

**PERSPECTIVES OF NEW YORK CITY COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION EARLY  
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM DIRECTORS ON MAINTAINING A POSITIVE  
PRESCHOOL CULTURE UNDER AN EVER-CHANGING EDUCATION SYSTEM**

**A Doctoral Research Project**

**Presented to**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **PERSPECTIVES OF NEW YORK CITY COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM DIRECTORS ON MAINTAINING A POSITIVE PRESCHOOL CULTURE UNDER AN EVER-CHANGING EDUCATION SYSTEM**

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In New York City, early childhood education has become the topic of conversation when talking about public education due to Mayor Bill De Blasio's Pre-Kindergarten for All initiative which was introduced in September of 2014. New York City has always invested in early childhood education through Head Start, Early Head Start, Child Care and Universal Pre-Kindergarten. Today, all of these modalities and funding streams occur under two major contracts: EarlyLearn New York (ELNY) administered by the Administration for Children's Services and Pre-Kindergarten for All administered by the New York City Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE). Moreover, early childhood education is provided through standalone Department of Education early childhood education centers and through contracted community-based organizations. The leaders of community-based organizations are commonly known as program directors. These program directors lead under a multi-accountability system driven by policies and procedures delegated to the program directors as part of their contractual agreements. The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the perspectives of New York City's community-based organization early childhood education program directors on maintaining

a positive preschool culture under an ever-changing education system. Sixteen active program directors were selected and interviewed for this study.

The findings for this current study were obtained by analyzing the data collected based on three research questions which guided this study. The first research question revealed that program directors view autonomy as being able to manage their preschool, supervise their staff, run the day-to-day functions within their preschool buildings and by being in compliance. The findings for the second research question revealed that program directors contribute their ability to maintain a positive preschool culture on being accountable for what takes place in their preschools despite the multi accountability system that governs them. The program directors also posited that providing all of the children with a quality-based early childhood education is part of maintaining a positive preschool culture. The third research question revealed that program directors have been able to evolve and maintain a positive preschool culture under an-ever changing system by being resilient and dedicated to their job and the field of early childhood education.

Key words: autonomy, community-based organization, Division of Early Childhood Education, EarlyLearn NY, program directors, multi-accountability system, school/preschool culture, early childhood education (ECE).

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The field of early childhood education in New York City has become the focus of the New York City's Department of Education due to Mayor Bill de Blasio's Pre-Kindergarten for All initiative. This focus on the early childhood education bandwagon, according to Austin (2014), is also evident nationwide which Austin states was widely supported by the nation's last president, President Obama. Obama's plan to close the academic achievement gap included access to free universal preschool. In New York City, the Mayor's campaign was grounded on providing a free, quality-based pre-kindergarten education to all four-year-old children in New York City (NYC). As a result, when the Mayor was elected, the Pre-Kindergarten for All (PKA) initiative was introduced and more than 50,000 seats were offered and filled in the 2014-2015 school year (NYC Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education, 2014). Prior to Pre-Kindergarten for All, New York City had implemented EarlyLearn New York (ELNY) through the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) in 2012. This initiative is now referred to as Early Care and Education. Unlike Pre-Kindergarten for All, EarlyLearn New York serves children ages zero-five. EarlyLearn New York services are provided through Family Child Care (FCC), Head Start, Dual, and center-based child care (CC). Funding for these different modalities of care and education derive from City, State, and federal funding under Early Head Start, Head Start, Department of Education and the Child Care and Development Block Grant funds (ACS, 2017).

Having different funding initiatives creates a multi accountability system that affects the way leaders uphold policies and procedures in order to maintain their funding (Bown & Sumsion, 2016). In 2012, ACS inaugurated the ELNY initiative in an attempt to improve the quality of

early childhood education and care according to the then ACS' Commissioner, Maria Benajan. Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) were given the opportunity to submit a Request For Proposal (RFP) for one of the following options: 1) Provide care and early childhood education through Head Start and UPK, 2) provide care and early childhood education through Child Care and UPK, and 3) provide care and early childhood education through Head Start and Child Care with UPK (also known as Dual). Funding varies for each option (United Neighborhood Houses, 2010). Through this process, many longstanding CBOs lost their funding and new CBOs emerged. According to United Neighborhood Houses (2010), the school year 2011-2012 would bring a sweeping change in how New York City cares and educates its youngest population with the onset of EarlyLearn New York because new policies would be delegated and new leadership would emerge as a result of this initiative.

Kotter (2012) cautions against drastic changes without having a conceptual plan to introduce and execute the changes in place and he suggests his Eight Stage Change Process as an effective process for leading change. Kotter (2012) states that often time organizations would undergo a change without having the proper structure in place to sustain such change. His suggested process would facilitate a venue that would create sustainable strategies to ensure success. Change, according to Kotter (2012) can be a platform to self-discovery for a leader because structural change of any kind if implemented right would require knowing what you are after and where you want to go. Moreover, the Eight Stage Change Process according to Kotter (2012) starts by creating a sense of urgency based on informed decisions by all parties involved. For example, according to the Administration for Children's Services (2012) with this new contract (the ELNY contract) came a drastic learning curve for programs that decided to venture into the Head Start model. Head Start since its inception has been governed by Performance

Standards which programs/CBOs have to implement in order to continue to receive federal funding (Austin, 2014; Gormley, 2005). Having an ELNY contract represents a multilayer of administration and competencies in order to effectively execute leadership duties. Kotter (2012) for example, would argue that those new to the Head Start model would need to establish a sense of urgency toward meeting the standards as a way to ensure buy-in and success with the implementation of the change.

When the Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education began the Pre-Kindergarten for All initiative in 2014, they partnered with ACS to meet their enrollment numbers. With this new Pre-Kindergarten for All initiative came new mandates and a narrower school level leadership capacity at the CBO level according to Austin (2014). Unlike Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK), which was mainly implemented in a two-and-a-half-hour schedule (Gormley, 2005), Pre-Kindergarten for All is a six hours and twenty-minute schedule (considered full day in accordance with the DOE public school schedule). With the increase in hours came the demand for more rigorous instruction and more programmatic policies to enforce. Having two entities with varying compliance policies and leadership style has placed the preschool leadership system in a state of constant change. Austin (2014) states:

As leaders navigate competing values and perspectives about what reforms are best for schools, teachers, and students, skillfully guiding multiple stakeholders through processes to create a shared belief in the goals for any reforms is the only way to bring about sustainable change. (p. 21)

Changes for New York City, like EarlyLearn New York and the Pre-Kindergarten for All initiative presented an opportunity for the system leaders behind each initiative to establish a sense of urgency in accordance with Kotter's (2012) Eight Stage Change Process. Changes in any

organization bring forth complexities that leaders need to manage and understand in order to sustain those changes (Austin, 2014; Kotter, 2012). Going from EarlyLearn New York to Pre-Kindergarten for All presented some complexities which program directors were charged with managing and producing results as Austin (2014) posits is the idea behind any new initiative introduced to the field of early childhood education.

A program director that operates under a contractual agreement with the New York City's Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education and the Administration for Children's Services under EarlyLearn New York (also known as Early Care and Education), is responsible for the overall executive functions and administrative duties pertaining to a center-based preschool. The program director (also known as Executive Director and Education Director) is responsible for writing and submitting Request For Proposals, the preparation of operational budgets, the selection, appointment and supervision of personnel, facilitating and monitoring preschool-wide professional development, conducting quarterly preschool self-assessments, aggregating, interpreting and reporting student outcome data, monitoring the student assessments and screenings, chairing the preschool readiness and family engagement teams, overseeing the functions of the Parent Policy Council/Parent Advisory Committee, maintaining licensing and permit requirements, and the maintenance of buildings and grounds among other responsibilities. Program directors wear many hats in order to oversee their preschools and adhere to all pertaining policies and procedures set forth by their funders (NYC Independent Budget Office, 2012; Talan, Bloom, & Kelton, 2014).

Furthermore, program directors also report to a governing board in regard to the programmatic functions and decision-making of the preschool. The board serves as the supervising body for the program director. The board also functions as a non-for-profit entity that



monitors and supports the systematic functions of the preschools (Carver, 2006). In essence, program directors report to various entities in order to be in compliance with the contractual obligations of running a preschool. For the purpose of this research study, the focus was on the program directors administering contracts under the DOE's Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE) and ACS' ELNY. Waters and Marzano (2006) addressed the importance of principals having a sense of autonomy when it comes to student achievement. That importance comes from having clear roles and responsibilities in terms of overseeing the classroom instruction to drive positive student outcomes. Program directors like principal, are also tasked with leading instruction to impact student achievement. Although early childhood education continues to dominate the media and research when it comes to the benefit for lifelong learning (Rothstein, 2004), very little research has been done on the role that program directors play in those identified benefits specifically in New York City from 2012-2016. Prominently, much of the research on early childhood education focuses on the instructional staff and environmental settings, thereby presenting an opportunity for further research on the leadership behind the instruction and settings in early childhood education.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the perspectives of New York City's community-based organization early childhood education program directors on maintaining a positive preschool culture under an ever-changing education system. This research study took place in New York City. The participants were 16 program directors who are currently funded by the New York City Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education, the New York City Council discretionary, and the Administration for Children's Services to provide early

childhood education (ECE). Data for this study was collected via a 12-item interview instrument.

This study was guided by the following three research questions:

- 1) To what extent do program directors feel that they have autonomy in running their early childhood education preschool?
- 2) How do program directors maintain a positive preschool culture under multiple supervision/accountability: The Administration for Children's Services, City Council Discretionary, and New York City Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education?
- 3) How has the role of a New York City early childhood education program director evolved in terms of supporting the preschool culture?

### **Significance of the Study**

Investigating the relationship between the Division of Early Childhood Education and ACS when it comes to preschool leaders' autonomy in maintaining a positive preschool culture will be significant because it will provide insight into the effectiveness of both entities in supporting program directors in their leadership role. This study will also provide information directly linked to community-based organizational preschool leadership in New York City.

Program directors have so many roles and responsibilities and this study will highlight how these leaders manage their roles under an ever-changing system. The understanding of how such uniformity of the two entities support or hinder the autonomy of preschool program directors will add to the body of knowledge of early childhood education leadership. The findings will be important for preschool program directors, instructional staff, funders and policymakers because it will guide the internal process for delegating and monitoring the functions of the preschools as well as the early childhood education system.

This study will influence leadership practice and policy in early childhood education as we learn about the perspectives of the 16 program directors on how they lead within their preschools. Learning more about the role of program directors will also provide a platform for collaboration and future partnerships between the Department of Education and CBOs. As the Department of Education is preparing to take on the ELNY contract, the outcome of this dissertation could help with understanding the complexity of running a preschool and therefore designing a more holistic system for working together to educate the youngest student population.

### **Conceptual Framework/Assumption**

In designing this study, the researcher used the conceptual framework of interviewing the participants from a phenomenological basis in order to learn from the participants' perspectives on their leadership role and how such role supports the culture of their preschools. The concept behind this phenomenological methodology was to analyze the participants' experiences and input from their own words and take their interview responses to find answers to the three research questions presented within this study.

Moreover, the researcher's assumptions come from being an active program director herself and being part of the system as an employee but also as an advocate for change and formalization of the early childhood education system. The researcher assumes that the participants' responses during the interviews were personalized around wanting to join the Department of Education as a way to bring order and structure into the field of early childhood education. The researcher also assumes that the outcome of this study will facilitate a platform for policymakers, community advocates, program directors, families and early childhood education staff to collaborate in restructuring the way early childhood education functions from a system-wide point of view.

**Limitations**

The limitations within this study included the participants' flexibility in setting a date and time to execute the interviews. This limitation led to rescheduling the interviews a couple of times for a number of participants. Another limitation that was dealt with when attempting to interview the participants was their apprehensiveness with being recorded and going on record about ACS and the DECE. Some of the participants expressed fear of retaliation if they were truthful about their views on the leadership system or the lack thereof. Another limitation that took place when attempting to collect the data was getting the participants to respond to the emails sent asking for them to confirm the information transcribed from their interviews.

**Scope**

Early childhood education settings vary in many ways when it comes to how preschools are managed and supervised. The delimitations within this study are the participants selected to be interviewed. For the purpose of this study, community-based organization program directors holding a contract for Pre-Kindergarten for All and EarlyLearn New York were the only participants selected which excluded Family Child Care directors, private preschool directors, parochial preschools and Early Head Start program directors. The rationale behind the selection was because this study sought to explore the multi-accountability within the Division of Early Childhood Education and the Administration for Children's Services that program directors work under while maintaining a positive preschool culture.

**Definition of Terms**

This study took place in New York City and there are terms used within this study that mainly applies to the New York City Department of Education Division of Early Childhood

Education and to the Administration for Children's Services. Knowing the context under which the following terms are used is important in order to understand the content of the present study.

*Autonomy:* For the purpose of the aforementioned study, autonomy is defined as how much authority program directors have in the decision-making process and in the day-to-day functions and policies in early childhood education as leaders of their preschools (Dou, Devos & Valcke, 2016).

*Organizational culture:* For the purpose of this study, Schein's (2010) definition of organizational culture as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (p. 18).

*Community-Based Organization:* Is defined as a preschool center that operates as an independent contractor funded by either ACS and/or DECE to provide early childhood education services (United Neighborhood Houses, 2010).

*Division of Early Childhood Education:* Administers Pre-K programs for NYC students in elementary schools, Pre-K Centers, charter schools and NYC Early Education Centers (NYCEECs). By working together with families and programs, DECE ensures that children are engaged, nurtured, and supported with the tools to develop into independent learners and creative problem-solvers (NYC Department of Education, 2016).

*New York City Early Childhood Education Centers (NYCEEC):* This name applies to programs that currently serve Universal Pre-kindergarten and Pre-K for All for NYC children (NYC Department of Education, 2016).

*EarlyLearn New York (ELNY):* Is defined as the current early care and early education funding

contract under ACS. This contract covers preschool centers that service children from zero to five years of age. This contract was enacted in October of 2012 as a new initiative to enhance the quality of early childhood care and education and to cover the loss of Head Start funds that New York City lost due to poor performance in the federal reviews under ACS' administration (New York City Administration for Children's Services, 2012; NYC Independent Budget Office, 2012).

*Acronyms* used in this study: *CACFP*: Child and Adult Care Food Program; *DOH*: Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; *FDNY*: Fire Department of New York; *ECE*: Early childhood education

## **Summary**

In summary, this study investigated the perspectives of New York City's community-based organization early childhood education program directors on maintaining a positive preschool culture under an ever-changing education system. Schein (2010) argues that organizational culture is as important as the goals set by any organization. The culture of an organization is what guides its members towards achievement and provides them with the tools to solve any given problem (Schein, 2010). Program directors are the leaders of their preschools and they are charged with leading their staff under a multi-accountability system. Learning about their perspectives on being early childhood education leaders will facilitate the platform to further understand how early childhood educational leadership functions and how to strengthen the system under which they operate.

This dissertation has five chapters: chapter one introduces the study by addressing the background and purpose of the dissertation as well as describing how the topic will be researched and addressed. In chapter two, the researcher reviews the literature that supports the content of

the dissertation. Within this chapter, the researcher presents researched-based arguments that supports the research questions leading this study. It provides a comprehensive body of research on leadership autonomy, culture and leading through change. Chapter three presents how the research was conducted within the research methodology used. The researcher addresses how the research method used guided the study and therefore how the data was collected in order to answer the three research questions pertaining to the study. Chapter four presents the findings based on the analysis of the data collected for each research question. This chapter provides figures and tables to illustrate the findings for each research question. Lastly, this dissertation ends with chapter five, which presents a summation of the findings as well as the researcher's conclusions on the findings. This chapter also provides what the researcher recommends for the field of early childhood education as well as recommendations for future studies on early childhood educational leadership.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter entails a review of the literature on early childhood educational leadership in relation to organizational culture within a multi accountability preschool system. Universal Pre-Kindergarten according to Gormley (2005) became part of New York State's educational system in 1997 when other States were making quality-based early childhood education part of their priority within their public education systems. Politicians, policymakers and early childhood advocates lobbied to fund early childhood education in order to address the declining enrollment in public schools and to close the achievement gap amongst disadvantaged students (Whitebook, Kipnis, Sakai, & Austin, 2012; Gormley, 2005). Since 1997, New York State has continued to advocate on behalf of early childhood education in the hopes of promoting academic achievement and strengthening the public school education system in order to meet the needs of all learners, especially economically disadvantaged children (Rothstein, 2004).

In 2011, New York City took on the task of funding a contract for the Administration for Children's Services named the EarlyLearn New York (ELNY) initiative. Today, this contract is widely called Early Care and Education which was designed to serve infants, toddlers and children in a birth-to-five model. Already existing Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) whose focus is early childhood education and care, were given the opportunity to submit Request for Proposal (RFP) in order to be awarded an ELNY contract. On October 1, 2012, the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) executed its most ambitious early childhood education initiative named EarlyLearn New York (ACS, 2012). Under this new initiative, ACS focused heavily on the Head Start Performance Standards as a quality assurance platform. Head Start, like ELNY was brought



to life in 1965 in order to address the needs of low socioeconomic status children and families (Gormley, 2005). According to the Administration for Children and Families (2017), Head Start was launched as an eight-week summer program in 1965 “designed to help break the cycle of poverty by providing preschool children of low-income families with a comprehensive program to meet their emotional, social, health, nutritional, and psychological needs” (Administration for Children and Families, 2017, para. 2).

Since 1965, Head Start has provided the model for serving children ages three to five years old with a developmentally appropriate early childhood education (Rothstein, 2004). The provision of early care and education through Head Start continues to be possible because every president since Lyndon B. Johnson has approved Head Start through the Head Start Reauthorization Act, which mandates new policies and regulations with the intent to break the poverty cycle amongst the neediest children. Each reauthorization comes with higher performance standards and every State is mandated to comply in order to receive federal funding (Administration for Children and Families, 2017). In New York City, ACS lost a high number of Head Start slots due to the federal budget sequestration cut of \$6.7 million dollars which in part gave birth to the concept of ELNY (New York City’s Independent Budget Office, 2012). This reduction in Head Start slots called for a reform in New York City’s early care and education service model. This need prompted ACS to present ELNY as the new initiative toward maintaining a failing financial system and improving the quality of service. Although ELNY was conceptualized well before 2011, its implementation in what many policymakers and community advocates called *rushed*, was partly due to the lost in funding through the agency’s federal Head Start contract (Day Care Council of New York, 2010; United Neighborhood Houses, 2010).

Moreover, Brimley, Verstegen and Garfield (2016) state that financial constraints in our educational system is sometimes the most influential factor when it comes to the implementation of any new initiatives that are executed in an attempt to make ends meet. Brimley et al. (2016) also state that educational goals are constantly under critical evaluation which leads to those goals being restatements. For New York City, birthing EarlyLearn New York was a restatement of its commitment to educate and care for its youngest citizens due to the loss of Head Start funds. Restatements of New York City's goals for early childhood education continues to evolve and experience immense changes such as the one just announced by Mayor De Blasio called 3 to K which is his new campaign.

Kotter (2012) suggests that most organizations act on transformational changes in order to remedy a failed goal/system. Such actions can lead to further failure because of the lack of sound planning an execution. The need to improve quality while at the same time being faced with having to make cuts, can also hinder an organization's ability to successfully implement meaningful change. Kotter (2012) warns that budget reductions can lead to unwanted results which can therefore impact families and communities in negative ways. For example, in 2014, New York City launched yet another early childhood education initiative under Pre-Kindergarten for All. This new initiative was the cornerstone of Mayor De Blasio's campaign as he promised free full day quality-based early childhood education for 4-year olds living in the five boroughs: Manhattan, Brooklyn, Bronx, Queens and Staten Island (New York City's Department of Education, 2016). This initiative presented a shift in how community-based organizations function because this change also meant competing with the public schools for enrolling 4-year olds in their programs. This initiative benefited families but it put a strain on the community-based organizations due to a decrease in their enrollment numbers.

As the field of early childhood education continues to change, the administrative leadership at the community-based organizations (CBOs) have to find ways to remain relevant and move their preschool and staff forward (Gonzalez, 2014). They have to establish a sense of urgency and tap into their social capital in order to stay at the forefront of leading early childhood education in order to help close the academic achievement gap (Daly, 2015; Kotter, 2012).

This chapter presents syntheses of relevant research and literature on the topic of the study. It is organized in three subsections: leadership autonomy, preschool culture and leading through change.

### **Leadership Autonomy**

Bennis, (2009) states “becoming a leader is synonymous with becoming yourself” (p. 9). This part of the literature review examines the research on leadership autonomy through the following subsections: Leadership development, leadership oversight, building trust and diverse systems.

