point, there was reference to the fact that her grandson was receiving speech therapy services. Due to the sensitivity of the subject, the researcher did not press the issue with follow up questions. Furthermore, her lack of acknowledgement of this as a personal connection, spoke to her view of disability. As in the case of Pam, there was not a connection for Gladys between receiving speech therapy services and disability in her view.

When asked to what she attributed her passion for her job, Gladys cited her mother. She stated,

My mom, she always said, "You're always going to be rewarded. You just always do good. Always do your best and you will be rewarded." . . . I see I'm blessed in so many ways. In so many ways, in abundance! And I don't, you know, I was like, "What did I do to deserve this?" But I know I'm a good person and I know that these people see things in me which is why they put me in this position. . . . I love what I do. I know my mom told me, "You have to take care of people." Even though some people don't really care one way or the other, but

you can't let that stop the way you feel. If we did the world would be such a horrible place.

Gladys's experience as a leader in an inclusive ECE program was influenced by contextual features of the program as part of a corporation, and her experiences as a leader related to the structures in place that allowed her role to be shared with a co-director. Furthermore, Gladys's previous experiences in ECE colored her perspective of leadership practices. Equally as important, Gladys's deep understanding of families and view of the children in her program as her own contributed to her experience as a leader. Moreover, Gladys shared the influence of her mother on her view of her work as worthy and righteous.

Sharon at Child Zone

Child Zone program is one of two programs owned and operated by the program administrator, Sharon, who opened the program approximately eight years ago. Sharon reported sharing administration duties with one of her daughters who served as the Assistant Director. She has a BA in Social Science with a minor in sociology, and an AA in Early Childhood Education. She reported that she took a few courses in special education, but did not recall the details of those courses. Sharon had thirty years of experience in early childhood education. She worked in two previous childcare settings, one in which she served as the administrator for two years prior to opening Child Zone. She reported working in another program for twenty years prior to that, which served children with disabilities as well as children who were typically developing. Sharon had a Level III North Carolina Early Childhood Administration Credential.

Child Zone is a for-profit licensed childcare center located in an urban area. At the time of data collection, the program was operating as an afterschool program for children ages 5 through 12 years from 2:45pm until 5:30pm. The program administrator explained that summer hours were extended to provide care for children from 7:00 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. Additionally, the program was open for children during school teacher work days and other planned school breaks like Spring Break. The program accepted vouchers from the Department of Health and Human Services that provided subsidies for childcare for eligible families. Additionally, expenses for meals and snacks provided to children by the program were reimbursed through a nationally funded Childcare Food Program. The program was funded by these programs as well as by some parents who paid tuition. There was no board of directors. The program administrator reported that Child Zone served approximately 30 children, 2 of whom had an IEP. The program was open weekdays year-round, and was closed for some holidays throughout the year.

Child Zone was located just off of a busy street in a low income area of a metropolitan city in the Southeastern United States. The brick building was positioned just behind a parking lot surrounded by a chain-link fence. A number of other businesses were located in the area. There was a patch of grass and concrete out back as well as a covered picnic area. A front lobby area was located just inside the front door. There were two chairs in this area, a low book shelf with pamphlets on top, and some plastic plants. There was a large white board propped up against one wall with messages written on it. A number of items were posted on a bulletin board in this area as well, including the program's most recent sanitation report and the center's 5-star license. Beyond this

area, there were two doorways, one leading to an office area, and one opening into a large space where children were observed playing and working.

Although observations of the children in the classroom were somewhat limited due to the focus of the current research, it was observed that the room was a large open space divided into different areas. Several tables were set up in one area, at which children were observed completing homework and eating snacks. One area included hooks and spaces for children to place their belongings. Some areas of the space were set up with toys, but children were not observed interacting in those areas. Children were observed playing outside in the back of the program with hula hoops and balls, as well as playing organized games.

Sharon's textural description. Sharon experiences leadership in her inclusive program in terms of supporting infrastructure, enrolling children with disabilities, taking children with disabilities on field trips, providing direct support, and securing professional development training for her employees. Sharon said,

We . . . accept all of them, you know, anybody. We don't turn none of them down, and we haven't had any real, you know, bad cases, you know, so mainly it's pretty much kind of mild cases, but we always include them and if we go on trips we include them in whatever we do here.

In an example of her role in supporting infrastructure, Sharon was observed providing transportation for children enrolled at Child Zone. She explained that she takes children to and from school, and also drives children from school to her afterschool program at Child Zone. Additionally, Sharon reported and was observed organizing and

collecting information for paperwork related to childcare subsidies and childcare food program attendance.

In terms of providing direct support, Sharon reported working with a child who had Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder when he got upset. She said,

Every now and then when he, you know, can't get his way he act out sometimes . . . we try to take him to the side or either I take him out and try to talk to him and calm him down and everything, but once you sit down and listen to him, most of the time it's something that upsets him, so if I can get him calmed down, then he'll listen. Or he'll be in a rage and then I can, you know, kind of talk to him and you know, say "Tell me about it," you know, "What happened?" You know, kind of calm him down, because he be up high, and then once I get to talking to him and then he'll finally calm down some.

In another example, Sharon shared that she provides support by "paying special attention and carrying them and . . . give them you know, good pats on the backs and you know and stuff when they do good, a good job and stuff like that."

Sharon also reported holding staff meetings and sharing changes in childcare laws at those meetings. Finally, Sharon reported connecting her staff members to professional development. She explained,

Different trainings, they have to go to SIDS training, I have some that go to behavior management training, and the brain development training, and when we get ready for the assessment, the ITERS and ECERS trainings . . . It's required that they get ten hours a year, but most of them go above and beyond . . . challenging behavior, yeah, they go to ones like that. The conscious discipline workshop . . . they learn a whole lot of stuff in those classes.

Sharon's structural description. Sharon's experience in leading in an inclusive ECE program was influenced by the context in which she led, her experience in ECE, her

education, and her personal experience with disability. These contextual elements of Sharon contributed to her perception of serving children with disabilities as requiring nothing different than what she would do or provide for any child.

In describing her background, Sharon reported that Child Zone program was one of two programs that she owned and operated. She opened the program approximately eight years ago. Sharon reported sharing administration duties with one of her daughters who served as the Assistant Director. She had a BA in Social Science with a minor and sociology, and an AA in Early Childhood Education. She reported that she took a few courses in special education, but did not recall the details of those courses.

Sharon also reported that she had thirty years of experience in ECE. She worked in two previous childcare settings, one in which she served as the administrator for two years prior to opening Child Zone. She reported working in another program for twenty years prior to that, which served children with disabilities as well as children who were typically developing. Sharon has a Level III North Carolina Early Childhood Administration Credential.

Child Zone was a for-profit licensed child care center that, at the time of data collection, was operating as an afterschool program. Sharon explained that summer hours were extended to provide care for children who were out of school. The program was funded by childcare subsidies, the childcare food subsidy, as well as by some parents who paid tuition.

In describing her personal experience with disability, Sharon stated,

I have an aunt, she's blind. But you know, she like to be very independent. She don't want nobody to help her. So you know, it was . . . kind of exciting to see her try to do things on her own. She didn't want people to do much. Like, you know, she wanting to get the door and do stuff for herself.

Sharon continued to connect this personal experience to her experience in leading at Child Zone when she went on to say,

But then in daycare, I had this little child that was in a wheelchair. But you know, pretty much about the same thing, wanted to do things on her own, didn't want people to feel sorry for them and do it. So I had this one incident when this little girl, I was getting ready to open the door for her, she said "No, don't open the door," she said, "because I—you probably won't be here tomorrow to open the door for me." So they like to do things, you know, pretty much and live a normal life like everybody else.

Sharon further shared previous experiences in working with children with disabilities when she stated,

I had two with disabilities. One, she had . . . Sturge-Weber thing and have seizures . . . It's a syndrome . . . she also had a stroke at birth so she, you know, would walk like with a limp . . . she you know, fit in like everybody else, you know, wasn't we had to do anything special . . . for her. So she blended in and then I had another child, I think he had cerebral palsy, but we didn't have to do anything special for him.

Sharon's experience as a leader is informed by her view that she did not have to do anything differently for the children she had served in the past who had disabilities. When asked to expand on whether she had to think or plan specifically for the children with disabilities, she stated,

They blend in and it's the little girl, the last one, you know, she you know, didn't have a wheelchair or anything like that so wasn't no special provision because she would get in, put the seatbelt on just like everybody else, and you know, would always watch, well I always do the head count off and on and stuff anyway. But we really didn't have to watch her, you know what I'm saying, like put extra eyes on her. But she kept up with the group, she was able to keep up with the group and everything.

Sharon attributed her philosophy in working with children to her grandmother.

She explained,

She was midwife, and you know, she's . . . always had a great love and stuff for children and all of them and she had a special way with them, and I guess me growing up, you know, in her home, you know, developed some of her habits.

Sharon again shared that she had not had experiences that required her to make accommodations for children with disabilities. She said, "We just like to make them feel like they belong, because some, I guess children are—you know, may feel like they not accepted because of their disability. But I mean, you know, like I said, we always include them in so we don't have a problem with anything like that."

Lisa at Radiance Childcare

At the time of data collection, Lisa had served as Radiance Childcare Center's program administrator for approximately two years. She shared administration duties with several other supervisors and the program owner whom she referred to as the "administration team" at Radiance. She reported having no previous experience in program administration. She had a BA in History but started her undergraduate degree in elementary education. She reported taking two introductory courses in special education as part of her undergraduate studies. Lisa reported having worked in a childcare center

while she was in college. She went on to pursue her administration credential following her undergraduate degree completion. She reported no previous experience in inclusive settings, and no personal experience with disability. Lisa has a Level I North Carolina Early Childhood Administration Credential.

Radiance Childcare Center is a non-profit organization that was funded by tuition. Additionally, the program accepted vouchers from the Department of Health and Human Services that provided subsidies for childcare for eligible families. Additionally, expenses for meals and snacks provided to children by the program were reimbursed through a nationally funded Childcare Food Program. The program served children zero through twelve years of age in classes divided by age and in some cases depending on independence in toileting. A combined class of four- and five-year-olds was available, as well as afterschool and summer camp for school-aged children. Lisa reported that the program served approximately 100 children, 5 of whom had either an IEP or an IFSP. Radiance Childcare Center was open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, with some closings for professional development throughout the year.

In this program, administrative duties were shared among several members of an “administrative team,” including Lisa, various shift supervisors, and the owner. Lisa explained that she was there during the day and described herself as the “daytime Monday through Friday director.” She explained that the other administration staff did share responsibility for knowing about the goals written on children’s IEPs and that one of them was responsible for food and supplies. Lisa is the administrator who conducts intake meetings with new families, among other things.

Radiance Childcare Center was located behind a church, a short distance from a busy road in a commercial and residential area of a metropolitan city in the Southeastern United States. The program was accessed from a long driveway leading from a residential street in a low-income neighborhood, just across from a public school. The building was surrounded by chain-link fencing. A gate led up a walkway to the door of the building. The door was locked at all times and required a staff member from the inside to open upon ringing a doorbell. The entrance led into a long, wide hallway. A couch was located just inside the door and a table filled with clipboards was located just beyond the couch. The clipboards held sign-in sheets for parents to register their arrival and departure. There was a vase of flowers located on the table. Several items were posted on the walls in this area, including the program's most recent sanitation report, the center license, school pictures, and teacher credentials. Children's artwork decorated the walls leading down the hall, including a bulletin board display of "African American Achievers." A bulletin board close to the entryway displayed the program menu, a summary of childcare laws, and the emergency medical plan. Observations at Radiance were limited by the focus of the current research, but revealed some details regarding the context within which Lisa worked. For example, there were high school students present during one observation, which Lisa later explained were students with disabilities on the occupational course of study from local schools. Radiance partners with the local high school to hosts these students to gain work experience. Brief classroom observations revealed classrooms with child-sized furniture arranged into centers for play and exploration. Children were observed eating breakfast seated at tables, being escorted to a

hallway bathroom by a teacher, being moved from one classroom to another classroom by the director, being comforted in the office with the director, engaged in free play and listening to music in the classroom, and engaged in free play outdoors.

Lisa's textural description. Lisa experienced leadership in her inclusive program as providing opportunities for related services providers to serve children in her program, facilitating communication between service providers and teachers, reviewing lesson plans, providing direct support, and connecting children and families to external resources.

In terms of providing opportunities for related services providers to work with children in her program, Lisa said, "Depending on what it is that they need, some of them come in already having therapists that are already working with them, and we let them come here to work with them. The one little boy that I have with Down's Syndrome, he has three different people that come in and work with him throughout the week."

She also described her role in facilitating communication between the therapists, teachers, and families. She expressed her expectation that teachers communicate with therapists as well. She stated,

My teachers work closely with the therapists because they're the ones that are in the classroom on a daily basis working with the children, so they build that relationship with the therapists along with myself talking to the therapists and to the parents about, you know, their needs and what it is that we should be working on here as well as things that they should be doing at home.

Lisa described her role in ensuring that strategies shared by service providers are put into place in the classrooms as well. One way that Lisa provided oversight was through

reviewing lesson plans and ensuring that teachers are planning differentiated instruction or activities for children with disabilities.

In providing direct support, Lisa explained that she stepped into the classrooms to support children and teachers. For example, Lisa was observed taking a child out of one of the classrooms and into the office to comfort her when she was crying. She reported giving her staff tips on how to soothe children as well.

Finally, Lisa described connecting families to external resources for children for whom program staff had concerns. She described the process of teachers collecting observations and then making contacts with external agencies. She said,

Once they are evaluated and they come to me with their documentation and their observations then from there we seek out, we have one company in particular . . . that comes in and helps the children with the speech. Now I do have some parents who come in, because I've had two in the last couple of months that have come in that already have therapists that they were working with at another school, that they just switched schools, so the therapists will come over and work with them. And then I've had Bringing Out the Best . . . I've had them come out several times whenever I have children with behavioral issues, to work with them.

Overall, Lisa views her experience as an inclusive leader in terms of her roles within her program. She described providing direct support, facilitating communication, connecting families and children to external resources, and by providing oversight to her staff.

Lisa's structural description. At the time of data collection, Lisa had served as Radiance Childcare Center's program administrator for approximately two years. She shared administration duties with several other supervisors and the program owner whom she referred to as the "administration team" at Radiance. She reported having no previous experience in program administration. She has a BA in History but started her

undergraduate degree in elementary education. She mentioned taking two introductory courses in special education as part of her undergraduate studies. Lisa reported having worked in a childcare center while she was in college. She went on to pursue her administration credential following her undergraduate degree completion. She reported no previous experience in inclusive settings, and no personal experience with disability. Lisa has a Level I North Carolina Early Childhood Administration Credential.

In terms of the influence of context, Lisa reported that Radiance Childcare Center was a non-profit organization funded by tuition. Additionally, the program accepted subsidy vouchers and the cost of foods were reimbursed through a federal program as well. Radiance Childcare Center was open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Lisa explained that she was there during the day and described herself as the “daytime Monday through Friday director.” She explained that the other administration staff shared responsibility for knowing about the goals written on children’s IEPs and that one of them was responsible for food and supplies.

Lisa also shared a view that children with disabilities did not necessarily require thinking or planning for intentionally as a separate group. For example, she said, “When I think about things that I’m planning, events that I’m having, I don’t specifically think . . . towards children with disabilities. I just try to make sure that it’s going to be something that everybody’s going to enjoy.”

She attributed at least some of her experience leading to her view of disability as not salient in early childhood in the following quote:

Getting other children to understand when they have children in their class, especially older . . . like when they're young, one, two . . . they don't really care. You're just another friend in the classroom that they can play with. But once you get older and children start to notice more . . . that somebody else is different from them then having them to understand and know how to interact with that person that's in their classroom can sometimes be a challenge depending on the child.

Overall, Lisa's experience as a leader in an inclusive ECE program was informed by the context in which she worked, including shared administrative duties. Her experience was also influenced by her view that children with disabilities did not need consideration above and beyond those she would make for the program as a whole, especially when children are young.

Victoria at Green Leaf Childcare

Victoria had served as the program administrator at Green Leaf Childcare for three and a half years at the time of data collection. She shared administrative duties with two additional employees, a Program Coordinator and a Human Resources Manager. She had a BA in Accounting and an AA in Early Childhood Education. She reported taking one course in special education. She also reported having many years of experience as a home childcare provider prior to starting Green Leaf Childcare center with the support of one of her colleagues with whom she now shares administration duties at Green Leaf. She reported having experience in a self-contained classroom setting during her student teaching, but no experience in inclusive settings prior to her experiences at Green Leaf. She reported no personal experience with disability. Victoria has a Level III North Carolina Early Childhood Administration Credential.

Green Leaf Childcare Program was in a state of transition as data collection occurred. The program, which qualified for this study as a 5-star program at the time of the telephone questionnaire, had undergone an Annual Compliance with Rated License Assessment visit in the time between the administration of the telephone questionnaire and subsequent data collection. In North Carolina, the Rated License Assessment visits are conducted every three years through the NCDCDEE, and are optional for programs wanting to attain a quality star rating (NCDCDEE, 2015). As a result of the program's Rated License Assessment, the program was reissued a 4-star quality rating. In a document obtained from Victoria, a letter to families of children enrolled at Green Leaf, she noted the following limitations that were evident from the Rated License Assessment: Supervision concerns due to classroom shape; limited space for gross motor play during inclement weather; limited classroom space for providing required distance between sleep mats; limited wall space to display children's artwork; and supervision concerns due to location of bathrooms outside of the classroom. For these reasons, Green Leaf Childcare moved to a new location on a weekend between data collection visits.

Despite the transition, there were no anticipated changes to Green Leaf's program other than its location. The program was located in a residential area in a metropolitan city in the Southeastern United States. Green Leaf served children ages 13 months to 5 years of age. It was a for-profit company funded by private parent fees. The program accepted vouchers from the Department of Health and Human Services that provided subsidies for childcare for eligible families. Additionally, expenses for meals and snacks provided to children by the program were reimbursed through a nationally funded

Childcare Food Program. The program was also funded by a local non-profit agency, which provides partial scholarships for qualifying children. Green Leaf's operating hours were from 7:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, with some closings throughout the year for holidays and professional development.

Although limited by the change in location and by the scope of this research, a description of the site provided details about the context in which Victoria led. Green Leaf's classrooms were located in one wing of a church and although not affiliated with the church, Green Leaf shared parking space, playgrounds, classroom, and office spaces with the church. The program was located in a middle-income neighborhood surrounded by residential neighborhoods. A large parking area led to a covered driveway in front of the program entrance. Just inside was a reception desk that Victoria planned to occupy as her work space. Beyond this space, hallways expanded in both directions, and another hallway continued toward the back of the building. Green Leaf's classrooms were on the right side of the wing. The Human Resources Administrator explained that the other wing of the hallway was occupied by an afterschool program operated by the church. On a brief tour, it was observed that there were four classrooms. Each room contained child-sized furniture, mostly made of wood, and was set up into centers. The classrooms included rugs to separate areas and were decorated with wall decals in some areas that added a warm ambiance to the spaces. The rooms were large and had lots of windows to let in natural light. The Human Resource Administrator also pointed out an art room near the classrooms that contained a large number of bins, presumably full of art materials. She explained that the space was shared between Green Leaf and the church's afterschool

program. There were high tables in this room with benches on which children could stand to participate in art activities. Children were observed very briefly in classrooms, but they appeared to be engaged in free play activities in each classroom. In the previous location, children were observed engaged in singing songs with a Spanish teacher, engaged in free play in the classroom, and participating in a fire drill.

