

# Florida State University Libraries

---

Electronic Theses, Treatises and Dissertations

The Graduate School

---

2012

## An Exploratory Study of Child Care Center Directors' Response to Young Children's Challenging Behaviors and the Impact on Preschool Expulsion

Dawn Noelle Bee



THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF CHILD CARE CENTER DIRECTORS' RESPONSE TO  
YOUNG CHILDREN'S CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS AND THE IMPACT  
ON PRESCHOOL EXPULSION

By

DAWN NOELLE BEE

A Dissertation submitted to the  
School of Teacher Education  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Submitted:  
Fall Semester, 2012

Dawn Noelle Bee defended this dissertation on August 22, 2012.

The members of the supervisory committee were:

Ithel Jones, Ed.D.  
Professor Directing Dissertation

Stacey Rutledge, Ph.D.  
University Representative

Mary Frances Hanline, Ph.D.  
Committee Member

Thomas Ratliffe, Ed.D.  
Committee Member

The Graduate School has verified and approved the above-named committee members, and certifies that the dissertation has been approved in accordance with university requirements.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .....	v
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vi
ABSTRACT .....	vii
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
PURPOSE.....	3
PRESCHOOL EXPULSION.....	4
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	6
APPLICATION TO THE STUDY .....	6
SCHOOL CLIMATE .....	9
CHILD CARE CENTER DIRECTORS .....	10
SIGNIFICANCE TO THE STUDY .....	10
RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	14
DEFINITION OF TERMS .....	14
ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS.....	16
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	17
CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR .....	17
RISK FACTORS-CHILD CHARACTERISTICS .....	20
RISK FACTORS-SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS.....	20
PRE-SCHOOL EXPULSION .....	22
FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO PRE-SCHOOL EXPULSION .....	24
STATES’ RESPONSES TO PRE-SCHOOL EXPULSION .....	25
CHILD CARE CENTER DIRECTORS .....	27
REQUIREMENTS TO BECOME A CENTER DIRECTOR.....	27
ROLE OF THE CENTER DIRECTOR.....	29
SCHOOL CLIMATE .....	30
SUMMARY.....	31
3. METHOD .....	32
RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	33
STUDY ONE: SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS .....	34
FLORIDA’S SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAM.....	34
INSTRUMENT-QUESTIONNAIRE .....	36
DATA COLLECTION.....	37
RESPONSE RATE .....	39
DATA ANALYSIS.....	40
STUDY TWO: DATA COLLECTION .....	40
IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS .....	40
PARTICIPANTS .....	42
DOCUMENT REVIEW.....	43
DATA ANALYSIS.....	45
QUALITY CONCERNS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH .....	46

	CREDIBILITY .....	46
	DEPENDABILITY .....	47
	PARTICIPANT’S RIGHTS .....	48
	SUMMARY .....	49
4.	RESULTS .....	50
	RESEARCH QUESTION ONE .....	50
	RISK FACTORS AND TRENDS .....	52
	RESEARCH QUESTION TWO .....	53
	RESEARCH QUESTION THREE.....	56
	WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION .....	58
	ACCIDENT/INCIDENT REPORTS.....	58
	PROBATION LETTER .....	59
	BEHAVIOR NOTIFICATION/REPORT.....	60
	REDIRECTION.....	60
	RESEARCH QUESTION FOUR.....	62
	SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION POLICIES.....	65
	SUMMARY.....	67
5.	DISCUSSION.....	68
	CHILD CARE CENTER DIRECTOR-PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.....	68
	CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR-A PARENT’S PERSPECTIVE.....	69
	CONCLUSIONS .....	70
	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	72
	CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS .....	73
	THE ROLE OF FAMILIES .....	75
	NEED FOR SPECIALIZED TRAINING.....	75
	INTERVENTION/SUPPORTS FOR THE CHILD .....	77
	SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	79
	LIMITATIONS.....	80
	APPENDIX A: CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR AND BELIEFS SURVEY .....	82
	APPENDIX B: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	87
	APPENDIX C: LIST OF STARTER CODES.....	88
	APPENDIX D: ITERATION TABLE OF ANALYSIS.....	89
	APPENDIX E: IRB HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL LETTER.....	90
	APPENDIX F: PARTICIPANT CONSENT LETTER.....	92
	REFERENCES.....	94
	BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.....	100