**Leadership development.** Program directors are charged with leading early childhood education and supporting their staff. Being a preschool school administrator demands an understanding of one’s role as a leader. Autonomy according to Dou, Devos, and Valcke (2016) when it comes to school leaders, represents how much authority school leaders have in the decision-making process and in the day-to-day functions and policies in in their schools. As the researcher of this study sought to put together a body of research that would support the current study, the concept of leadership efficacy was also considered.

Unlike autonomy, efficacy within the concept of leadership looks at a leader’s ability to obtain results while autonomy refers to how a leader obtains those results. Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) define a leader’s self-efficacy as one’s ability to perform and act independently in order to

drive change and achieve results. Bennis (2009) states that “the key to full self-expression is understanding one’s self-and the world, and the key to understanding is learning-from one’s own life and experience” (p. 3). This statement coincides with the definition of autonomy. Knowing yourself is as crucial as having a vision for the organization that you lead (Bennis, 2009). The productivity of an organization depends on the leadership of its leader.

Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) also state that a leader’s perception of his or her ability to lead influences the academic achievement of students. Having a leader that feels confident and competent will lead to a productive and a galvanized workforce because the leader is able to lead the organization forward (Kotter, 2012; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). Elmore (2002) also argues that system leaders and policymakers must ensure that school level leadership is knowledgeable and skillful in order to impact student achievement. The roles of community-based organization early childhood education program directors incorporate a great deal of responsibilities that being competent is a prerequisite in order to do the job effectively (Devine, 2015; Patton, 2009). The perceptions of leaders about their own knowledge when it comes to early childhood education can play a role in the autonomy that such leaders exhibit when executing their jobs (Wilson, 2009).

Bennis (2009) states that a leader who knows his strengths and weaknesses, works with both in order to do his job by fully utilizing his strengths to compensate for his weaknesses. A leader should know who he is and what he wants out of his role. Bennis (2009) also states that leaders get the best out of people by giving them direction, fostering trust and giving them hope. People do better when they feel empowered, supported and have room to act independently. For program directors, having the room to lead their preschool is vital in order to maintain a productive and positive preschool culture under a multi-accountability system. Feeling autonomous in a multi accountability leadership system which currently governs the way early childhood education

program directors operate, is intricate because it requires a certain finesse when dealing with different stakeholders. Bennis (2009) adds “followers need from their leaders three basic qualities: they need direction; they want trust; and they want hope” (p. xiii). Bennis (2009) also mentions that a leader should be able to master the context of their organization in order to effectively lead others. Mastering the context as explained by Bennis (2009) means being self-expressive, following your inner voice, learning from the right people, and having a guiding vision.

Furthermore, Kidder (2006) suggests that a leader needs to know where he is in order to know where he is going and what he stands for. The early childhood educational leadership from the standpoint of community-based organization leaders, continues to evolve and therefore early childhood educational leadership is also changing. The majority of the changes derive from the standards and policies being introduced into the field of early childhood education by the system leaders. Program directors are required to engage in professional development training in order to support their understanding of new policies and procedures (Gormley, 2005).

An occupation becomes a profession when it assumes responsibility for developing a shared knowledge base for all of its members and for transmitting that knowledge through professional education, licensing, and ongoing peer review. A profession seeks to ensure that its members understand and use standards of practice that put the interests of clients first and base decisions on the best available knowledge. (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. 298)

Scharmer (2007) states that leaders need to work from the idea of wanting to reach their highest potential. To work from a frame of mind of your future self in order to achieve results in the now. In the field of education, leaders spend so much time putting out fires and being reactive that focusing on who you could become could be a task in itself. Scharmer (2007) looks at the development of a leader by embarking on a deeper awareness of self when dealing with change.

This awareness happens through three levels: an open mind, an open heart, and an open will. At level one, leaders begin to demonstrate awareness toward things that were not noticeable before. Level two allows leaders to see and accept what is seeing and therefore begin to take actions regarding new found knowledge. Level three is when leaders accept the calling and surrender to the commitment that their role calls for. Educational leadership pushes on a leader's inner voice and it requires selfless acts in order to work with others to achieve results (Daly, 2015). Scharmer (2007) describes five movements that a leader could encounter when engaging in the *U* process which is a leader's grassroots movement toward reaching an authentic self. According to Scharmer (2007) these five movements are:

Movement one *Co-initiating*: listen to what life calls you to do, connect with people and contexts related to that call, and convene constellations of core players that co-inspire common intention.

Movement two *Co-sensing*: go to the places of most potential; observe; observe; observe; listen with your mind and heart wide open.

Movement three *Co-presencing*: go to the place of individual and collective stillness, open up to the deeper source of knowing, and connect to the future that wants to emerge through you.

Movement four *Co-creating*: building landing strips of the future by prototyping living microcosms in order to explore the future by doing.

Movement five *Co-evolving*: co-developing a larger innovation ecosystem and hold the space that connects people across boundaries through seeing and acting from the whole.

(pp. 18-19).

Scharmer (2007) asserts that a leader's work exists from a collective perspective but it demands an intimate individualistic process in order for such collectiveness to impact change and shift toward progress. Bolman and Deal's (2006) assertion provides context to what CBO program directors of early childhood education confront by being at the forefront of leadership in early childhood education. Bolman and Deal (2006) discuss the concept of good and evil, wizards and warriors and needing both sides in order to succeed. Leaders that are wizards rely on possibilities, self-courage, hope, magic, determination for a better tomorrow, value in foreseeing in order to adapt, and an overall sense of positivism when it comes to their area of expertise.

Moreover, leadership autonomy according to Dou, Devos, and Volcke (2016) requires school leaders to have knowledge of their roles and responsibilities in order to exercise their authority within their schools. Bolman and Deal (2006) state that an organization without wizards can often be toxic to its environment. Warriors on the other hand, rely on strength, power, authority, courage, a willingness to go the distance, and fight for what they believe is right. Nonetheless, Bolman and Deal (2006) state that leaders need to be able to exist between the two roles in order to lead effectively. Leaders need a sense of believe but also a sense of power to overcome obstacles in order to impact change and achieve new heights. Program directors have to exercise power but also believe that they can do the job especially under a multi accountability system.

Bolman and Deal (2006) seek to assess leadership in four different roles: Analysts, Caregivers, Warriors and Wizards. *Analysts* "believe a good leader is knowledgeable, thinks clearly, makes the right decisions, has good analytic skills, and can design clear structures and systems that get the job done" (Bolman & Deal, 2006, p. 21). The *Caregivers* "believe in leadership built around coaching, participation, motivation, teamwork, and good interpersonal

relations. A good leader cares deeply about others and is a facilitator who listens, supports and empowers” (Bolman & Deal, 2006, p. 21). Hudson (2010) argues that early childhood education leaders are viewed as caregivers because of the age of the students being from birth to five years of age and not so much as leaders in education. Bolman and Deal’s (2006) definition of caregivers provides a different take on what a caregiver could be under the lens of leadership. Program directors for example, have to have good interpersonal skills and coaching in order to function in a system guided by different policies. Likewise, “warriors emphasize the importance of building a power base: allies, resources, networks, coalitions” (Bolman & Deal, 2006, p. 21). “Wizards bring imagination, insight, creativity, vision, meaning, and magic to the work of leadership. They look beyond the surface of things to see new possibilities” (Bolman & Deal, 2006, p. 21).

Understanding how these four frames of assessing leadership work is important when trying to understand the functions of an organization. However, Bolman and Deal (2006) state that the frames of warriors and wizards are crucial to leadership because their functions are intertwined and often neglected when looking at leadership. “The *warrior* corresponds to the political frame, which sees organizations as arenas in which individuals and groups compete for power and scarce resources. Finally, the *wizard* aligns with the symbolic frame, with its emphasis on the cultural and non-rational features of an organization” (Bolman & Deal, 2006, p. 22). A leader would need to understand each of these frameworks when dealing with policymakers, their superiors, and the community that they serve in order to embody the appropriate leadership style. For program directors understanding the frameworks of their multi-accountability system should be part of their job in order to lead others.

**Leadership oversight.** Collaborating with various monitoring systems is part of the leadership role that program directors exercise. Lumby (2009) states that school leaders often have



to contend with multi-organizations in order to achieve success which requires that they test and adjust their own autonomy when it comes to working in collaboration. In early childhood education for example, program directors in New York City are required to work within a multi-service model as they are funded by the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), federal government for Head Start services and the NYC Department of Education for Pre-K for All services. Lumby (2009) argues that when looking at the success of an organization it is important to consider the collaborations that exist within that organization as well as the autonomy of the leader within that organization.

Program directors as Lumby (2009) suggests are school administrators that must work with others in order to execute their jobs. Part of the governing body that oversees the functions of community-based organizations which includes supervising the program directors, is a board of directors. According to Houston and Eadie (2003):

Boards are by definition, organizations within the wider organization of which they are a part of, just like an officer of curriculum and instruction or an office of the district superintendent. They are a permanently established group of people working through formal structure and process to achieve a valid mission: to govern. (p. 4)

Program directors are governed by non-for-profit board of directors. For EarlyLearn New York programs, having an active board is a contractual requirement. According to the Head Start Act of 2007, the board serves as the governing body in charge of overseeing the fiscal and legal responsibilities of the organization as well as the supervision of the program director. Needless to say, program directors need to maintain a close relationship with their boards not only because they are the governing entity but their supervisors as well. Houston and Eadie (2003), note that board savvy superintendents understand the importance of working collaboratively with their

boards and utilizing the boards effectively instead of as damage control. They also mentioned that a board savvy superintendent seeks to include the board, utilize their skills, and treat them as assets in leading their school districts successfully.

In addition, Houston and Eadie (2003) recommend that a leader that works with a board needs to move beyond being in charge and become more strategic in terms of making decision that will continue to engage the board and keep them on the side the leader desires. Being knowledgeable of your role and craft in order to influence the board to collaborate in moving the organization forward, according to Houston and Eadie (2003) is vital to the process of being in charge while having an entity such as a board of directors serve as a governing body.

On the other hand, Carver (2006) unlike Houston and Eadie (2003), focuses more on the role that the boards play in developing and supporting leadership while Houston and Eadie (2003) focus on the superintendents' role in influencing their boards. The board of directors are being regarded as supervising entities to support the autonomy of the program directors much like Waters and Marzano (2006) describe the relationship of superintendents and principals when it comes to autonomy. Having a board that can be impactful and tactful with their support can efficiently support a leader's ability to develop as a leader. Carver (2006) states that there are three intentions for which people organize as a group or join boards. For this literature review, the third intention is more fitting: "organize to make life better for others" (Carver, 2006, p. 16). Looking at the current state of early childhood education through the eyes of program directors can shed light on how their board of directors have influenced their thinking and supported their autonomy skills.

Carver (2006) conceives the various ways a board can be of benefit to a leader such as being actively involved in the work by having linkages to the organization, by owning what the organization stands for, guarding the organization's values, and by maintaining an active voice

within the community it serves. Carver (2006) also mentions a board that is less involved in terms of allowing the leader to carry on his or her responsibilities (having autonomy), is solution oriented and not just problem-solvers as another form of providing beneficial support to the leader. Being a board that provides sound support that facilitates progress and self-confidence for the leader and staying out of the leader's way to allow room for independent thinking and actions, is also another role that boards can play from their governing system according to Carver (2006). Boards that support leaders by giving them room to make decisions and grow as a leader, are considered to be mentors (Carver, 2006). Boards could in a way be seen as mentors to the program directors because they are there to provide guidance on how to move the organization forward.

**Building trust.** Leaders move the organizations that they lead forward by galvanizing their staff and fostering linkages that facilitate trust amongst the membership. Maxwell (2003) speaks about the value of being able to get people to trust the leadership based on words and actions when it comes to leading others. This article was relevant because it examined the role that personality plays in being seen within an organization, a group, and/or amongst peers.

Maxwell (2003) focuses on the benefits of building trust when it comes to leadership and program directors are at the forefront of having to build trust with key stakeholders due to the multi accountability system under which they operate. Maxwell (2003) also mentions that integrity helps to build relationships “and it is the foundation upon which many other qualities for success are built, such as, respect, dignity, and trust” (p. 56). Maxwell (2003) also adds that a person earns people's trust by showing them what he or she stands for within an organization.

Furthermore, Stevenson, Hedberg, O'Sullivan, and Howe (2015), state that leaders need to be reflective of their audience in order to manage the expectations of individuals when it comes to facilitating professional development. Stevenson et al. (2015) augment that in school communities

there are drivers and buyers and that as leaders, we need to network with both groups in order to achieve success. *Drivers* refer to those that are self-directed in their fields and *buyers* refer to those that are resistant to change and need to be persuaded in order to act or produce. In relation to this current research, Stevenson et al. (2015) provide support to the research question on autonomy because in order for action to take place we need self-directed people to lead the way and obtain buy-in from those resistant to embark on a new direction or a new way of doing things. Unlike Maxwell (2003), that focuses on trust to get others to adhere, Stevenson et al. (2015) put an emphasis on knowing who your members are in order to get them on your side.

**Diverse systems.** Operating under a diverse system could pull school administrators into different directions in order for them to be effective as educational leaders. Elmore (2002) says that system leaders and policymakers must ensure that school level leadership is knowledgeable and skillful in order to impact student achievement. Elmore (2002) discusses the role that leaders play in terms of leading instruction to impact student achievement when dealing with standards and having to implement those standards as a way of operating under a system.

Having autonomy in the realm of teaching to the standards according to Elmore (2002) has proven to be beneficial to school level leaders. EarlyLearn New York (ELNY) and Pre-Kindergarten for All (PKA) program directors adhere to the New York State Pre-Kindergarten Foundation for the Common Core, New York State Early Learning Guidelines, and the Head Start Performance Standards to run their preschool and impact the students for lifelong learning. Ritchhart (2002) states that as educators we need to constantly seek to spark learning through exploration and supporting individual knowledge. Autonomy plays a role in being able to lead others in order to impact student learning. Having the various learning and instructional guidelines as part of an educational leader's repertoire could put a strain a leader's ability to effectively lead

others if his or her autonomy skills are not put into practice within a diverse system of operation (Ritchhart, 2002).

On the other hand, Sims and Penny (2015) examine how professional learning communities fail due to their narrowed focus when it comes to working together. Within this article, it was found that professional learning communities attributed their failure to their narrow focus with not enough room to account for other factors that can influence or guide a professional learning community. Sims and Penny (2015) support the concept of working together to impact student achievement and create a community of learners. Sims and Penny (2015) provide a lens on how teams work together and the importance of having clear goals within those teams. The factor of culture can vastly influence how people work together within an organization (Thornton, & Cherrington, 2014).

Leadership autonomy according to the current research is something that many educational leaders grapple with because of the multifaceted system under which educational leaders operate. Leadership autonomy can be viewed from different frameworks such as the development of a leader towards becoming autonomous. How a leader exerts autonomy under the leadership of an overarching system. How a leader fosters trust amongst the members of their organization in order to execute his or her vision. And lastly, how a leader exercises autonomy under a diverse system of operations. Dealing with these frameworks according to the research, harnesses a leader's autonomy due to the challenges that arises from leading under such capacity (Betebenner & Linn, 2010; Hudson, 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Thornton & Cherrington, 2014).

### **The Preschool Culture**

Schein (2010) explains, “culture is constantly reenacted and created by our interactions with others and shaped by our own behavior” (p. 3). Early childhood education has landed itself

at the frontline of public education in part because quality-based early childhood education has been highlighted as a solution toward academic achievement (Rothstein, 2004). Concepts of culture, cultural competency, as well as community and culture are presented below as subsections pertaining to preschool culture.

**Concepts of culture.** Schein (2010) defines culture as a pattern of shared basic assumptions which is passed down to new members as such assumptions have proven to be valid when problem-solving. Schein presents the concept of culture within four categories: *Macrocultures*, *Organizational cultures*, *Subcultures* and *Microcultures*. Schein defines these categories to further explore the concept of organizational culture: *Macrocultures* refer to nations, ethnic and global organizations. *Organizational cultures* refer to the various organizations that exist from the private, public and government sector. *Subcultures* refer to groups within organizations. Lastly, *microcultures* refer to smaller systems in or out of an organization. The community-based organizations administered by program directors fall under the category of organizational cultures from the perspective of understanding their role in education. Nonetheless, all of the three other categories can also be defined when looking at the culture of community-based organizations.

Schein (2010) also states that culture and leadership are part of the same concept and they mirror each other. Culture gives leaders language and societal norms which guide the work that leaders do. The community-based organizations addressed within this literature review are non-for-profit organizations and according to Schein (2010) leaders such as early childhood education program directors of CBOs share a culture based on change and reorganization. Schein (2010) explains that an organization's culture can be analyzed by three differentiated levels which he defines as the degree to which an organization functions as a whole. Schein (2010) expresses that these three levels of culture are important when analyzing a culture because such analyses allows

one to understand the inner values of an organization based on the following three levels: *Artifacts*, *Espoused Beliefs and Values*, and *Basic Underlying Assumptions*. For example, Schein (2010) mentions artifacts as an entryway for understanding the culture of an organization from a surface standpoint. Schein's (2010) three levels of culture begin with what is visible in an organization. Schein (2010) adds:

Artifacts include the visible products of the group, such as the architecture of its physical environment; its language; its technology and products; its artistic creations; its style, as embodied in clothing, manners of address, and emotional displays; its myths and stories told about the organization; its published lists of values; and its observable rituals and ceremonies. (p. 23)

Hence in community-based organization early childhood education programs, ACS and NYC's Department of Education (DOE) play a major role on the physical environments where program directors work. Even the name of the macrosystem under which individual community-based organizations operate is derived from their funders. For example, under ACS preschool centers are referred to as ELNY sites and under the NYC's Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education, preschool centers are known as New York City Early Education Centers (NYCEECs) this is the latest name given to the community-based organization preschool centers as of September 2015.

In the context of Schein's (2010) definition of artifacts, rebranding an organization by renaming it has to be done with intentionality in order for the new name to become part of the culture and the organization's identity. The name of an organization is very visible and it can be known without knowing much about the organization. Schein (2010) goes on to say that knowing the value of the cultural artifacts is crucial to the process of leading change and understanding the

stages of such change because what we hold to be valuable is inclusive of our artifacts that display such values.

The second level of culture according to Schein (2010) is defined as the *espoused beliefs and values* which are “ideals, goals, values, aspirations, ideologies and rationalizations” (p. 24). Schein (2010) explains that these beliefs and values originate from an individual’s own point of view which is espoused by the members of the organization. The process under which these beliefs and values become part of a culture unfurls when such actions prove to be fruitful and transferrable amongst the membership. Within this level of culture exist a need for *social validation* in order for these beliefs and values to become part of the culture, which Schein (2010) defines as “certain beliefs and values are confirmed only by the shared social experience of a group” (p. 26). Much of this validation comes from how the members of the organization feel about embracing the way it functions and solves problems. Program directors not only have to espouse the beliefs and values of their funders but they also have to get their staff to do the same within their preschools.

The third and final level of culture is *basic underlying assumptions* which according to Schein (2010) means “unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs and values; determine behavior, perception, thought, and feeling” (p. 24). This level of culture makes the members comfortable and stable which according to Schein (2010) is due to the fact that the culture of an organization is at its ultimate level of power. This level can facilitate congruency and credence between the artifacts and the espoused beliefs and values of an organization. Schein (2010) posits that understanding culture, we will know ourselves better and this will allow us to manage the culture of our organization as well as recognize the forces that influence us as leaders.



Similarly, Kotter (2012) defines culture as “norms of behavior and shared values among a group of people” (p. 156). Kotter (2012) explains the following two terms: *norms of behavior* and *share values* as it relates to culture.

Behavior norms are common or pervasive ways of acting that are found in a group and that persist because group members tend to behave in ways that teach these practices to new members, rewarding those who fit in and sanctioning those who do not. Shared values are important concerns and goals shared by most of the people in a group that tend to shape group behavior and that often persist over time even when group membership changes. (Kotter, 2012, p. 156)

**Cultural proficiency.** Leaders have to consider culture not only as it applies to their organization but also as it exists amongst the members of the organization. The research presented examines how being culturally proficient supports a leader’s ability to sustain the culture of their school. Kotter (2012) goes on to say that “culture is important because it can powerfully influence human behavior, because it can be difficult to change, and because its near invisibility makes it hard to address directly” (p. 156).

Similarly, Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) consider organizational culture by describing the elements that define school culture. Within the development of this literature review toward understanding preschool culture, Gruenert and Whitaker’s (2015) explanation of rituals, symbols, and the aim within a school culture coincides with Schein’s (2010) view on organizational culture. Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) state that school culture can be explained by looking at what the school considers to be important, their school’s rituals, their school’s symbols and most importantly, what the school aims for in terms of what they hope to achieve.