Victoria's textural description. Victoria had served as the program director at Green Leaf for approximately three and a half years at the time of data collection. For her, the experience of leading in an inclusive ECE program included ensuring communication between families and service providers through policy and oversight, providing space for related services providers to serve children, setting expectations for teachers to provide accommodations and providing oversight to ensure that they are implemented, making staffing decisions based on children's needs and teacher education, and providing information and professional development for teachers.

In describing program accommodations she noted her role in being responsible for collaborating with her administration team to determine what is needed and whether the program can obtain materials or adapted equipment. She also spoke about a child enrolled who has a hearing impairment and the specific accommodations that were made by teachers in his class.

She stated,

We are a print-rich program for that child who have that hearing impairments, so we write a lot of things down. We also incorporate sign language into our program. We're making sure that he has a mirror so he can see the speech when he's talking so that he is articulating correctly, we also make sure that we are down on the child's level and we're giving him some eye contact so he can read

our lips and follow along that way. His positioning when we do any group time or story time, he's always in front so that he can hear the teacher as well.

She also described her role in providing oversight to ensure that the child's hearing aids were removed at nap time, stored properly, and returned to the child after nap.

Victoria also facilitated communication between teachers and related services providers. She described her role in ensuring that related services providers had space to provide therapy for children when she stated,

Well my role is to make sure that the transitioning from the classroom to a private space is available for that outside provider when she's here. I don't want to have to come in and clean out any areas. I designate a space in that time and I protect that time, so when she come in she can utilize her techniques in this space at its optimum value. My role also is to inform the teacher when the outside provider is coming so that they're not away from the building, that they're not doing anything that the child would see as—would miss, you know, it's always through a routine and not—never on a special event day, so I need to really coordinate that so he will—won't feel like he's missing something when he's pulled from the classroom, that's my role.

She also described how she provided information to related services providers and set expectations for them in communicating with families in the following excerpt:

We do a tour with them, we give them a little information on that child, just some background information, so she can know what to expect. If we have any strategies we have been using we share that information with them, we let them understand that we are in constant contact with the parent and so we're not the person that you need to contact if something goes wrong, that you need to contact that parent and then the parent usually contact us if they can't make it, but it's very important that we keep the parent in the loop, so there's sometimes something comes up and the provider cannot come out to the location, we want to definitely know, make aware that the parent need to know that.

In her experience as program administrator, Victoria viewed her role as encouraging professional development for her staff, and linking them to external resources to attain that. She stated,

As the director I encourage those teachers if we have a child that have some impairments, to go and make sure they have that training. If they don't have the training then of course we reach out to our agencies and our community resources and get them in here to help that teacher with that training and there's a lot of help out here, and we have used Guilford Child Development program specialists, infant/toddler specialists, we have used . . . Bringing Out the Best to come into the classroom to help us with the adjustment. But we would love for those teacher to have that formal training, that coursework in that field, and we try to encourage that.

Furthermore, Victoria discussed her process for providing on-site training for new hires. She explained that she provided individual child profiles and required new hires to complete observations.

In making staffing decisions based on children's needs and teacher education, Victoria indicated,

We have done some shifting in staff. If a child comes in and the person who have the training in special needs, we may shift her to be in that classroom, and that works out really well. And then hopefully we can provide continuous care. That teacher would move up with the child . . . so we have two teachers who have special needs training and so they usually move up with the child.

She stated that she focused on every child, ensures that data is collected to track children's progress, and that she did these same thing for children with disabilities. She reviews teacher's lesson plans and provides materials or other resources that are requested to ensure that modifications can be implemented.

In providing support to families, Victoria discussed her role in sharing information and encouraging assessments when children were displaying potential delays. She explained that in this process, the teachers collected data and that she attended conferences to share that information, as well as to provide families with the option of having assessments completed at her program.

Victoria's structural description. Victoria had served as the program administrator at Green Leaf Childcare for three and a half years at the time of data collection. Her experience as a leader in an inclusive ECE program were informed by the context in which she led, her education, her previous experience in working with a child with a disability whose needs she felt she could not meet, and in working as a student teacher in a self-contained setting where she questioned the methods employed by her cooperating teachers.

In terms of context, Victoria shared administrative duties with two additional employees, a Program Coordinator and a Human Resources Manager. She started Green Leaf with one of her colleagues after many years working as a home childcare provider. Green Leaf Childcare Program was in a state of transition as data collection occurred, as the program was moving locations due to a recent Quality Rated License Assessment. Victoria also expressed her view of the context as a small program, especially in reference to challenges related to a lack of resources.

Victoria has a BA in Accounting and an AA in Early Childhood Education and she reported taking one course in special education. Her background in business

contributed to her experience as a leader in terms of her strengths in administration, budgeting, and financial planning.

Although Victoria reported no personal experience with disability she reported having experience in a self-contained classroom setting during her student teaching.

Here, Victoria explained the experience:

I wish I could say it was a positive experience. Unfortunately it wasn't for me. The children were great, children are children, they want to be loved, and so that part was great. Some of the techniques, again, I didn't understand and so I questioned some of the techniques. There was one little boy and he was Autistic and he would have triggers. And some of the triggers were loud noises or maybe the lighting. And when he had these experiences they would try to calm him down by putting weight or pressure on him. I understand that, but I understand a weighted vest and things like that. But they would physically put their body weight on him to calm him down or they would put him in a room to calm him down where it was dark because he needed to settle. But it just seemed, I don't know, it seems, can I say cruel, to me, to put him in the closet or to put him in the bathroom and turn the lights off. But it worked, you know. He would calm down after spending some time in a bathroom with the lights off . . . But it just seemed like there could have been a better way. Be in there with him, I don't know. I just didn't think it was the right way to just place him there . . . and I would ask questions and they would give me answers. You know, "This is the way to settle him." And I would ask you know, "Well, why wouldn't you be in there with him?" And they would say, "Well, he needs the solitude. It helps him to calm down faster." And then I would say, "Well, why would you put your body weight on him? It seems like you're trying to restrain him and not necessarily give him that feeling of the pressure." And they would say, "Well, he needed it right away and we keep his vest here or there." And so I understood. They always had an explanation, but it just seemed like there should have been a better way . . . It didn't sit right with me, it didn't.

In this example, it is evident that Victoria had experienced discomfort in her student teaching placement during which she observed teachers using strategies with children that she questioned. Despite her reporting that there were explanations provided for these

methods, Victoria reported feeling like there could have been a better way to support the children with disabilities in that setting.

Victoria shared her prior experience in working with a child with a disability in her previous work as a home childcare provider. She explained the experience when she said,

I did have a child, she was in a wheelchair. And her needs were, in my opinion, extreme. And so in a family childcare setting, I didn't keep her for very long. And I explained that to the parent, you know, "I really can't accommodate." And she was like, "No, this is all you have to do, I'll give you the training." You had to feed her. She was about eight years old and she was non-verbal. She needed a system with eating. You had to puree her food or she would choke, and I did it for one summer and everything went well. But it made me very nervous. It made me very nervous because you really did have to give a lot of time to her. You had to make sure that she was okay. I just wanted to make sure that when I'm feeding her she didn't choke. If she made any type of noise because she was prone to have seizures, you know, I would just focus on her. And unfortunately my other children, you know, it was difficult because I wanted to make sure this young girl was just okay, so I did not continue doing that.

In this example, Victoria's previous experience in feeling uncomfortable in providing care for a child with a disability was apparent. Her current experience as a leader in an inclusive setting was influenced by her feelings from the past of having inadequate support and training to provide for this child.

Angela at Friendly Child Development

Angela served as one of three administrators at Friendly Child Development at the time of data collection. She shared administrative duties with two additional employees, an assistant director and an administrative assistant. She had held this position for six years, and had previous experience in program administration in two other early

childhood education programs. She had an undergraduate degree (not specified) in Child Development and a BA in Adult Education. She reported taking multiple courses in special education as part of her degree program, and had in fact taught college courses related to exceptional children. Angela reported that she had previous experience in inclusive settings. She was previously employed as the Education Director for a Head Start program. She also reported having two family members with special needs. She had one daughter who was born prematurely but who had no formal diagnosis, and one daughter who was academically gifted. Angela had a Level III North Carolina Early Childhood Administration Credential.

Friendly Child Development is located on the campus of a local university and served as a lab school for students at the university who were completing projects related to child development, child behavior, special education, human performance and leisure studies, speech pathology, social work psychology or other areas involving children and families. The program was administered within one of the university departments that includes majors in child development, birth to kindergarten education and family studies. The program enrolled a maximum of thirty-four children each year from ages two and a half years old to five years old. The program operated from late August to early June each year and was open from 7:45 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, with some closing throughout the year for holidays and professional development. The program was funded through parent tuition fees and was also subsidized by the university. Angela reported that the program had thirty-four children enrolled, approximately four of whom had either an IEP or an IFSP.

Friendly Child Development is housed in a brick building on the university campus. The university was located in an urban area in the Southeastern United States. There was a parking lot in the front of the building and a walkway led from the parking lot to the program door. There was a chain-link fence enclosing playground equipment in the back of the building, which was visible from the road leading to the parking lot. Inside the door, there was a reception desk, chairs, and a table. Two classroom doors were located to the right, and a hallway led to bathrooms, a closet, and the director's office to the left. There was a sign posted in the entry hall reminding families to pay tuition. There were no observations of children in classrooms in this site. Children were observed walking down the hall in a line to the bathrooms, children were heard singing songs in their classroom, and individual children were observed arriving with their family members.

Angela's textural description. Angela experiences leadership in her inclusive program by providing professional development for her staff, supporting families through the referral process, setting expectations for staff in collecting child data, and providing oversight to related services providers.

Angela discussed providing professional development for her teaching staff. She explained that professional development sessions were often held over the summer when the program is closed, and that the university personnel often provide those trainings. She explained,

We have someone from the psychology department that comes to do training with us . . . training on assessment and how to do your anecdotal records and keep

notes on children and what you're—what you are actually, what you're observing for when you're looking at your children, what is it that you want to see.

She also described her role in supporting families through the referral and IEP process. She explained expectations she has for teachers in communicating with families to support them as well. She asserted,

What I'll do is I always want the teachers to tell them positives, tell something good even if you're struggling to find it. Tell them something good about what's going on with their child. And then we want to make sure that we don't make it un-personal. We want to give them objective observations of what we have seen.

She also explained how she supports families through this process by allowing them time to process the program's recommendation for referral, and that she allows families to bring in other family members to support the process. She acknowledged,

And parents will say let me think about it, some will cry . . . when I say get them to come on board, that's what I'm saying, to talk through that with them before you bring anybody else in from the outside. I let them go home and process this and let them come back and ask questions, and—and then they come and some of them want to bring grandma, and my mom was a teacher and maybe she has ideas, and—okay.

She describes supporting families through this process again in the following excerpt:

What we want to do is, while we're trying to meet the child's needs, and do what's in the best interest of the child, we want to make sure that the parents, you know, are okay in this process and they feel good, that they feel like they have the support that they need, that they know that we're here to help.

In terms of supporting families through the IEP process, she explained her role in providing information and helping families understand the implications and process. She indicated,

And making sure that we give them information. We try to make sure that we, you know, engage in information sharing. You know, this is what to expect, and when we do the—when we have that last IEP meeting before they leave us, when they redo everything before they go to kindergarten, you know, we try to make sure that any questions they have are asked. “What type of environment is my child going to be in? You know, what expectations will you have for—will they have for my child? Will we be welcome?” You know, all of those things, you know, information. We want them to gather all the information they need to make the best decisions for their child. And so we try to help them with that here.

Angela also experienced leadership in her program through setting expectations for teachers in collecting child data. She explained that data are used for lesson planning and supporting families through the referral process. She said,

We start out by screening our children. We screen every child that comes here. They don't have to be screened to get in, we screen them after they're in, and that's just so teachers know where to start, and after they're screened, then teachers come up with goals and then we start with our assessment process where we develop portfolios, and we do ongoing assessment of children.

In using data to support the referral process, she explained how that information would be used in a conference. She said, “Based on these observations we feel that it might be a good idea to start a referral process, have somebody else come in and take a look.”

She shared the expectations for teachers to collect data as very important in supporting children with disabilities in her program. She imparted,

I think having anecdotal notes, anecdotal records, and they—they have clipboards in their classrooms in various activity centers. And when children do something they can write it right then, and I think that helps to reinforce, you know, what that child is doing. We take a lot of pictures, a lot of pictures, and I am just a real believer that you can tell parents all day long about their children, but if you can show them what they are doing when they are actively engaged, or not as the case may be, it helps them to grasp a lot.

Angela described her role in providing oversight to related services providers as well. She gave two examples of when she observed therapy sessions that she felt were inappropriate. Subsequently, she made recommendations to families to request different providers. She explained,

I had one little boy that was getting some therapy, and they worked outside this door, I mean outside this wall on the other side. And I put them there because I noticed something when the therapist came in. And he and the therapist did not click . . . So I sat in here while the therapist was working with him the entire time every time. And finally I just said, I'm not sure that he is really working with you as successfully as you might like. She said, interesting that you say that, because I don't think so either. And I said, would you like for me to mention anything to mom about this? Yeah, I was thinking because I'm not really getting any much of anything out of him. And so I mentioned to mom, and I said, it's probably going to be necessary for you to call and say we need a meeting, and they got another therapist and it worked well.

Angela's structural description. Angela's experience as a leader in an inclusive program was influenced by elements of program context, her education, and her past experiences with disability, including being a parent of a child for whom she had to advocate against recommendations that she needed an IEP. Furthermore, Angela attributed fear and prejudice to programs' lack of inclusion. She stated, "I think like any other prejudice it's the fear of the unknown if you have not worked with them before. Then you're thinking, I don't want to do it. And really it's—it's really not that different."

In the program in which she led Angela shared administrative duties with two additional employees, an assistant director and an administrative assistant. She had held this position for six years, and had previous experience in program administration in two other early childhood education programs. Friendly Child Development was located on the campus of a local university and served as a lab school for students at the university who were completing projects related to child development, child behavior, special education, human performance and leisure studies, speech pathology, social work psychology or other areas involving children and families. The program enrolled a maximum of 34 children each year and operated during the school year only. The program was funded through parent tuition fees and was also subsidized by the university.

Angela has an undergraduate degree (not specified) in Child Development and a BA in Adult Education. She reported taking multiple courses in special education as part of her degree program, and had in fact taught college courses related to exceptional children. Angela reported that she had previous experience in inclusive settings and that she was previously employed as the Education Director for a Head Start program.

Also of influence on her experience, Angela reported having two family members with special needs. She had one daughter who was born prematurely but who had no formal diagnosis, and one daughter who was academically gifted. Angela spoke about her experience in advocating for her daughter amidst pressure from teachers to medicate her child. She shared,

All through school, depending on the teacher that she had, some years were great years because the teacher worked with her and other years the teacher would be like, “Oh my gosh, you need to get her diagnosed.” . . . We had her evaluated multiple times because as an educator I wanted to make sure that we were meeting her needs, but also to satisfy them. And finally a psychologist said to me, “She does not have a diagnosed disability. She is an average child.” And that is not what we’re looking for in our educational system today, and it’s sad. And so I would go to school and they would set up meetings and they would have teachers and the counselor. And teachers would say, “She doesn’t focus well.” So they wanted us to put her on Adderall, we did. I told the doctor, “Put her on Adderall if that will help her focus and the teachers can get what they need to get across.” The doctor said, “This child does not need Adderall.” I said, “Well put her on it anyway.” Did not, did not do a thing, nothing. So we went through meetings after meetings after meetings, where—and finally we got a counselor that said, “We’re supposed to meet these children where they are.”

Angela shared having negative experiences as a parent of a child whom teachers reported having difficulty with school. She also spoke of having to go to school to support her daughter who was academically gifted, presumably in advocating for her needs for individualized education. This personal experience influenced her position as a leader in an inclusive ECE program, and undoubtedly affected her practices when carrying out her role of supporting families through the referral process.

Diane at Evergreen Preschool Program

Evergreen Preschool Program is owned and operated by the administrator, Diane, who opened the program with the support of two of her family members in 2011. She shares administrative duties with two other employees, a finance manager and administrator and an assistant director. Diane opened the program with the financial support of her husband and mother spurred by their desire to create a philosophically innovative early childhood education program in their community. She has a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and over twenty years of experience in early childhood

education. Diane also has a Level III North Carolina Early Childhood Administration Credential. She had been an administrator at Evergreen for almost four years and had worked in the past as a program director for a different early childhood education program for two years. She had experience as a program consultant for at least two other programs in the community, and worked as an administrator in the state-funded early childhood education programs for more than ten years. She had also owned and operated her own family childcare home.

Evergreen Preschool Program serves children ages 1 year through 6 years in three classrooms. It was a for-profit company funded by private parent fees. The program accepted vouchers from the Department of Health and Human Services that provided subsidies for childcare for eligible families. Additionally, expenses for meals and snacks provided to children by the program were reimbursed through a nationally funded Childcare Food Program. The program was also funded by grant money through a local non-profit agency. The program director reported that Evergreen served approximately 56 children, six of whom had either an IEP or an IFSP. The program was open weekdays from 7:10 am until 5:50 pm year-round with closings for some holidays and professional development workdays throughout the year.

Evergreen was located on a busy road in a metropolitan area in the Southeastern United States. There were a number of other businesses surrounding Evergreen. Evergreen's building was surrounded by fenced playground spaces on one side with a parking lot on the other side. In the front of the program upon entry, there was a reception desk and a small lobby area. Children's rain boots lined one wall. There was a

couch in the lobby area with several chairs and a bookshelf. The reception desk was decorated with flowers. The director's office was located behind the reception area in a small room. A hallway on one side of the reception area led to a classroom and a kitchen. Another classroom was located on the other side of the reception area. Overall, the entry area was warm, organized, and welcoming.

Although observations of the classrooms were somewhat limited, the classrooms that were observed in Evergreen were welcoming and warm as well. Each room included child-sized furniture arranged into centers. Children were observed freely exploring all areas of the classroom, eating snacks, and participating in group activities. Children's artwork was displayed throughout the school.

Diane's textural description. Diane had served as the program administrator for approximately four years at the time of data collection. The data provided evidence of her experience as a leader through her roles in her current program including meeting with families throughout the process of enrollment, supporting teachers by acquiring materials or providing direct support in classrooms, supporting families through the referral process, connecting families to external resources, training staff members, and leading staff meetings.