## LIST OF TABLES

3.1	RELEVANT PARTICIPANT DATA-QUESTIONNAIRE .....	37
3.2	RELEVANT CHILD CARE CENTER DATA-QUESTIONNAIRE .....	39
3.3	IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS .....	43
3.4	QUANTATIVE AND QUALITATIVE CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING RESEARCH- APPLICABILITY TO RESEARCH STUDY.....	48
4.1	QUESTIONNAIRE: TOP THREE CHALLENGING BHEAVIORS PRESENT IN CENTERS.....	51
4.2	STATEMENTS ON PREVENTING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR BY THEME.....	54
4.3	QUESTIONNAIRE: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN RESPONSE TO CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR.....	56
4.4	DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF DIRECTORS WITH CHILD DISMISSALS.....	62
4.5	QUESTIONNAIRE: REASONS FOR DISMISSAL OF THE CHILD/CHILDREN.....	64

## LIST OF FIGURES

1.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	6
5.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	72

## **ABSTRACT**

During the first five years of life, many young children engage in behaviors that can be considered challenging by the adults who care for them. Child care, or out of home care, is an important resource that can have a tremendous effect on a family (Buck & Ambrosino, 2004). Child care can also cause turmoil and stress for a family whose child has exhibited challenging behavior and is no longer welcome in the program (Buck & Ambrosino, 2004). The consequences of young children's behavioral problems are reflected in the high rates of preschool expulsions across the United States (Whitted, 2011).

Preschool expulsion is related to a variety of factors within the child care center such as program characteristics, characteristics of children in the class, and factors associated with the family (Gilliam & Shahar, 2006). Only a few empirical studies focus on expulsion or suspension at any grade level and researchers have largely ignored expulsion and suspension during the preschool years (Gilliam and Shahar, 2006). The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine challenging behavior and the role it plays in child care center directors' decision making process regarding whether or not to expel a child from their center. The findings of this study support the current research that challenging behavior is present in centers and the center directors who administer the early learning programs use a variety of techniques to prevent and address the challenging behaviors. The data generated from this study provided examples of written documentation created by center directors, risk factors and trends observed in the centers participating in this study, and the suggestion by respondents identifying the need for specific training to address and prevent challenging behavior in the child care centers.



# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Every day, approximately 7.4 million children under the age five are cared for outside of the home while their parents are working (United States Census Bureau, 2011). The various types of out-of-home care arrangements include for profit and non-profit child care centers, family child care, as well as public schools. Since children spend a significant amount of time in settings outside of the home, specific aspects of the child care context may influence children's behaviors, expectations, and interactions. That is, for many children, it is the early childhood setting that gives them their first sense of community outside of the home (Epstein, 2007). It follows that how children expect to be treated, and how they treat others is significantly shaped and influenced by the early childhood setting as well as by the individuals within that setting (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009). Yet, for many children, adapting to the behavioral expectations of the child care center can be difficult.

During the first five years of life, many young children engage in behaviors that can be considered challenging by the adults who care for them. Examples of challenging behaviors include biting other children, physical aggression toward other children or adults, acting out in nonaggressive ways, defiance or noncompliance, being overly active, impulsive, or having little or no self-control (Buck & Ambrosino, 2004). Many early childhood educators are of the opinion that occurrences of such behaviors are increasing (Joseph, Strain, & Skinner 2003). Yet, while some children's specific behaviors may appear to be challenging, they could in fact be age-appropriate behaviors, or behaviors that reflect developmental changes or age-related conflict. For example, defiance and noncompliance can be considered age-appropriate behavior for

toddlers who are struggling with their need for autonomy (de Shipper, Van IJzendoorn, & Tavecchio, 2004). Clearly, the definition of “challenging behaviors” is broad and the behavior problem may be “in the eye of the beholder” (Kaiser & Raminsky, 2007).