Moreover, Terrell and Lindsey (2009) state that as leaders, achieving cultural proficiency requires undergoing an inward journey that could lead to enlightenment and more tools to use when collaborating with others. Terrell and Lindsey (2009) define culture as “the set of practices and beliefs shared by members of a particular group that distinguish that group from other groups” (p. 16). This definition speaks to the description of human characteristics, which include aspects such as gender, religion, language, socioeconomic status and so forth. Terrell and Lindsey (2009) define *cultural proficiency* as:

A process that begins with us, not with our students, or their communities. A shift in thinking; a lens through which we view our role as educators; a concept comprised of a set of four interrelated tools to guide our practice. (p. 20)

Terrell and Lindsey’s (2009) guiding tools for personal and professional growth are as follow: *Guiding principles*, *a continuum*, *essential elements*, and *barriers*. These four elements help educational leaders work through the process of becoming culturally proficient which in return equips them to lead others toward favorable outcomes.

*Guiding principles* on which you can build an ethical and professional frame for effective cross-cultural communication and problem solving.

*A continuum* of behaviors that enables you to diagnose your values and behavior in such a way that you can better influence the policies and practices of our profession.

*Essential elements* expressed in terms of standards of personal and professional conduct, that serve as a framework for intentionally responding to the academic and social needs of the cultural groups in your school and community.

*Barriers* to this work framed in such a way that you are intentional in the use of the guiding principles and essential elements. (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009, pp. 22-23)

Terrell and Lindsey (2009) also discuss the benefits of achieving cultural proficiency as it could propel leaders to a place of understanding, inclusion, collaboration and self-reflection. Terrell and Lindsey (2009) state that “cultural proficiency is a mindset for how we interact with all people, irrespective of their cultural memberships. Cultural proficiency is a worldview that carries explicit values, language, and standards for effective personal interactions and professional practices” (p. 21). Program directors becoming proficient could mean being able to effectively work with their staff as well as the leaders that monitor and oversee their preschools. Furthermore, Terrell and Lindsey (2009) discuss how these four tools support educational leaders by providing more information on how these tools can be understood. For example, there are five essential elements and the third element is *Managing the Dynamics of Difference* which means “modeling problem solving and conflict resolution strategies as a natural and normal process within the organizational culture of the schools and the cultural contexts of the communities of your school” (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009, p. 26). This essential element aligns with Schein’s (2010) view on how members of an organization view culture in terms of how they solve their problems. Terrell and Lindsey’s (2009) fourth tool are the barriers that exist in reaching cultural proficiency. Within this tool there are three common barriers and the first one is *Resistance to Change* which means:

Many educators and schools often struggle with change that involves issues of culture. For those who are resistant, change often is experienced as an outside force that judges current practices as deficient or defective. Whether accurate or not, an adversarial relationship exists between those forcing the change and the members of the school. (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009, p. 27)

Terrell and Lindsey (2009) underpin that educational leaders need to be aware of these barriers in order to effectively work through them and become culturally proficient. Therefore,

program directors should understand the barriers that exist within the multi-accountability system under which they operate as a useful strategy towards becoming culturally proficient and therefore maintain the culture of their preschool that's inclusive of their funders.

**Community and culture.** Research on culture brings up the concept of community as it relates to organizational culture because culture transcends individuals and calls upon collaborative thinking. Peck (1988) for example, describes the process by which community forms and transcends culture. This process takes place in four stages: Stage One is the primitive formation of a group to form a community. Their reasons are superficial and there is no real interest in working together. Stage Two represents the beginning of commitment to the laws of the community and they are dogmatic towards each other and anyone who threatens their pseudo-community. Stage Three represents reflective actions which demands that the members of the community begin to look at themselves and question their actions within the community. Peck (1988) refers to this stage as “the required beginning of the emptying process” (p. 201). Peck also states, “we cannot succeed in emptying ourselves of preconceptions, prejudices, needs to control or convert, and so forth, without first becoming skeptical of them and without doubting their necessity” (p. 201). The final stage of Peck’s (1988) concept of transcending culture is Stage Four. When individuals reach this stage, they are able to accept each other for who they are, they are able to accept their limitations and the limitations of the members of their community.

Much like Terrell and Lindsey (2009), Peck’s (1988) Stage Four aligns with the achievement of cultural proficiency as described by Terrell and Lindsey (2009). Lastly, Peck’s (1988) view is that leaders are faced with making tough decisions when it comes to leadership because they need to have the courage to make difficult decisions and stand by those decisions in the face of adversity. For program directors working under the multiplicity of leadership could

also mean having to make certain decisions that others might not agree with but still having the courage to make them for the sake of the preschool culture under which they lead.

In addition, Dufour and Fullan (2013) mention the benefits of implementing an effective professional learning community (PLC) when it comes to changing the stagnant culture of an organization and sustaining such change. Dufour and Fullan (2013) found that schools that were not expected to yield positive student outcomes did because they used the process of professional learning community to change the way they work and changed the culture of their schools. Dufour and Fullan (2013) agree that changing an organization's culture is challenging because leaders and their followers have to unlearn old behaviors and learn new ways to get things done. As educational leaders having to unlearn strategies and methods is part of the process which coincides with Peck's (1988) emptying process. Dufour and Fullan (2013) suggest that in order to ensure that a culture has been built to last, one must look at the journey that the leader has taken to build that culture.

On the other hand, Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers (1999) speak of accountability and how a leader can facilitate learning and growth by understanding the culture of their schools. Taking responsibility for one's actions according to Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers (1999) requires that you understand yourself and that you know yourself and what you are trying to achieve. Accountability as described by Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers (1999) supports Terrell and Lindsey's (2009) reference on cultural proficiency as a journey that leads to truly knowing yourself.

Moreover, Ssentamu (2014) mentions adult learning and how being an adult can influence the quality of your learning due to your learned behavior and the culture of your surroundings. In this article, Ssentamu supports the research on preschool culture within this literature review and

he cites the various components that organizations should consider when planning learning activities such as professional development for adults. Ssentamu's (2014) article, "Opportunities and Threats to Learning: Lessons from a Pedagogical Workshop for Faculty at a Higher Education Institution" was selected for this literature review because Ssentamu (2014) points out how adults learn and what can impact their learning for the benefit of the organization that they serve. The majority of the participants in this study have been in the field for a long time which under Ssentamu's point of view is important to consider when thinking about their professional development as adult learners.

Another point that Ssentamu (2014) makes is that adult learners can sometimes lack self-reflection and tend to place blame on their facilitators as supposed to looking at their weaknesses. This aspect of adult learning can highlight the role that these program directors are playing in providing professional development for their staff and facilitating their learning. From the perspective of organizational culture as described by Schein (2010), organizational culture is passed down from members to members. Ensuring that the culture being cultivated is conducive to the organization's mission and vision is part of the responsibility of any educational leader which includes program directors.

On the other hand, Kidder (2006) presents a different perspective on leadership when it comes to having moral courage and standing up for what you know is right as a leader. Kidder's (2006) book "Moral Courage" highlights another scope of leadership which helps illustrate how leaders support any given culture. Much like autonomy, preschool culture speaks to the character of a leader as a person and as a professional in terms of what that leader believes in. Kidder (2006) addresses the fact that the presence or absence of moral courage can lead to success and/or failure. Kidder (2006) states that as members of society, having values and ethics can prove to be useful

however, if such members lack moral courage such skills can be of little to no use toward achievement.

Kidder (2006) states “without moral courage, our brightest virtues rust from lack of use. With it, we build piece by piece a more ethical world” (p. 3). In a world that is constantly changing, moral courage when it comes to the preschool culture fosters what Schein’s (2010) concept of espoused beliefs and values does for the culture of an organization. According to Schein (2010), rationalization forms part of an organizational culture as it relates to the leader at the helm of the organization. Kidder (2006) also supports the fact that much of what takes place in an organization has to do with how the leader upholds his own morality.

Additionally, Kidder (2006) maintains that there are three elements of moral courage: *Principles*, *Danger*, and *Endurance*. These three elements overlap and how a leader navigates these elements can prove to be fruitful in the midst of decision-making and leading others. Knowing what you stand for and the danger involved in any given process can happen through endurance. Being part of the early childhood education culture could have tested these participants’ courage and their endurance to lead by their courage. Kidder (2006) states that moral courage can be viewed in two forms: *physical courage* and *moral courage*. Physical courage meaning facing adversity when you know it can lead to physical harm and moral courage-as having the mental courage to engage in activities that could bring emotional distress and challenge your morality (Kidder, 2006).

Kidder (2006) posits that “moral courage is the courage to be moral” (p. 10). Kidder also states that being moral involves five values: “honesty, respect, responsibility, fairness, and compassion” (p. 10). As has been stated, culture is the passing of knowledge, Kidder (2006) insists that a leader needs to be honest about his intentions and respect the intentions of others as well as

demand respect by being responsible and being fair. Celebrating each other's triumphs and showing solidarity during hardship generates compassion amongst the members of an organization. Kidder (2006) provides a lens on how a leader's morality can influence the culture within an organization. Organizational culture is "the values, norms, beliefs, and practice that govern how an institution functions" (Kidder, 2006, p. 177).

Another aspect that Kidder (2006) references when talking about moral courage is whether it can be learned or is it something that you are born with. The answer according to Kidder is that it is the "latter, as in all learning, two things are important: the substance or idea of what's taught and the pedagogy or methodology through which it's learned" (p. 213). Ssentuma (2014) like Kidder (2006) refers to the role of learners when it comes to leadership and culture. Schein (2010) states that "learning and change cannot be imposed on people. Their involvement and participation is needed in diagnosing what is going on, in figuring out what to do, and in the actual process of learning and change" (p. 382).

Similarly, Whyte (2001) addressed courage and how having courage can lead a person to being passionate about their work and their individual growth. Whyte (2001) states that courage is another word for heartfelt which when exercised creates a spark and raises the stakes on what you are trying to achieve. Whyte goes on to say that "the human soul thrives on and finds courage from the difficult intimacies of belonging" (p. 23). Being a preschool leader operating under a larger system such as the NYC Department of Education, could also present a need to want to belong in the education system and therefore have to face the difficulties that such longing for belongingness demands (Whyte, 2001).

Preschool culture when examined under the current research deciphers a leader's role in creating culture, sustaining culture, shifting culture and changing culture. For this current



literature review, the preschool culture was explored under the concepts of culture that some leaders encounter when leading others. The cultural proficiency of leaders, in terms of their organization, their staff, and themselves as an internal and an individual process that could lead to organizational growth across the board. Lastly, the literature review also looked at the preschool culture from the framework of community as it relates to culture. So much of what educational leaders do entails building a community of learners in order to effect change and impact positive outcomes for others (Dufour & Fullan, 2013; Kidder, 2006; Schein, 2010; Terrell & Lindsey, 2009; Wiseman & McKeown, 2010).

### **Leading Change**

According to Bennis (2009) “the first step toward change is to refuse to be deployed by others and to choose to deploy yourself” (p. 37). This section focuses on leading change through the elements of change, social networks, transition due to change and lastly, followership as we explore how a leader engages in organizational change.

Understanding the culture of a program such as Head Start, is crucial for a leader’s ability to impact change and drive positive student outcomes. In 1997, Universal Pre-Kindergarten was added to the world of early education in New York City (Gormley, 2005). Since then, New York City has enacted various initiatives all driven to closing the achievement gap through quality-based early childhood education (Brimley, Verstegen, & Garfield, 2016). All of these initiatives represent change.

As community-based organizations still depend on submitting request for proposal to gain funding in order to remain operational, Schein’s (2010) *survival anxiety* plays a role in how directors manage change. Survival anxiety according to Schein (2010) is a sense of wanting to deal with a present situation that threatens the existence of the organization in order to move

forward. Leaders can help the members of their organizations manage their anxiety by providing a sense of safety. This sense of safety according to Schein (2010), comes from having psychological safety which means giving the members of the organization a sense of purpose, productivity and the tools to manage the change and embrace the culture.

As of April 2017, the Mayor of New York City announced that early childhood education (ECE) is about to undergo yet another change. Through a press release the Mayor announced that Pre-Kindergarten for All will expand to 3-year olds in school district seven in the Bronx and school district 23 in Brooklyn beginning in September of 2017. By the school year of 2021, such expansion will be executed throughout the entire city of New York in all school districts. Program directors have become accustomed to such changes being introduced on a constant basis. This upcoming change when considered under Bernhardt's (2012) claim, occurs in context due to the current trends that are taking place in the education system. Early childhood education took a front seat in 2014 when the NYC's Department of Education expanded its Pre-K seats by 50,000 and later on in 2015 to 75,000 (New York City Department of Education, 2016).

Furthermore, Darling-Hammond (1997) state that most educational systems in the United States have a school system separated by three categories: elementary, middle and high school. The elementary category includes Kindergarten through fifth grade. As of the year 2014, New York City's public schools moved to a full Preschool to 12<sup>th</sup> grade model even though Universal Pre-K has been in existence since the 1990s in New York City (Brimley, Verstegen, & Garfield, 2016; Gormley, 2005). Program directors are expected to encounter what the Mayor of New York City is calling a 3-K expansion as well as EarlyLearn New York being administered by the Department of Education as supposed to by the Administration for Children's Services.

**Elements of change.** Elmore (2000) addresses the challenge of culture when it comes to designing school improvement and dealing with change. Leaders have to take into account various factors when it comes to leading change. Kotter (2012) introduces the concept of leading change in order to transform organizations. Kotter (2012) also mentions the fact that leaders need followers to be on board in order to effectively sustain change. Organizational changes are sometimes brought upon through a shift in conditions or a need to stay relevant (Dufour & Fullan, 2013; Kotter, 2012; Schein, 2010). Kotter (2012) articulates that change is complicated and can sometimes lead organizations to make mistakes when introducing change. Kotter (2012) indicates that there are eight common errors that can hinder the process of change. These eight errors are:

Error one, allowing too much complacency; error two, failing to create a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition; error three, underestimating the power of vision; error four, under communicating the vision by a factor of 10; error five, permitting obstacles to block the new vision; error six, failing to create short-term wins; error seven, declaring victory too soon; and finally, error eight, neglecting to anchor changes firmly in the corporate culture. (p. 16)

Kotter (2012) goes on to state that being too compliant with staff when leading the charge on change is an error that can be detrimental to the organization because sometimes such change is introduced without establishing a sense of urgency amongst the membership. Lacking such urge for change can lead to members not giving their all or going the extra mile. Kotter (2012) points to error two to say that regardless of how effective a leader is, if the organization is not on board or is not being guided under clear expectations, such leader will not be successful in any sustainable endeavor. Errors three to five according to Kotter (2012) refer to the vision of an organization and how the lack of clarity, communication, and obstacles can prevent a leader from

achieving successful changes and upholding the organization's vision. Errors six and seven occur when leaders fall short of recognizing progress within the organization. Lastly, Kotter's (2012) error eight: "neglecting to anchor changes firmly in the corporate culture" (p. 14) addresses the fact that leaders sometime fail to ensure that the people involved understand how things work and what the expectations are within the organization.

Still, Kotter (2012) states that leaders need to ensure that information is passed down in order to anchor change. That passing down of information continues to inform the culture of the organization. Knowing the culture and articulating such culture is vital to sustaining change and avoiding costly mistakes that can hinder the productivity of an organization (Kotter, 2012). Just as there are eight errors that are common when dealing with organizational changes, Kotter (2012) also discusses the process through which change can be successful if those identified errors are minimized or avoided. Kotter (2012) says that there are two important patterns that emerge from successful change. "First, useful change tends to be associated with a multistep process that creates power and motivation sufficient to overwhelm all the sources of inertia. Second, this process is never employed effectively unless it is driven by a high-quality leadership" (p. 22).

Transformational change according to Kotter (2012) is not an easy process partly due to "inwardly focused cultures, paralyzing bureaucracy, parochial politics, a low level of trust, lack of teamwork, arrogant attitudes, a lack of leadership in middle management, and the general human fear of the unknown" (Kotter, 2012, p. 22). Changing the culture of an organization takes more than just introducing new policies or moving things around, it requires a change to happen within the individuals themselves before the organizational culture can be changed (Kidder 2006; Kotter, 2012; Schein, 2010; Terrell & Lindsey, 2009).

As mentioned before, Kotter (2012) introduces an Eight-Stage Change Process for creating major change within an organization as a counter to what he calls the “eight fundamental errors that undermine transformation efforts” (p. 24). These stages are as follow: establishing a sense of urgency, creating a guiding coalition, developing a vision and strategy, communicating the change vision, empowering broad-based action, generating short-term wins, consolidating gains and producing more change, and lastly, anchoring new approaches in the culture (Kotter, 2012). These stages are idiosyncratic to a chronological system in order to yield sustainable change. Kotter (2012) also suggests that each stage scaffolds into each other providing the leaders with a solid foundation from where to lead. Since the current state under which early childhood education functions entails a multi accountability system, incorporating Kotter’s (2012) Eight-Stage Change Process could support the system leader’s ability to introduce the Mayor’s new 3-K initiative.

In addition, Kotter (2012) explains that effective change of any scale should go through the eight-stage process in sequence. This sequencing is important according to Kotter (2012) because stages one through four represent the defrosting of “a hardened status quo” (p. 24). Stages five through seven represent innovative practices. Lastly, stage eight cements the changes into the culture of the organization. Kotter (2012) insists that failing to follow the stages in chronological order will lead to a weakened process and the end result could be faulty when attempting to make the changes part of the system.

“Transformation requires sacrifice, dedication, and creativity, none of which usually comes with coercion” (Kotter, 2012, p. 32). Kotter suggests that in order to ensure that we are not forcing people into accepting the vision, it is important to manage the process in order to prevent an unorganized process. However, Kotter (2012) states that leadership is truly what makes changes grounded not management. “Because leaders are so central to any major change effort, we

sometimes conclude that transformation equals leadership. Certainly, without strong and capable leadership from many people, restructurings, turnarounds, and cultural changes don't happen well or at all" (Kotter, 2012, p. 133).

Kotter (2012) also says that changing the culture of an organization is a hard task because so much of an organization's culture is deeply embedded that any new change that is inconsistent with the core of the culture creates a challenge. This is why Kotter (2012) states "the biggest impediment to creating change in a group is culture" (p. 164). Kotter goes on to say that culture cannot be manipulated and it has to also follow a sequence process much like the Eight-Stage Process in order to shift the culture enough for change to happen. This happens when the behaviors and values of the individuals are altered (Kotter, 2012).

Furthermore, Scharmer (2007) states that leaders must be ready for what the future holds by letting go of old habits and having a deeper connection with oneself. Scharmer (2007) describes leaders as "people who engage in creating change or shaping their future, regardless of their formal positions in institutional structures" (p. 5). Scharmer's (2007) *U* process is a leader's ability to operate as someone who is looking forward and not just focused on what has already transpired. This process challenges leaders to be proactive and not reactive and to function at an altered state of mind that pushes the boundaries in order for awareness to emerge and authenticity to occur (Scharmer, 2007).

Scharmer (2007) states "when groups begin to operate from a real future possibility, they start to tap into a different social field from the one they normally experience. It manifests through a shift in the quality of thinking, conversing, and collective action" (p. 4). Scharmer (2007) explains that when members of an organization or a group of people go through some event or transformational change that causes them to shift their thinking, it leads to the formation of a social

field among those members. Scharmer (2007) defines a *social field* as “the totality and type of connections through which the participants of a given system relate, converse, think, and act” (p. 4). Scharmer’s (2007) view on looking towards the future is in agreement with Kotter’s (2012) argument on the forces behind impactful change. Scharmer (2007) posits that transformational change entails a shift in how we view ourselves, we relate to others and how we view our future self as a leader. Working from an optimal standpoint enables leaders to operate and reach higher grounds of achievements.

Furthermore, change is constant and leaders are expected to remain vigilant of the forces that influences change in order to stay ahead of the curve and therefore equipped to lead others (Bennis, 2009; Kotter, 2012). Scharmer (2007) views leadership from a three-step process: Sources from leaders’ work, the processes they engage in to do their work, and lastly, the results that they obtain by addressing their blind spot. Scharmer (2007) defines a leader’s *blind spot* as “the place within or around us where our attention and intention originates. It’s the place from where we operate when we do something” (p. 6). Understanding the place from where a leader’s work begins leads to having a futuristic vision of where the organization is going. Scharmer (2007) explains that in order to effectively deal with organizational change, a leader must understand the barriers that could derail progress. “All people affect change, regardless of their formal positions or titles” (Scharmer, 2007, p. 19). According to Scharmer (2007) there are five levels of change: re-acting, re-structuring, re-designing, re-framing, and last, re-generating. Scharmer (2007) explains that these five levels of change occur within an organization’s structure, process and thought as it deals with change. Scharmer’s (2007) suggestion on the process of organizational change aligns with his suggestion on how a leader goes through change when reaching for his authentic self.