For example, Diane was observed meeting with a newly enrolled family. This particular family was a mother and her son who had an identified disability. Throughout the observation, Diane asked questions about the child's food preferences, schedule for sleeping and eating, blanket and other personal items that the mother had brought to school, the mother's typical process for changing diapers, and the child's communication

skills. Diane took notes in a journal to be used for communications between the teachers and the family. She asked for and copied the child's current IFSP, and provided a copy to the teachers upon visiting the classroom with the family. Additionally, Diane spent a lot of time telling the mother about the program. She shared procedures for how and where to store the child's belongings including his Pediasure, which he needed as a dietary supplement due to low weight. She read through the child's IFSP and discussed the child's goals with the mother and described examples of how those goals would be incorporated into classroom activities. Diane explained the enrollment process when she said,

All families are required to have an orientation before your child starts, so we usually do that about two, three weeks before they have orientation and when we have orientation, both parents have to attend, it takes about 45 minutes to an hour. And then at that orientation we write the transition plan and we talk a lot about the child's personality and what transitions are usually like, other types of transitions, to kind of get a sense of what we may see in terms of adjusting to a new school. And so for kids who are, you know, real timid or have complex needs we tend to have many transition visits planned. If, you know, this child is just, like they're just really happy-go-lucky, whatever, then I tend to recommend a couple of transition visits and that will be fine, you know, one or two even, just depending. And so . . . the newest student that I enrolled, she had a couple of meetings with me to help me understand her child's needs and she has had a couple of transition visits with him. So all total, she's had four meetings at the pre-school before her child is ever dropped off . . . The first couple of meetings were to go over, you know, his vision needs, his—he's in feeding therapy, he has occupational therapy, he has speech therapy. He has kinds of therapy that I've never even heard of. I didn't know there was feeding therapy and so he goes to Wake Forest Baptist for feeding therapy . . . these are all the things that we needed to fully understand. Then she came back and brought us his food and showed us how they prep him and prepare for him to eat.

In this example, it is clear that Diane has specific practices in place to gather information and to make decisions to ease children's transitions into Evergreen.

In interviews, Diane referenced her experience as a leader when she described her role in supporting families through the referral process. She said, “I feel like a lot of what I do to support children with disabilities is start the referral process . . . but they’re not identified yet . . . but just coaching parents and families and, you know, teaching teachers to observe and document.” Diane explained that she works directly with her teachers to train them how to collect objective observations as well as how to use a specific assessment system. She described doing these trainings with staff in a “workshop” setting and through modeling. In supporting families, she described,

I think that’s probably what I actually do the most of is . . . guiding parents. Some parents go through that process very easily, for some parents it’s very difficult and takes a lot of time for them to wrap their mind around, you know, calling in a specialist for anything for their child. They have different fears like, “Oh, there might be a label,” or . . . they have a bad experience with special ed. or some reason they don’t want to go there. Just all different kinds of things and so conversations about that, guiding parents and guiding my staff through that is I think a big part of how I, you know, support children with disabilities. A lot of programs are like afraid to tell parents or just don’t feel like they have the time to make sure they’re looking at every child’s development. And so, you know, that, making sure that my staff understand that’s a huge part of our responsibility. I feel like that culture and making sure that follow through happens is a big way that I support children with disabilities.

Diane also described her role in supporting children with disabilities when she discussed procedures she has in place requiring family participation. She clarified,

One of the things that I do is whenever we have trouble with, you know, challenges in the classroom, is I require a high level of parent participation. Like a high level. . . . So if we have children that are kind of like, you know, tearing through the room, or really struggling with regulation, things like that, then I say I need you to be here, mom or you to be here, dad, and assist and support.

Diane's role in leading her staff was also evidenced in an observation of a staff meeting. Diane explained that this particular staff meeting was unusual, in that the format had been changed. Instead of the typical meeting, Diane had decided to celebrate a recent achievement of the program related to quality rating assessment results. In this meeting, Diane led her staff through an agenda that included viewing recent news clips of her program personnel participating in a Worthy Wage Campaign, a political event intended to bring awareness to the low wages and lack of funding for ECE. This meeting also included a candle lighting ceremony wherein she intended to honor her staff members for their "dedication and passion." The ceremony included Diane and each staff member sharing at least one story about a child that they "had challenges with and some successes with, that you feel really speaks to your heart for whatever reason." Diane provided dinner for her staff and a cake that was iced with a display of, "Top Scoring School." There were other items covered in the meeting including Diane thanking her staff for organizing children's rain boots in the front lobby area, a review of day end routines and responsibilities, some discussion about upcoming conferences and preparation of portfolios, and discussion about upcoming fundraiser and teacher roles before, during, and after the fundraising event.

Diane further viewed her experience as a leader in the role of providing program accommodations for children with disabilities. She specified a time when the program had to purchase additional gate security for a child who tried to open the gates repeatedly. She provided program accommodations in response to children's individual dietary needs

as well. In reference to making dietary accommodations, Diane stated, “We’re a place that has a healthy attitude about that.”

Diane’s structural description. Diane’s experience as a leader in an inclusive ECE program was influenced by the context in which she worked, her education, and her past work experience. Diane has a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and over twenty years of experience in early childhood education. She also has a Level III North Carolina Early Childhood Administration Credential. She had been an administrator at Evergreen for almost four years and had worked in the past as a program director for a different early childhood education program for two years. She had past work experience as a program consultant for at least two other programs in the community, and had worked as an administrator in the state-funded early childhood education programs for more than ten years. She had also owned and operated her own family childcare home.

Her experience as a leader was influenced by her past work experience. Related to her previous work in ECE she said,

I mean much of my work has been, you know, a lot of the problem solving and challenges, you know, arise from looking at how we can better meet the needs of children with special needs, and [in my past work experiences] a lot of the challenges that the teachers would face, I need to go and assist and support them with, was communicating with families . . . making sure that things were happening as they should with everybody being at the table like they should, information and just copies of IEPs getting shared . . . people being able to access additional support, making that happen, helping teachers just brainstorm and observe one another and collaborate to develop . . . adaptations, ideas, strategies . . . simple technologies that they could make, ordering special equipment, you know, whatever needed to happen . . . making referrals to get evals and assessments started, you know, all that whole process was what I used to do as a classroom specialist.

Diane described influences on her experience as a leader in this excerpt. She shared that in the past she worked with teachers and families to share information, connect families to resources, and support teachers to make accommodations. She also explained influences from her past experiences when she stated,

And so we'd just do a lot of that because it just seems like supports was never adequate, like there might be someone in the building who's supposed to be, you know, responsible, but in some schools the process of writing and working on IEPs is really, really strong and there's just a great facilitation, and then in some places it's like someone, it's like the—it's much more fragmented and it's rushed and there's not adequate personnel or adequate communication, and so you would just would find that to be different and just depending on whatever the need is.

Diane also experiences inclusion as requiring family members to support children, as evidenced by her policy that families have to attend her program with their children at her discretion.

Results of Cross-case Analyses

In this section, the results of cross-case analyses are discussed in relationship to the theoretical framework of leadership practice employed in this study. Bolman and Deal's (2013) leadership theory describes multiple frames, providing leaders with multiple perspectives, through which they engage in meaningful organizational analysis and action. The four frames described by Bolman and Deal (2013) constitute the structural frame, the human resource frame, the political frame, and the symbolic frame.

Results are presented in this section related to administrators' perceptions of challenges and overcoming challenges. Textural and structural descriptions provided composite depictions of individual administrator practices, providing a foundation to

which the theoretical framework was applied to examine practices that contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon of inclusive leadership in ECE programs. Table 11 provides a list of the emerging themes across frames as well as related to challenges and overcoming challenges.

Table 11

Emerging Themes Reflected within Frames and Research Focuses

Frame/Focus	Emerging Themes
Structural Frame	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Providing Direct Support as an Administrator Role 2. Making Program Accommodations 3. Providing Oversight to Teachers and Related Services Providers 4. Setting Expectations for Teacher Practices
Human Resource Frame	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Building Partnerships with Families 2. Facilitating Partnerships with Related Services Providers 3. Facilitating Collaboration within the Program 4. Providing and Valuing Teacher Education and Professional Development related to Children with Disabilities
Political Frame	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connecting Children and Families to External Resources
Symbolic Frame	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developing an Inclusive Philosophy 2. Views of disability
Challenges	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supporting families through the referral process 2. Lack of Resources
Overcoming Challenges	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collecting Data 2. Collaboration (within and outside of program) 3. Professional Development

Practices Reflective of the Structural Frame

In Bolman and Deal's (2013) leadership theory, the structural frame provides a lens through which effective leaders focus on the architecture of organizations, with attention to design, rules, roles, goals and policies, for example (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The themes that emerged as relevant leadership practices reflective of the structural frame in this study included providing direct support as an administrator role, making program accommodations, providing oversight to teachers and related services providers, and setting expectations for teacher practices related to lesson planning, interacting with children with disabilities, and collecting data.

Emerging theme: Providing direct support as an administrator role.

Examples are presented in this section to demonstrate administrators' providing direct support. This role was evident across participants, and is reflective of the structural frame in terms of representing a leadership role.

Diane shared, "The teachers are sometimes are really busy and so, you know, I am a extra person who is contributing to the flow of the classrooms and meeting the children's needs." Angela explained that when children are having difficulty engaging or are causing disruption, she either steps into the classroom to support the child or removes the child from the classroom and brings them to her office.

In describing her role in providing direct support, Sharon described taking a child out of the classroom or to the side to talk and try to calm the child. She explained that she does this by asking the child about his day. Lisa explained that she stays in the classroom as additional support when someone is available to answer the phone and door

in the office. She also gives her teachers ideas for what they can do to calm and soothe children. Lisa was observed comforting a child in her office who was crying a lot in the classroom. It was unknown whether the child had a disability or not, but she nonetheless supported both the teachers and child directly by bringing the child to her office for a few minutes.

Gladys described her role in providing direct support when she relayed that she acknowledges children, shows affection, and spends time in the classroom specifically when children are having a “great day . . . not just when he’s off.”

Pam also reported supporting children and teachers directly by stepping into the classroom. She described her role in providing direct support in the following excerpt:

We’re like back up, we’re support, because we have awesome teachers, but everybody has the breaking point. They’re patient, patient to a point, I mean they can go a very, very long time but if you have a child, especially one that has some behavioral issues, once my teachers—my teachers know, once they get to a point they call . . . We go down and most of the time we take the child out of the environment because by the time we get involved the child is either endangering the children around him or he’s endangering himself. So we bring him up here, help him to calm down and we do conscious discipline, which with children with special needs, especially the ones that have behavioral issues, once we bring them up here if we can get their attention is what we’re trying to do. Because once we get their attention we can get them to breathe and you know, conscious discipline has taught us that, you know, a lot of times the child’s behavior is tied to the brain and if you can get them to breathe it relaxes their muscles in their brain and helps them to kind of reset and to rethink . . . But nevertheless, their feelings are important and they, they don’t know how to react to it yet and it’s our job to teach them, to give them the skills of how to react and the best way that we know to do that is just to pull them out . . . when it comes to children with special needs and we have a couple of behavior ones right now, they spend a lot of time with us or they’ll just kind of shadow us while we’re walking up and down the hall and they’ll carry our clipboard for us or you know, just something, whatever, just something different to take them out of the moment where they were so stressed, so that they can calm down, then we talk about it, then we talk about what we’re going to do the next time that happens, so maybe you won’t get so upset.

Sometimes it works, sometimes it don't but you know, that's our role. Just being the backup support team supporting the teachers.

Pam describes how she and her assistant director work together to support teachers when children are having difficulty in the classroom. From this excerpt, she describes strategies she employs when providing support, including removing children from the classroom environment, changing their focus through asking questions about unrelated topics, and giving children a job to do. It is clear that she recognizes that children sometimes respond to a change in environment, including adults in the role of support.

Across participants, there were examples of administrators fulfilling the role of providing direct support to teachers and children. This practice was reflective of the structural frame in terms of representing a job role, and was expressed by several participants as part of the experience of leading in inclusive ECE programs.

Emerging theme: Making program accommodations. Examples of administrators making accommodations in their programs for children with disabilities are evident in the following descriptions of participants' practices. This practice was reflective of the structural frame as it represented elements of rules, policies, and standards within programs.

Diane, in describing her program, indicated that her program makes accommodations by allowing for dietary modifications. Specifically, she cited having a "healthy attitude" about cutting food into small pieces, pureeing food, and allowing families to provide Pediasure for children in need of extra caloric intake. Diane also

discussed a time she had a child enrolled for whom the purchase of additional gating was necessary.

Lisa discussed her program's ability to enroll a child who is older than they typically allow. She explained that the afterschool program typically is not offered to children who are older than twelve, but that in this child's case, the program had made an exception.

Gladys explained her program's flexibility in allowing specific children extra time to adjust to being at school and taking a flexible stance on standard practices, like allowing children to bring transition items from home for security. She also cited making accommodations by providing medications in cases where children need them to function, despite the general program policy against administering medications. Gladys also explained some of the considerations that were made related to including children on field trips. She stated,

We have field trips so we have to assess, if we have a chaperone, we have to make sure that the chaperone is competent and knows the situation. And again, like I said, it mostly has to do with communication. So specifically, we would make sure is mom coming as a chaperone. Is dad reachable today on his cell phone? So there are specific things that we need to know before we say, "Yes, he's going to go" . . . And if he's sensitive to noise then maybe he can't go to laser tag or bowling. Maybe he could just go to the movies, or if the movie's too loud . . . So we do have to specifically think, "What are the things . . . that could happen?"

Victoria described a program policy related to enrolling children with disabilities. She explained,

The plan for inclusion is basically to make it easy for the child to follow the same routine as every other child . . . whatever we need to do to make sure that that child can follow the same routine, that what the other children is doing, that child can participate, then that's what we're going to do . . . if they're doing a writing assignment then we want to make sure that that child is capable of writing also, if they're going to use a tool to help them to write with, then that's what we want to have in the classroom.

It is clear from these examples that leaders in inclusive ECE programs make program accommodations to ensure that children are safe and are supported to have their needs met. Administrators were flexible in allowing children and families some leeway in terms of program rules. Additionally, programs took responsibility for obtaining additional safety equipment when necessary.

Emerging theme: Providing oversight to teachers and related services providers. The program administrators in this research illustrated their role in providing oversight to both teachers and to related services providers who were serving children in their programs. In this role, administrators were able to ensure that children's individual needs were being met, that their time with related services providers was productive, and that effective accommodations were provided.

Angela described her experience in providing oversight when children are working with related services providers in the following excerpt:

I had one little boy that was getting some therapy, and they worked outside this door, I mean outside this wall on the other side. And I put them there because I noticed something when the therapist came in. And he and the therapist did not click. They did not click. So I sat in here while the therapist was working with him the entire time every time. And finally I just said, "I'm not sure that he is really working with you as successfully as you might like." She said, "Interesting that you say that, because I don't think so either." And I said, "Would you like for me to mention anything to mom about this?" "Yeah, I was thinking because

I'm not really getting any much of anything out of him." And so I mentioned to mom, and I said, "It's probably going to be necessary for you to call and say we need a meeting," and they got another therapist and it worked well.

She also described a similar situation where she provided direct oversight. In this case, Angela again stayed close enough by to evaluate the effectiveness of the related services provider session with a child enrolled in her program.

Sharon discussed her role in providing oversight in terms of checking in. She stated that she checks to, "make sure everything is straight over there, checking the rolls and the classroom making sure they got all the snack supplies and everything, and chatting with the kids a little bit." Because of her dual role in serving as a program administrator in two sites, Sharon spends a majority of her day with her full day program. She does however provide some level of oversight at Child Zone.

Lisa described her role in providing oversight when she said, "just making sure that whatever it is that they're saying, that it's actually getting done in the classroom . . . that would be my part in it." In this excerpt, Lisa was talking specifically about her role in making sure that strategies that are shared by related services providers are being incorporated into teacher practices. Lisa also explained that she provides oversight by checking over and approving lesson plans.

Gladys and Pam disclosed their roles in providing oversight through completing regular teacher observations. Pam explained,

I'm just watching the cleanliness of the room, the organization of the room, and a big, big thing for me, which I hope you've seen in every classroom is the teacher-child interaction . . . I need that one-on-one interaction, I need to see. . . you're asking them open-ended questions. You're building on the knowledge of what

they have and finding out what they know and then just added to it . . . and even social-emotional, when children get upset, I want to see you teachers comforting them instead of getting angry at them. “Why are you acting that way?” is not a good enough response to me. “What can I do to help you because I see you’re upset,” is perfect . . . even with children that have the disabilities, we make accommodations for them to meet what they, their skill level is or what they can do, but as far as what I’m expecting from that teacher, that child gets the same attention, the same interactions, and the same involvement as every other child in the classroom.

Pam and Victoria referenced providing oversight by checking lesson plans. Pam explained that she checks to ensure that developmental domains are covered in lesson plans, while Victoria shared her role to ensure that needed modifications were provided.

Victoria described how she provides oversight to confirm that children are making progress. She stated,

As the program director my focus is on each child. So with the child with disability, he’s not overlooked, he’s not neglected because of course I will pay special attention because he has that impairment. My job is to make sure that he’s on track, that he is not suffering because of his impairment and again, he has a hearing impairment so we need to make the adjustment. And we keep portfolios to make sure that he is meeting certain bullet points and he’s mastering these bullet points, these areas and stage of development bullet points.

Several examples were presented in this section that represented the emerging theme related to providing oversight. Administrators demonstrated their practices in providing oversight when they discussed reviewing lesson plans, conducting teacher observations, and observing related services providers.

Emerging theme: Setting expectations for teacher practices. In a role that is somewhat related to providing oversight, the emerging theme of setting expectations for teacher practices emerged as an administrator practice reflective of the structural frame.

Data informing this theme emerged as common across participants and reflected an administrator practice through which they ensured that children's individual needs were being met. Additionally, administrators referenced their expectations for teacher practices in terms of collecting data to be used in making referrals, communicating with families, lesson planning, and assessments.

Diane described her role in teaching teachers how to collect data by describing their process. She explained how they use a particular assessment tool when she said,

It has a developmental continuum for how children should—skills should develop at particular ages and so, you know, teaching teachers how to observe has mostly to do with modeling for them and intentionally teaching them, like in a workshop setting, like I teach my staff a lot, you know, “This is how you write an objective observation, you know, Billy said or he did,” you know, just what you see, the facts, the date, where they were, teaching them how to record observations and then when you get a lot of observations together, in your head and on paper, it can be photographic, samples, then if you're seeing things that are concerning, let's take lots of bits of information . . . and let's look at Teaching Strategies Gold and see, okay, if this is a two-year-old and we're seeing all these different things that are at the six-month-old level or nine-month-old level...but a lot of times this is like your gut knowing because these teachers are familiar with child development and they're with children all the time. But having a tool to go to I think is really important that shows, hmm, we're seeing lots of skills at the one-year-old level with language, or maybe motor skills or maybe cognitive skills, and having a place where that's in writing I think helps validate the way we talk to families.

Angela explained how teachers use screening information formatively to collect data for lesson planning when children enroll in her program. She also explained her expectations for how teachers communicate with families. She specifically cited expecting her teachers to report children's strengths to families, communicating personably and objectively. In describing lesson planning, she said that every child has goals written on the back page of posted lesson plans. She explained that she believes that this practice

ensures that families of children with disabilities see that their child is a part of the program. When goals are set for every child, it can show that every child has goals, not just the children with disabilities. She also described the teachers' practices in collecting data related to children's interests and progress through writing anecdotal notes and taking photographs to demonstrate children's engagement.

In terms of teacher practices, and specifically related to what is needed for programs to be inclusive, again Angela discussed her expectations when she relayed,

You have to have trained teachers that are willing to work with them, you have to have teachers that are open to new challenges because everything that works—something that works with one child might not work with another, you may have to change what you're doing, and they have to be willing to do that on top of everything else they're doing.