Many experts believe that developmentally inappropriate expectations and practices often lead to normal or typical child behavior being incorrectly labeled as misbehavior, and normal learning patterns mislabeled as learning disabilities (Alliance for Childhood, 2009; Qi & Kaiser, 2003). Lack of experience in group settings and behaviors associated with skill deficits, particularly in the areas of language communication and cognitive and social development, are often deemed problem behaviors in young children (Hemmeter, Ostrosky, & Fox, 2006). For some children, the behavior exhibited would be considered age appropriate, based on their developmental stage. For other children, the behavior is more intense, ongoing, and problematic. Such children who have more severe behavioral challenges are those that will need considerable support by caring adults in order to help them be ready to succeed in school (Gilliam, 2008).

The preschool years are considered an important period for establishing children’s positive attitudes and behaviors about learning (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009). Children’s early relationships set the stage not only for later emotional development, but also for cognitive development and academic achievement (National Academy of Sciences, 2000; Whitted, 2011). A child’s attitudes and behaviors are closely related to social and emotional development and affect virtually all aspects of children’s development and learning (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009). Given that many children spend most of their day in care outside of the home, it is imperative that the care is of high-quality and one that facilitates the child’s ability to safely explore and learn (Hunter & Hemmeter, 2009). Unfortunately, however, many early childhood programs are

not prepared to meet the needs of children who are emotionally delayed, or those who have challenging behaviors (Quesenberry, Hemmeter & Ostrosky, 2011).

Typically, preschool classrooms are housed within center-based programs administered by a center director. While the teacher directly engages with the children in the classroom, it is the center director who manages the overall center including establishing and implementing policies, developing curriculum, and providing oversight of the daily center operation. Child development experts believe that teacher training and support is essential in order to provide the positive and consistent environment that young children need (Stormont 2002; Buck & Ambrosino, 2004). Recent research shows that better trained providers lead to higher quality care and more positive outcomes for children (NACCRRA, 2012). In preschool classrooms, teachers should receive relevant training that enables them to identify and help the children in their classrooms that have challenging behaviors (Whitted, 2011). Unfortunately, in many cases, when a child does not fit within a classroom community or within the parameters set for the program, the parents may be told that the child can no longer attend and that they should make other child care arrangements (Kaiser & Raminsky, 2012). In other words, many young children are expelled from the early childhood program they attend. It was recently reported that preschool children are three times as likely to be expelled as children from kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. One possible reason for this disturbing statistic is that while there is a legal obligation to educate children from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, preschool programs are not required to retain children who are disruptive. In such situations, policies, decisions, and actions concerning expulsion rests with the child care center director.

## **Purpose**

Out of home care, or child, care is a necessity for most American families. This is because child care supports maternal employment, and it is therefore an essential part of today's economy (NACCRRA, 2012). It follows that child care is an important resource that can have a tremendous effect on a family (Buck & Ambrosino, 2004). Unfortunately, for some families however, arranging child care can become particularly stressful. Many parents, for example, are informed that their child has exhibited challenging behavior in the classroom and is no longer welcome in the child care program (Buck & Ambrosino, 2004). The parents are then left with the challenging task of making alternative child care arrangements, often with no professional help. This task can be particularly difficult, especially since the parents have no real authority and power when it comes to preschool enrollment decisions. This is because such decisions are typically made by the child care center director.

Given the important decision making role of the center director concerning preschool expulsion, the current study was designed to examine their opinions. The main purpose of this exploratory study was to examine how child care center directors respond to young children's challenging behaviors and their decision making process concerning potential expulsion of a child from their center. Two different, yet related approaches were used to examine the extent of preschool expulsion as well as the processes and procedures used by child care center directors to address children's challenging behaviors.

## **Preschool Expulsion**

The consequences of young children's behavioral problems are reflected in the high rates of preschool expulsions across the United States (Whitted, 2011). Results of a national prekindergarten survey of state-level administrators indicate that two-thirds of states explicitly allowed expulsion, or left the decision to local providers (Gilliam, 2008). In the study, more than 4,000 state-funded prekindergarten classrooms were randomly selected and, of those, 10.4 percent of the prekindergarten teachers reported at least one expulsion in their classes during the past twelve months. Gilliam's results showed a rate of 6.7 expulsions per 1,000 preschoolers enrolled in state-funded programs across the nation. Notably, African American boys were found 4.5 times more likely to be expelled than girls, and African American students were twice as likely to be expelled as compared to students of European descent (Whitted, 2011).