**Social network.** Leadership according to the research presented in this literature review entails pulling in all available resources in order to sustain change. Working with others postulates a leader towards tapping into the networks of their collaborators. Sims and Penny (2015) present the argument of professional learning communities when it comes to organizational change. Daly's (2015) views on social capital as it relates to early childhood education, can help sustain the various changes that this field must undergo as New York City struggles to streamline funding and formalize the way early childhood professionals function in the education system. Social capital can be beneficial because it means that every leader brings resources, knowledge, skills and network connections that can be tapped into to sustain organizational change (Daly, 2015). Scharmer (2007) describes networks as "living systems that communicate with one another and share resources across boundaries" (p. 101).

Collaboration amongst educational leadership systems enables school leaders to tap into resources that supports their role as instructional leaders (Daly, 2015). Waters and Marzano (2006) support the concept of autonomy when it comes to leaders managing change. They say that school level administrators need to feel capable of implementing the strategies provided by system leaders (superintendents) in order for such strategies to yield positive student outcomes. In early childhood education for example, program directors being capable of executing the various tasks within their role is essential to the success of early childhood education. Currently, there is no formal professional linkage between program directors and New York City school superintendents, however, Waters and Marzano (2006) mention the value in superintendents being involved in all aspects of running a school and a district when it comes to driving student achievement. Waters and Marzano (2006) also infer that an involved leadership leads to sustainable change that can be implemented at the school level and at the macro level. Daly (2015) argues that all members of a



network have a role to play and therefore, program directors also have a role to play in the education system of New York City.

Dickson and Mitchell (2014) looked at the role that superintendents play when it comes to supporting learning communities within their schools. Being an active agent in a learning community demands that superintendents manage their autonomy as well as the autonomy of others (Davenport, 2015; Dickson & Mitchell, 2014). Ensuring that all key players are involved and contributing to the school culture and mission is also the responsibility of school superintendents as these qualities lead to student achievements according to Dickson and Mitchell (2014). Also, Waters and Marzano (2006) concluded that school defined autonomy was an outcome that derived from looking at the role that superintendents play when supporting school level leaders in overseeing change and productivity within their schools. This concept of defined autonomy refers to the authority delegated to school level administrators in order for them to enforce the day-to-day functions of their school building (Waters & Marzano, 2006). Leading change does require that system leaders and micro leaders understand their roles and responsibilities in order to effectively influence and maintain change (Dickson & Mitchell, 2014; Waters & Marzano, 2006).

As Daly (2015) points out, networking in the name of education is not only beneficial but it should be a must when it comes to leaders and system leaders overseeing the provision of educational services. Program directors, according to Gonzalez (2014), view system leaders as agents for policymaking and monitoring. This view differs from Daly's (2015) view on public school superintendents in that principals on the other hand, view superintendents as their supervisors and also as a resource toward quality assurance. Often time a program director's interaction with system leaders is solely based on assessment or quality assurance and very little

is found in the literature about social networking amongst community-based organization leaders and public school system leaders (Patton, 2009).

Dufour and Fullan (2013) address the need for cohesiveness amongst school leaders and system leaders in order to strengthen the network and enhance the resources available for leaders to lead. They believe that each member (leader) has something to contribute that could sustain changes within an organization such as the public school system. Talan, Bloom and Kelton, (2014) state that early childhood education leadership is still at its infancy when it comes to being school administrators and dealing with change. They argue that taking charge of change within the field of early of childhood education requires that leaders receive more support from other mentors as this field has various components or as others have called it, mixed services (Talan, Bloom & Kelton, 2014). Hudson (2010) agrees with Talan et al. (2014) that early childhood education leadership has more roads to cover when it comes to managing change in part because there are so many entities involved in the process.

In addition, Daly (2015) explains that the role a social system plays in leading change and supporting a leader's autonomy within social networks is vital to the process of change. Unlike Kotter (2012), Daly (2015) stresses the importance that relationships play when it comes to supporting change within an organization and Kotter (2012) stresses urgency and communication as vital to sustaining change. Nevertheless, both Daly (2015) and Kotter (2012) mention the fact that understanding the expectations and what the system can provide is also part of the process of dealing with change. The social network according to Daly (2015) highlights that leaders in education need to tap into every resource and connect with their colleagues to ensure that they have everything they need to implement and execute changes.

Daly (2015) also speculates that every member of an organization has something to offer because of their individual network and resources. Every member has a role to play when it comes to leading change and therefore their networks must be included in the process of increasing resources to meet the needs of the organization. Having the skills to pull those resources by building social networks according to Daly (2015), is crucial to leading change as a leader. “Attempts to create greater collaboration, distributed leadership, and participative decision making often require changing existing social relationships” (Daly, 2015, p. 3). Knowing the networks that exist within an organization according to Daly (2015), is part of the leader’s responsibility because it will provide resources that can be beneficial to the change process. It can also highlight potential barriers from the staff’s perspectives that can block the progress of change. Kotter (2012) insists that any barriers blocking the process of change must be dealt with in an intentional process in order to continue to move the organization forward.

In addition, Daly (2015) explains the role that social network plays in building social capital in order to leverage human capital which refers to the education of people. Brimley, Verstegen and Garfield (2016) address the concept of financing education to invest in human capital. This investment according to these researchers will lead to gains in the economy because providing people with a quality-based education will lead to their growth and reinvestment into society. Educated people are more productive and self-efficient, Daly (2015) like Brimley, Verstegen, and Garfield (2016) speak to these gains when talking about training and educating others. The current policymakers in education consider early childhood education an investment in human capital because the student population constitutes as our youngest learners (Brimley, Verstegen, and Garfield, 2016; Rothstein, 2004; Talan, Bloom, & Kelton, 2014).

**Transition due to change.** Program directors face many challenges when dealing with change to which Bridges (2009) states that for a leader, the change is not the problem but the transition that such change brings is what challenges the leader. Change is always taking place especially in education because new strategies, policies, and standards are always being introduced (Brimley, Verstegen & Garfield, 2016). Bridges (2009) cautions that in order for a leader to effectively lead through change, a leader needs to support the staff in the process of transitioning through three phases: *letting go*, the *neutral zone*, and the *new beginning*. Each phase helps a leader lead the organization forward as it deals with change. Phase one requires a leader to help people move through a loss of their old way of doing things. Phase two requires a bit of creativity from the leader's toolbox because this phase represents being in-between the old ways of doing things and the new way of doing things. This phase according to Bridges (2009), deals with having to support the internal psychological struggle of feeling stuck in between two places. The final transition phase is accepting the change and embracing a new purpose toward achieving such change.

Bridges (2009) continues on to say, that transition requires an ending in order to gain a new beginning. This concept aligns with the understanding that in order to achieve results one must let go of certain things and implement new strategies to better handle the process of achieving results. Once again, Peck's (1988) emptying process comes to mind when analyzing Bridges' (2009) statement of letting go and learning new strategies when dealing with change. Leaders must start any journey as an individual in order to be able to work with others and to gain their buy-in. Knowing yourself as a leader is a requirement when dealing with change (Bennis 2009; Bridges, 2009; Kotter, 2012; Scharmer, 2007; Schein, 2010; Terrell & Lindsey, 2009).

Moreover, Bridges (2009) also states the nuances that change brings is the fact that it is always occurring and constant. The suggestion is to instill trust in those that you lead, to remain true to yourself and to remain flexible throughout each transition. Curtis and City (2012) present another aspect of leading through change by introducing the concept of having a well-designed strategy to manage change. Curtis and City (2012) explain that before implementing a strategy, a leader needs to ask the following three questions as it pertains to the changes being dealt with: “What are we doing? Why are we doing it? and How are we doing it? Curtis and City (2012) state that in order to answer these three questions leaders must have a solid strategy. A *strategy* is how an organization works to achieve its goals. Curtis and City (2012) contend that such strategy needs to be part of a bigger picture and not just empty guidelines and meaningless planning. Curtis and City (2012) maintain that a strategy “provides a focus based on data and beliefs about what will be most effective in helping students learn” (p. 20). An effective implementation of a strategy also leads to dealing with change because it will demand that the organization work differently and for staff to become autonomous within their roles. To have the courage to look and leap when it comes to following your strategy (Curtis & City, 2012).

In addition, Tierney (2006) presents the idea of leaders managing change by recognizing the culture of their organization. Tierney (2006) argues that leaders need to learn to embrace the culture of their organization in order to fit in and adjust to their surroundings. Tierney (2006) also states that organizational culture can sometimes present a challenge when it comes to dealing with change because it requires for the leader to decide where him or her stand on the issues at hand. Defining a purpose within a culture and the actions of others can push a leader to self-discovery because such process is personal and selfless (Kotter, 2012; Scharmer, 2007; Tierney, 2006).

**Followership and change.** Another aspect that was reviewed within this literature review was the role of *followers* when it comes to leadership. Riggio, Chaleff, and Lipman-Blumen (2008) argue that leadership has as much to do with the people being led as it does with the leader itself. Riggio et al. (2008) state that there are five styles of followership that function within “two dimensions that define the way that people follow” (p. 7). These styles are: *The sheep* (passive-expects to be told what to do), *the yes-people* (a doer, always willing to act with instruction), *the alienated* (skeptical, able to think alone but too negative to follow), *the pragmatic* (cautious as to when to follow) and *the star followers* (able to follow and lead when necessary). This body of research lends the current literature review a platform that helps describe the role that program directors play when it comes to having multi-agencies overseeing their role and responsibilities as well as how they respond to change when following orders.

Wiseman and McKeown (2010) state that “some leaders make us better and smarter. They bring out our intelligence” (p. 4). These leaders according to Wiseman and McKeown (2010) are considered to be multipliers because the people around them become better at their tasks and they reach new heights under their leadership.

Looking at program directors from the lens of followership as described by Riggio, Chaleff, and Lipman-Blumen (2008) facilitates the room for further investigation into the complexities of being a leader while at the same time having to follow orders. Riggio et al. (2008) suggest that looking at the styles of followership and using it to understand the behaviors of those within the organization can help a leader deal with change. Culture as it relates to followership is also addressed by Riggio et al. (2008) because culture according to Riggio et al. (2008) “affects people’s beliefs systems and behaviors” (p. 10). They concluded that culture plays as much of a role on followers as does religion and gender. Unlike Schein (2010) who looks at culture from the

standpoint of the way members of an organization carry themselves within their field, Riggio et al. (2008) refer to culture as the individual members' background, and how such background influences their actions. Riggio et al. (2008) consider how the cultural background of people can characterize who they are as followers. Riggio et al. (2008) went as far as stating that followers are "who carry out commands dutifully, we need to view followers as the primary defenders against toxic leaders or dysfunctional organizations. The buck stops more with followers than leaders" (p. 14).

Riggio, Chaleff, and Lipman-Blumen (2008) also insist that leaders must be dedicated to the organization that they serve which expresses the value upheld by its followers. Like Kidder (2006), Riggio et al. (2008) also refer to moral courage as a key quality to possess when forming part of an organization. The belief is that being a follower also demands courage just as it does for a leader. "Strong and effective leadership require a clear vision, strong intention, and skill to choose when and how to make leadership moves" (Riggio et al., 2008, p. 97). Furthermore, Riggio et al. (2008) state that being a leader is knowing the when and how one must act in accordance with the circumstance. "Leadership is more than what one knows—it is how one shows up in the world" (Riggio et al., 2008, p. 97). Riggio, Chaleff, and Lipman-Blumen's (2008) argue that:

Cultures that practice the principles of courageous followership have a greater chance of sustaining accountability and excellence because followers have the courage to assume responsibility, serve, challenge, participate in transformation, and take moral action. It is because courageous followers empower themselves to accept responsibility and accountability that the organization is more likely to develop a culture of critical thinking, deliberation, discernment, and judicious action. (p. 111)

Gonzalez (2014) argues that early childhood education program directors can be looked at from both perspectives: as followers and as leaders since both exude being proactive and leading change. Leading change according to the reviewed literature, is an intricate function that requires an understanding of the elements of change for oneself and for others. It requires leaders to have strong social networks in place in order to sustain change by tapping into the vast resources that those social networks could provide. It also requires that leaders continue to move forward during the transitions that change could bring. Lastly, leading change requires leaders to support and value the inputs given by the members of the organization through their followership of one's leadership (Bennis, 2009; Bridges, 2009; Curtis & City, 2012; Daly, 2015; Kotter, 2012; Riggio, Chaleff, & Lipman-Blumen, 2008).

### **Summary**

In summary, the current literature review provided a summation of the current research that addresses educational and system leadership as it pertains to leadership autonomy, preschool culture, and leading through change. This literature review focused on the role that leaders play in having enough autonomy to execute their leadership duties. The literature review revealed that leadership autonomy for school leaders requires certain diplomacy because there are other entities at play that could get in the way of a leader being autonomous in and out of their school building (Waters & Marzano, 2006; Elmore, 2000). The literature review also addressed the subject of organizational culture in terms the role that leaders play in maintaining such cultures. Schein's (2010) work provided a noteworthy portion in part because he focuses on the process of how organizational culture functions and influences a leader.

The review also emphasized the fact that culture is an embedded mechanism that is difficult to alter or shift because of the fact that culture, in a nutshell, is about how individuals accomplish



their duties, what they value as a group, and the symbols that they hold to be indicative of their values and beliefs (Dufour & Fullan, 2013; Schein, 2010). The third component that was addressed in this literature review was leading change. The body of research in the literature reviewed points out that change is ever present and leaders need to be able to deal with change in order to lead others (Kotter, 2012). The literature also addresses the complexities that comes with change in terms of collaboration, the cursor of transition and enticing others to get on board and embark on any given journey through the art of followership (Daly, 2015; Kotter, 2012; Riggio, Chaleff, & Lipman-Blumen, 2008; Scharmer, 2007).

However, this current literature review identified research gaps in terms of understanding how New York City (NYC) program directors from community-based organizations have implemented and executed early childhood education under their leadership and experience. The research revealed that very little is known about the preschool cultures spearheaded by program directors and the elements that currently constitutes and influences their preschool culture as well as, what influences them as education leaders. Within this literature review the researcher uncovered that very little is known about how program directors deal with change as it pertains to their role and responsibilities and how they lead through the changes that they face as a contracted entity for the Administration for Children's Services and the NYC Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education. The current study will explore the perspectives of early childhood education community-based organization program directors of early childhood education have on leadership autonomy, their preschool culture and how their role has evolved through change. This phenomenological research will help bridge the literature gap that currently exist when it comes to preschool leadership and the culture under which they lead.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

Community-based organizations (CBO) provide a myriad of services to low income families throughout New York City (United Neighborhood Houses, 2016). One of such services is their contribution to public education. The purpose of this study is to investigate the perspectives of New York City's community-based organization early childhood education program directors on maintaining a positive preschool culture under an ever-changing education system.

This chapter presents the research methodology used to conduct the study. Specific components included in this chapter are the research questions, research design, sample and sampling procedures, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, researcher's bias, validity, reliability and lastly, the summary.

The following three research questions guide this study:

- 1) To what extent do program directors feel that they have autonomy in running their early childhood education preschool?
- 2) How do program directors maintain a positive preschool culture under multiple supervision/accountability: The Administration for Children's Services, City Council Discretionary, and New York City Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education?
- 3) How has the role of a New York City Community-Based Organization early childhood education program director evolved in terms of supporting the preschool culture?

## **Research Design**

This is a qualitative study. The design of this qualitative study was a phenomenological design. McMillan (2012) views qualitative research as having a focus on gaining understanding based on the participants' perceptions of the phenomenon being studied. The researcher selected this research type and design in order to investigate the perspectives of program directors through interviews. Vogt, Gardner, and Haefelle (2012) state that research interviews allow the researcher to be systemic in obtaining the required information. This research design was also beneficial because the researcher sought to gain information by interviewing the participants within a phenomenological design. The qualitative phenomenological research design allowed the participants to share their experiences (Alemu, 2016). Since the purpose of this study is to learn from the experiences of the participants about their early childhood education leadership role, it was logical to use a phenomenological design to collect the data for this study.

This qualitative method allowed the participants to share their perspectives due to the design of the study. Creswell (2009) states that qualitative phenomenological research design is the most conducive to gathering data in the field of education because it facilitates the setting for participants to freely provide the information desired to obtain results.

## **Sample and Sampling Procedures**

The sample population for this qualitative research study are community-based organization program directors working under an early childhood education contract. These program directors are currently working in non-direct DOE early childhood centers. These preschool/child care settings are those licensed under the New York City's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) Article 47 and hold a current contract under either of the following entities: The Administration for Children's Services (ACS) EarlyLearn NY, New York City's

Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE) Pre-Kindergarten for All (PKA) and New York City Council's Discretionary Funds programs. These program directors were identified from the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators' (CSA) database. The program directors in this study are representative of the population in New York City's early childhood education centers and their perspectives could provide information on the population as a whole.

Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants. McMillan (2012) states that such sampling provides an opportunity for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Purposeful sampling allowed the researcher to further explore the role of community-based organization early childhood education leadership in maintaining the preschool culture by selecting active (on the job) program directors with leadership experience with ACS and the DOE. There are 220 program directors that are members of the CSA union and the researcher reached out to 30 program directors via email, telephone and in person and invited them to form part of the study. A total of 16 program directors were selected to participate in this study upon their expressed interest to be a prospective participant. The participants were informed of the purpose of the study and provided with information regarding confidentiality as well as a consent form in accordance with Sages' and New York City DOE's IRB regulations. Multiple layers of confidentiality were used including pseudonyms of participants, securing the raw data in a locked cabinet, and using a password protected laptop only accessible to the researcher. The participants were given the option to opt out of the study at any given time without any repercussion.

### **Instrumentation**

The data collection instrument used for the study was an interview protocol. The 12-item interview questions were open-ended and developed by the researcher. The interview questions

were developed in accordance with the topic of investigation and in relation to the literature relevant to the study. The researcher is also an active program director and as such, some of the content of the interview questions were enriched by her experience regarding early childhood education programs in New York City. Once the research questions were developed, the researcher aligned each question to specific interview items. The interviews took 30-45 minutes and they were audio recorded using a handheld recorder and handwritten notes were also taken when necessary. The participants were encouraged to elaborate on their responses to further explore the phenomenon being studied by asking them to expand on their responses and explain their answers. The researcher would say “tell me more about that” or “can you expand on that?” when follow up was needed.

The interview questions were pilot tested with five community-based organization program directors who did not participate in the study to test for clarity and reliability. The pilot participants were asked to provide feedback on the questions, the timeframe of the interview, and their understanding of the content within the questions. The final draft incorporated relevant feedback from these participants.

### **Data Collection**

The researcher began to recruit possible participants by utilizing the CSA union electronic membership roster which is emailed to the New York City Five Borough Chairs periodically. The researcher is the Manhattan Borough Chair and therefore had access to the roster. The researcher called 30 directors from all boroughs and explained the purpose of the study as well as their role in the study if they chose to participate. For those directors that did not return the phone calls, an email was sent to them using the email protocol approved by both the Sage Colleges Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the New York City IRB. The email included the purpose of the study

and the role of the participants. Once the participants agreed to participate, they were asked to sign a consent form and select a date to do the interview. A total of 16 interviews were scheduled and completed. The participants were given the flexibility to pick the time and place. Before the start of the interview, the participants were reminded of their option to opt out of the study at any time as well as to report any discomfort experienced during the interview. The researcher used a handheld audio recorder. In addition, paper and pencil were available for backup. The interviews took 30-45 minutes and participants were thanked for their cooperation. The audio recorded interviews were transcribed by the researcher and stored in a password-protected laptop.

Vogt, Gardner, and Haeffele (2012) state that research interviews are one of the oldest form of collecting data in the field of social science. Due to the nature of this qualitative study, choosing to conduct interviews for the purpose of collecting data agrees with McMillan's (2012) view on qualitative research having a focus on gaining understanding based on the participants' perceptions of the phenomenon being studied.