She referenced her expectation that teachers display a willingness to try new things while simultaneously managing the workload of teaching.

Both Lisa and Pam described teacher practices related to lesson planning. Each of these participants described lesson planning forms that provided space specifically for teachers to plan differentiated instruction. Pam explained that these plans allow substitutes or other visitors to know what is necessary for each child to be included in activities. Pam elaborated,

It's just all comes to the teacher's thinking about, what her goal is, what they're trying to learn, what she is expecting the children to learn from the activity, and just thinking about the—and it's not even just special needs children, I mean all children are different and a good teacher will set up activities that will meet all children's abilities.

Lisa also described expectations she has of her teachers in working with a child with a disability. She explained that although the child is staying in a two-year-old class despite having turned three, she has asked the teachers to “work with him where he is.”

Victoria also discussed teacher practices when she described accommodations in place in one classroom in which a child with a hearing impairment is enrolled. She described accommodations to the environment including provision of a print-rich environment, incorporating sign language, including a mirror in the classroom for the child to use when working on speech goals, speaking on the child’s level so he can lip read, and positioning the child close to teachers during group activities.

Administrators in this study expected their teachers to make accommodations for children in lesson planning, to collect data, and to communicate strengths to families. From their perspectives, these practices supported inclusion in their programs.

Results of the analyses across the cases included in this research yielded several practices reflective of the structural frame as described by Bolman and Deal (2013). Some of the ways that leaders in the present research evidenced the engagement of the structural frame were through providing direct support to teachers by spending time with children, making individualized program accommodations, providing oversight to teachers and related services providers, and by setting expectations for teacher practices in lesson planning and collecting assessment data.

Practices Reflective of the Human Resource Frame

According to Bolman and Deal (2013), the human resource frame is engaged by leaders when they are focused on relationships with and among those whom they lead. In

this study, human resource frame practices were reflected in administrators' interactions and responses in interviews. Themes emerged across participants that illustrate practices within the human resource frame including those related to building partnerships with families, supporting teachers, and facilitating collaboration within their programs to support the inclusion of children with disabilities.

Emerging theme: Building partnerships with families. A number of specific practices illustrated by the participants in this study contributed to their ability to build partnerships with families within their programs to support the inclusion of children with disabilities. For example, administrators met with families a number of times throughout the year to discuss children's progress, gather information, and to share data. These meetings, which were in the form of orientation meetings and conferences, were referenced by several participants as ways to formally communicate with families about their children. Participants also referenced informal conversations to share information about children's goals and needs.

In some cases, meetings occurred prior to enrollment to gather specific information that programs used to ensure that children's individual needs were being met. For example, Diane described her process as an orientation with parents before children start. She requires both parents to attend and are a time to get specific information about children's individual needs as well as to plan for transitions into her program. Transition plans are individualized based on children's personalities and needs, and range from a couple of visits in the classroom up to four or more.

Angela referenced conferences as well in describing her role in partnering with families. She said, “We do four parent conferences a year to talk about children’s progress, using our portfolios, well, three with the portfolios and one is kind of an introductory.” Either Angela or her assistant director attended the initial conference. Her role in conferences was to gather information and to support teachers. Angela discussed getting family input when children exhibit behavioral concerns. She talked about being present at her program every morning to greet families as they arrive. She also referenced partnerships with families when she described her role in supporting families through the referral process. She said,

We want to give them objective observations of what we have seen . . . And parents will say let me think about it, some will cry . . . When I say get them to come on board, that’s what I’m saying, to talk through that with them before you bring anybody else in from the outside. I let them go home and process this and let them come back and ask questions, and—and then they come and some of them want to bring grandma, and my mom was a teacher and maybe she has ideas.

In this example, Angela describes her approach in working with families of children for whom the program personnel have concerns. She relays an understanding that families respond to the news of possibly needing to seek a referral in different ways. She understood that families needed time to process the news, and she provided time for families to do that prior to making the referral. She also comprehended that families often approach these experiences with a desire to seek the support of family members.

Gladys also expressed her understanding of families of children with disabilities. She related,

It means a lot. You have to care for these children, you know, it's hard for the parents. I mean, she's at a point where I'm sure she doesn't know what to do, and she's looking for help, but if you're in denial then you can't really ask for help because what are you asking for help for if you don't need it. So it's hard for her, so we try to do all that we can, you know, and let her know that we understand. Sometimes she'll walk out or she'll be shaking her head and we'll go, "It's alright. Tomorrow's another day."

Victoria discussed her role in partnering with families by sharing information with families during conferences. Although it was unclear whether or not Victoria attended all of the conferences, she described the opportunities they provided for partnerships with families to emerge. Victoria also described partnering with families by sharing information throughout the referral process, ensuring that related services providers stayed in contact with families, and through providing recommendations for other programs when she felt that her program was unable to accommodate children.

Emerging theme: Facilitating partnerships with related services providers.

Participants often cited their roles in facilitating partnerships among families and program personnel with related services providers. Children with IEPs and IFSPs are often recipients of related services that are delivered in the context of their ECE programs.

Diane related a specific effort she made in reaching out to related services providers when her program opened. Although this practice of networking overlaps with the political frame, her reaching out to these agencies reflected her value in building partnerships. She said,

We build really strong relationships with the developmental therapists that serve this area. So for instance there's a team of special ed. teachers with *[the]* county

schools and there are therapists that work with all these private firms . . . but we try to build really good relationships with them. When we opened I mailed all those different companies that I could find on the internet, I mailed them all just profile info about our center and told them that we did want to include children with special needs in our program . . . I looked forward to seeing them . . . should they ever serve a child in our program and that they please know that we're a place that they could refer families to that were looking for places for their children to attend.

Diane contacted the agencies in her area that employed related services providers. She made an effort to welcome them into her program and notified them of the program's intention to serve children with disabilities.

Lisa and Pam described their roles in serving as the "middle man" between therapists, families, and teachers. Lisa said that her teachers work with the therapists to incorporate therapy goals into classroom activities. She explained, "[Therapists] do tell me things that need to be worked on but I also let them know to tell teachers because they're the ones that work more closely with the children."

Gladys also discussed how communications were shared between therapists and teachers. She said, "She will usually give them the same handout as the mom, as the parents to say hey, they're working on t's, so even when we do ABC Mouse, we know we're working on t's, so we'll go t t t." Gladys used this example of how a child's speech goals were embedded in a class activity involving a computer game as a result of the speech therapist sharing those goals with teachers in her program.

In another example, Victoria discussed a program policy that was designed specifically to facilitate communication between related services providers, families, and program personnel. She explained,

We have a policy for outside providers and so they understand that it's not just enough to go ahead and do the therapy, you have to share that information with the teachers so that we also can help him with some of his issues and with some of the strategies that she's using. We try to implement them in the classroom as well. So they are wonderful with sharing that information. The parent is on board also to make sure that that information is shared with our teachers.

She went on to describe her role in reviewing the policy and sharing information with new service providers by explaining that she gives new providers a tour of the facility and discusses children's backgrounds and strategies they have used in working with children. She was sure to emphasize that providers were expected to communicate absences with families.

Participants experienced leadership in inclusive ECE programs as facilitating partnerships with external resources. For these administrators this practice was described in their reports of sharing information with related services providers, connecting families to external agencies, and in establishing program policies related to partnering with professionals serving children with disabilities in their programs.

Emerging theme: Facilitating collaboration within the program.

Administrators referenced collaborating within their programs with teachers and other administrative personnel as one of the ways they work to support the inclusion of children with disabilities in their programs. There were a number of ways collaboration was carried out, both formally and informally. In some cases, there is overlap with practices reflective of the structural frame. For example, providing time in meetings specifically for discussing children with disabilities would be considered structural; however, the purpose of collaboration in these cases, to support teachers, is reflective of a

practice within the human resource frame. Other examples related to sharing strategies informally, dividing labor to provide adapted materials, and generally viewing their responsibilities as shared.

Diane explained that she listened to her staff to know whether to connect staff members to training, shift staff, or purchase adapted materials. She also described how staff members are supported to collaborate in describing her staff meetings. She and Pam both explained that their staff meetings have a specific portion dedicated to discussing children, brainstorming and sharing ideas, and that those sessions often are focused on children with disabilities. Diane also noted that staff members are invited to add items to the staff meeting agendas. Additionally, when describing any parts of her job that require intentional focus on children with disabilities, she said, “There’s no person here that’s like oh, I don’t do that part. It’s—we all do it.” This illustrates the shared responsibility among personnel at Evergreen.

Angela spoke about being present at initial conferences as a way to ensure that everyone was “on the same page.” She also described collaborating with teachers when children were exhibiting potential disabilities.

Sharon discussed her role in sharing information with her teachers following director’s meetings held by the local child development agency. She explained that the meetings sometimes resulted in her needing to inform her staff of new childcare regulations or changes to laws. She also explained that she held staff meetings each month, or more often if the need arose.

Lisa explained that she viewed her partnership with other administrators in her program as a “team effort.” She spoke about how all of the administrators are responsible for being aware of children’s IEP goals. Lisa also discussed how she gave her staff tips on how to support children when they were upset, and how they discussed together children for whom they had concerns.

Gladys shared that she had one staff member who had a child with a disability. She described how the program personnel got ideas and strategies for supporting children in their program by talking with this staff member. She also described how she works together with her co-director to make recommendations for staff trainings for specific teachers. In sharing how program personnel collaborate to provide accommodations for children, Gladys disclosed,

They usually know what they want when they come and ask me, is it okay to do a certain thing . . . If they don’t know then we’ll brainstorm together and [my co-director’s] got 20-something years of experience, so she’s pretty good at saying, “This is okay, this is not, we can’t do this. Let’s ask the state, let’s call somebody,” so I think it’s a good . . . it’s all about communication. If you tell me what you need, I’ll do my best to get it for you. If I see you need something then I’m going to work to get it to you.

Gladys was also observed having a conversation with one of her staff members about a child who was not feeding herself. Although it is unclear whether this child had a disability, the observation revealed Gladys’s collaboration with her teacher. Together, they discussed the next step of speaking to the family to determine whether the child was given opportunities to feed herself at home. Finally, Gladys shared her experience in being able to provide feedback to the Childcare World corporate office regarding policies

and procedures. She described how the corporate representatives ask for program administrator's feedback on a regular basis.

Pam described her role in collaborating with teachers to support children with disabilities. She explained that teachers come to her and they work together to look through Pam's course materials from her teacher education program and develop an action plan. She often asks her teachers to document behaviors or concerns in a diary to determine whether patterns exist from which interventions can be planned. Pam described the program personnel's efforts to support one another when children with disabilities are having difficulties, stating that everyone works together as a team. Pam also discussed collaboration in terms of shared responsibility among the personnel in the Childcare World Corporation. She revealed that several corporate representatives provide her with oversight, and that she views that as a strength to ensure accuracy. Victoria described collaborative efforts among her program personnel in determining whether to provide adapted materials or assistive technology to meet the needs of children with disabilities. She stated,

It's not just on one person, everybody has specific roles. And even if I see something that is not being done then I can delegate. I can say you know, "This child really needs this. What do I need to do?" And they help, you know, "What do I need to do to make sure that child can get this?" or you know, "It would be great to have this in the classroom." [Our Business Administrator] is our finance person. "Could you research how much it would cost to see if we can get this in the classroom?" and she does . . . If we can afford it, it's going to happen. If there's an event or something coming up where we can't afford it, she'll let me know and then she'll give me a timeline as to when she think we will be able to get it in the classroom. Once we get that certain item then [our Program Coordinator] will make sure that it's accessible to the child and then again, I'll make sure that we're using it.

Overall, program administrators viewed their programs as collaborative in that responsibilities were shared among various personnel. Both formal and informal idea sharing were evident through which personnel collaboratively developed strategies to support children with disabilities.

Emerging theme: Providing and valuing teacher education and professional development related to children with disabilities. Program administrators shared their values for teacher education and professional development related to children with disabilities. Evidence was provided reflective of this theme when administrators discussed providing training for the teachers in their programs as well as when they cited these needs as ways to overcome challenges they face in supporting children with disabilities.

Diane said, “Well I always look for teachers who are really experienced in inclusive settings, but it doesn’t mean that I won’t hire you if you’re not.” She also said, “I see it as a huge strength if you’ve, you know, had course work related to children with special needs or if you have experience, those are huge strengths that I would you know definitely note on a potential employee.” In describing what she thought programs needed in order to successfully include children with disabilities, Diane shared her value of professional development, but also noted that there are not enough options that specifically address working with children with disabilities. She expressed her view that a better system of professional development is needed, including technical assistance, and especially related to addressing challenging behaviors. Diane also discussed her role in securing professional development training for her teachers. She shared her role in

modelling and providing direct training as well, specifically related to collecting objective observations and other documentation.

Angela affirmed Diane's valuing teacher education and professional development in that she similarly noted the need for trained teachers for inclusion to be successful. Victoria, Gladys, and Pam cited this as a need as well. Angela stated that, "You have to have trained teachers that are willing to work with them . . . You have to have a knowledgeable staff. Administrator and staff need to be knowledgeable."

Angela described specific professional development for her staff related to collecting observation data that is provided by university personnel. Some of this professional development is held over the summer months when Friendly Child Development is closed.

Lisa also shared her value of teacher education when she discussed challenges. She shared that her staff sometimes encounter challenges with children for which they need more information and experience to support. Lisa shared Diane's view that there were not enough professional development opportunities related to inclusion. Lisa discussed the need for more classes in teacher preparation programs related to working with children with disabilities and this reflected her value for education among teachers in her program.

As one of the ways her program includes children with disabilities, Gladys said, "we also have workshops that our teachers are required to take twice a month and they can incorporate different topics to kind of help them with that as well." She described

that she and her co-director suggest specific workshops when teachers come to them with questions about how to serve children with disabilities.

Pam also referenced her role in securing professional development for her teachers. Pam described training modules available for her staff through the Childcare World Corporation. She stated,

Also, you know, we have the trainings that we offer our teachers, so say there's a teacher that just . . . got a child that just has been diagnosed with Autism. She can go right onto our website and there are many, many trainings that deal specifically with Autism, ways to help the child develop skills, ways to deal with certain behaviors that autistic children have, signs and symptoms.

Similarly, Victoria described her role in providing professional development. She stated, "As the director I encourage those teachers, if we have a child that have some impairments, to go and make sure they have that training." She also described how she sometimes makes decisions about teacher placements based on their training and education. She explained, "If there is a child with disabilities we try to find a teacher who have some type of training in special needs children . . . I would hate to have a child with special needs and not have a teacher who have any training in special needs."

Victoria was also observed creating an agenda for orientation for new hires. She explained some of the training that she provides on site. She includes profiles of each student to share specific information to support the inclusion of children with disabilities. Victoria reported that teacher education was the most important thing for programs to ensure that children with disabilities were included. She said, "Some teachers are afraid

because they're—they feel they wouldn't know what to do or how to accommodate these children, so I think education is so important for all teachers.”

Administrators in this study reported across cases their value and practices related to teacher education and professional development. Examples from the data showed that administrators sought out training opportunities for teachers in their programs in response to children's individual needs, specifically related to children with disabilities, and providing accommodations. These practices were reflective of the human resources frame in that they were provided in response to the professional needs of the teachers.

Practices Reflective of the Political Frame

Leaders utilizing the political frame view organizations as “competitive arenas of scarce resources, competing interests, and struggles for power and advantage” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, pp. 21–22). When operating from the political frame, leaders understand when to engage their powers and with whom, and know how and when to negotiate and bargain for interests (Bolman & Deal, 2013). In the current study, scarce resources were referenced often as a challenge, but leaders in these ECE programs also worked to forge partnerships with external agencies through networking to access support services for children with disabilities in their programs. Almost every program accepted vouchers provided by DHHS which subsidized childcare for eligible families. While not specifically designated for children with disabilities, the subsidy provided support for at least one family specifically referenced by Pam, whose child who had a disability needed afterschool care, despite his being older than the program typically enrolled.

Emerging theme: Connecting children and families to external resources.

The most relevant practice reflective of the political frame that emerged as a theme across cases was the leader's connecting children and families to external resources. In almost every relevant example, program administrators discussed these connections in terms of making referrals. As Diane noted, the frequency with which this issue was discussed was possibly due to the context of ECE, in that children enter at an age when developmental concerns begin to emerge.

Diane shared her experience in connecting families and children to external resources when she stated,

We can't conclude that something's wrong, but what this does tell us is that we should ask a professional who specializes in child development to do an assessment and just let us know if there's more we could be doing or more supports that could be offered this child to boost this particular area instead of just saying we'll just wait and see, let's just ask . . . I spend tons of time doing—having conversations like that, similar to that to get the balls rolling, too. “Let's see about having a speech assessment. Let's see about having a full developmental eval. Let's see about having a psychologist look at this child's behavior,” and so those—I feel like that's the most time that I spend in my leadership role.

Angela offered a similar experience in her role as program administrator when she described making recommendations for referrals. She explained how that worked when she said, “So we did some more observations and we called mom in and said, ‘We need to bring somebody else in. Are you okay with that because she needs some additional help?’”

Lisa discussed connecting families and children to external resources. She referenced one particular agency, Bringing Out the Best that was mentioned by several

other program administrators in this study. Gladys, Pam, and Victoria specifically mentioned Bringing Out the Best as an agency with whom they collaborate when children show signs of difficulty or delay. Gladys referenced their success in applying the strategies learned from this external agency in supporting all of the children in her program.

Victoria described her role in connecting children and families to external resources when teachers were lacking in training related to children with disabilities. She expressed,

If they don't have the training then of course we reach out to our agencies and our community resources and get them in here to help that teacher with that training and there's a lot of help out here . . . we have used Guilford Child Development program specialists, infant/toddler specialists, we have used . . . Bringing Out the Best to come into the classroom to help us with the adjustment.

It is clear that leaders in inclusive ECE programs work to access external agencies as one way to support the inclusion of children with disabilities in their programs. Most often, these connections are forged as children are referred for developmental evaluations.

Practices Reflective of the Symbolic Frame

Leaders engaging the symbolic frame create powerful symbolism within organizations through the use of rituals, humor, and ceremonies, for example, and facilitate the development of strong organizational identity that is rooted in a shared vision (Bolman & Deal, 2013). In this research, practices reflective of the symbolic frame were evident in observations, documents and interviews. ECE program

administrators demonstrated symbolic frame practices such as holding a ceremony for staff to celebrate recent quality assessment scores at Evergreen, a reward system in place and a Teacher Appreciation Week party for teachers at Childcare World 1 and 2, and, sharing successes of successes in including children with disabilities in the past. Themes emerged across cases reflecting the symbolic frame including an expanded view of disability and developing an inclusive philosophy.

Emerging theme: Views of children with special needs. One theme that emerged when ECE program administrators discussed including children with disabilities were their views of children with special needs. Although the focus of the present research was specifically on ECE administrator practices related to children who qualified for services with IEPs or IFSPs, program administrators' responses revealed a perception of children with special needs that goes beyond the limited definition used in this research. According to the ADA (1990), disability is defined as "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment" (Section 12102). Views of disability by participants in this research included children with special needs in terms of behavioral challenges and medical needs including diabetes, allergies, and needs for additional caloric intake.