Expulsion from a preschool program interrupts a child's bonding with his or her caregiver, increases parental stress within the family and the workplace, and has negative economic impacts on the parents and child care professionals (Kaiser, 2007). The factors that contribute to the emergence of challenging behaviors in the preschool classroom often have effects that cannot be anticipated. For example, sometimes teachers contribute to the problem by calling on children with conduct problems less often, asking fewer questions of them, providing less information to them, and thus, providing them with fewer learning opportunities (Raver, 2002). Such negative behaviors can have a significant impact on children's readiness for school. This is because school readiness encompasses all developmental domains (social, emotional, physical, and cognitive) and is cultivated when all children have access to quality early care and

learning experiences in classrooms with warm teachers and an engaging learning environment (Wilson & Hanson, 2010).

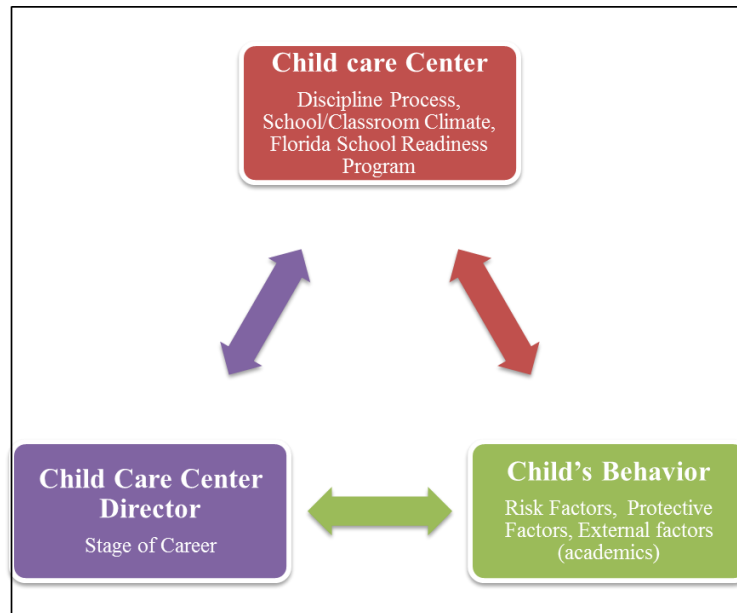
### **Theoretical Framework**

Preschool expulsion is related to a variety of factors within the child care center such as program characteristics, characteristics of children in the class, and factors associated with the family (Gilliam & Shahar, 2006). It is clear that children effect their environments and environments affect children. This research study is guided by Albert Sameroff's Transactional Model of Development (2009). The transactional model has been used as the basis for many intervention programs to improve developmental outcomes for children and families (Sameroff, 2009). The transactional model definition may be broadened to include all social settings of the child.

This framework provides a picture of the role of the child's behavior and how it may ultimately factor into the decision by the child care center director to have the child removed from the setting. In a transaction, at least two people interact in such a way that the interactions or actions of one reciprocally affect the intentions or actions of the other through time. The transaction principle acknowledges that an individual's characteristics shape his or her experiences and reciprocally, experiences shape the characteristics of the individual through time (Borstein, 2009).

In recent years, risk factors have been identified that may contribute to a child's display of challenging behaviors. A large body of research exists that links multiple risk factors with childhood behavior problems (Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Qi & Kaiser, 2003). These risk factors are both biological and environmental (Kaiser & Ramisky, 2012). Child characteristics that are

biological in nature include temperamental difficulties, aggression, language difficulties, and noncompliance (Hemmeter, Ostrosky, & Fox, 2006). Characteristics that are environmental include poverty, parenting styles, the child care center, and exposure to violent media (Qi & Kaiser, 2003). Together, these risk factors contribute to the child's overall experience and behavior in the preschool classroom.