### **Data analysis**

The researcher reviewed the questions and the audio-recordings were played a couple of times and transcribed to facilitate the analysis of emerging themes within the answers given by the participants. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to ensure their confidentiality. A master list was used to keep track of the participants in order to send the transcribed interviews for member checking. The list was kept electronically in a password-protected laptop. The researcher emailed the transcribed interviews to the corresponding participant as well as the interview questions in order for them to make any necessary changes and clean up the data. Once the researcher received confirmation from the participants that they were in agreement with the transcription of their interview, the researcher began to review the content of each interview. The researcher tracked

recurring answers amongst the participants and themes emerged from those recurring answers. The researcher organized the themes per research question to guide the analysis. The Nvivo-11 software was used to analyze the data.

### **Research Bias**

The researcher is a current program director which could be a bias in how the information is interpreted. To ensure that this bias did not influence the participants' responses, the researcher only asked the interview questions approved by the Sage Colleges and New York City IRBs and allowed the participants to answer the questions without interruption or asking leading questions. Probing was done to get the participants to expand on their answers and provide more information within their answers. All participants were asked the same interview questions in the same order. The researcher encouraged the participants to share more by giving the participants time to speak without interjecting her own views. The researcher is an active director and in order to minimize personal bias a low inference approach was implemented when looking at the data from the interviews and correlating the data with the available literature on the topic.

### **Validity**

To ensure validity, the researcher piloted the interview questions with program directors who did not take part in the actual study. Their participation was to seek validity in the content of the questions that were asked. The researcher asked all participants the exact questions and coded their answers in the same way for interpretation. For the purpose of member checking, the participants were asked to review their answers once their interviews were transcribed to check for validity. Reviewing the literature and the data contained in the interviews as well as information known to the researcher, facilitated triangulation of the data source to ensure validity.

**Reliability**

To ensure reliability, the researcher asked all of the participants the same questions in the same format and in the same order. The researcher also limited her own bias when asking the interview questions and probing for a deeper understanding by only asking the IRB approved questions. Following the same script with all of the participants also supported the reliability of the study. The researcher also used the same method of coding the data for all the transcribed interviews and stayed away from making generalizations based on personal views. The researcher read the transcripts and listened to the audio-recorded interviews multiple times before starting the data analysis.

**Summary**

In conclusion, to investigate the phenomenological perspectives of New York City early childhood education community-based organization program directors on maintaining a positive preschool culture under an ever-changing education system, the researcher followed a research methodology that best facilitated the process of collecting data. The researcher utilized an interview protocol with a 12-item tool. The researcher interviewed 16 participants and transcribed their interviews, coded their answers and identified emergent themes from the data in order to address the three research questions of the study. In chapter four, the researcher will present the findings from the data collected. In chapter five the researcher will present a summary of the findings, conclusions, as well as recommendations for policy and for future studies on early childhood education leadership.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINDINGS**

This chapter presents the findings of this qualitative study based on data obtained by interviewing community-based organization early childhood education program directors in New York City. This chapter covers the background information of the participants of this study as well as background information on the community-based organizations that provide early childhood education to children ages 6 weeks to 5 years old in New York City.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate the perspectives of New York City's community-based organization early childhood education program directors on maintaining a positive preschool culture under an ever-changing education system.

#### **Background on the Funding Systems of New York City Early Childhood Education Programs**

The participants of this study are active program directors of community-based organization early childhood education centers funded by the Administration for Children's Services, New York City Council Discretionary, and New York City's Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education. The current settings under which these participants work, operate under three different supervisions: 1) The Administration for Children's Services Early Care and Education formerly known as EarlyLearn New York, 2) New York City's Department of Education Pre-Kindergarten for All through the Division of Early Childhood Education, and 3) Discretionary programs funded by the City Council. Each of these systems require a submission of a Request for Proposal (RFP), in order for the program directors to continue to fund their preschools (centers) every two to three years.

## Settings

The participants of this study oversee early childhood education centers that serve children ages 6 weeks to 5 years old. Some of these centers serve under different modalities such as Family Child Care sites, which provide care to children in the homes of individual child care providers (Hudson, 2010). Some of these Family Child Care sites are managed by what is called *networks* comprised of Day Care Centers under the Administration for Children's Services. Directors also have Early Head Start and Head Start in their centers which are governed by federal mandates under the Head Start Performance Standards. These standards serve as guidelines for quality assurance (Gormley, 2005). And finally, there is the new early childhood education initiative: Pre-Kindergarten for All, which is funded and managed by the New York City Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education. This initiative serves 4 years old children under the guidelines set forth by the New York City Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education. Under Pre-Kindergarten for All, program directors implement the New York State Pre-Kindergarten Foundation for the Common Core which like the Head Start Performance Standards, are meant to be used to guide instruction and impact student achievement in pre-kindergarten.

The participants also work under the oversight of the New York City's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene which grants them their site permits in order for their centers to be operational and licensed. These permits require that they submit an application every three year for renewal. These site permits are required in order for the funding to be disbursed to the program directors from either entity (the Administration for Children's Services, the New York City Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education, and/or the New York City Council). Another monitoring entity that program directors have to answer to is the New York

State Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) funded by the Federal government to provide nutritious meals to children who qualify under an income-based scale: free, reduced or pay, based on the family's social-economic status (United States Department of Agriculture, 2017).

This contract requires that program directors adhere to the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) nutrition guidelines in order to receive funding to provide nutritional meals to the children that they serve. According to the USDA (2017) "CACFP reimburses centers at free, reduced-price, or paid rates for eligible meals and snacks served to enrolled children, targeting benefits to those children most in need" (Child care section, para. 2). Adhering to the mandates of this nutrition program, the program directors find themselves having to manage the execution of the policies and procedures of another contract in order to keep their programs in operation. As with all of the other funding contracts, program directors have to adhere to all of the mandates and policies that accompany each funding stream in order to maintain their centers and serve their respective communities.

Overall, the program directors have to adhere to various monitoring systems as well as lead within a multi-faceted and accountability system all working within their own sets of rules, policies, and procedures. Each system has its own goals to achieve as well as its own lens for how productivity and quality ought to be achieved. *Figure 1* below illustrates the various systems that a program director interacts with, reports to, and adheres to in order to keep their preschools open.



*Figure 1. Program Directors' multi accountability*

As shown in the figure above (Figure 1), program directors have to report to many entities as leaders of their preschools. Board of directors serve as supervisors to the program directors and their roles and responsibilities are to oversee the macro-functions of the preschools, ensure the program director acts responsibly with the finances of the preschool, and serve as an accountable body that governs the overall functions of the preschool (Houston & Eadie, 2003). The program directors also have to work with the parents not only through parental and family engagement, but also under the governmental branch of the preschool on one of the two following capacities: For child care, program directors work with the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) and for Head Start

and Dual, the program directors work with the Delegate Agency Policy Council (DAPC). Being an early childhood education program director requires flexibility and the ability to work under a diverse system of leadership (Talan, Bloom, & Kelton, 2014).

## **Participants**

The participants of this study were selected from the Council of Supervisors and School Administrators (CSA) union's roster of over 200 daycare programs in New York City. The selection criteria were based on participants being active members of CSA and having a contract under the auspices of the Administration for Children's Services and the New York City Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education and/or the New York City Council. For this study, 16 participants were selected to participate in this study. The researcher recruited the participants via phone calls, in person during citywide Directors' meetings, and via email. The researcher reached out to 30 active program directors with the goal of having 12-16 participants interviewed. Some prospective participants declined to participate for various reasons.

Moreover, due to the nature under which program directors obtain funding to keep their preschools open, program directors were apprehensive about participating in this study because according to those that declined to participate, such participation could lead to negative attention which would impact their contracts. For example, some program directors explained that honesty about the lack of support or structure was not something that the administrations wanted to hear or have it publicized. The researcher assured all prospective participants that confidentiality would be maintained and that pseudonyms would be used when sharing their information. The 16 program directors that decided to be part of the study, expressed the need for confidentiality and some were not quite comfortable with (although they agreed) being audio-recorded. The researcher shared the confidentiality agreement document as well as the consent form with all of

the participants. After clarifying their concerns with confidentiality, the 16 participants gave full consent and were fully committed to answering the interview questions and of being audio-recorded.

Table 1 below depicts the demographic information of each of the participant of this study.

Table 1

*Demographic of the participants*

<b>Pseudonyms of Participant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Years of Experience</b>
Linda	Female	>20
Sandy	Female	>20
Elle	Female	10-20
Susan	Female	>20
Kim	Female	0-5
Baron	Male	>20
Pearl	Female	>20
Rose	Female	10-20
Ava	Female	10-20
Julie	Female	>20
Marie	Female	10-20
Joy	Female	10-20
Neal	Male	>20
Mozart	Male	>20
Peter	Male	>20
Kathy	Female	>20

The table above (Table 1) illustrates the extensive years of experience that program directors have in their role as program directors which according to Talan, Bloom, and Kelton (2014) supports the system of early childhood administrative leadership. Moreover, Table 1 also illustrates the pseudonyms given to the participants in order to maintain their confidentiality. From the 16 participants, 12 were female and four were male. All of the participants were non-white and have at least a master's degree in early childhood education.

The participants were asked 12 interview questions relating to leadership autonomy, preschool culture and leading through change (See interview protocol: Appendix C). For Research Question One, the following interview questions were asked to the participants: Questions one, two, three, and five. For Research Question Two: interview questions six, seven, eight, and nine were asked. And Lastly, for Research Question Three: interview questions four, ten, eleven, and twelve were asked. The participants were provided with the list of questions before starting the interview and the researcher encouraged them to seek clarifications if necessary. Table 2 presents the dates the interviews were conducted as well as the length of each interview:

Table 2

*Participants' interviews*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Date of interview</b>	<b>Length of interview</b>
Linda	2/28/17	40 minutes
Sandy	3/12/17	45 minutes
Elle	3/15/17	48 minutes
Susan	3/15/17	40 minutes
Kim	4/20/17	1 hour
Baron	4/26/17	40 minutes
Pearl	3/18/17	40 minutes
Rose	3/18/17	40 minutes
Ava	3/21/17	55 minutes
Julie	3/25/17	45 minutes
Marie	3/28/17	45 minutes
Joy	3/28/17	50 minutes
Neal	4/4/17	35 minutes
Mozart	4/4/17	40 minutes
Peter	4/6/17	45 minutes
Kathy	4/11/17	50 minutes



The interviews took place in various places: public settings, the program directors' offices, their homes, via email and via phone depending on individual's preference. The demographic data of the participants in this study show a large number of the program directors being female, non-white, college level education and with longevity.

### **Research Question One:**

**To what extent do program directors feel that they have autonomy in running their preschools?**

While answering the four interview questions (items 1, 2, 3, & 5) related to research question one (see interview protocol, Appendix C), the participants expressed that autonomy when it comes to early childhood education leaders has to be looked at from two different angles: autonomy within their school building and autonomy outside of their school building. They also expressed that being involved plays a role in having or not having autonomy. Another aspect that emerged from the data was leadership collaboration when it comes to having autonomy.

All in all, the participants' answers generated the following three common themes which are also used below as sub-headings of this analysis.

Theme One: Leadership practice

Theme Two: Advocacy to influence policy

Theme Three: Leadership collaboration

Table 3 below illustrates how the 16 participants of this study responded to the interview questions which provided the data for research question one based on the identified themes above.

Table 3

*Leadership autonomy*

Themes	Number of directors in agreement	Number of directors not in agreement
Leadership practice	10	6
Advocacy to influence policy	5	11
Leadership collaboration- Pattern 3.1 Resources	9	7
Leadership collaboration- Pattern 3.2 Communication	3	13
Leadership collaboration- Pattern 3.3 Compliance	11	5

**Theme 1: Leadership Practice**

For the first theme, the findings show that the participants see their responsibilities as having autonomy when it comes to the practice of being an early childhood education leader and running their school, supervising their staff, engaging the families and maintaining compliance. The findings show that 10 of the 16 participants stated that they have autonomy when it comes to being the leaders of their preschools due to the responsibilities that they execute on a daily basis. Kim stated “I do feel as though I have a good amount of autonomy, at least to some degree. I generally make the day to day decisions at my site on my own.” Other participants also agreed that by being able to delegate to their staff and handling the day-to-day functions of their school,

allotted them with some autonomy (Ava; Baron; Elle; Joy; Julie; Kathy; Linda; Neal; Peter). Baron for example, stated “I have enough autonomy so that I can work with my staff and parents and work toward our vision and mission of our service for children and families.” Some participants also spoke about the many responsibilities that they take on as leaders.

Another participant that defined autonomy as having some control inside the school was Elle. Elle stated, “you are on a balancing scale, when you are at work you do have some control, the running of the program, you can put a curriculum together and get somethings going, you do have something there.” Ava like her peers, stated “I run the preschool by delegating to my staff. I meet with the board and share what’s going on in the program. I meet with the PAC and inform them of what’s going on.” The PAC is the Parent Advisory Committee which is comprised of a selected group of parents that are currently enrolled in the program. Their role is to share their opinion on what transpires in the preschools. Joy stated:

I have to approve lessons, menus, supervise all of the staff within the preschool, I have to meet with the board, I have to renew our license and contracts, I have to attend meetings, submit reports, and do walkthroughs with everyone and anyone that comes in waving a title that could threaten our existence. That’s how I do my job.

In addition, Joy was adamant about the fact that she has a lot of work to do as a leader and the only reason she is able to accomplish those things is because she is in her building “my control comes when I am inside my school” (Joy). Peter stated that overseeing his staff and responding to the board and his funders is how he exercises his role as a leader. He ensures that compliance is achieved by being a leader to his staff. The data collected from the interviews show that the participants don’t have an active role outside of their school building when it comes to making decisions, implementing policies and communicating with the system leaders. Kathy stated that

having the responsibility of running a preschool requires a focus on what is going on around you and that being effective is a must in order to be a leader. Kathy also mentioned:

I try to focus on what I can within the walls of my preschool. I supervise my staff, I answer to my board and the DAPC to some extent. In my school, I am the leader and as such I call it as I see fit. I run a fine-tuned school that is innovative, creative, and exploratory for both the students and the staff.

The Delegate Agency Policy Council (DAPC) acts as a part of the governing body comprised of enrolled parents in Head Start and Dual programs. This body has an active voice on what takes place in the preschool and the program director has to inform the DAPC as well as obtain their approval or disapproval on any given component of the program which Kathy, stated can be a task in itself.

Nonetheless, the findings also show that six of the 16 participants felt that all that they do is follow orders delegated to them from their funders, monitors, and City agencies. Marie noted “I supervise the teachers, custodian, bookkeeper, cooks, and interns. I submit attendance reports to ACS, DECE and CACFP. I meet with the board at least quarterly as required by ACS to give them reports on how the program is doing. I don’t know if you can call that autonomy or just following orders.” Similarly, Rose said, “I follow orders given by the Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE), the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), the Department of Health (DOH), the Fire Department of New York, (FDNY), and anyone else that has a hand in our monies.”

Furthermore, Susan suggested “we have come a long way since 1994, when I joined the field but we are still looked at as glorified babysitters.” Mozart added to the findings by saying “I

take orders and I give those orders to my staff and I follow them just like they do.” This sentiment was also shared by Sandy:

You have to operate your programs under guidelines set by different entities, the different entities include Department of Health, the Department of Education via PreK programs, the Administration for Children’s Services, and quite honestly your sponsoring board of directors because they also have their own set of objectives and goals that they are looking for the programs to implement in addition to the other sources that I just mentioned.

The findings also show that the six of the 16 participants that felt that they are just following orders when it comes to their leadership role and how they execute their responsibilities often referred to the various entities under which they operate as the ones giving the orders. The findings reflect the multi accountability systems that the participants continuously mention as part of the system that governs their actions and provides their funding. Pearl for example stated,

The Administration for Children’s Services doesn’t even ask, they just tell you what to do and you don’t have room to justify your actions. From the Division of Early Childhood Education, well, they have certified teachers coming to our centers to give directors directions on how we can do our jobs. We are not administrators we are just following orders without having a say.

Lastly, the findings for theme one suggests that 10 of the 16 participants of this study identified their actions and responsibilities as a determinant that drives their leadership practice. Identifying the various functions, obligations, and accountability that comes with the role of being a program director illustrates how these participants see themselves as leaders of their preschool. In analyzing the participants’ responses within theme one, the researcher observed that most of the 16 participants repeatedly mentioned their efficacy in carrying out their duties in the midst of a

multi-accountability system with varying monitoring structures as a form of autonomy. Nevertheless, six of the 16 participants viewed doing their job as simply following orders and not being leaders.

### **Theme Two: Advocacy to Influence Policy**

The second theme that emerged from the data was *advocacy to influence policy*. From the 16 participants, five mentioned being involved in and out of their preschool building as a venue to influence policy. The other 11 participants concurred that involvement can only get you but so far up the ladder and not enough clout to influence the policymakers. Nonetheless, the five participants corresponded in that being involved in and out of their school buildings was part of a leader's autonomy (Baron; Elle; Linda; Sandy; Kim). Sandy, specifically stated:

Well, for me personally, is a matter of engaging, by that I mean attending meetings, being responsive to emails and inquiries and being a part of when let's say documentation in terms of surveys, and what is good practice versus what is not so good practice. So, for me to always be involved in those things is important even though sometimes it feels like if you are fighting almost a losing battle. I think it is important to continue to try to shape where EC is going and you can only do that by being involved.

Furthermore, the participants spoke about the different ways that they advocate on behalf of the field of early childhood education, their staff and the families that they serve. For example, Sandy, brought up the fact that she is an active member of her community and that she resides in the district that she serves which according to her allows her to keep up to date with the needs of the community and therefore she can meet the needs of the children and families in her preschool. Sandy went on to say that moving the community forward is an educational leader's responsibility and more so for an early childhood education leader. Sandy referred to early childhood education

as the foundation for learning and such foundation going beyond the classroom and involving the whole child not just the academic development of the child.

Linda stated that she is in a unique place when it comes to being an early childhood education leader because her place of work provides her with many opportunities to advocate on behalf of herself and her staff as well as the families that she serves. She added:

I am a certified SAS/SBL and that puts me at an equal plain field with public school administrators. As part of my organization I run the afterschool, I participate in the leadership team alongside the principals whom consider me the sixth person on the team and oversee the two programs within DOE and ACS. I am able to balance my two worlds of being in early childhood education but also being aware of the DOE world. (Linda)

In addition, Linda touched on how her organization supports her with autonomy and her ability to balance her roles from both sides of the educational spectrum: early childhood education and public school. Another participant that expressed the value in being involved was Elle and she spoke about the value of having an active board to model what advocacy ought to be in order to lead others. Elle stated:

My board, I like my board, they are an active board and they talk with the commissioners, they are involved with the Day Care Council of New York. My board talks to those involved in policymaking, and they voice my opinion. Talking to ACS is not going to help us because ACS says they are not the policymakers, so you have get to the commissioners. The Day Care Council of New York has some power, my board meets with them and they come to me and I share my ideas with them. I really do see a change, Directors talk about it all of the time, like the change in the enrollment system. I have met with the commissioner for example, about the enrollment eligibility requirement to include 4-year

school instead of just a vocational school. I see the change that has taken place, they have implemented things, you have to speak on a higher level. That's where the boards come in. Our union is not going to get it, because our unions go to the commissioner and the mayor but we don't get a part in that. When you can get your leg on the door, when you can speak to the people that are higher up, that's the only way you are going to get help; you can't just talk to ACS, you have to reach higher.

Being proactive and attending meetings as a way of advocating was a sentiment shared by seven of the 16 participants interviewed. Kim for instance, stated:

I am involved with politics and advocacy, I do feel as though I can contribute in that sense. I attend meetings, rallies, and advocate via social media re: Early Childhood issues. Of course, I work closely with our DECE (Division of Early Childhood Education) and ACS (the Administration for Children's Services) liaisons to solve problems and further improve our school. I also make suggestions to them and in related meetings/public forums, many of which have already been implemented.

Nonetheless, 11 of the 16 participants shared that they have no way of being involved in the decision-making process because they are just following orders as they are delegated to them. Rose indicated, "my contribution is following orders that were decided upon without my input." Julie agreed that she cannot truly advocate to influence policy as she is given mandates and she is expected to follow them without giving her input. Joy felt that in order for her to maintain her sanity, she just tries her best and she knows that she does not contribute. She stated, "right now I just try my best to keep my wit." Peter noted "I don't even know the first thing about the process that either the DECE or ACS follow when it comes to the decisions that they make. So, no I don't contribute to the process."



Moreover, eight from the 11 of the 16 participants suggested that in order for you to be able to advocate, you must have a role, a vote, and a voice within the system that you serve. Their perception of their role as early childhood educational leaders is that they don't have a stake from which to pull when it comes to the larger systemic functions of early childhood education (Ava; Marie; Mozart; Neal; 2017; Pearl; Susan). Kathy specified:

I don't really have a seat at the table as there is not an invitation for me to share my views on how the job should be done. There is no formal system by which we guide ourselves as leaders. We answer to a board comprised of members that are not really in the field and yet, they are seen as the point people to make the decisions.