For example, Diane discussed behavior as a challenge for her program in working to include every child. She summarized her expanded view of needs related to behavior when she stated that

Serving children with challenging behaviors, especially children who act violently or, you know, strike out, you know, hit a lot of other children or hurt other children, kids who really have a hard time, you know, responding to adult redirection—those have been the children that we struggle the most with and we seem to be at risk of losing with our current methods of trying to include children with disabilities.

She also reviewed some of her program policies related to behavior:

Where it talks about behavior there is, like here, it says if a child repeatedly acts out with periods of aggressive or oppositional behavior in a single school day parents will be contacted and they have to come to the school within 45 minutes and provide the child with one-on-one support to finish the school day...I always try to promote the parents staying with the child, it's just sometimes parents will be really upset about that.

Diane again discussed some of the challenges she has with children related to behavior when she stated,

Many parents in this millennium feel very disempowered in terms of disciplining our children, setting limits at home, and so we have lots of children that enter early childhood, and it's kind of like everything revolves around them at home, and you come to school and there's a structure, and there's a program, and sometimes you can do things so you have to clean up, and they just kind of like really struggle with responding to redirection, accepting limits, you know, having to have a little bit of delayed gratification, and so, you know, children, these, I feel like this is not like a diagnosis, it's just a characteristic of millennium parenting, and you know, being busy people and letting our children kind of do what they want to do.

Thus, Diane exhibits an understanding of children in the context of their families and recognizes the challenges that families face in providing guidance to their children.

Angela discussed challenges related to behavior as well. In this example she discussed the challenge of being able to enroll a child who was exhibiting disruptive behavior. She stated,

We have had one case I can think of, of an extreme behavior situation that the mom was a curriculum facilitator for the school system and just said point blank I know he's got to get it together before he goes to the school system but I don't care if he doesn't get it together now. And I said so you're if he is picking up chairs and throwing them, and we have to keep everyone safe, and if he runs and jumps over a bookcase and could fall and break his leg, you don't care, she said as long as you can just watch him and keep him safe I'm okay with it. And so I said that's not okay because we have to make decisions for the total program. That was sad. We have—so I think we have a variety of things we're dealing with.

A second commonly referenced view of disability was related to children who had medical needs requiring program accommodations. In some cases, administrators reported being unable to enroll children with medical needs, and in other cases, medical needs were discussed in terms of accommodations programs were able to make. For some administrators, there were reports of challenges when families failed to report medical issues. For example, Sharon discussed the challenge of a family's reluctance to report a child's medical needs in the following excerpt,

For instance, I got a little baby have respiratory problems. I asked the mom or she, you know, didn't say anything. Everything was fine, but we noticed that she, you know, start breathing funny. And then we called her mom to tell her, she said, "Oh yeah, it's just respiratory." But that could be serious. So after, you know, I asked her about it she said at another daycare they had to call 911 because of her breathing. And I'm like, "That's something that should have been discussed, you know, because that's why I always ask . . . questions . . . and give you a chance to tell me." But she didn't tell us so that was kind of like a surprise, and scary at the same time. It's like she was . . . pretty much gasping for breath.

Relatedly, Pam expressed her inability to accommodate a family whose child had diabetes due to program policy preventing program personnel from administering medication.

In terms of dietary needs, several participants discussed accommodations for children based on medical needs related to allergies or needs for additional caloric intake. Diane was observed discussing a new child's need for Pediasure, a supplemental milk product that was recommended by the child's pediatrician. Evergreen was able to provide the accommodation of providing the supplement with a doctor's note. Angela also talked about allergies and dietary accommodations as a common phenomenon for which her program modifies meals.

In these examples, it is evident that participants included in their views of disability the medical needs and behavioral challenges that sometimes served as challenges in their efforts to include children. In some cases, program policies prevented children from being able to enroll or continue enrollment due to medical needs or behavioral concerns. In other cases, programs were able to provide accommodations for children in need of individualized care.

Emerging theme: Developing an inclusive philosophy. Leaders in these ECE programs similarly expressed philosophical beliefs that reflected their value of inclusion. According to Bolman and Deal (2013), "the symbolic leader believes that the most important part of a leader's job is inspiration—giving people something they can believe in" (p. 331). In the cases, ECE leaders promoted inclusion through creating program cultures reflective of their philosophies in support of inclusion. In some cases, leaders

reflected practices that revealed their belief that children with disabilities were treated the same way as children who were typically developing. In other cases, leaders expressed understanding of inclusion that required different approaches and adjusted levels of care and commitment. Examples are included here that were evidence of leaders' philosophies in support of inclusion.

Diane expressed the application of her practices as the same for children with and without disabilities. She stated, "The things that I do for kids with special needs we do for all children." Angela gave a specific example of how she applies similar practices to children with and without disabilities when she stated, "We have individual goals for every child in here . . . the goal is to try to make sure that they feel like their child is a part of the program."

Additionally, Angela reported her view that including children with disabilities does not require more than children who are typically developing when she said, "I think like any other prejudice it's the fear of the unknown if you have not worked with them before. Then you're thinking, I don't want to do it. And really it's—it's really not that different." Pam also referenced fear in terms of being something that inclusion minimizes when she said, "To be around children with special needs exposes all children to everything that could happen and you know, there's no, the fear goes away."

Sharon also experienced leadership practices reflective of the structural frame related to philosophy when she said, "Wasn't, we had to do anything special, you know, for her so she blended in. And then I had another child, I think he had Cerebral Palsy, but we didn't have to do anything special for him." She explained that inclusion came

naturally to her and that she felt that it didn't require anything different or special. Gladys mirrored this belief when she said, "You have to know how to deal with each child individually whether they have a special need or not, or whether they have exceptions or not, because they're all individuals even though they're all the same." Pam felt similarly and reported, "It's not even just special needs children, I mean all children are different and a good teacher will set up activities that will meet all children's abilities." Victoria expressed that she shared this view when she described tracking children's progress. She stated, "I have to say that has been very easy because I do it with each of the child whether or not they have an impairment."

Pam reported seeing no limitations to including children with disabilities. She stated, "I just don't see any limits for children with special needs with what we do because most of everything we do, like I said, we really don't have any limitations, you know, or I haven't personally run across any that would stop a child from being able to participate in any activity." This perspective contributed to her experience as an inclusive leader.

Angela reported her efforts in minimizing negative stigma of disability when she described how she supports families through the referral process. She said, "We're not here to single your child out . . . they don't like the labeling. And so, you know, we try to tell them, if you could just think of it not as labeling, but as trying to specifically meet your child's needs."

Sharon believed that working with children with disabilities required, "Just love, you just have to have the love and patience to care for them." Lisa also shared her efforts

to include children by, “just caring for them and you know, not making them feel like they’re any different than any other child.” She explained that she would

[t]ell the children that, ‘No . . . we’re not all alike. Everybody’s different. Everybody has certain things that are special about them’ . . . and to get the children to know that if they want somebody to respect them and play with them and be kind to them then they have to do the same towards the other children.

Victoria reported a similar sentiment when she shared strategies and goals for facilitating inclusion that included making every child feel a sense of belonging and in embracing differences.

Willingness to enroll and serve children with disabilities was evident of symbolic frame practices across cases as well. Angela, Lisa, and Gladys each described willingness as an essential first step. Angela cited being open to challenges. Lisa described her willingness and her understanding of children both with and without disabilities as needing access to similar experiences. As an example related to willingness, Gladys stated,

If we have a child and we’re not specifically trained for that, we will never turn a child away and say, “Hey, you know, we don’t know how to deal with children with autism or any disability.” It’s just we adapt and adjust accordingly so that we can, you know, include them in the environment.

Related to the view that children with and without disabilities do not require separate practices, Diane expressed her beliefs about children in general. She described what she termed “millennium parenting” and her beliefs about the needs of children as a result. She described this when she said,

This profile of this type of child, these are great kids, nothing wrong with them, it's just we all have a lot to learn, mom and dad have a lot to learn, you have a lot to learn, we have a lot to learn about you, there's a lot of reciprocal learning that's going to be taking place because it's a great opportunity for us to figure out how to begin to teach new skills about how to successfully enter a play group, how to respond to requests, you know, how to handle making choices, you know, how to regulate the rush of excitement that you feel, how to regulate the rush of anger that you feel, you know, there's so much opportunity for us to teach you this and that's what you come to preschool for . . . and to let children understand that there's a difference between adults and children, and what it really means that it's my job to keep you safe, and why you need to be able to rest and relax in the protection of knowing that someone's going to take care of you, and that you won't be allowed to do or say anything that you want, and that's good for you.

Diane's views about children in general contributed to her view that what she does for children with disabilities is the same as what she does for all children. She expressed a belief that many or all of the children in her program had goals related to responding to adults, emotion regulation, and following rules. Pam also reported her views of children in general when she stated,

There's no such thing as a bad child. There's a misunderstood child or there is a child that doesn't know how to make better choices for themselves and it is our job as early childhood educators to give them the skills and the knowledge to be able to make an intelligent choice about what they're doing.

Related to the facilitation of an inclusive ECE program philosophy, Diane explained her purpose in celebrating her staff members in a meeting that was observed by the researcher. She shared her perspective that despite low wages, people choose to work in ECE because of the connections they get to have with families and knowing that they make a difference in the lives of children. She explained why she cultivated culture within her program when she said,

Childcare centers have a tendency to easily develop negative social cultures among the teachers. And so I put a lot of intentionality into making sure that our culture stays positive, that we stay focused on the children and what Billy needs, and Sarah needs, and Bobby needs, and the Smith family needs, and what you need as a teacher, and not get caught up in, you know, who got to do this or didn't get to do that, and who came in late, and just the gossipy kind of stuff. If we, you know, really make our conversations be those of a professional learning community, then those are the things that we think about, and our work is kind of elevated a little bit, and becomes more professional, and so that's why I kind of do those things.

Diane also communicated a belief that inclusion requires family participation, as was evidenced by her program policies requiring family support. Diane expressed her perspective that successful inclusion depends on the right mixture of program elements, and that finding solutions involves a journey of discovery. She explained,

I think inclusion does usually work, and when it doesn't, I don't think that's a failure. I think those words about, you know, putting the opportunity for each child in the least restrictive environment, I think those are great words to live by. And we need to continue to just figure out ways to make that work. And when it doesn't it's not a failure. It's just a twist and turn along the journey...Some families we help for a little while, some we help for a long time. And just if we stay true to our professional work, I think that, you know, we should be careful to just keep encouraging ourselves and feeling good about the things that we do and not feeling bad about the things that we couldn't do.

The development of an inclusive philosophy was evident across participants as exemplified in the above section reflective of the symbolic frame. These administrators' perspectives included their views related to the benefits of inclusion, the idea that inclusion comprises making accommodations for children without diagnosed disabilities as well as children with IEPs and IFSPs, and that children with disabilities deserve equitable access to educational settings.

Challenges

Challenges to including children with disabilities are well documented in the literature (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Brotherson et al., 2001). A specific challenge that participants in this study discussed was related to supporting families through the referral process for children who were not yet diagnosed, but whom program personnel felt needed additional evaluation to determine whether an IEP or IFSP was needed. This practice of program administrators was cited as a challenge because administrators found it difficult to navigate these sensitive conversations. Administrators reported challenges through this process when encountering families whom they described as being “in denial” about a child’s potential disability. Moreover, the challenges that were cited by participants in this study confirm past research findings related to perceived challenges related to lack of resources in terms of education, personnel, and time (Bailey & du Plessis, 1997; Bond, 2010; Brotherson et al., 2001; Leatherman, 2007; Mohay & Reid, 2006). Examples of participant’s references to a lack of resources as a challenge to inclusion are described following their reports related to supporting families through the referral process.

Emerging Theme: Supporting Families through the Referral Process (Human Resource Frame)

As noted by several participants, early childhood is a unique time in a child’s life when oftentimes disabilities become evident. An emerging theme across participants was the challenge of supporting families through the referral process. Diane summarized this experience when she said,

A lot of special needs are undiagnosed as of yet, and so that's why I say it's hard. We're talking about, okay, well define disabilities, because we have several kids and we're on the journey of family acceptance to even more forward with taking a closer look.

She goes on to say,

We talk about children with disabilities but these kids don't yet have an IFSP or an IEP but this has to start somewhere and because we're dealing with young children it often starts here with us. And so I think that's probably what I actually do the most of is . . . guiding parents. Some parents go through that process very easily, for some parents it's very difficult and takes a lot of time for them to wrap their mind around, you know, calling in a specialist for anything for their child. You know, they have different fears like oh, there might be a label or oh no, I don't, you know, they have a bad experience with special ed or some reason they don't want to go there.

Several of the participants referenced their challenges in working to support families in coming to terms with concerns that program personnel had regarding children's development and the need for seeking external assessments. For example, Sharon disclosed, "after talking to the mom first she was in denial, and then, you know, speech therapists start coming and then, you know, got better." Angela explained, "It's hard to hear that something might be a little different about my child." She described another experience in working through the process with a family. Angela described her experience in serving a child in her program about whom teachers had expressed concerns. Her role was to support teachers to communicate with the family regarding strengths of the child as well as to share data in the form of observations. Data were used as evidence to support program personnel's concerns and recommendations. She described the family member's reactions in coming to terms with her suggestion to

connect with professionals from outside the program to determine whether the child would qualify for an IEP or an IFSP. Angela recognized that this was a difficult process for this family and that their position as well educated parents might have contributed to their perspectives about their child.

Pam provided her perspective on supporting families through the referral process as well. She explained her experience with families coming to terms with their child's potential disability and her roles in facilitating this process:

My experience is, unless they already come to me with an IEP or they already have a program or they're already in therapy for what is going on, parents are in denial. I mean you know, we are not doctors, so we have to be really careful how we bring up, and in which, you know, we have parent-teacher conferences so it's easy for us to say, you know, we've noticed this is going on with your child and that raises some concerns for us and our suggestion is he, maybe you need to take him to the doctor and ask is there, are—what's the reasoning your child is behaving like this or whatever, and parents are in denial: nothing's wrong with my child, it's all the other people, it's all the other children in the classroom or it's because you're just not listening to them or you know, they're just full or you know, they don't listen when they're at home either, they're just, that's just, they're four.

Pam emphasized her efforts in building trust with families at various events throughout the year. She also pointed out her belief in the value of early intervention as effective in helping children gain skills to be more successful. She also recognized families' difficulty in coming to terms with the possibility that their child might have a disability.

Victoria expressed similar experiences with families and her roles in supporting families through the process of referral. Like Pam, she cited experiencing families' doubt in response to teachers' concerns. Victoria, like Pam, valued early intervention. She recognized that objective observations provided families with evidence to support

program's recommendations. Similarly to Angela, Victoria recognized that families relied on support from friends and family members when these situations arose. She also acknowledged teachers' experiences with feeling uncomfortable and possibly undervalued when families did not respond to their recommendations for further evaluation.

ECE administrators in this study expressed their challenges related to supporting families through the referral process. They cited difficulty in navigating sensitive conversations and recognized that families often approached these revelations with skepticism.

Emerging Theme: Lack of Resources (Political Frame)

Literature supports the commonly cited challenges of a lack of resources by practitioners in the field of early childhood education related to the inclusion of children with disabilities. Results of this study confirm those findings of past research (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014). Participants cited a number of challenges that were categorized under this theme including lack of time, lack of trained personnel, and lack of education or experience. Another category related to the administrators' needs to defer the cost of additional supports to families is included in this section, as these experiences indicate a lack of funding or personnel to support the inclusion of children with disabilities.

In terms of a lack of experience, Diane noted that "sometimes you have situations where there's childcare centers and it's the very first time I've ever had a child with special needs in my classroom and not really knowing what to do." Lisa explained that

sometimes there's something that's going on that they don't really have a lot of information on . . . making sure that they understand and how to deal with the child with certain disabilities might be a challenge, especially if they've never worked with a child with disabilities. I do see that sometimes.

Victoria stated that “Some teachers are afraid because they're—they feel they wouldn't know what to do or how to accommodate these children.”

Lack of education was cited as a challenge by Lisa who noted that “I don't think there are a lot of classes that teach inclusion.” She explains that unless a teacher is enrolled specifically in special education, then teachers who are entering the early childhood education workforce are not getting enough education related to including children with disabilities.

Victoria discussed her experiences in having children recommended for placement in alternative programs by service providers who have completed evaluations for children as part of the referral process. She explained that recommendations to families to relocate their children were made based on these professionals' perspectives that children need specialized assistance that they believed Green Leaf was unable to provide. Although she did not disagree with these recommendations, she explained her response in terms of wanting to support and not confuse families who are the recipients of professionals' suggestions to leave her program.

Some participants described challenges related to a lack of resources in terms of lack of adequate personnel. Diane explained, “I have two teachers in the room, but I can't take one of those teachers just to be with Billy¹ because then the other teacher will

¹ Pseudonym.

be alone with 15 students.” Diane was explaining her process for involving families when children need additional support. In discussing this further she explained, “To be quite honest, the ratios were inadequate because their child’s behaviors were so acute that they needed more support than just being in a typical early childhood ratio setting.”

Victoria expressed a similar challenge when she stated that “they may need a one-on-one representative to come in and help them instead of a teacher who is taking care of this child and ten other children.”

Finally, both Diane and Victoria expressed a need to defer to families for additional supports for children to participate in their inclusive programs. This practice is an outcome of a lack of resources. Diane said for example, in describing her policy for requiring families to provide support for children at the program’s discretion, “some of that responsibility for supervision I ask the parents to share and that pretty much results in half the time or more with withdrawal because they’re like I’ve got to go to work, I’m not doing all this.” She stated that “when children need extra supervision, I defer to the parent.”

Diane also reads from her family handbook to describe the program policy related to requiring families to provide additional supports for children who might need them:

If teachers have questions about the possibility of a developmental delay or there is a need to promote prosocial behavior, dental health, good vision, hearing acuity, you know, whatever, we may refer the child to be evaluated by professionals or a specialist outside our school, you know, parents will have the opportunity to consider proposed support staff, resource agencies and services, parents will be notified before their child is evaluated or special services begin, you know, and then it says parents are responsible for the cost of evaluation, support services, special things, and on and on and on and on and on and our policy goes on and says that additional resources are an optional for parents,

generally speaking, and our staff will encourage you to try services or equipment intended to provide additional support toward meeting you child's needs, however, if special equipment is necessary for basic care or safety or if a child's accumulated more than eight behavior logs in a two-month period parents must accept the referrals or employ similar services or equipment within 30 days in order for the child's enrollment to be continued. So you can see, it's very clear that parents have to buy into whatever is needed in order for their children to be able to successfully participate in the program.

Similarly, Victoria discussed the need for families to provide additional supports for their children. In discussing a child that was previously enrolled in the program she explained that, "We could not accommodate because we didn't have a one-to-one. We tried, but it was up to the parent to take the lead on that. She had to make sure that she identified a one-to-one so that he would have everything that he needed."

Challenges to leading in inclusive ECE programs were evident across cases related to supporting families through the referral process as well as to a lack of resources. Specifically, administrators reported their desires for explicitly trained teachers and in Diane's case, she at times required families to provide one-on-one support in lieu of providing additional staff at her program's expense.

Overcoming Challenges

ECE administrators were asked to disclose their strategies for overcoming challenges in response to those they cited in interviews. A number of themes emerged as relevant across cases, including their practices related to collecting data and sharing information to support families through the referral process, collaborating both within and outside of their programs, and securing professional development opportunities for their staff members.