**Figure 1. Theoretical Framework**

### **Application to the Study**

Sutherland and Oswald (2005) contend that experiences provided by the environment are not independent, but rather are shaped by and shape the individual's developmental trajectory. The theory of the transactional model supports the notion that an individual's development is the product of ongoing bidirectional influences on the individual and his or her environment (Sameroff, 2000). This model of development is based on the idea that a child's development is

a product of dynamic reciprocal relationships among child characteristics, parental characteristics, and environmental characteristics over time (Qi & Kaiser, 2003). A transactional model of development acknowledges that individuals are continually being shaped through interactions with others and environmental influences. Viewing child development through a transactional perspective takes into account individual and environmental conditions as well as the impact each person has on one another (Sameroff & Chandler, 1975; Sameroff & Friese, 1990).

Young children experience their world as an environment of relationships, and those relationships affect virtually all aspects of their development (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2009). Everyone in the universe is affecting another or is being affected by another (Sameroff, 2009). In the transaction model, development of any process in the individual is influenced by interplay with processes in the individual's context over time. Children constantly change and are changed by their social environments, which in turn reflects many different sources of strain and support (Sameroff, 2009). As a result, a relationship is more than just the sum of its interactions; the relationship itself has derived from the systems from which the individuals belong (Ray, Bowman & Brownell, 2006). Children constantly change and are changed by their social environments, which in turn reflects many different sources of strain and support. Now, over 30 years old, the transactional model seems as timely as ever (Olson & Lunkenheimer, 2009). This study will examine the different behaviors, some which may be deemed as challenging, and how the child care center, child care center director, and others respond to it.



The transactional model was used as a framework for analyzing the data, and thereby portray the influences of factors on a child's behavior and his or her continued enrollment in a child care center. Transactional models of development help us frame the relationship between the child, the school climate, and the challenging behavior when considering the factors that influence the actions (Sameroff, 2009). Transactional models consider behavioral outcomes not only as a function solely of the child, the school climate, and the teacher/center director, but as interplay between all of these factors.

### **School Climate**

The Yale Child Study Center School Development Program (SDP) defines school climate as “the quality and consistency of interpersonal interactions within the school community that influence children’s cognitive, social, and psychological development.” As cited in Bowman and Brownell (2006), “these interactions include those among staff, between staff and students, among students, and between home and school.” When children enroll in early learning settings, sometimes there is not a *fit* in the school climate. The school climate has an immediate impact on the student’s sense of safety and well-being and on student behavior (Bowman & Brownell, 2006).

The classroom or center climate is set by the teacher and ultimately the child care center director (Jorde Bloom, 1998). The way a school is organized and run, including having clear behavioral expectations and rules that are consistently and fairly applied, shape the school climate (Kaiser & Raminsky, 2012). Daniel Goleman writes in *Emotional Intelligence* (p.279) “whenever a teacher responds to one student, 20 or 30 others learn a lesson. Her words, actions,

and body language inevitably tell each child about the power, ability, and worth of everyone in the classroom” (Kaiser & Ramisky, 2012, p.124).

### **Child Care Center Directors**

Early childhood teachers quickly learn about an administrator’s level of commitment and support when a challenge exceeds the skills and techniques of classroom staff (Carr, Johnson, & Corkwell, 2004). Often times, this is directly related to the amount of professional development training the center director has and his/her stage in their career cycle. A director’s career cycle refers to the professional journey of change as reflected in the individual’s competence, self-confidence, and actual behavior at different career points (Jorde Bloom, 1998).

Child care center directors can respond to children’s behavior, talk with families, and empower a child’s peers so that the understanding of the behavior is reframed. Thus, consistent, effective responses to an undesirable behavior may help a child become more successful within the early childhood environment. The transactional framework is used in this study as a conceptual framework to facilitate the interpretation of a child’s perceived challenging behavior, characteristics within the child care center, and the decision made by the child care center director to have the child withdraw from the center or not (Jimerson, 2001). It is important to remember that the center is the larger setting and that preschool classrooms are typically nested within the child care centers.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is that it contributed to the knowledge and understanding of the complex issue of preschool expulsion. This study allowed child care center directors to use the information in their professional practice in the planning of the professional development of

their classroom teachers, and their interactions with families who enroll in their settings. A survey cited by Hemmeter, Santos, and Ostrosky (2008) indicated that 500 early childhood educators rated their highest training need as wanting to learn information on addressing challenging behavior in the classroom. Addressing challenging behavior in early childhood settings requires strategies for promoting social emotional development as well as preventing challenging behavior (Quesenberry, Hemmeter, & Ostrosky, 2011). This is an issue that has largely been ignored in the early childhood research.