In sum, the findings for the second theme on advocacy to influence policy shows that five of the 16 participants interviewed see their involvement as actions that could influence policies when it comes to early childhood education. The other 11 participants concurred that in order to be influential, you must have an active role in the decision-making process. The findings highlight the participants' perception on autonomy outside of their school building in terms of their involvement or non-involvement in advocacy to influence policy. The perspectives of the five of the 16 participants that viewed involvement as a form of autonomy is that being involved helps you meet the demands of your funders because you are in the know when it comes to new changes within the field of early childhood education (Sandy, March 12, 2017). On the other hand, Susan posited "I don't think we have a role in the decision-making process, we are just told what needs to be done."

### **Theme 3: Leadership Collaboration**

Leadership collaboration is the third and final theme that emerged from the data collected for research question one. Within this theme, three patterns became evident from the data

collected: pattern 3.1 collaboration in terms of leaders having resources afforded to them by the Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE) and the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), pattern 3.2 was leadership collaboration in terms of how the leaders communicate with their funders and lastly, pattern 3.3 was leadership collaboration in terms of programmatic compliance. The participants of this study as shown in Table 1 have extensive experience in early childhood education and both the New York City Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education and the Administration for Children's Services can tap into their longevity to continue to improve the profession of early childhood education (Sandy, March 12, 2017).

**Pattern 3.1: Resources.** The participants of this study were very straightforward about their perspectives on leadership collaboration and the role that each of them play in that collaboration. From the data collected for this study, nine of the 16 participants concluded that the resources provided by both the New York City Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education and the Administration Children's Services support them in their role as leaders. The participants mentioned the four professional development days facilitated to them and for the educational staff by the Division of Early Childhood Education and the 12 professional development days approved by the Administration for Children's Services as valuable resources.

Others mentioned the assessment and screening tools as another resource that supports them in their role as instructional leaders. Baron agreed by saying "I do get needed support from the agencies mentioned. There is support for the teaching staff and I think the intentions of the agencies to ensure quality are welcomed." Susan added:

For example, when we get our reports—for me we are all saying the same thing and when we get our ACS (the Administration for Children's Services) reports or hand in reports and there is an expectation and it supports me because I can turn to the teachers and say, 'this

is what ACS is asking.’ When the DOE (Department of Education) consultant comes in I have the same leverage in delivering the message of how to work with children.

In all, nine of the 16 participants agreed that having their funders provide them with the resources necessary to effectively run their preschool included the CLASS tool which allows them to assess the quality of interaction between the teachers and the students to further their learning. In addition, the nine participants considered the environmental rating scales such as ECERS and ITERS provided by the Division of Early Childhood Education and the Administration for Children’s Services as useful resources for them to monitor the quality and safety of their preschools. The nine participants also mentioned the units of study as provided by the Division of Early Childhood Education as being helpful because those units of study are already aligned with the New York State Pre-Kindergarten Foundation for the Common Core and are detailed enough that their education team can implement them with minimum oversight (Baron, April 26, 2017; Elle, March 15, 2017; Joy, March 28, 2017; Julie, March 25, 2017; Kim, April 20, 2017; Linda, February 28, 2017; Peter, April 6, 2017; Sandy, March 12, 2017; Susan, March 15, 2017). Joy (March 28, 2017) for example went on to say:

Well, after so many years in the field it is helpful to have them provide the guidelines for how to assess children under the new system, how to devise unit plans that meet the standards and how to set up the classrooms that help us pass the ECERS and ITERS. They are helpful in supporting my ability to comply with their mandates because they create the policy and suggest the tools that I can use to meet those policies.

Furthermore, Sandy mentioned that having these two entities involved demands that leaders exercise autonomy as to how they will deal with their requests and at the same time remain

true to their beliefs. She added “for me though the goal is to make sure quality is quality whether it is coming from the perspective of ACS or DOE.” Similarly, Peter added:

They are supportive in that they have the resources for us to use to some extent-I can depend on them to provide the landscape for unit plans, child assessment tools, and rating scales (ECERS, CLASS, etc.). Those tools support me in providing my staff with research-based tools to help them do their job. They also support by allowing me to have 12 PD days under ACS and DECE provides 4 PDs for my staff and for me as well.

Furthermore, of the nine from the 16 participants that spoke about having resources, six of them expressed that early childhood education requires constant oversight and having the resources to facilitate such oversight makes their job more manageable. Linda for example, expressed:

I see the standards for the DOE that also align with ACS and now is becoming more unified in that we see the same kinds of standards and having ECERS and CLASS really helps too. With the DOE, they send you the curriculum materials and they really help, I tell my staff that they can follow their curriculum as well as the Teaching Strategies. Over the past few years since the PKA program have been coming in under De Blasio and others, we have gotten more resources but we have been doing this all along but now we have additional resources so that helps too. For the CBOs under ACS, I don’t want to say that ACS did wonderful things for us, I think that each CBO has made it work because they know the needs of their communities and their students.

Nonetheless, seven of the 16 participants felt that having the Division of Early Childhood Education and the Administration for Children’s Services provide them with the guidelines for them to follow creates more confusion and makes their jobs harder. Marie contends “I don’t know

if they support me or if they make my job harder than it needs to be. DECE thought that creating a Policy Handbook was helpful but that book wasn't created with my role in mind." Similarly, Ava argued "it makes the job more confusing and time consuming, there is very little support because there is no collaboration from them and me or from each other—everyone is a captain." Participants such as Mozart, Neal, and Pearl maintained that having the Division of Early Childhood Education and the Administration for Children's Services as their monitors makes their job more about following orders than about being collaborative. Rose concurred with the other participants by saying "it makes my job harder because there is no support coming from them. Having these two organizations that don't work together as my monitors isn't a supportive system is a blockage."

**Pattern 3.2: Communication.** This second pattern from the third theme revealed that 13 of the 16 participants referred to the level of communication or the lack thereof when it comes to collaboration amongst them and their funders as nonexistent. Three of the 16 participants felt that they do have an open-line of communication, stated that they can negotiate and articulate what they need and that they are able to have those requests met. Sandy stated, "I am very satisfied with my funder and I am clear on what they expect from me." Linda added:

With the DECE I feel there is room for negotiation and for you to explain why you need more money but with ACS there is no negotiation as we don't know where the money is or goes, or comes from. So, I feel that with DECE you have a line of communication that's open.

Yet, 13 of the 16 participants felt that there was no communication between them and their funders which hindered their ability to work together in a collaborative manner. Rose said "as long as I do everything they want without any deviation or real input from me, our relationship is cordial. Not even sure if that's enough to call it a relationship." Likewise, Susan stated that she

is not even part of the conversation as there are others in her organization in charge of communicating with the system leaders.

Susan went on to say, “Being part of an organization that operates under the leadership of an executive director shields you, the director, from having to deal directly with ACS or the DOE when it comes to negotiating and submitting contractual paperwork.” Kim also agreed with Susan and she said, “I am the educational director so I don’t deal with the finances.” Like these two participants that feel that they are far removed from the table, other participants felt the same way. Neal for example, stated that “there is no relationship” between him and his funders as far as a working relationship.

**Pattern 3.3: Compliance.** The third and final pattern that emerged from the third theme on leadership collaboration was programmatic compliance. Eleven of the 16 participants mentioned compliance when referring to collaboration and running their preschools. They explained that due to the nature of their system and how it is structured, having so many entities involved in early childhood education makes it more about being on the yes column and less about what you can truly do to impact student achievement.

Moreover, of the 16 participants interviewed, 11 felt that doing what was necessary to be in compliance was important in order to keep their preschool doors open. According to the participants, being collaborative means submitting reports as a mean to get funding for their preschools. These reports are: attendance, enrollment, child and staff assessments data, among others. Marie confirmed by saying:

For DECE I submit my paperwork to an operational analyst and she approves my invoices and I get the funds to run my preschool. With ACS, I submit attendance and maintain the

enrollment system and I get reimbursed monthly. That's our relationship, if it can be called that.

Furthermore, Joy stated it concisely, "I enroll students and I get funded." For her, that is complying with what is required which represents collaborating with what is written on the contract. Baron noted "I feel my relationship has changed over the years. Now, it is about being in compliance and having enough children enrolled so that we will not be shut down." Mozart and Pearl agreed in that they both stated that as long as they submit their documentations to the proper parties, they were comfortable knowing that they have complied and that they were adhering to the policies set by their funders. Some participants like Julie, Kathy, and Peter mentioned the process of applying for their contracts as a form of collaborating with their funders in order to get their contracts renewed. Kathy responded, "as long as I submit the proper paperwork whether it is my RFP, my Vendex and legal documents, our relationship is collaborative—workable." In all, 11 of the 16 participants mentioned that they have to answer to many entities as part of their jobs as program directors.

Within the third theme, five of the 16 participants did not mention compliance as a way of collaborating with their funders (Ava; Linda; Sandy; Susan; Kim). Linda and Sandy, referred to their active role and open line of communication as their main strategy for collaborating with their funders.

Overall, the findings on the third theme of the first research question revealed that 11 of the 16 participants feel strongly about making sure that they follow the rules, that they comply with what is expected of them in order for their collaboration to be beneficial to them as program directors. The findings also reflect how intricate the system of early childhood education is because of the fact that there are many entities that influence and impact the system. Eleven of

the 16 participants focused on compliance when referring to the concept of leadership collaboration while only five of the 16 participants mentioned having an open-line of communication as part of the process of collaboration.

The findings for the first research question show that the participants do feel as if they have a certain level of autonomy when it comes to their schools and a very limited role outside of their schools. They also emphasized that both monitoring systems: The Division of Early Childhood Education and the Administration for Children's Services do facilitate support in terms of the resources that are readily available for the participants to use. A total of nine of the 16 participants feel that the resources afforded to them in and out of the classrooms, are supportive tools that enhance their ability to do their jobs and therefore exercise their autonomy as preschool leaders. The 16 participants of this study also underlined how they exercise their autonomy by delegating to their staff, running the day-to-day functions of their preschools, complying with the requirements set forth in their contracts and by working with their governing body: their board and their parent council/committee.

This study revealed that autonomy at the preschool level is about supervisory functions and compliance. The participants spoke about their roles as program directors in terms of supervising the staff, engaging the families, community involvement, public advocacy, programmatic compliance and collaborating with various entities. Overall, the participants presented the concept of early childhood education leadership autonomy as a function that requires collaboration, advocacy and efficacy.

### **Research Question Two:**

**How do program directors maintain a positive preschool culture under multiple supervision/accountability: The Administration for Children's Services, City Council**



## **Discretionary, and the New York City Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education?**

Participants were asked four questions (items 6, 7, 8, & 9) pertaining to organizational culture in order to answer the second research question (see Interview Protocol Appendix C). From the answers given by all of the participants the following two themes emerged:

Theme one: Staff and leadership accountability

Theme two: Inclusive quality-based education

These two themes that emerged from the responses of the 16 participants are shown on Table 4 below. The two themes will also be presented as sub-headings for the analysis of the data.

Table 4

### *Preschool culture*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Number of directors who responded</b>
Staff and leadership accountability	12/16
Inclusive quality-based education	13/16

The 16 participants of this study spoke extensively about their preschools being unique, welcoming, and developmentally appropriate for all types of learners and a place for staff and families to feel that they belong. When referring to the culture of their preschools, the participants touched upon accountability and being inclusive. These two concepts became the two themes that emerged from the data which supported the findings for answering the second research question of this dissertation. Below these two themes are introduced as subheadings in the analysis of the data.

### **Theme 1: Staff and Leadership Accountability**

The findings show that of the 16 participants interviewed, 12 spoke about taking responsibility for what takes place in their preschools, their dedication, intentionality in hiring a body of staff that is reflective of the community they serve, working with the staff to gain their trust, and trusting their own vision to move their preschool forward. Ava stated that training her staff and remaining vigilant on the trends that occur in and out of her preschool supports her ability to sustain her preschool culture. Holding herself accountable for sharing the information as she receives it and by checking for her staff's understanding of such information.

Baron stated, “we are mindful that most of the families that we serve come from low income backgrounds and therefore, our staff is prepared to work with children that come in with challenges that are sometimes due to their home environment.” Baron added, “I believe that my staff as a whole has a good understanding of the community that we work in and the culture in our program has a good fit.” He said:

We have to adapt, be creative, and always be mindful of what works for our children and families in our communities without dismissing the changes or expectations that can be imposed by governing agencies. We try to find a balance when we collaborate.

Linda also focused on the importance of being accountable to the families as a cultural strength. She answered, “I hired the staff to be reflective of the community that we serve which means that I have staff that speak Spanish.” She also stated, “we value the home culture as we value our preschool culture.” Another point that Linda made was, “we are professionals and we are good at our job, that’s how we maintain our preschool culture.” Rose like other participants focused on facilitating professional development in order to maintain accountability amongst her team, she explains:

I train my staff monthly on the trends of our preschool and this training is based on the belief that we are the best at educating our students. We believe in quality and in order to ensure that quality we have to check with each other as to how we are doing our delegated responsibilities. We also believe in family and we treat each other as such. We solve problems by relying on each other for support. We are a unit.

Susan, like her peers spoke about training and formal and informal meetings as a method for upholding her preschool culture which is focused on teaching every child. She mentioned the fact that she started in this field as a volunteer and having come up the ranks she believes makes her more effective with her team. “When you come in with experience from the ground up, you have a different feeling with your team, you are working together to make things happen” (Susan). Similarly, Mozart stated, “we are accountable for our actions as educators. As a leader, I believe in us and I believe in myself to get the job done.” Pearl addressed teachers and giving them room to decide how they want to manage their classrooms and meet the needs of their students in order to make them accountable for what happens in their rooms. Moreover, Elle talked about adhering to the policies and not cutting corners to obtain results. She categorized herself as a “go getter” and an advocate within her school and community. In addition, Kathy focused on having the trust of her team as the core for her accountability toward her preschool and its success. She mentioned having loyalty toward her staff and believing in what they can do collectively in the name of the students that they serve.

In summation, the data for the first theme on staff and leadership accountability presents the participants’ perspectives on being accountable for their actions and how their accountability helps them delegate to their staff. The findings within this theme highlights the role that advocacy plays when leading others and running a preschool. The data shows that 12 of the 16 participants

in this study consider leadership accountability as a contributor for maintaining the culture of their preschool. The participants individually talked about their roles when it comes to ensuring that although they answer to various entities due to the nature of their systemic functions, that their staff follow one vision and that their preschool culture is embedded in their practice and the way they engage their students and their families.

## **Theme 2: Inclusive Quality-based Education**

The second theme that emerged from the data was the concept of providing an inclusive quality-based education to the children and their families that support their learning and development. From the 16 participants interviewed for this study, 13 felt that providing every child with an opportunity to learn in a developmentally appropriate setting was a big part of their preschool culture (Baron; Elle; Joy; Julie; Kim; Linda; Marie; Neal; Peter; Sandy; Susan). When talking about his preschool culture, Neal stated “we put children first and policies second” when referring to himself and his staff. Neal also added:

We run a preschool based on the belief that children deserve the best education under the assumption that we are not here to teach the ABCs and 123s but that we are here to educate the child in a way that creates an everlasting impact.

Sandy spoke about the person who hired her which happened to be the director whom she replaced at her current site and how she noticed the way the director ran the preschool and the sense of peace she felt when she walked in for her interview. Sandy added:

For me, the current culture would have to be that every child is unique and has the potential to learn and needs to be taught not only academics but also given care and the opportunity to develop independently.

Furthermore, Sandy mentioned what she holds as values and beliefs that support the culture of her preschool. That is that every child is unique, learns differently and needs differentiated attention and that as leaders, we need to continue to advocate in order for all students to achieve their highest potential. Additionally, Julie spoke along the lines of educating all children regardless of their learning style. Julie also added, “we are a family and we want the best for our students.” Julie expressed with fervor “we believe in our cause: lay the foundation for lifelong learning. Preschool is where it all begins for our students.” She stated as she spoke about her staff. In addition, Peter stated “we believe that every child has the right to a quality-based education.” Peter also said, “children are first” when it comes to dealing with policymakers and his funders. Moreover, Elle stated “we have to fight for what we believe in and for the foundation of educating our children” when talking about the role that the Division of Early Childhood Education and the Administration for Children’s Services play in maintaining the culture of her preschool. Elle felt that part of her role in sustaining her preschool culture is being a “juggler” amongst all parties involved which she said demands that she keeps her staff and families informed.

In the same way, Baron stated “we want to provide a safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate environment where children can learn ‘hands on’ and at their own pace. We also want to empower families to participate and enhance their children’s education process.” Linda stated, “our beliefs are that our students as well as their families need a place to call home away from home.” She also mentioned “believing in family and celebrating our cultural differences is part of what our preschool believes in. We value families and we provide a high quality early childhood education.”

On the other hand, the findings show that three of the 16 participants spoke about the fact that maintaining any culture within their preschools is a challenge because of the fact that they have to answer to different entities with differing standards of operation. Kathy stated, “we understand that DECE and ACS think of us as babysitters and not really as professionals.” She also stated, “it is as if we operate from the understanding that to the outside world what we do has no impact or value but yet we still push forward.” In addition, these three participants from the 16 participants felt that it was hard to feel as if they were accountable for anything due to the multi-accountability system that they operate under. Pearl for example, stated “we know that the DECE and ACS are always on the lookout for us to fail at our job.”

Furthermore, the findings for the second theme on an inclusive quality-based education as a platform to maintaining the preschool culture was an area that 13 of the 16 participants agreed on to some degree. Each participant described how by putting children first, they are able to maintain a preschool culture that focuses on lifelong learning and on setting the foundation that meets the needs of all students. On the contrary, three participants alluded to the fact that having a multi-accountability monitoring system does hinder their ability to maintain a culture that can be embraced by all. The second theme also illustrates how the participants see culture as a vehicle for educating children in a developmentally appropriate environment conducive to learning.

In sum, the findings for the second research question yielded two themes: staff and leadership accountability and inclusive quality-based education as a process for maintaining the preschool culture. The findings demonstrated that participants view their preschool culture on the basis of how children are educated, how the staff support all children regardless of their needs and how the leader takes charge in ensuring that inside their schools, the culture under which they operate is maintained despite outside demands. It was also found that 12 of the 16 participants in

this study concluded that accountability on the staff and the leader's part is important in maintaining the preschool culture.

Furthermore, because of the systemic functions of early childhood education: operating under a social service agency, an education department and a health department requires that leaders take ownership of their schools and what takes place within their preschools. Sharing this accountability with their staff was also expressed by the participants as a way to ensure that the culture of the preschool is maintained by all involved (Ava; Baron; Elle; Kathy; Linda; Mozart; Neal; Rose; Sandy; Susan).

Possibly, in sharing the accountability for maintaining the preschool culture, the participants felt that it facilitates the space for providing an inclusive education for all. A total of 13 of the 16 participants related inclusiveness as a form for maintaining the preschool culture. The findings for the second research question show that the participants maintain the culture of their preschools by being hands on (accountable) with what takes place in their preschools and by maintaining an environment that supports all learners.

### **Research Question Three:**

**How has the role of a New York City community-based organization early childhood education program director evolved in terms of supporting the preschool culture?**

Through the process of analyzing the data to answer the third and final research question it is notable to mention that every participant of this study touched on the fact that the field of early childhood education is in a constant state of change in part due to the nature of the field and because it is a political game changer. In reviewing the data collected two themes emerged from the participants' answers: *Resiliency* and *Dedication*. Table 5 below illustrates these two themes as well as the number of participants that corresponded to each theme. These two themes will also

be presented as sub-headings in the analysis of the data. The participants were asked four questions (items 4, 10, 11, & 12) pertaining to leading through change in order to obtain the data for research question three (see Interview Protocol Appendix C).

**Table 5**

*The evolution of leading through change*

Themes	Number of directors who responded
Resiliency	13/16
Dedication	8/16

### **Theme 1: Resiliency**

Being a leader of any organization requires tactfulness as you are dealing with people and productivity. Being the leader of an early childhood education preschool demands diplomacy but also innovation (Linda). The theme *resiliency* emerged as the participants of this study spoke about the changes that they have endured through their years of service and the countless policies that have been thrown their way (Baron). Thirteen of the 16 participants were in accord in that they did not believe the Division of Early Childhood Education and the Administration for Children’s Services value them as program directors. They expressed their dissatisfaction with how the Division of Early Childhood Education views them and how the Administration for Children’s Services treats them.