Emerging Theme: Collecting Data and Sharing Information

Participants reported collecting data and sharing information as one way to overcome the challenges they faced in supporting families through the referral and IEP process. Several administrators referenced collecting objective data to support their recommendations in the form of observations, anecdotal notes, and with assessment tools.

Diane referred to the collection of data as a strategy she employed in supporting families through the referral process when she shared, “I feel like a lot of what I do to support children with disabilities is start the referral process . . . just coaching parents and families and, you know, teaching teachers to observe and document.” She went on to describe how an assessment tool that her program utilizes in collecting developmental data to share children’s progress along developmental trajectories is used to provide evidence of concerns. She explained,

Having a tool to go to I think is really important . . . I think helps validate the way we talk to families and say, you know, here are some strengths that we’re seeing and let’s also take a look at this, these are some areas that we want to address and make sure that we do everything we possibly can to support this child and so we’re seeing these and these are typical indicators that we might see at nine-months-old and being that so-and-so is 18 months old or three years old, it’s not definitive, we can’t conclude that something’s wrong, but what this does tell us is that we should ask a professional who specializes in child development to do an assessment and just let us know if there’s more we could be doing or more supports that could be offered this child to boost this particular area instead of just saying we’ll just wait and see.

Angela shared her practice of collecting data as one way to overcome challenges related to supporting families through the referral process. She also cited engaging in information sharing to support families to know what to ask in their IEP meetings.

Lisa made reference to her teachers collecting data in the form of observations as a first step toward making referrals for children in her program. She explained that teachers bring her their observations first. She then provides families with contact information for agencies.

Pam also explained data collection as an avenue for overcoming challenges. Specifically she asks teachers to keep a diary to determine whether patterns in behavior emerged from which interventions could be planned.

Victoria described data collection in the form of observations and progress reports which are shared with families at several points across the school year. She cited these opportunities to share information with families as one way she overcomes the challenge of supporting families through the referral process, especially when families exhibit skepticism.

Across participants, there was evidence of data collection and information sharing as a strategy for overcoming the challenges related to supporting families through the IEP and referral process. ECE administrators shared their perspectives that these practices supported teachers' concerns, prepared families for transitions, and assisted teams in developing individualized interventions.

Emerging Theme: Collaboration

ECE administrators in the current study reported collaborating both within their programs and with agencies external to their programs in addressing challenges they faced. Collaboration within programs was evidenced by their reports of working together, both with other administrators and with teachers in their programs to problem-

solve challenges with children and to support families through the referral and IEP process. Collaboration with external agencies provided avenues through which administrators supported families to have children evaluated, and to serve children in their programs.

Diane reported collaborating with teachers in working to support families through the referral process. She stated, “The teachers have a big role in this, too, the referring children part, but I have a big role in it as well.” She structured her staff meetings to include time for teachers to work together to problem-solve and brainstorm strategies. She stated, “A portion of our staff meetings are dedicated . . . to discussing children and just sharing and brainstorming together and . . . I noticed that we tend to talk a lot about our kids with special needs at those meetings during that time.” She also reported allowing teachers to add agenda items to staff meetings. In discussing her intake and transitions meetings with newly enrolled families, she also discussed communication among families and teachers in her program. She stated, “I structure a high level of communication so that myself and most especially the teachers have complete and thorough understanding of how we can support this child.” Diane was observed sharing an IFSP with teachers that she obtained from a newly enrolled family, as well as documenting child information in a communication log to be kept in the child’s classroom cubby and added to by teachers and the family. Diane reported collaborating with external agencies to notify them of her program’s intention to serve children with disabilities, as well as working to contact professionals to come in and observe children when concerns arose.

Angela also discussed her role in facilitating collaboration in her program. She spoke often of sharing roles and responsibilities with her Assistant Director. She cited attending initial conferences with teachers and newly enrolled families, as well as conducting intake meetings with families to collect information from families about children's individual needs. She also discussed working with her teachers and families when concerns about children's development arose to develop action plans prior to seeking external resources for referrals. Additionally, she shared several examples of when she had contacted external agencies to come to her program to conduct assessments when children were referred. She welcomed families to bring in other family members when concerns arose as well.

Sharon reported hosting staff meetings to share information with her staff, as well as spending time in the classroom when needed. She was observed checking on the teachers in her program when she came into the classroom and spoke to children and teachers. She was also observed talking to a family about a schedule change and making alternate plans for transportation.

Lisa viewed her program as collaborative and reported a "team effort" among administrative staff in making decisions. She spent time providing direct support for teachers. In working with families, Lisa was observed in a conversation with a mother who was expressing concerns about the program and her child's belongings. Specifically, the mother was concerned about the absence of a pad on the diaper changing table and about her child's milk cup. Lisa welcomed this mother to leave her own changing pad, and walked with the mother to the classroom to discuss accommodating

the mother's request with the teacher. Additionally, Lisa worked with her teacher to address the mother's concerns about her child's cup. She also described working with teachers and external agencies in making referrals for children when concerns arose.

Gladys reported collaborating within her program and with external agencies to overcome challenges. She worked with teachers to discuss issues and concerns about specific children. She reported working with families and related services providers to gain an understanding of children's individual needs and to develop and implement strategies to support children. She utilized the expertise of one of her teachers who was the parent of a child with Autism to support the children, teachers, and families through facilitating the sharing of information, strategies, and resources. She communicated with her co-director throughout observations to divide labor, problem-solve, and share tasks. She reported opportunities to provide input to the corporate office and district manager of Childcare World regarding program policies and procedures. Gladys also reported seeking support from other Childcare World programs when she said,

We can find help in so many different places, you know. We'll ask supervisors, we may ask other directors who have similar instances . . . there's a school that has a focus of children with special needs, so we may call them and say, "Hey, do you have something there? Do you have an expert? Do you have a pamphlet? Do you know something?" So it's just finding out from resources and asking for help.

Pam facilitated collaboration to overcome challenges in her program by sharing ideas with her staff to address challenging behaviors. She was observed providing direct support for a child and then communicating her strategies with the classroom teachers

once the issue had been resolved. She reported contacting external agencies in referring children for evaluations.

Finally, Victoria collaborated with other members of her administrative team in securing adapted materials for children with disabilities in her program. Her program had a policy in place to facilitate communication and information sharing among related services providers, teachers, and families in her program.

Emerging Theme: Professional Development

Participants reported seeking professional development as a way to overcome challenges they faced in leading inclusive ECE programs. Professional development was sought specifically for teachers related to working with children with disabilities and was cited as a solution for overcoming challenges as well.

Diane cited her role in seeking professional development opportunities for her teachers as a way she worked to solve challenges related to including children with disabilities, specifically related to sharing information and facilitating communication with families. She mentioned providing professional development herself in teaching her staff members how to collect objective observation data to support program recommendations for referrals. She cited the need for more opportunities for professional development when she said, “I think we have some training needs . . . there is not a lot of training that’s frequently offered that supports early childhood teachers, and students with disabilities.”

Angela also reported providing professional development for her staff members, also specifically in regards to collecting objective data to support program

recommendations for referrals. She cited needing teachers who are trained to be able to successfully include children with disabilities in ECE programs.

Sharon reported connecting her staff members to professional development opportunities as well. She noted specific topics including SIDS, Conscious Discipline, using Epipens, and other sessions related to children with disabilities in general.

Lisa said that her staff faces challenges when they do not have adequate training related to supporting children with disabilities as well. She cited connecting with a local child development agency to secure training for her staff members. She reported having attending a professional development session that she found very helpful in providing strategies for how to include children with disabilities in classroom activities, but she also noted that there needed to be more of those available. She cited the need for trained staff, specifically in working with children with disabilities as a primary need for programs to be able to include children successfully.

Gladys mentioned professional development workshops as one of the ways she supports inclusion in her program. She explained that she and her co-director observe staff members and make recommendations for specific workshops when children with disabilities are enrolled. Gladys also suggested a need for more training as primary consideration for how programs can successfully include children with disabilities.

When asked what programs need, she stated,

Teachers who are specifically trained to deal with children with disabilities . . . we can go to workshops and get training here and there. We can call and have people come in, but when you have somebody that specifically is training for that . . . maybe it's a person that can go to all the schools.

Similarly, Pam cited specifically trained personnel as a way to overcome the challenges she faced in leading in an inclusive ECE program. She reported connecting her staff members to professional development opportunities via Childcare World Corporate webinars.

Victoria said that she encourages her teachers to get specific training when children with disabilities are enrolled in their classrooms. She was observed making plans for new hire orientation, and described providing new hires with specific training on individual children, including modeling interactions and sharing information about the needs of children with disabilities. Finally, similar to Pam and Gladys, Victoria felt that programs needed staff who had specific training in working with children with disabilities in order to include them successfully in ECE programs.

Essences

The final step in Moustakas's (1994) phenomenological analysis requires the reduction of the phenomenon to its essence. The combined textural, structural, and composite emerging themes reflective of practices through the theoretical framework yielded five essential themes that capture the experience of inclusive ECE leadership. The themes that emerged as outcomes of this research helped to capture the true essence of the phenomenon of inclusive ECE leadership. The essence has five domains which integrate the experience and the context of the experience: Inclusive ECE leaders are flexible; Inclusive ECE leaders provide emotional support to families; Inclusive ECE leaders support teachers; Inclusive ECE leaders utilize external resources; and Inclusive

ECE leaders value inclusion. Each of these essential themes is explained in detail in the next sections.

Inclusive ECE Leaders are Flexible

In this study, it was evident that leaders in inclusive programs were flexible in serving children with disabilities and their families. Evidence revealed their willingness to make accommodations to their programs both physically (i.e., purchasing safety equipment), by shifting staff, and by being open to interpreting program rules more flexibly as a way to provide accommodations. For example, Gladys expressed her flexibility when she reported that she would provide medication to a child who needed it to function, even though program rules generally do not allow the administration of medication to children. Lisa also expressed flexibility when she shared her willingness to continue to provide care for a child with a disability who had aged out of her program, because the family wanted their child to continue to come there. Administrators reported providing adapted equipment and classroom materials to ensure that differentiated instruction could be implemented. Moreover, several program administrators expressed willingness to provide accommodations in the form of dietary modifications for children who had medical needs.

Flexibility was also evident through the practice of shifting staff members and in being available to provide direct support for teachers and children. Gladys specifically reported leaving her office paperwork until late in the evening on occasions because spending time in the classrooms took priority.

Inclusive ECE Leaders Provide Emotional Support to Families

Inclusive leaders in this research demonstrated their roles in supporting families in a variety of ways. Most notably, administrators expressed their judicious and delicate approaches in making recommendations for children to be assessed when concerns about development or behavior arose. Their practices reflected understanding families' needs to process difficult news and to approach referral recommendations with skepticism. Angela specifically cited allowing family members time to process information and welcoming their family members into her program to observe and provide recommendations prior to formalizing referrals. Gladys supported families through providing encouragement and expressing her willingness to try to accommodate a child's special needs despite her perceived lack of expertise in special education. Diane, Lisa, Pam, and Victoria cited collecting data and sharing information as a way that they support families through the referral process. Furthermore, Diane was observed acknowledging a mother's anxiety in bringing her child to school and comforting the mother as she brought her child to the classroom. She was also observed sharing information with the mother about how IFSP goals would be incorporated into classroom activities. Angela supported families when she provided oversight to related services therapy sessions wherein she evaluated their effectiveness.

Inclusive ECE Leaders Support Teachers

Leaders in this study reported supporting teachers through providing direct classroom support, shifting staff, providing classroom materials, and providing professional development. Pam was observed providing classroom support for a child

who was having difficulty joining a large group activity. Several of the participants reported stepping into classrooms and/or removing children from the classroom setting when disruptive or difficult behaviors arose. Diane reported supporting teachers by implementing her policy requiring family members to provide direct support for children the program deemed needed additional support to participate. Victoria and Diane reported making staffing decisions to facilitate the inclusion of children with disabilities, either in terms of matching staff education levels to children's needs or in providing additional staff to support children. All of the administrators discussed providing training for teachers. Some reported providing training personally, and every administrator reported connecting staff members to training via local child development agencies or through corporate webinars.

Inclusive ECE Leaders Utilize External Resources

In terms of utilizing external resources, each of the administrators referenced connecting their teaching staff to professional development opportunities specifically related to working with children with disabilities outside of their programs, as mentioned in the section regarding supporting teachers. Moreover, each of these administrators referenced local agencies in either connecting families to professionals in the referral process or in facilitating partnerships with related services providers. For example, several of the participants mentioned Bringing out the Best, a local agency who consults with ECE programs to assist staff members in developing strategies for addressing challenging child behaviors. Several programs also referenced acceptance of the DHHS

childcare subsidies and the childcare food subsidies, which require administrators to track and submit attendance data.

Inclusive ECE Leaders Value Inclusion

The ECE program administrators shared their value for inclusion. They discussed the benefits of inclusion for families and for children who had disabilities and children who were typically developing. Administrators cited justification for inclusion as law, as a right, and as the moral “right thing to do.” For example, Angela described some programs’ reluctance to include children with disabilities as prejudice based on fear. Several of the participants viewed disability as not requiring procedures or practices above and beyond those they would implement for any child. For example, Sharon said, “I always like to tell people, you know, I treat people the way I like to be treated . . . so we just have to deal with it and just love them, just keep on going.” Gladys also expressed a strong belief in including children with disabilities as being morally correct.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The inclusion of children with disabilities in ECE programs has long been the subject of research, policy, and leading ECE organization's recommendations for implementing best practices (DEC/NAEYC, 2009; Green et al., 2014; Rafferty et al., 2003; Strain & Bovey, 2011). Nevertheless, data show that a majority of preschool children with disabilities receive special education services in separate settings (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Furthermore, current drafted policy recently released by the USDHHS and the USDOE builds on past research and policy to provide a unified definition of inclusion in ECE to increase "public understanding of the science that supports meaningful inclusion of children with disabilities," to make recommendations, and to identify free resources to increase the inclusion of children with disabilities in high-quality ECE programs (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Education, 2015, p. 1). This latest policy development in the field of ECE underscores the relevance of the current research in terms of public and professional priorities for increasing access to inclusive programs. This study sought to explore inclusive ECE administrators' practices that promote inclusion, an area of research that has been largely overlooked, but one that demands investigation as the field pushes toward expanded implementation of these recommendations.

The research questions addressed in the current study were: (a) How does the practice of ECE Leaders (reflective of each of Bolman and Deal's leadership frames) promote the inclusion of children with disabilities in ECE programs?; (b) What are ECE Leaders' perspectives of the challenges they face in practicing inclusion in ECE programs?; and (c) What are ECE Leaders' perspectives of how they overcome challenges in practicing inclusion?

The results of the study answered these research questions in identifying practices of ECE leaders across the structural, human resource, political, and symbolic frames that promoted the inclusion of children with disabilities in their programs. Within the structural frame, leaders were found to be providing direct support for children with disabilities, making program accommodations, providing oversight to teachers and related services providers, and setting expectations for teacher practices. Within the human resource frame, leaders were found to be building partnerships with families, facilitating partnerships with related services providers, facilitating collaboration within the program, and providing and valuing teacher education and professional development related to children with disabilities. Practices reflected in the political frame were those of connecting children and families to external resources. Within the symbolic frame, leaders developed inclusive philosophies within their programs and shared expanded views of disability. Furthermore, administrators' provided their perspectives of challenges and strategies they use to overcome those challenges. Participants in the current study reported their challenges in supporting families through the referral process and in facing a lack of resources including time, money, and trained personnel. These

administrators reported collecting student data, collaborating within and outside of their programs, and seeking and accessing professional development opportunities as strategies for overcoming challenges in their inclusive ECE programs.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the practices of inclusive ECE leaders in supporting the inclusion of children with disabilities in their programs. The study also sought to ascertain leaders' perceptions of challenges they face in including children with disabilities, as well as solutions they enact and envision in overcoming challenges in implementing the inclusion of children with disabilities in their programs. This phenomenological case study design aimed to gain an understanding of leaders' practices and perceptions regarding inclusion of children with disabilities in their programs. Leaders in ECE were identified as program administrators or directors of programs serving children aged birth through five years of age, or including children in that age range, who reported serving children with disabilities in their programs. Further criteria were incorporated to ensure that programs meeting the highest quality rating standards in the state were identified as recruitment sites. Practices and perceptions of participants were reflected in observations, interviews, and program documents.

Chapter I included a rationale for the current study and delineated the problem addressed through the research. Definitions were included for clarity, and the research questions were presented. Chapter II included an explanation of Bolman and Deal's (2013) leadership theory in detail as the theoretical context through which this study was carried out. Leadership theory was used as a basis for developing an understanding of

leadership practices in inclusive ECE programs in this study. Relevant literature regarding inclusive leadership practices across the structural, human resources, political, and symbolic frames (Bolman & Deal, 2013) was reviewed to expose trends and gaps that the current research sought to address.

In Chapter III, the vision for this research was presented, along with the research framework, epistemology, researcher positionality, and a detailed description of the research design, including specific methodology that was utilized in the study. Data collection sites were described in detail, including the inclusion, exclusion, and desired site features, which were employed with the intention of identifying administrators of programs that included children with disabilities as a reflection of their program philosophy. Participants and recruitment procedures were explained, followed by descriptions of data collection and analysis procedures employed in this study. Data management, trustworthiness, and ethics were addressed as well.

In Chapter IV, results were presented in the form of site and participant descriptions, textural and structural participant profiles, and emerging themes across cases within the framework of the leadership theory employed in this study. Finally, essential elements were identified to capture the true essence of inclusive ECE leadership practice.

This chapter includes an evaluation of the theoretical framework in terms of its application to this phenomenological case study is provided. The literature that was presented in Chapter II will be revisited and discussed in relationship to the findings of

this study. Limitations and future directions are presented and recommendations for practice are discussed with consideration for recent policy developments.

Evaluation of the Theoretical Framework

This study employed a theoretical framework based on the leadership theory of Bolman and Deal (2013). The authors' theory of leadership practice is rooted in organizational research, and is presented as a tool through which organizational leadership can be evaluated, reframed or reimagined, and applied. The four frames they present are described as “mental models—or sets of ideas and assumptions—that you carry in your head to help you understand and negotiate a particular ‘territory’” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 10). According to the authors, effective leaders engage the four frames in their approaches to management, in problem-solving and decision-making, and they shift frames intuitively as necessary. The current study included interviews, observations, and documents and data were examined in terms of the frames engaged through practices reported and observed.

The leadership framework provided a useful tool for organizing practices of inclusive ECE leaders. Practices were evident that could be categorized as reflective of each of the frames. For example, when leaders discussed decisions regarding shifting staff members among different classrooms as an accommodation for children with disabilities, the practice was reflective of the structural frame in terms of being related to coordinating roles. When the administrators shared their practice of providing professional development opportunities for their staff members, the human resource frame was engaged. Connecting families and children to external resources was

reflective of the political frame; whereas, strong philosophies toward inclusion were reflective of the symbolic frame.