Marie concurred that “they value me because they can hire me for \$10,000-\$11,000 per child with no real job security but yet we provide a lifetime of service to a field that doesn’t offer much in return.” She added “outside of that, they don’t see any value in us.” Moreover, Marie stipulated “the Mayor ran his campaign on ECE and yet the program directors got a new contract after 10 years that gives them \$6000 more than the teachers that they supervise and yet our bottom line salary is less than \$60,000 a year.” Similarly, Julie added “we are not valued we are being



used for cheap labor.” Kathy agreed by saying “unfortunately, they don’t see a value in us. With every change comes less power and less room for creativity and individuality.” Like these five participants, eight others expressed the same sentiment when it came to their value in the eyes of their funders. Being that 13 of the 16 participants felt that their funders do not see any value in them as program directors, this finding speaks to their resiliency because despite feeling unappreciated and undervalued they are still moving forward and advocating for the rights of the nation’s youngest student population.

Linda has given the field over 40 years of service and she has dealt with her fair share of changes and yet she is still advocating and supporting our youngest learners. “By staying current and on top of all of the changes, you ensure that your preschool remains open” (Linda). Likewise, Elle has led for many years and through some cuts which crippled her preschool’s ability to support working families but she powers through and found other ways to support her families. She stated that she accepts changes, as they come with the territory, but feels that early childhood education is unjustly targeted because the field is administered by women of color.

Furthermore, Joy specified “It is beyond the classroom experience which is how I have maintained my role by believing that I can ensure that children receive an education and that they don’t pay for our mistakes.” Joy agreed that “change is necessary and is also part of the process. I don’t fear change but I fear those who act as if they have the children and us at heart when making these changes.” Neal agreed that some of the changes that he has dealt with “have made our profession better just as others have not.” Neal referred to the introduction of research-based child assessment tools, screening tools, units of study and the New York State Pre-Kindergarten Foundation for the Common Core as some of the changes that have formalized the way children are educated. He concurred that being resilient is about making “the best of what we have. We

are here in ECE because we believe in what we are doing. We are not here for the money or the security as none of those exist in our field.” Peter coincides with Neal in that “being an advocate requires a willingness to find a way out of every situation and in this case out of every change that comes our way.”

Rose stated that resiliency in the face of change comes from staying true to your beliefs and sticking it through. Ava stated that she takes change and tries to find a silver lining with every new change that gets introduced into her role. She accepts the change as do her peers but she cautions against just going with the flow. Joy stated “I wanted to be part of the culture that lays the foundation for lifelong learning. We are laying the ground work for our students to achieve their highest potential in life not just in school.” Joy spoke of her resiliency over the years when dealing with changes such as ELNY being introduced in 2011 as the only option to gain a contract and keep her preschool open. All 16 participants mentioned ELNY as one of the major changes that they have led through and how this initiative has impacted the quality of service that families receive. Some spoke of the lack of resources, the lack of training and technical assistance for complying with the contract and the standards. Others felt that ELNY happened because ACS could not retain their Head Start dollars due to poor performance.

Baron provided some of the changes that he feels has impacted him as a leader and tested his resiliency in terms of leading through those changes. As the other participants, Baron also agreed that early childhood education continues to evolve and that some of the changes have brought formalization and order as well as structure for leaders to implement in their individual preschools. For example, Baron highlighted the screening tools and assessment tools as a change that pushed him to learn new ways of supervising his staff and of using technology to inform his practice as a leader.

The findings for the first theme of research question three presented the perspectives of the participants interviewed for this study as leaders of early childhood education being resilient in the face of change. The participants shared that they consider themselves resilient because they are constantly having to deal with change and rising above those changes in order to keep their preschools open. Thirteen out of the 16 participants interviewed concurred in that being able to lead and evolve under a multi-accountability system requires resiliency because program directors have to be able to stay strong and informed in order to meet all that is required and expected from a program director. Having to answer to the various entities according to the participants makes you resilient to change which allows you to evolve and remain in your field.

**Theme 2: Dedication.** The second and last theme of research question three is *dedication*. This theme emerged from the data collected which demonstrates that the participants view dedication in terms of how hard they work, their endurance through the evolution of early childhood education, and the commitment that they feel towards laying the foundation for learning. The participants also added that they have dedication for their job and that such dedication enables them to lead and maintain their preschool culture. Moreover, eight out of the 16 participants of this study mentioned that being dedicated to their craft is what helps them lead and evolve through change.

Another argument that the participants shared was having to work within a multi-accountability system that involves people that have very little knowledge of their roles and responsibilities and yet they remain dedicated to their jobs. The 16 participants shared their perspectives on both the Division of Early Childhood Education and the Administration for Children's Services having little or no knowledge of what it truly takes to be a program director

according to them (the participants) and that they collaborate with them (ACS and the DOE) because they are dedicated to being the best in their fields. Joy declared:

Most of these new people were not even born when I joined ECE or ran my own preschool. Sometimes I can see it in their faces that they don't think I know what I am doing. They come in with their knowledge of policies and procedures and technology and they think they know it all when they don't. I get it that I might not be able to get things the way it is required but I know that I am more knowledgeable than they are when it comes to ECE.

Furthermore, Ava added "we are exactly where we should be just as elementary, junior high, and high school principals are where they need to be. We are the leaders of our field and we understand our student population and their families." Joy referred to the field as "early childhood education is magical and it keeps you going." As seven of the 16 participants in this study have more than 20 years in this field, finding a reason to keep going is part of the dedication that they bring to the field (Sandy). Sandy also spoke about the value that they bring to the field by maintaining a lasting relationship with the families they serve "I have families that come back to my program with their young children because they attended my program as children themselves."

Pearl maintained that she reminds herself of the reasons why she joined the field in order to keep up with the changes and the obstacles that come with those changes. Linda on the other hand, said that being innovative and thinking outside of the box is part of the process of being dedicated to the job because in early childhood education, resources are limited but you have to maintain quality at all cost.

I am not ready to retire just yet so I try to do what is needed from me. A lot of my old colleagues have hung up their towels due to the demands that ELNY and PKA have put on our role as a program director. I have tried to partner up with the countless monitors (the

Administration of Children's Services, the Department of Education, and the Department of Health) that come into my school in order to meet their demands. (Marie)

Nevertheless, Kathy specified that "As a leader, I remain loyal and trustworthy to my staff, the board and my funders. I collaborate well with all parties involved even with limited autonomy."

To summarize, the findings for the third research question revealed two themes: *Resiliency* and *Dedication*. The participants spoke of being resilient in the face of uncertainty and countless structures and accountability systems to adhere to. A total of 13 of the 16 participants referred to resiliency as a method of leading through change. The participants mentioned that the fact that they deal with various changes and are still here to do their job shows how they have evolved due to their resiliency to change. Baron for example, provided a list of his top five changes that he feels have impacted his role as a leader and truly tested his resiliency. Like his peers, he also mentioned the ELNY initiative as a change that demanded resiliency because of all the new policies that it entails.

Dedication, the second theme that emerged from the data, revealed that eight participants were in agreement amongst the 16 participants of this study. Eight participants referred to dedication when addressing how they lead through an ever-changing system. The participants spoke of dedication because as some of them put it, there is no high salary, real benefits or security that comes with being a program director but nonetheless, they stay in the field when they could go somewhere else.

The data collected also revealed that of the 16 participants, 13 suggested that their funders: the New York City Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education and the Administration for Children's Services do not value the role of program directors. The findings

for the third research question show that the participants lead through change by being resilient and dedicated despite feeling that they are not valued by those who oversee them.

### **Summary**

This chapter, presented the findings of the study. These findings are based primarily on the analysis of the participants' interview responses. The findings were discussed within the themes that emerged from the data corresponding to the three research questions. From the 16 program directors that shared their phenomenological perspectives on early childhood educational leadership the researcher presented the findings based on the three research questions which focused on leadership autonomy, preschool culture, and leading through change in order to address the investigation of how program directors maintain their preschool culture.

The findings reflect that program directors maintain their preschool culture through their leadership practice, their advocacy to influence policy, leadership collaboration, staff and leadership accountability, providing an inclusive quality-based education, being resilient, and dedicated to the field through an ever-changing education system. In the next chapter, a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations are provided as a culmination of the research study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

The field of early childhood education in New York City exists under various modalities which include: Family Child Care, Head Start, Early Head Start, Child Care, among other modalities (Austin, 2014). Funding for the majority of these early childhood education programs is provided by one or two of the following agencies: the New York City Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education, the Administration for Children's Services and/or the New York City Council Discretionary funds. Some of these programs serve children from birth to 5 years of age. Due to the nature under which early childhood education functions, the leaders of these programs are faced with the challenge of having to implement a system, that according to the available research, is fragmented partly because of disparate funding and multi accountability monitoring structures that govern early childhood education in New York City (Austin, 2014; Bown & Sumsion, 2016; Talan, Bloom, & Kelton, 2014).

Nevertheless, just as the funding systems influence the field of early childhood education, the leaders of early childhood education also have an influential role to play when it comes to educating the youngest student population (Gonzalez, 2014). Those leaders are called program directors and they are responsible for the day to day functions of their preschools which include the following among other responsibilities: the supervision of personnel (teachers, cooks, bookkeeper, secretary, custodian, family coordinator, among others), preschool wide professional development, the submission of monthly reports to their funders, maintaining required site permits, overseeing the financial and nutrition contracts, student enrollment and outcome oversight, family

engagement, community engagement, and reporting to a governing body comprised of a board and a parent committee/council.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the perspectives of New York City community-based organization early childhood education program directors on maintaining a positive preschool culture under an ever-changing education system. The participants of this study were 16 program directors that are currently working in community-based organizations under one or two contracts funded by the following either of the entities: the New York City Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education, the New York City Administration for Children's Services, and/or the New York City Council Discretionary Funds. The study took place in New York City and it excluded early childhood education centers administered directly by the New York City Department of Education (more commonly known as standalone DOE early childhood programs). This chapter presents a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for early childhood education practice and policies as well as future studies.

### **Summary of Findings**

The findings of this study are based on the participants' responses to the 12 interview questions in pertaining to their perspectives as program directors of early childhood education on maintaining a positive preschool culture under an ever-changing system.

The findings for the first research question revealed that program directors do feel that they have autonomy in running their preschools. The participants interviewed shared that when it comes to running their preschools, they do exercise their autonomy and the participants described such autonomy in three major themes: *leadership practice*, *advocacy to influence policy* and lastly, *leadership collaboration*. These three themes support the participants' claim that program directors have autonomy when it comes to running their preschool inside of their buildings.



One finding in relation to research question one is that 10 of the 16 participants interviewed, agreed that being able to administer the daily functions of their preschools as well as overseeing what takes place inside of their preschool are their ways of exercising their autonomy. Nonetheless, six of the 16 participants stated that all they do is follow orders given to them by their funders and that they were not really doing what they wanted to do as leaders to exercise their autonomy.

Furthermore, other findings in relation to research question one, show that five of the 16 participants agreed that being involved in and out of their preschool buildings influence the policies that shape early childhood education and impact their autonomy. The other 11 participants on the other hand, disagreed based on their belief that it did not matter if you attended meetings, spoke to local politicians or have an involved board; that such advocacy did not influence the level of autonomy that a program director has when it comes to early childhood education.

Moreover, the last finding of research question one demonstrates that program directors also view their autonomy in terms of how they collaborate with their funders (the Administration for Children's Services, The New York City Council, and/or the Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education) in order to keep their preschools in operation. The finding shows that within leadership collaboration, three patterns were identified: resources, communication and compliance.

In sum, the findings for research question one, revealed that program directors have autonomy inside of their preschools and such autonomy is heavily based on being in compliance in order to keep their preschools in operation.

Furthermore, the findings for the second research question show that program directors maintain a positive preschool culture by being accountable for their actions as leaders and by

providing an inclusive quality-based education to all students. The findings are based on the two major themes that emerged from the data which were: *staff and leadership accountability* and *inclusive quality-based education*. The data revealed a total of 12 of the 16 participants expressed staff and leadership accountability as a determining factor for maintaining the culture of their preschools. The data for research question two also revealed that 13 of the 16 participants view their preschool culture as having a welcoming and an inclusive environment that supports the entire child beyond the classroom. The participants posited that they maintain the culture of putting children first by being accountable for their actions and for what takes place inside their preschools. Overall, the findings for research question two supports the current research on organizational culture in that it has to be embedded in the organization and fully embraced by its leader. The participants concurred in that accountability on their part is what drives their preschool culture. In addition, the findings for research question two also revealed that program directors view their preschool culture as being accountable toward educating the students for lifelong learning.

Furthermore, the findings from the third research question which guided this study, revealed that program directors have evolved in alignment with the changes that have transpired in the field of early childhood education and that they have maintained the culture of their preschools by putting children first. The two themes that emerged from the data were: *Resiliency* and *Dedication*. The participants added that due to the ever-changing nature under which early childhood education exists, being resilient is an evolutionary trait that they have embraced in order to keep their preschools in business. A total of 13 of the 16 participants referred to resiliency as a form of maintaining their preschool culture. The participants conferred that having the dedication

for a field that pays very little and offers no job security, shows how they continue to evolve and remain in the field despite the changes that continue to come their way due to their resiliency.

Additionally, the findings for the second theme revealed that eight of the 16 participants said that dedication plays a role in their ability to maintain a positive preschool culture. The participants insisted that early childhood education is the foundation for lifelong learning and that it is the duty of program directors to see that such education takes place.

In sum, the findings for this study demonstrate that program directors do have leadership autonomy when it comes to running their preschools. Such autonomy according to the participants, is exercised by overseeing and administering the functions of their preschools, advocating to influence the policies that govern early childhood education, and by collaborating with the system leaders that hold a stake on their existence as program directors. The findings also revealed that program directors feel very strongly that their preschool culture is about having an inclusive environment that meets the needs of all children well beyond their academic needs. The findings also show that program directors maintain a positive preschool culture by putting children first. Furthermore, the findings also revealed that program directors feel that their role as program directors are not valued by their funders which they concurred substantiates their argument about their resiliency and dedication. Also, they believe it is their resiliency and dedication that serves as a cornerstone from which they continue to lead through an ever-changing education system. The participants of this study also conceived that early childhood education functions under a multi-accountability system which makes their job more complex in how they execute their functions but also co-exist in the field of education.

## Conclusions

Several conclusions have been made on the findings of this study. First, early childhood education in New York City does in fact function under a multi accountability system (Figure 1) which in turn, fosters and demands leadership autonomy in order for each program director to effectively lead their preschool. Waters and Marzano (2006) posit that school-based leadership require system leaders to give them school level autonomy in order to support them in overseeing the functions of their schools. Program directors operate under the supervision of a board of directors and they are also charged with having to implement all of the policies and procedures that their funders delegate to them. Waters and Marzano (2006) argue that levels of leadership oversight would be more effective if everyone understood their level of authority within the system. Using similar context of supervisor-supervisee relationship regarding autonomy, Waters and Marzano (2006) suggest “effective superintendents may provide principals with ‘defined autonomy.’ That is, they may set clear, non-negotiable goals for learning and instruction, yet provide school leadership teams with the responsibility and authority for determining how to meet those goals” (p. 4). Program directors work under a multi-accountability system in early childhood education, and such system, fosters the need to be accountable and innovative in meeting the demands of all entities involved. The concept of working under a multi-accountability system and having leadership autonomy, correlates with the argument made by Waters and Marzano (2006) in terms of defined autonomy when it comes to school-level leadership and system (school district) leadership.

Elmore (2000) maintains that in order for school leaders to execute school improvements, work on complex educational tasks, and/or collaborate with system leaders, there needs to be a distribution of power and authority from all parties involved. As it was stated before, program

directors exercise their autonomy by administering the functions of their preschools through leadership practice, advocacy and collaboration. Daly (2015) stated that school district leaders need to utilize all of the available social networks in order to meet the needs of their district schools under limited resources. Currently, program directors have a vast social network driven by the multi-accountability system under which they operate.

On the other hand, Bennis (2009) and Scharmer (2007) refer to the benefits of knowing yourself as a person and as a leader as a resource for leading others and maximizing the organization's potentials. This research confirms the idea that autonomy is more than just being able to act individually, it is also, about having the skills to pull in all available resources to get the job done (Daly, 2015). This idea brings together what Daly (2015) suggests with his social network theory, in that program directors could see the value in having all of the entities that govern them as resources for them to use to lead others. It also aligns with Bennis' (2009) and Scharmer's (2007) argument that leadership is much about the leader itself. This knowledge of self could support a leader's ability to identify possible networks that could enhance the quality of service provided to others.

Moreover, Hudson (2010) and Gonzalez (2014) address the complexity under which early childhood education professionals do their jobs and how such complexity can sometimes be overpowered by bureaucracy and misguided policies. Being able to exercise leadership autonomy under the current system contributes to the fact that early childhood education program directors are knowledgeable about their jobs and can therefore navigate the system under which they work. Dous, Devos, and Valcke (2016) stated "school autonomy, a strategy to ensure school accountability, increase student achievement and parental involvement, and improve school effectiveness" (p. 1). Program directors are thus expected to produce results as leaders.

The second conclusion is that program directors take full accountability for their actions which support their autonomy when it comes to maintaining the culture of their preschool. Program directors spoke openly on putting children first when it comes to their roles and responsibilities as early childhood education leaders. Terrell and Lindsey (2009) and Dufour and Fullan (2013) mention the concept of culture when it comes to leadership as a platform towards self-discovery, holistic acceptance of the similarities and differences among their members, and a vehicle for sustaining change across the organization under which they lead. As stated by Dufour and Fullan (2013):

The transformation from a culture of isolation to a culture of collaboration does not happen without ongoing support from the system. This support includes assigning people into meaningful teams, providing time for collaboration, and establishing clarity regarding the focus of collaboration. (p. 68)

Elmore (2000) states that failing to work at developing and sustaining an organization's culture or its values and celebrations, can prove to be detrimental to the accomplishments of any given organization. Elmore (2000) also adds that policymakers and education system leaders must adhere to the culture that are fostered within the public schools in order to bring coherence in what they are all trying to accomplish through school improvements and student achievement. Whyte (2001) explains that an effective leader should make sure that all members of an organization have a role to play and that they know what is expected of them.

The third conclusion is that program directors maintain a positive preschool culture by viewing early childhood education as the foundation for lifelong learning. This point of view catapults what many consider to be the key to closing the academic achievement gap in the education system. Bernhardt (2013), Rothstein (2004), and Brimley, Verstegen, and Garfield

(2016) refer to early childhood education as a pathway to ensuring that all students benefit from a public education because giving children exposure to a quality-based early childhood education prepares them as lifelong learners. This idea is shared by the research participants when talking about their preschool culture and providing an inclusive quality-based early childhood education as the basis for lifelong learning. For program directors, according to the participants of this study, the culture of their preschools is based on what they want for the children that they serve to achieve beyond early childhood education. Their dedication derives from seeing the individuality of each of the children that they serve. Schein (2010) stated “most importantly, understanding cultural forces enables us to understand ourselves better” (p. 7). Program directors see the cultural forces of their preschool being about the children and what they need in order to become lifelong learners. This lens positions the program directors to be accountable for their actions in order to support the children.

Lastly, the final conclusion is that for program directors to exercise their autonomy and maintain a positive preschool culture, they need to quickly adjust and be able to lead through an ever-changing education system. The current findings suggest that program directors need to be resilient and dedicated to the field of early childhood education in order to be leaders in early childhood education. If early childhood education is supposed to help with closing the achievement gap, having resilient and dedicated leaders at the helm could ensure that the intended outcome is achieved. Kotter (2012) states that leaders are constantly having to deal with change in order to keep their organization moving forward, which Gonzalez (2014) concurs. The program directors of early childhood education who participated in this study seem to be agreeing with Kotter (2012) and Gonzalez (2014). According to their responses, program directors have dealt with their fair share of changes and they continue to lead today because of how resilient they are

in the face of change. Their long tenure, despite some challenging policies surrounding the field of early childhood education, supports their dedication to educating the youngest student population.

Dufour and Fullan (2013) state “every person in the system has an obligation to be an instrument for cultural change—rather than waiting for others to make the necessary changes” (p. 4). The participants referred to staff accountability toward maintaining the culture of their preschools as a factor that influences how the culture is maintained. Being able to galvanize the staff in order to play a role in maintaining the preschool culture, is according to the participants, part of the job of a program director in terms of being accountable for the culture of their preschool. Bolman and Deal (2006) add:

Leaders are defined by their legacy, which is shaped over time from hard decisions they must often make—whether to lay off or not, to fight or withdraw, to merge or go it alone, to go against the grain to achieve more or follow the rules but gain less. (p. 3)

In summary, program directors exercise their autonomy in their preschools which helps them maintain a positive preschool culture defined as being accountable for providing an inclusive quality-based education to foster lifelong learners.

### **Recommendations for Policy and Practice**

The findings and the conclusions provided within this chapter have led the researcher to make the following recommendations geared towards policies and practice for early childhood educational leadership and recommendations for studies to further explore the field of early childhood educational leadership. New York City is getting ready to embark on yet another early childhood education initiative aimed at improving the quality of education that young children



receive in order to ensure lifelong success which Brimley, Verstegen, and Garfield (2016) infer is an investment in human capital the provision of public education.

The first recommendation is that system leaders (the Administration for Children's Services, the New York City Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, among others), should streamline the system under which program directors run their preschool in order to minimize the multiplicity of accountability under which program directors currently lead. This recommendation is based on the findings on early childhood education leadership autonomy and the role that overarching leaders play in supporting program directors. The findings under leadership autonomy show that program directors place a high level of importance on following in orders as a way to comply with all of the mandates that comes with having the various early childhood education contracts. This recommendation is grounded under Waters and Marzano's (2006) and Dufour and Fullan's (2013) argument on the need for coherency when it comes to educational leadership and policy leadership collaborating in the name of public education. Since the provision of early childhood education is being shifted into the public school system, the streamlining of operation and oversight would facilitate a more seamless way of collaboration between preschool education and K-12 education system leaders.

The participants of this study expressed the complexity under which they function in part due to the multi-accountability system that governs their contracts. Creating a coalition where all entities formulate a system that supports uniformity in terms of: funding, standards and policies, personnel policies, health codes, and infrastructure of the education system encompassing all levels of education. For example, currently CBO, FCC and public schools can serve the same population of students which fosters a competitive system that leads to cuts in funding and

therefore impacts that quality of education that students receive. Since the NYC DOE will have total control of the funds implementing a system of operation that eliminates the competitive nature under which early childhood education leaders work could lead to a more collaborative system.

Below is an illustration of how the system could begin to streamline its provision of services:

<b>Population</b>	<b>Service provider</b>	<b>Collaborative oversight</b>	<b>System oversight</b>
Birth-2.5 years of age	Home-based Family Child Care	CBO Program directors	School district leadership
2.5-3.9 years of age	Community-based organization preschools	Elementary school principals	
Pre-K	Elementary public schools	Its current structure	

By setting the system above would one provide a vehicle for collaboration amongst all service providers and also eliminate some of the entities that complicates the providers' work such as, the board of directors, ACS, among others. This shift could also support with the involvement of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene because the overseeing system comes from the school district instead of each preschool operating on its own. This shift will also support the field of early childhood education in terms of funding because there would be structures to support them with enrollment and procurement. This shift could also eliminate the lack of communication that currently exist between CBO and elementary school leadership.

The second recommendation is that the New York City Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education should collaborate more closely with the program directors now that the early childhood education contracts are going to be administered by the New York City

Department of Education. Collaborating should facilitate a new systemic culture under which program directors and system leaders can share the accountability of ensuring a positive preschool culture amongst all preschools. The findings of the present study show that program directors view their roles on maintaining the preschool culture as a responsibility that takes place solely by the actions of their staff and themselves, when researchers such as Terrell and Lindsey (2009) and Dufour and Fullan (2013) believe that in order for an organizational culture to stand the test of time, all members of the organization must play a role in maintaining such culture.

The system leaders (ACS, DOE, DOH, among others) that currently govern early childhood education have an influential role in the preschool culture just as much as program directors do. They hold the funds and licensing requirements which are needed in order to keep the preschools open and people employed. Knowing each other's roles in maintain the culture of the preschools should provide the landscape for sustainable change and quality-based early childhood education. Another reason for this recommendation is based on the findings that program directors did not feel that they have an open-line of communication with their funders and system leaders which researchers such as Daly (2015) would argue is a vital component to have in order to collaborate and improve our educational system and have strong social networks.

As New York City is preparing to move its entire early childhood education funding streams into the New York City Department of Education and out of the management of the Administration for Children's Services beginning July of 2018; the recommendation is that the New York City Department of Education should adhere to a principled and well-organized change process. It may benefit for example, using Kotter's (2012) Eight-Stage Change Process as part of their transition plan to move early childhood education and care under their leadership. Kotter

(2012) suggests that if organizations follow his suggested change process from stages one through eight in sequence, that any change that occurs under such process will yield long lasting results.

Furthermore, some of the participants had already mentioned joining the New York City Department of Education as a solution to their current problems under the supervision of the Administration for Children's Services prior to the announcement of the transition from the Administration for Children's Services to the New York City Department of Education. This fact could be of benefit to the New York City Department of Education because they might already have buy-in from some of the leaders of early childhood education in having them be their sole overarching monitoring system leadership. Riggio, Chaleff, and Lipman-Blumen (2008) stressed that valuing the role of followers within an organization could be of benefit because followers move the cause forward for the leaders.

Bennis (2009) as well as Kidder (2006) concurred that leadership has much to do with the individuals themselves and the organizations under which they lead. The announcement that the New York City Department of Education has been given the jurisdiction of the entire early childhood education system, could present a great opportunity for program directors to contribute to the transition into this new system. Program directors have a vast network under which they operate due to the multiplicity of entities that governs their funding. If leading in accordance with Daly's (2015) social network theory, program directors could have access to additional resources that could support the transition process of the early childhood education system from a social services preventive system under ACS, to an educational system under the New York City Department of Education. Kotter (2012) stated that understanding the current culture can help implement change because it would be done in an organic manner. Directors' understanding of the culture under which they lead could support with the transition being introduced by the Mayor.

## **Recommendations for Future Studies**

While numerous research have been conducted on the issues of early childhood education programs in general, there is a need for more studies on the administration/leadership aspect of these programs. A research study that looks at the role of leaders/directors within early childhood education could present an opportunity to learn more about the system that governs the functions of early childhood education in New York City. This recommendation is also based on the fact that the New York City Department of Education is poised to take over the contracts for early childhood education for all of New York City beginning in two school districts in September of 2017. Learning more about the perspectives of how they view their role when it comes to leadership in early childhood education could be of benefit to the program directors, the staff and the communities under which they serve. Learning more the leadership of CBO program directors can also support the transition of service from social services into education.

Talan, Bloom, and Kelton (2014) suggested that very little research has been done in looking at the effectiveness of preparing program directors in their role as leaders. The second recommendation aligns with Talan et al.'s (2014) claim as well as the findings of this study in that program directors work under an ever-changing multi-accountability system which demands higher order leadership skills. Investigating how program directors are professionally trained to function as leaders could be of benefit in developing administrative leadership program conducive to the role of early childhood education leadership. This recommended study could also support the proposed career ladder agreed upon by the program directors' union and the Day Care Council of New York, due to the fact that the current requirement to be a program director is to have a professional teaching license and not an administrative license. This lack of administrative educational training could be a disadvantage to the program directors' ability to function under the

upcoming transition. Patton (2009) and Talan et al. (2014) both mentioned the complexities that early childhood education presents when it comes to its leadership due to a very ambiguous yet complicated system under which the program directors work. Learning more about their leadership development and preparation could provide a platform under which to strengthen their leadership skills. This recommendation could also support the development of a school leader administrative college-level program tailored specifically for early childhood education leadership which is currently not available in New York colleges and universities.

The third recommendation for future study is based on Dufour and Fullan's (2013) research on cultures built to last. They suggested that in order to educate *all* students, schools should foster a collaborative culture with the necessary efforts to support student achievement. The findings of this study revealed that program directors view their preschool cultures within the lens of educating all students and meeting their needs in order to lay the foundation for lifelong learning. However, the program directors also expressed how their aim of wanting to educate children occurs under a multi-accountability system that often makes their jobs more about programmatic compliance and less about collaboration amongst them and the system leaders (for example, the Administration for Children's Services, the New York City Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, NYC Buildings Department, NYC Fire Department, NYS Child and Adult Care Food Program).

Dufour and Fullan (2013) stated "schools cannot achieve the fundamental purpose of learning for all if educators work in isolation. Therefore, educators must build a collaborative culture in which they work together inter-dependently and assume collective responsibility for the learning of all students" (pp. 14-15). Therefore, the third recommendation is to explore how the New York City Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education is planning to

transition early childhood education into their system from a collaborative standpoint. What strategies if any, are they planning to implement to foster a collaborative culture amongst them (Division of Early Childhood Education) and community-based organization program directors in order to educate all students. “Leaders must base their overall strategies on capacity building, collaborative work, instruction, and systemness” (Dufour & Fullan, 2013, p. 22). Kotter (2012) stated that transformational change can only be achieved if all parties involved understand the culture under which they operate and they all have a role towards achieving transformational change.

Program directors are vital to the field of early childhood education because that is their expertise. The New York City Department of Education focuses on educating all students which will now include the city’s youngest learners. Shifting a system that has operated from the standpoint of social and preventative services to a system that is heavily driven by child assessment should be done in conjunction with the experts in the field. This inclusion of program directors could positively facilitate the shift and support the goal of leading change and impacting academic achievement.

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**Appendix A****Sage College of Albany Sage IRB Approval Letter**

140 New Scotland Avenue  
Albany, NY 12208  
www.sage.edu

December 30, 2016

Yessenia Rosario-Adon  
Doctoral Student, The Sage Colleges

**IRB PROPOSAL #521-2016-2017**  
**Reviewer: Francesca Durand, Chair**

Dear Researchers:

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your expedited application and has approved your project entitled "Perspectives of New York City Community-Based Organization Early Childhood Leadership on Maintaining a Positive Preschool Culture"

Good luck with your research.

Please refer to your IRB Proposal number whenever corresponding with us whether by mail or in person.

When you have completed collecting your data you will need to submit to the IRB Committee a final report indicating any problems you may have encountered regarding the treatment of human subjects, if the project goes longer than one year.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Francesca Durand, PhD  
Chair, IRB

FD/nan

Cc. Dr. Daniel Alemu

## Appendix B

### New York City IRB Approval Letter



**Department of  
Education**

*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Research and Policy Support Group January 18, 2017

**52 Chambers Street  
Room 310  
New York, NY 10007**

Mrs Yessenia Rosario-Adon  
1148 East 223rd  
Fl 2  
Bronx, NY 10466

Dear Mrs Rosario-Adon:

I am happy to inform you that the New York City Department of Education Institutional Review Board (NYCDOE IRB) has approved your research proposal, "Perspectives of New York City Community-Based Organization Early Childhood Leadership on Maintaining a Positive Preschool Culture." The NYCDOE IRB has assigned your study the file number of 1554. Please make certain that all correspondence regarding this project references this number. The IRB has determined that the study poses minimal risk to participants. The approval is for a period of one year:

**Approval Date:** January 18, 2017  
**Expiration Date:** January 17, 2018

**Responsibilities of Principal Investigators:** Please find below a list of responsibilities of Principal Investigators who have DOE IRB approval to conduct research in New York City public schools.

- Approval by this office does not guarantee access to any particular school, individual or data. You are responsible for making appropriate contacts and getting the required permissions and consents before initiating the study.
- When requesting permission to conduct research, submit a letter to the school principal summarizing your research design and methodology along with this IRB Approval letter. Each principal agreeing to participate must sign the enclosed Approval to Conduct Research in Schools/Districts form. *A completed and signed form for every school included in your research must be emailed to [IRB@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:IRB@schools.nyc.gov).* Principals may also ask you to show them the receipt issued by the NYC Department of Education at the time of your fingerprinting.
- You are responsible for ensuring that all researchers on your team conducting research in NYC public schools are fingerprinted by the NYC Department of Education. Please note: This rule applies to all research in schools conducted with students and/or staff. See the attached fingerprinting materials. For additional information [click here](#). Fingerprinting staff will ask you for your identification and social security number and for your DOE IRB approval letter. You must be fingerprinted during the school year in which the letter is issued. Researchers who join the study team after the inception of the research must also be fingerprinted. Please provide a list of their names and social security numbers to the NYC Department of Education Research and Policy Support Group for tracking their eligibility and security clearance. The cost of fingerprinting is \$135. *A copy of the fingerprinting receipt must be emailed to [IRB@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:IRB@schools.nyc.gov).*

Mrs Yessenia Rosario-Adon

Page 2

January 18, 2017

- You are responsible for ensuring that the research is conducted in accordance with your research proposal as approved by the DOE IRB and for the actions of all co-investigators and research staff involved with the research.
- You are responsible for informing all participants (e.g., administrators, teachers, parents, and students) that their participation is strictly voluntary and that there are no consequences for non-participation or withdrawal at any time during the study.
- Researchers must: use the consent forms approved by the DOE IRB; provide all research subjects with copies of their signed forms; maintain signed forms in a secure place for a period of at least three years after study completion; and destroy the forms in accordance with the data disposal plan approved by the IRB.

**Mandatory Reporting to the IRB:** The principal investigator must report to the Research and Policy Support Group, within five business days, any serious problem, adverse effect, or outcome that occurs with frequency or degree of severity greater than that anticipated. In addition, the principal investigator must report any event or series of events that prompt the temporary or permanent suspension of a research project involving human subjects or any deviations from the approved protocol.

**Amendments/Modifications:** All amendments/modification of protocols involving human subjects must have prior IRB approval, except those involving the prevention of immediate harm to a subject, which must be reported within 24 hours to the NYC Department of Education IRB.

**Continuation of your research:** It is your responsibility to insure that an application for continuing review approval is submitted six weeks before the expiration date noted above. If you do not receive approval before the expiration date, all study activities must stop until you receive a new approval letter.

**Research findings:** We require a copy of the report of findings from the research. Interim reports may also be requested for multi-year studies. Your report should not include identification of the superintendency, district, any school, student, or staff member. Please send an electronic copy of the final report to: [irb@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:irb@schools.nyc.gov).

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Mary Mattis at 212.374.3913.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Mary C. Mattis, PhD  
Director, Institutional Review Board

cc: Barbara Dworkowitz

## **Appendix C**

### **Data Collection Instrument**

#### **Interview Questions**

Question 1: How do you describe the level of exercising your autonomy as a program director?

Question 2: How do you contribute to the decision-making process at the DECE and ACS level?

Question 3: How does working with DECE and ACS support your ability to oversee your preschool?

Question 4: How knowledgeable do you think the DECE and ACS leaders are about your role as a program director?

Question 5: How do you describe the current relationship between you and your funding system(s) leadership?

Question 6: For the purpose of this study, we will use Schein's (2010) definition of organizational culture: "a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (p.18). How do you describe the current culture of your preschool?

Question 7: According to Schein (2010) there are three levels of organizational culture: artifacts, espoused beliefs and values and third basic underlying assumptions. For this study, we would like to explore the second level of culture: espoused beliefs and values which include an organization's ideals, goals, values, aspirations, ideologies and rationalization. Please share any of these espoused beliefs and values that your preschool currently embraces.

Question 8: In your role as program director, how do you convey these espoused beliefs and values that govern the culture of your preschool while collaborating with ACS/DECE?

Question 9: How do you deal with the challenge(s) of implementing DECE and ACS' mandates and maintaining your preschool culture?

Question 10: What have been some major changes that you think have impacted the preschool culture within your time as a program director?

Question 11: In your role as a program director, how have you led through those changes?

Question 12: In regard to the evolution of early childhood education in New York City, what values if any, do you think ACS and DECE see in your role as a program director?



### Research questions aligned with the interview questions

<b>Preschool Leadership Autonomy</b>	<b>School Culture</b>	<b>Leading Through Change</b>
Q1, Q2, Q3 Q5	Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9	Q4 Q10, Q11, Q12

## **Appendix D**

### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

To: \_\_\_\_\_

You are being asked to participate in a research project entitled: The Perspectives of community-based organization early childhood education program directors on maintaining a positive preschool culture. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

This research is being conducted by: Dr. Daniel Alemu and Yessenia Rosario-Adon, Sage Colleges Educational Leadership Doctoral candidate.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the phenomenological perspective of New York City's community-based organization early childhood education program and educational directors on maintaining their preschool culture under an ever-changing education system.

If you agree to be in this study, I will conduct an interview with you. The interview will include questions about your job, your professional development, your role in managing your preschool and your relationship with your funders. The interview will take about 45-60 minutes to complete. With your permission, we would also like to tape-record the interview and take some handwritten notes as well. You will be asked open-ended questions.

This qualitative study is confidential and your privacy will be maintained by using pseudonyms, your information will be kept under lock and key and in a password-protected laptop.

By participating in this study, you will provide useful information that will further support the role of community-based organization early childhood education leadership. Sharing your experiences in early childhood education will be beneficial in identifying the trends that support an early childhood education leader in order to impact student outcomes.

There is the risk that you may find some of the questions about your job conditions to be sensitive.

In the event that I am harmed (or the person for whom I am consenting is harmed) by participating in this study, I understand that compensation and/or medical treatment is not available from The Sage Colleges. However, compensation and/or medical costs might be recovered by legal action.

Participation is voluntary, I understand that I may at any time during the course of this study revoke my consent and withdraw from the study without any penalty.

I have been given an opportunity to read and keep a copy of this Agreement and to ask questions concerning the study. Any such questions have been answered to my full and complete satisfaction.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, having full capacity to consent, do hereby volunteer to participate in this research study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ agree to have my interview audio-recorded.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Research participant

This research has received the approval of The Sage Colleges Institutional Review Board, which functions to insure the protection of the rights of human participants. If you, as a participant, have any complaints about this study, please contact:

Dr. Donna Heald, PhD  
Associate Provost  
The Sage Colleges  
65 1<sup>st</sup> Street  
Troy, New York 12180  
518-244-2326  
healdd@sage.edu

## Appendix E

### Confidentiality Agreement

I, \_\_\_\_\_, individually and/or on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_, do agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes, videotapes, and/or oral or written documentation received from Yessenia Rosario-Adon related to the research project entitled Community-based organization Early Childhood Education Leadership and Preschool Culture. The information in these tapes and/or documentation has been revealed by those who participated in this research project with the understanding that their information would remain strictly confidential. I understand I have the responsibility to honor this confidentiality agreement.

Furthermore:

1. I will follow the established protocol for my role in the project.
2. I will not share any information in these tapes and/or documents with anyone except the researchers listed on this form.
3. I will hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual who may be revealed in these tapes and/or documents.
4. I will not disclose any information received for profit, gain or otherwise.
5. I will not make copies of the audiotapes, videotapes, and/or oral or written documentation, unless specifically requested to do so by Yessenia Rosario-Adon.
6. I will store audiotapes, videotapes, and/or oral or written documentation in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession.
7. I will return all materials; including audiotapes, videotapes, and/or oral or written documentation; to Yessenia Rosario-Adon within the mutually agreed upon time frame.
8. I will return all electronic computer devices to the researchers at the end of the project. I will not save any data provided to me in any format, electronic or otherwise.

Any violation of this agreement would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards and I pledge not to do so. I am also aware I am legally liable for any breach of confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes, videotapes, and/or oral or written documentation to which I have access.

Printed name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Title and/or affiliation with the researchers \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix F**

### **Email Invitation**

Dear Prospective Research Participant,

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Yessenia Rosario-Adon, I am a Sage Educational Leadership Doctoral student. Dr. Daniel Alemu, Professor of The Sage Colleges is my Advisor. The main purpose of this study is to investigate the phenomenological perspective of New York City community-based organization early childhood education program directors on maintaining a positive preschool culture. Participation in this study may benefit you by sharing your experiences on leading in the field of early childhood education which could help enhance our understanding of the role and provide professional development through our understanding.

If you decide to participate in the study, you will be asked to:

You will sign an adult consent. Participate in a 45-60-minutes audio-recorded interview, answering open-ended questions relating to your role as a leader. Your answers will be recorded using an audio-recorder. You will also be asked to review your answers once transcribed for members checking to ensure validity of the data.

Participation is completely voluntary. Data will be coded to maintain confidentiality; thus, no data will be personally identified with you. Your name will not appear in any presentation or publication coming from this research. If you agree to participate, you may choose not to answer any given questions, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time. There are no known risks beyond the inconvenience of time and possibly feeling uncomfortable with the questions that you will be asked.

If at any time you have questions about this study, you may contact:

Yessenia Rosario-Adon  
Telephone: 646-823-7754  
Email: [rosary2@sage.edu](mailto:rosary2@sage.edu)

Dr. Daniel Alemu  
The Sage Colleges,  
140 New Scotland Ave, Albany, NY 12208  
Email: [alemud@sage.edu](mailto:alemud@sage.edu)

Thank you for your consideration of participating in this study.