However, there are unique elements of ECE programs, and specifically those that are independent of public systems that a model of leadership theory focused on leadership within the organization might not address. For example, in independent ECE programs, families and children are essentially customers of a business, as they are choosing childcare and paying tuition to attend in many cases. Partnerships with families are vital in securing customers when the care of their children is the service the program is selling. Furthermore, leaders in inclusive programs might experience the need to serve as advocates for the children with disabilities, as was evident in the study by Hoppey and McLeskey (2010). In the current study, partnerships with families were included in the category of the human resource frame. However, the model was not intended as applicable to the business aspect of ECE programs and it might not have accounted for the vital role of administrators in building partnerships with families, had it not been loosely interpreted.

Furthermore, in applying this leadership theory to inclusive practices only, elements related to program infrastructure, which clearly contribute to a program's sustainability, were not necessarily captured. Although potentially more closely associated with the focus of this research, administrators' roles in contributing to the infrastructure of inclusive ECE programs cannot be understated. For example, interviews and observations yielded a wealth of information regarding the daily work involved in ECE program administration. Although not related directly to inclusion, administrators

were observed and discussed completing tasks such as cleaning fish tanks, snaking toilets, moving cars out of the parking lot, and working on an air conditioning unit. Applied more generally, the theoretical framework could have evaluated administrators' contributions to program infrastructure.

The theoretical framework was applied to data as a way to categorize practices into the four frames. There are risks however, when parts are separated from the whole of the experience via data analysis. Moustakas (1994) describes the process of separating the object as a point of focus but with the purpose of viewing it through varied perspectives to eventually unify the parts into a whole. In reality, and Bolman and Deal (2013) would agree, each practice likely reflected engagement in several frames at one time. For example, a decision to shift staff members' classroom assignments in response to children's individual needs could be viewed as a practice reflective of the structural frame and of the human resource frame at the same time. Moving teachers is a staffing decision, but the reason behind it is related to caring for teachers and children.

Revisiting the Literature

The literature that was presented in Chapter II is reviewed in this section and discussed in relationship to the findings of this study. Although elements that were reflective of previous research emerged in some of the data in this study, others were not captured, and several did not emerge as essential. Comparisons and contrasts follow.

Practices Reflected in the Structural Frame

The major themes that emerged in the current study reflective of the structural frame were those related to providing direct support as an administrator role, making

program accommodations, providing oversight to teachers and related services providers, and setting expectations for teacher practices. However, there were some data elements related to service delivery models, enrollment and placement decisions, instructional practices, and resources as well.

Although DeVore and Russell (2007) captured the key inclusive practice of having all of the educators interacting with all of the children, rather than dividing children into target intervention groups or otherwise limiting interactions between specific professionals and children, some of the administrators in this research reported pull-out practices of related services providers. For example, in the studies by Salisbury (2006) and DeVore and Russell (2007), the practice of providing related services in the context of the classroom setting were found to be facilitators of inclusion. Although neither reported nor observed as a practice within the programs included in the present study, it is possible that these practices were simply not discussed nor observed. On the contrary, Victoria and Angela specifically discussed the occurrence of pull-out therapy sessions within their programs.

Relatedly, DeVore et al. (2011) described inclusive practices of collaborative consultation, wherein professionals such as speech-language pathologists, occupational and physical therapists, early childhood special educators, early childhood educators, and families work together to build relationships, determine roles and responsibilities, gather information, identify goals and strategies, implement strategies, and monitor progress. Although there was evidence of some practices to facilitate collaboration among families, providers, and teachers in the current study, some administrators took on the role of the

“middle man” and were not actively involved, and did not appear to be expecting nor facilitating a comparable level of collaboration. However, Victoria shared her program’s policy outlining procedures to be followed by related services providers, families, and teachers, by outlining a structure for communication among constituents of the program.

Interestingly, although Purdue (2009) identified the abdication of care and education of children with disabilities by classroom teachers to support staff, including assistant teachers and/or related services providers, as a barrier to inclusion, several of the participants in the current study cited their desires to employ or utilize a specialist to provide one-on-one services to children in their programs.

The practice of setting expectations for teacher practices that emerged in the current study reflected several of those indicated in the literature review. For example, Salisbury (2006) found that children with disabilities in the partially inclusive schools were served in general education classrooms and instruction was differentiated within those classrooms to meet the needs of all students, with appropriate support personnel in place in the classrooms. Purdue’s (2009) study similarly revealed that teachers who modified curriculum and practices to meet the needs of individual children were including children successfully. A majority of the administrators in the current study indicated their expectations that teachers provide differentiated instruction and they provided oversight of lesson plans to ensure that modifications were planned and provided by teachers. Finally, Hoppey and McLeskey (2010) found that the use of data to define goals and standards lent to buffering external pressure in the form of concerned families. In the cases explored in the current study, the administrators reported collecting

data to support families through the referral process. Teachers were reported to be largely responsible for collecting objective data to this end.

Hurley and Horn (2010) found that stakeholders valued programs that provided accommodations and adaptations to meet the needs of individual children. The provision of program accommodations was evident across participants in the present study in the form of expectations for differentiated instructional practices, provision of adapted equipment, flexibility in application of program rules, and food modifications.

The organization and administration of resources within educational settings is leadership practice reflective of the structural frame, especially when related to staffing and providing time. DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2014) found that resources within inclusive schools may need to be added or shifted, specifically in terms of professional development and personnel to provide time for teachers to plan and receive professional continuing education. Participants in the current study did report shifting staff and making staffing decisions based on children's individual needs; however, the provision of time for planning was not designated by the participants.

Clearly communicating expectations for working with children with disabilities is another practice reflective of the structural frame in which leaders can engage. For example, with regard to policies, Purdue (2009) found that program documents often included clauses of conditionality for including children with disabilities. Additionally, verbal statements and practices in Purdue's (2009) study reflected conditionality and illustrated the denial of rights outlined in national and early childhood policies. Therefore, one facilitator of inclusion was found to be the explicit inclusion of statements

in policies informing program staff of their legal obligation to include all children. A majority of the program policies reviewed in the current study were not explicit, and some reflected conditionality, especially related to children's challenging behavior. For example, Evergreen's Family Handbook stated,

We strive to make accommodations for all applicants and children with special needs are always welcome. In some cases specific equipment, training, additional staff, or specialists may be required in order to meet a student's needs and are at the parents' expense. In some cases a modified schedule may be required by the director. Continued enrollment of any student will be based on assessing the successfulness of the placement and supporting the needs of all the children in the class.

Conditionality was also evident in the Evergreen Handbook when it presented the following information:

Our staff is prepared to serve children who function well in a typical preschool class size with the stimulation of a wide variety of accessible materials. In group settings teachers are somewhat limited in the amount of one-on-one time they can devote to dealing with an individual child's behavior . . . Parents are responsible for the cost of evaluation, support staff, resource services, special equipment and/or therapists . . . Generally speaking, additional resources are an option for parents and our staff will encourage you to try services and/or equipment intended to provide additional support toward meeting your child's needs. However, if special equipment is necessary for basic safety or care, or a child has accumulated 8 or more Behavior Logs in an [sic] two month period, the parents must accept the referrals or employ similar services/equipment within 30 days of receiving the referral(s) in order for the child's enrollment to continue . . . In some cases it may be required that an individual child has his/her own parent chaperone present in order to participate.

The expressed conditionality in these examples is concerning in that behavior challenges pose a potential avenue for exclusion. Furthermore, such program policies indicate the requirement that families assume the responsibility for the attainment and costs of

adapted equipment for a child with disabilities. Purdue (2009) also found that the need for resources, including modifications of physical settings, materials, and personal support were cited as reasons to exclude children with disabilities. It is unclear how these policies may affect the children with disabilities and their families in the particular program mentioned above, but there are clear indications of conditionality.

The essential theme that inclusive ECE leaders are flexible is reflected in the structural frame as well. In the current study, flexibility was evident in leaders' application of program rules in an effort to support the inclusion of children with disabilities. Implications of this finding are discussed in the following section related to recommendations and areas for growth.

Practices Reflected in the Human Resource Frame

The current research findings reflective of the human resource frame included building partnerships with families, facilitating partnerships with related services providers, facilitating collaboration within the program, and providing and valuing teacher education and professional development related to children with disabilities. A number of findings from the literature were related to collaboration among professionals and highlighted the importance of collaborative practices as key in implementing inclusive education. Collaboration among professionals and other key stakeholders is cited by DEC/NAEYC (2009) as vital for implementing high-quality inclusive education for young children.

For example, DeVore and Russell (2007) found that professionals engaged in changing roles, recognizing each other's skills, sharing information, and building trust

were enabling successful inclusion. In the current study, collaboration was evident in leaders' practices of sharing responsibilities and roles, especially within administrative teams. The sharing of information was reported to be structured among teachers, families, and related services providers in some of the programs included this study.

In regard to training and educational needs, the findings of the current study supported previous literature citing the need for additional education and training as an avenue for facilitating inclusion (Bond, 2010; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2010; Mohay & Reid, 2006). The administrators in the current study reflected the findings of Bond (2010) that teachers needed training specifically related to strategies and adaptations and effective assessment to assist children with disabilities. For example, Victoria, Diane, and Gladys all reported providing training specifically related to collecting objective data.

Participants in the current study were found to be providing emotional support to their teachers, specifically through their provision of direct support, collaborative problem-solving, and providing professional development resources. Although observations with teachers were somewhat limited, there were some indications that administrators shared strategies, were open to suggestions of teachers, and gave praise frequently, practices that were valued in past research (Hoppey & McLeskey, 2010; Leatherman, 2007; Salisbury & McGregor, 2002).

In the current study, past experiences with disability clearly contributed to administrators' experience of leadership, especially when disability experiences were personal. For example, Pam cited her experience of fear as a child in interacting with a cousin with a disability as contributing to her value of inclusion now. Mohay and Reid

(2006) found that program directors with more experience and training in the area of disability were more likely to be currently including children with disabilities in their programs. As revealed in the current study, Victoria, who had negative past experience in a self-contained classroom, reported including children with mild disabilities in her program, and expressed some reluctance to include children with more severe disabilities without hiring teachers who were specifically trained in special education. For example, as the following statement from Victoria indicates, it is possible that her negative experiences contributed to her seemingly conditional enrollment in her current program.

I would love to have an inclusive program. We don't market or advertise that we are inclusive, we do not. We do not target children with special needs, we do not, but in the interim, if there is a child we see may have some special needs, I don't want to refer them out. I would love working with those children. I would want the parent to think this is the best place for my child because this is a program that is only very academic, but they can handle any need that my child have, they're very inclusive, they celebrate differences, I want to be that type of program. I would love to be that type of program, but we have to make sure we have teachers who have the training and unfortunately in the early childhood field teacher turnover is more than what I had hoped it would be.

Practices Reflected in the Political Frame

Leadership practices in the current study revealed practices reflective of the political frame when program administrators worked to connect children and families to external resources. In Diane's case, she specifically networked with agencies whose employees were expected to be serving children with disabilities in her program by contacting them when she opened her program to notify them of her intentions to serve children with disabilities to her program. She cited her intention to welcome these providers as well as to encourage them to refer families of children with disabilities to her

program. Other administrators discussed referring children for evaluations to external agencies by making suggestions and providing agency information to families. Angela spoke specifically of her role in supporting families through the IEP process by encouraging them to ask questions regarding children's future placements and services. It was clear that these administrators had at least some level of understanding of the sources of support in their communities. These practices mirror those cited in previous research that suggest that mapping the political terrain is a key practice in facilitating inclusion (Purcell et al., 2007).

In terms of buffering teachers from external pressure, the administrators in the current study did not cite a need to fulfil this role specifically. When asked whether there was feedback from families regarding the inclusion of children with disabilities in their programs, most of the participants cited positive feedback, and most of the feedback they received was from the parents who had children with disabilities included. In one instance, Gladys reported having to address a family's concerns regarding a child who had displayed challenging behavior.

Moreover, the conditionality expressed in Evergreen's Family Handbook could have been developed in response to external pressures. For example, at least one of the studies reviewed in the literature pointed to the occasional and temporary use of segregation of students with severe emotional and behavioral disabilities in cases where jeopardizing the safety of students and teachers would go against social justice (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014). Barriers experienced by the leaders in DeMatthews and Mawhinney's (2014) study reflected the political frame included community pressure

to exclude children with certain disabilities (i.e., emotional and behavioral disabilities) and a reluctance from parents to include their children with disabilities in general education classes. It is unclear whether the policy at Evergreen was developed in response to external pressures. This behavior loophole needs to be explored further to determine whether external pressures are the impetus for exclusion and how leaders can buffer against those if so.

Practices Reflected in the Symbolic Frame

In the current study, emerging themes reflected in the symbolic frame included the expression of an inclusive philosophy and expanded views of disability to include a broader range of special needs than was the focus of the current study. The literature reviewed in Chapter II supports the notion that attitudes and philosophies play a role in how inclusion is enacted and that program administrators set the overall tone in programs (Bradley & Kibera, 2006; Hurley & Horn, 2010). Administrators in the current study expressed their values for inclusion in discussing benefits to all children, as coming naturally, and as an expression of morality.

In some cases, however, and as discussed previously in this dissertation, conditionality was expressed by some of the participants in the current study. Purdue (2009) identified as barriers the framing of disability as “special” and “different,” and views that children with disabilities were “better off having their educational and care needs met by outside agencies and experts who have the qualifications, skills and techniques to treat, manage or solve their problems” (p. 135). This sentiment was reflected in the current study. For example, several of the participants cited the need for

specially trained personnel as a way that ECE programs could successfully include children with disabilities. There were expressed views in this study that including children with disabilities required training that was above and beyond that which typical teachers had attained. Victoria specifically referenced referring children to a local self-contained school when she felt that her program was unable to accommodate children with more severe disabilities. Diane also acknowledged this experience when she noted,

Some children just respond to the cocktail of strengths that we have here and for some children we do not have the cocktail of strengths at this time and so, you know, we continue to want to have children with special needs but we do so with very realistic understanding that these are our children that are most at risk for failed placement because sometimes it doesn't work.

Interestingly, Evergreen was also one of the few programs that specifically addressed welcoming children with disabilities in their documents. This statement of welcome was included in the enrollment section of their handbook, however, and not stated as a core value of the program. A more general statement about welcoming diversity was included in a paragraph in a section titled "Philosophy" that simply stated, "We embrace an anti-bias standpoint that opposes prejudice and stereotyping."

The results of this study revealed interesting findings reflective of the structural frame in that program administrators appeared to have expanded views of disability. Specifically, there were comments that revealed challenging behavior as a potential avenue to exclusion. Although some of the participants spoke of inclusion as highly valued and a program feature for which there were specific individualized procedures in place, there were also concurrent expressions of conditionality, especially in reference to

behavior. For example, both Green Leaf and Evergreen program's policies included trial enrollment periods during which children were evaluated for goodness of fit within their programs. Inappropriate child behaviors, including "abusive language, extreme physical aggression, destruction of property or an extreme disrespect for rules" were cited as cause for expulsion at Green Leaf.

Future Directions

By gaining an understanding of the perspectives of leaders in inclusive early childhood education programs, the potential for the field to develop inclusive leadership dispositions and practices will continue to expand. Future research can continue to uncover the valuable contributions of leaders in inclusive ECE programs. Because the present study was restricted, both in number of participants and in terms of geographic reach, more research with a greater number of programs in differing geographic areas is needed to determine whether and how leaders in ECE programs support inclusion. It is possible that administrators' perspectives would vary depending upon the geographically varying political negotiations that might impact their practices regarding inclusion, especially practices that reflect the political lens (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

In the telephone questionnaire used for recruitment, program administrators' self-reported numbers of children with disabilities and children who were developing typically enrolled in their programs. Future studies can validate the enrollment of children with disabilities through the attainment of IEPs or IFSPs. These were not included in the procedures of the current study due to the confidentiality of those documents.

Additionally, as part of the telephone questionnaire, potential participants were asked whether they currently served children with disabilities in their programs. The respondents who replied that they did not have children with disabilities currently enrolled were excluded from further recruitment. It is possible that this procedure excluded administrators who had past experiences as inclusive leaders that could have contributed to the research.

Relatedly, the current research limited the participating administrators to those who had obtained a Level I administrator credential within the state of North Carolina. It was found that programs employed inclusion facilitators and other administrators who did not hold this level of credential who may have been better equipped to provide specific details regarding practices that facilitate inclusion in ECE programs. For example, it is possible that programs employed program administrators to conduct managerial activities while employing an inclusion facilitator to organize and carry out practices specific to supporting inclusive practices. Future studies can expand criteria to include program employees that program personnel identify as the best representative to explore inclusive leadership practices.

Furthermore, the current study begins to shed light on the practices that promote inclusion, whereas, future studies can engage a much broader base of evidence through the recruitment of stakeholders beyond program administrators. For example, teachers and families, including families of children with and without disabilities can be included in future research to reveal a more comprehensive picture of the practices of leaders that promote inclusion.

Future studies can also employ a variety of theoretical lenses through which to view leaders' practices. For example, Darragh (2007) provided the model of Universal Design for Learning through which inclusion was promoted through multiple means of access, multiple means of representation, multiple means of engagement, multiple means of expression, and accountability for equity and success. Multiple means of access referred to children and families having various opportunities to access high quality care and education. Access was supported by the components related to representation, engagement, and expression. Children were provided with multiple means of representation when learning was understood to be acquired through a variety of methods, including those that enabled them to access all senses and when a wide variety of programs, educational approaches, and philosophies were represented in care and education options for families. Children were provided with multiple means of engagement when they had opportunities to learn in environments and through curricula that encouraged development across domains while supporting the development of the classroom community as a whole. Multiple means of expression emphasized that children were given multiple and varied opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and growth through the use of a variety of assessment strategies to support the development of individual needs. Lastly, the component of accountability for equity and success related to the outcomes relevant to larger societal values is a belief that is emulated in the DEC/NAEYC position statement (2009). Future research can evaluate inclusive ECE leaders' adherence to or practices reflective of the components of Darragh's (2007) model to provide greater insight into areas for growth toward

facilitating inclusion. For example, future studies could recruit programs representing multiple means of access, and explore practices reflective of multiple means of representation and engagement as an avenue to provide specific practice recommendations for stakeholders.

Another feature of this study for future consideration was the inclusion of data from one program that did not meet inclusion criteria at the time of interview and observation data collection due to the loss of one of their stars in a recent Quality Rating Assessment. Nonetheless, the program met criteria in the telephone questionnaire phase of data collection, and the administrators was recruited as a participant as a result of meeting criteria at that time. Furthermore, it is unclear whether the criteria related to the star rating provided a sufficient means of representing high-quality inclusion, especially given the results that indicated that the highest star-rated programs had significant room for growth in enacting inclusion.

Thus, quality inclusion scales measures can be included in future studies as one way to identify programs of the highest inclusive quality. For example, the SpecialLink Inclusion Scale (Irwin, 2009) includes quality indicators for inclusion and could be utilized in recruitment procedures to bolster the assurance that programs under study reflect high quality inclusion. Model programs can be identified with such tools and can be included in future studies seeking to disseminate high-quality inclusive practices.

The DEC/NAEYC Joint Position Statement on Inclusion is one of the most relevant documents related to inclusion in ECE, intended as a guide to take an informed position, promote dialogue, create shared language and evidence-based frame of

reference, influence public policy, stimulate investments, and influence the field for better child outcomes (NAEYC, 2015). Unfortunately, it is unknown whether ECE leaders included in the current study were aware of the statement, and this information was not asked of participants. The programs included as sites were representative of the defining feature of access in terms of being exemplars of a relatively narrow range of ECE settings as dictated by inclusion criteria. Access was also evident in the participants' references to wide ranges of learning opportunities and activities, especially when discussing their expectations of teachers. Elements of the defining feature of participation were evident in leaders' references to making program accommodations and in their expressions of inclusive philosophies. Collaboration, family support, and valuing and providing professional development opportunities reflected elements of the defining feature of supports. Although there were elements of each of these features reflected in the leadership practices of participants in the current study, it is unclear whether these pieces worked together to produce the desired results of inclusive experiences, including "a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential" (DEC/NAEYC, 2009, p. 2). Future research can address whether inclusive ECE leaders are aware of the Joint Position Statement, whether knowledge of the statement influences practices, and whether families and children reap the desired results of inclusive education as described by the DEC/NAEYC (2009).

Recommendations and Areas for Growth

Based on the results of this study, in the context of the literature, and with consideration for laws, previously established best practices for inclusion as promoted by the DEC/NAEYC, and currently drafted policy related to expanding access to inclusion in ECE programs, a number of recommendations and areas for growth are presented.

ECE programs can develop, expand, and review program policies that support inclusion. In the current study, policies were found to be very general, conditional, or nonexistent. Program administrators can examine policies to ensure that they recognize the unique needs of children with disabilities, with special consideration to ensure that these children and their families are not further marginalized. For example, policies should be written that reflect enough flexibility to be applied to meet the individual needs of children with disabilities. To avoid the exclusion of children based on displays of challenging behavior, programs should consider adaptations to behavior policies and seek ways to address behavior of children with disabilities in partnership with related services providers. The drafted Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs (USDHHS/USDOE) released for review in May 2015 also suggests that programs review and establish fair and appropriate policies related to inclusion.

Program policies for communicating with related services providers were evident in the current study. However, only one program had such a policy. Policies can be included to reflect program personnel's intentions to partner with related services providers in planning and implementing strategies and information sharing to enhance

collaboration and child outcomes. Furthermore, consideration can be given to models of service delivery. Purdue (2009) found that when related services providers, taking on “expert” approaches, pulled children out of classrooms or focused their interventions on single children, children were isolated, labeled as “different” or “special,” and were not experiencing the same level of access to learning opportunities within programs. Furthermore, a range of service delivery models should be available to children (DEC/NAEYC, 2009). The studies reviewed in the literature provided evidence that inclusive models often support the delivery of services and placements within the general education classroom. Although there are occasions when pull-out approaches might be well-suited to meet speech goals, for example, this model of service delivery should not be standard practice. The 2015 drafted Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs (USDHHS/USDOE) also supports embedded service delivery models as opposed to pulling children out of their settings for specialized instruction.

There was also evidence of program administrators’ willingness to some degree to provide adapted materials to support the inclusion of children with disabilities. However, there were also expressions reflecting an abdication of those responsibilities onto families. Inclusive ECE programs can plan for and absorb the cost of adaptive equipment, assistive technology, and other services for children with disabilities when children do not qualify for financial support through other agencies or providers. More importantly, agencies and government bodies who administer support to ECE programs

need to identify avenues through which independent ECE programs can access funding to secure these accommodations for children in these programs.

Furthermore, quality measures such as those employed in the state of North Carolina should be revised to include indicators of inclusion. According to Buysse, West, and Hollingsworth (2009), of the states that have Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRIS) in place, only New Hampshire's includes a specific standard related to including children with disabilities. Eight states have embedded performance standards that specifically address children with disabilities and their families, and North Carolina is not among them (Buysse et al., 2009). As an example of a source from which North Carolina's QRIS could build, the SpecialLink Inclusion Scale (Irwin, 2009) contains quality indicators for inclusion that could easily be integrated into measures of global ECE program quality. The drafted Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs (USDHHS/USDOE, 2015) also promotes the revision of quality frameworks to include indicators applicable to children with disabilities across levels "as opposed to indicators specific to children with disabilities being optional or only applying at the highest level of a framework" (p. 9).

The DEC (2014) additionally asserts several recommended leadership practices relevant to inclusive ECE leaders that were evident in the current research. Although the current study did not intend to evaluate specifically whether the DEC recommended practices were reflected by participants, some of the findings raise questions about whether and to what extent leaders are aware of or practice those outlined by the DEC. For example, it was evident that leadership practices could be developed to support the

development of policies and procedures for practitioners to implement the DEC recommended practices, such as teaming with related services providers to provide embedded learning opportunities and using functional assessment to prevent and address challenging behavior. Administration preparation programs should include emphasis on the recommended practices for leadership outlined by the DEC (2014) to expand and improve inclusive ECE programming.

Each of the administrators in the current study recognized the importance of having teachers who were trained specifically in the area of working with children with disabilities. Program administrators can continue to make hiring teachers with these qualifications a priority. Moreover, the field of teacher preparation needs to recognize the sustained and overwhelmingly palpable perception that, for inclusion of children with disabilities in education programs to be successful, teacher education related to providing for all children must be a top priority. Because the leaders in the present study perceived that there need to be specialists, coupled with the fact that this practice is not valued by stakeholders as an inclusive practice (Purdue, 2009), teacher preparation programs need to prioritize preparing graduates of early childhood education programs to work with children with disabilities. Again, the drafted Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs (USDHHS/USDOE, 2015) supports the notion that States should prioritize systematic, evidence-based, pre-service and in-service training opportunities addressing inclusive practices. Teacher education must incorporate both specific and embedded curriculum objectives related to practices to support inclusion. Teacher educators should impart the legal and empirical foundations for

inclusion across courses and in continuing education venues. Field experiences in programs identified as models of inclusive education should be prioritized for education majors. As suggested in the drafted Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs (USDHHS/USDOE, 2015), attitudes and beliefs, often negative toward inclusion and formed based on false information and fear, must be a strong focus of change efforts in pre-service and in-service professional development curricula. Until the perception (and practices that generate these perceptions) that including children with disabilities requires specialized training beyond that of what is included in general education is addressed, as was evident in the current study, the desire for and practice of abdicating care to specialists will persist, with consequences including ongoing segregation of children and individuals with disabilities.

The findings of the current research highlight the need for continued efforts among practitioners, leaders, politicians, and representatives in higher education toward enacting inclusion in ECE. For more than 20 years, momentum within the field of ECE has grown for prioritizing high-quality inclusive ECE (ADA, 1990; DEC/NAEYC, 2009; IDEA, 2004; OHCHR, 2015). Despite this momentum, the most recent statistics from the USDOE (2013) demonstrate that a large majority of children with disabilities in ECE continue to be excluded. Coupled with the alarming statistics related to expulsion in ECE (Gilliam, 2005), there is substantial evidence to support the urgent need for continued efforts to effect change.

Discrimination against and marginalization of children with disabilities must be addressed in teacher preparation, policy and standards of practice for teachers, programs

and leaders in the field of ECE. The DEC/NAEYC (2009) Joint Position Statement on Inclusion calls for broader system-level supports to this end. Moreover, the recently released drafted policy statement on the inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood education programs by the USDHHS with USDOE (2015) has the potential to effect ECE programs by prioritizing inclusion on the federal education agenda, espousing the legal and scientific foundations for inclusion, providing a unified definition of inclusion, and creating a platform for providing federal funding to support systemic change to promote inclusion. This statement recognizes that any efforts to expand inclusion must be accompanied by a strong focus on attitudes and beliefs, with emphasis on exposing false myths, stereotyping, and fear that continue to serve as barriers to inclusion (USDHHS/USDOE, 2015).

Specifically cited as barriers by USDHHS/USDOE (2015), and evidenced in the current study, were beliefs related to false information about the feasibility of inclusion, and in at least one leader's interpretations of LRE. Inclusive leaders in ECE have the power to effect change in the field, starting with their own programs. ECE leaders can prioritize the intentional inclusion of children with disabilities. ECE leaders can examine their beliefs and attitudes and can find and share empirical evidence to support these beliefs. ECE leaders can influence program culture, create inclusive program policies, and hire teachers who share this value and who enact best practices for inclusion. In order to accomplish these aims, broader systems-level supports must attend to the unique positions of ECE leaders as advocates for children with disabilities and their families. The field of ECE must nurture leaders' activism and passion for inclusion to further

social justice for equitable educational rights and opportunities. To do less imperils the rights of children with disabilities to be fully participating citizens.

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APPENDIX A

INITIAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL—ECE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS

Demographic Information

1. How long have you been an administrator in this program?
2. Do you have any other experience in administration? Tell me about that.
3. Tell me about your education.
 - a. What type of degree or license do you have?
 - b. Did you take courses in special education?
 - c. What types of courses were they?
4. Do you have a teaching license?
 - a. What type of license is it?
5. Tell me about any personal experiences you have had with individuals with disabilities (i.e., do you or a child in your family or other family member have a disability?)
6. Tell me about any experiences you have had in inclusive settings other than this program.
7. Can you tell me about your program structure?
 - a. Is this program a non-profit or for-profit program?
 - b. How is your program funded?
 - c. Who oversees this program?
 - d. Is there a Board of Directors or other governing body?
8. Tell me all the ways you include children with disabilities in this program.
 - a. Is there anything else?
 - b. Tell me more about _____.
(selecting a few of the responses the individual mentions regarding the ways they work to include children with disabilities in their program in order to solicit more specific information)
 - c. How does that work?
 - d. What is your role in _____?
(selecting a few of the responses the individual mentions regarding ways they include children with disabilities in their program)

9. Of the ways you include children with disabilities in your program that you discussed, which of those are the *most important* to ensure that children with disabilities are included in your program?
 - a. How do you help that happen?
10. Describe any specific activities or duties (in your role as program administrator) that require your intentional focus on children with disabilities.
11. Are there any specific things that you do or parts of your job that require you to think or plan intentionally about/for children with disabilities? What are those?
12. What are the challenges that you face in including children with disabilities in your program?
 - a. How do you work through challenges when possible?
13. What do you think programs need in order to include children successfully?
14. Is there anything else that you would like to share about including children with disabilities in early childhood education programs?

APPENDIX B
OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

In order to gain information related to the research questions, I will observe administrators' practices related to including children with disabilities. The observations will be organized into categories representative of frames of leadership as described by Bolman and Deal (2013) with an additional observation category related to barriers. A running record of observations will be written by the researcher and later organized into these categories.

Structural Framework
Human Resource Framework
Political Framework
Symbolic Framework
Barriers

APPENDIX C

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. In our first interview, we discussed _____
(selecting one of the responses/topics from the first interview).
 - a. Can you tell me more about that?
 - b. What did you mean when you said _____?
 - c. Did I understand correctly that _____?
 - d. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about _____?
 - e. Tell me more about _____.
(selecting a few of the responses the participant mentions regarding the follow-up questions in order to solicit more specific information)

*Question 1 may be asked several times, depending on what information is chosen by the researcher for further description or clarification.

2. In the observations that I conducted, I observed _____
(selecting a one of the observations)
 - a. Can you tell me more about that?
 - b. Tell me about how this practice supports inclusion of children with disabilities?
 - c. Did I observe correctly that _____?
 - d. Why do you think that practice is important to do?
 - e. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about _____?

*Question 2 may be asked several times, depending on what information is chosen by the researcher for further description or clarification.

3. Is there anything else that you would like to share about including children with disabilities in early childhood education programs?

APPENDIX D
TELEPHONE SCRIPT

“Hello, my name is Mary Jordan. I am a graduate student at UNCG here in Greensboro. May I please speak with the program administrator? Thank you for taking a minute to talk. We are conducting a research study about early childhood program directors and children with disabilities. We have selected your program as a good fit for our research and wanted to ask if you would be willing to participate. It would involve participating in a short phone interview to begin. Some participants will be asked to participate in 2 interviews that would take about an hour each as well as being observed two or three times for about 2 hours per visit. The interviews and observations will be spread out over the course of a few months and will be planned to accommodate your schedule.

We are interested in learning more about what program administrators do in their work roles to facilitate the inclusion of children with disabilities. We are asking some of the 5-star program administrators in Guilford County to participate. Your participation is completely voluntary. Would you be willing to participate?

Great, when would be a good time to call you for the phone interview? It is 8 questions and will take about 15 minutes to complete.

My email address is mcjorda2@uncg.edu and my phone number is (336)324-9780 if you have any questions at all about participating. You can also contact either of my faculty advisors, Mary V. Compton at (336) 334-3771 or at mvcompto@uncg.edu, or Carl Lashley at (336)256-0156 or carl.lashley@gmail.com with any questions. Thank you so much.”

APPENDIX E

TELEPHONE QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE FORM

The purpose of this questionnaire is to further screen potential participants for the interview and observation phase of the study. The overall goal is to identify (from the 5-star early childhood education programs in Guilford County), those programs who promote or identify themselves as inclusive of children with disabilities and their families. These questions will be asked of the program administrators over the phone.

1. Can you tell me about the type of administration license you hold? _____

2. Does your program currently serve children with disabilities? _____
3. Is your program considered part of Head Start or Early Head Start? _____
4. About how many children are currently enrolled in your program? _____
5. About how many children enrolled currently have an IEP or an IFSP? _____
6. Are children with IEPs/IFSPs served in the same classrooms as children who are typically developing? _____
7. Does your program have any written policies related to including children with disabilities? _____
8. Are there children with any types of disabilities that your program has been *unable* to enroll? _____

Notes:

APPENDIX F

EXAMPLE OF HORIZONTALIZED DATA

Textural Description of the Phenomenon	
Examples of Horizons	Example Themes
<p>I guess that allows us to be an easy choice for parents who have kids with disabilities, knowing that we have that really good system in place for if we need to cut up your child's food, if it needs to be pureed, you know, if you need them to be drinking—we have a couple of kids that drink Pediasure because they are on—and see, if you're talking about disabilities, I haven't—I don't know if that's considered a disability, like I have two kids that have low, it's not like, it's not birthweight, but they're, they're like less than like tenth percentile, and so they have to take in extra calories, but they are mind and body and all their function is perfectly fine, it's just dietary. [<i>I see.</i>] So, you know, they are on a high—so we do special, you know, and do some special stuff for them, but you know, all those things, we're a place that has a healthy attitude about that, we're not like, oh, we're not doing all that, or you know, that's too much, or that's—we're not, you know, we don't like that, I want people to feel welcome, you know, if you have a child with a restricted diet, or a child who needs you know, special dietary prep. I've got a fulltime cook and that she loves making sure that each of these babies gets exactly what they need, the way they need to be fed it.</p>	(1) Making Program Accommodations
<p>We have special diets for children that have allergies. We have—that's really a biggie now. We have more food allergies than—it's really, that's unreal. [<i>Yeah.</i>] We have a lot of food allergies so we have special diets. We have more allergies to the sun when it gets really hot, [<i>Oh, yeah.</i>] where children have to have special creams applied, and so we have allergy plans for that. Let's see what else. What other kind of [<i>And diets you mentioned?</i>] Yeah, we have special diets. We have one little girl, I don't know, bless her heart, she eats very little. When she—if it's something she likes we give her whatever she wants because she can't eat meats. Vegetables</p>	

Textural Description of the Phenomenon	
Examples of Horizons	Example Themes
<p>are limited. She can't eat beans, she can. She eats some fruit, not very many fruits. She does eat yogurt. And so we're trying to get protein in this child and fruit and veg—she does drink some juices. Not a—she's really probably our biggest challenge, this particular one</p>	
<p>we do have a child in our afterschool program that we have special treatment for, you know, we include him but we also know he has special time where he has to take a moment, he has to get himself together and there's different techniques that we've learned from outside sources how to deal with him,</p>	
<p>the assistant director and I normally make the initial contact for starting the referral process if we need to. [Okay.] You know, we normally do that, the teachers don't do that.</p>	<p>(2)Facilitating Partnerships with Related Services Providers</p>
<p>I spend tons of time doing—having conversations like that, similar to that to get the balls rolling, too, let's see about having a speech assessment, let's see about having a full developmental eval, let's see about having a psychologist look at this child's behavior, and so those—I feel like that's the most time that I spend in my leadership role in terms of, we talk about children with disabilities but these kids don't yet have an IFSP or an IEP but this has to start somewhere and because we're dealing with young children it often starts here with us</p>	
<p>So we did some more observations and we called mom in and said we need to bring somebody else in. Are you okay with that because she needs some additional help. After she cried and after dad, you know, then they signed and now she's in the process of going through the system.</p>	
<p>then of course we have, you know, I mentioned Bringing Out the Best, different resources available to them to talk about, you know, you know, go to your doctor and see what's going on. [Right.] But just trying to get the right information to the parents so that we can get what that child needs</p>	
<p>We build really strong relationships with the developmental therapists that serve this area so for instance there's a team of</p>	

Textural Description of the Phenomenon	
Examples of Horizons	Example Themes
<p>special ed teachers with Guilford County Schools and there are therapists that work with all these private firms like Interact and Cheshire and Ling and Kerr and you know, I could go on and on and on with the different ones, but we try to build really good relationships with them. When we opened I mailed all those different companies that I could find on the internet, I mailed them all just profile info about our center and told them that we did want to include children with special needs in our program, so you know, I looked forward to seeing them, you know, should they ever serve a child in our program and that they please know that we're a place that they could refer families to that were looking for places for their children to attend</p>	
<p>whatever classroom the child is in, the therapists, they—the teachers communicate with what's going on, and a lot of times that's how we communicate through the parent is they'll leave the notes or the letters or say hey you know, Ms. Simone can you tell such-and-such mom that we did therapy today and, you know, this is what I saw, she needs to give me a call, vice versa, different things like that. [Okay.] But we're, I call us the middle man when it's the therapists and the parents, because I mean, yet and for a lot of these kids, they're—the majority of the day they are with us. [Right.] So you know, it helps the therapists, you know, the daily routines or whatever and then too, you know, the therapists will ask, has there been any behavior change, mom and dad, you know, just the whole communication piece, letting us know what's going on at home and here.</p>	

APPENDIX G

SUMMARY OF SITE DESCRIPTIONS

SITES	Operating Schedule	Structure	Ages of Children Served	Types of Care offered
Childcare World 1	M-F 6:30am-6:00pm Year-round; some closings	Corporate Childcare; 3 administrative employees	6 weeks- 12 years	Childcare, afterschool, summer camps
Childcare World 2	M-F 6:30am-6:00pm Year-round; some closings	Corporate Childcare; 2 administrative employees	6 weeks- 12 years	Childcare, afterschool, summer camps
Child Zone	M-F 2:45pm-5:30pm; extended 7:30-5:30 summers; some closings	For-profit; 2 administrative employees	5 years- 12 years	Afterschool and summer/holiday care
Radiance Childcare	7 days per week; 24 hours/day; some closings	Non-profit; administrative team	6 weeks- 12 years	Childcare; afterschool
Green Leaf Childcare	M-F; 7:00am-6:00pm; Year-round; some closings	For-profit; 3 administrative employees	13 months- 5 years	Childcare
Friendly Child Development	M-F; 7:45am-5:30pm; late August-early June; some closings	University Lab School; 3 administrative employees	2 ½ years-5 years	Childcare
Evergreen Preschool	M-F; 7:10am-5:50pm; Year-round; some closings	For-profit; 3 administrative employees	1 year-6 years	Childcare