There are many reasons that it is important to address challenging behavior and the results that stem from a child who is asked to leave a child care center. The short and long term consequences of behavioral difficulties are numerous. As cited in Hemmeter, Ostrosky, and Fox (2006), “young children with challenging behaviors are often rejected by their peers and, if antisocial and aggressive behavior persists to age 9, intervention has a poor chance of success.” (p.584). for these children, it is often difficult to experience success in the early learning classroom. These are the children that need assistance with social skills and to belong to the classroom community the most (Kaiser & Rasminsky, 2012).

Prekindergarten programs are designed to enhance academic skills and behaviors of preschoolers prior to formal school entry (Howes, Burchinal, Pianta, Bryant, Early, Clifford, & Baarbarin, 2008). The primary goal of early education is to start children on their educational careers so they can succeed in elementary school and beyond (Gilliam, 2008). Before a child enters kindergarten, he or she is expected to have a combination of intellectual skills, motivational qualities, and social emotional skills (Wilson & Hanson, 2010). Children with

severe behavioral challenges need considerable support to be ready to succeed in school (Gilliam, 2008).

In light of the recent academic mandates, such as the No Child Left Behind Act, there has been an increased emphasis on the academic development of children in preschool (Graves & Howes, 2011). As a consequence, many schools have paid little attention to the social-emotional issues involved in schools or in learning (Ray, Bowman, & Brownell, 2006). Children who attend these schools may lack basic social and relational skills and, in turn, have difficulty meeting the academic demands of the school environment (Whitted, 2011). However, some students entering kindergarten may not be prepared because they were not able to complete their prekindergarten years successfully.

An increasing number of children are entering kindergarten without the skills needed to succeed in school (Whitted, 2011). The traditional kindergarten classroom that most adults remember from childhood—with plenty of space and time for unstructured play and discovery, art and music, practicing social skills, and learning to enjoy learning has largely disappeared (Miller & Almon, 2009). Kindergarteners are now under great pressure to meet inappropriate expectations, including academic standards that until recently were reserved for first grade. In one recent nationally representative survey of over 3,000 kindergarten teachers (Whitted, 2011), 30% of the teachers reported that at least half of the children in their class lacked academic skills, had difficulty following directions, and struggled with working as a part of a group. Additionally 20% reported that at least half of the class had problems with social skills (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000).

The present study served as a resource to provide an initial barometer of preschool programs in the state of Florida and collected data on the processes, procedures and practices used by child care center directors to respond appropriately to challenging behaviors, as well as create and implement a developmentally appropriate program. The data generated from this research could allow child care center directors to refine their discipline process, if needed, and update the training on how to respond to challenging behaviors displayed by young children in School Readiness Programs in Florida.

A supplemental purpose of this study was to add to the literature that outlines the qualifications needed to administer a child care center in the State of Florida and necessary training to support families of children with challenging behaviors. While these problems have been documented extensively in elementary school aged populations, the severity of these issues at even younger ages has become a concern. Consequently, there has been a steady increase in preschool research and school readiness (Graves & Howes, 2011).

The research was conducted as two different yet related studies. The first study utilized a questionnaire administered to center directors to determine the extent to which young children are expelled from preschools and child care centers. The questionnaire also addressed the way directors address challenging behaviors as well as the circumstances that lead to a child being dismissed from a program. The second study adopted qualitative methods to obtain and analyze more in depth information from center directors concerning the way they address children's challenging behaviors. Both studies were guided by the following four research questions:

## **Research Questions**

- (1) What is the nature and extent of preschool children’s classroom behaviors that are considered challenging?
- (2) What practices do child care center directors use to anticipate and prevent challenging behavior in the child care center?
- (3) What processes and procedures do child care center directors use to address challenging behavior and/or expel children from a child care center?
- (4) What factors contribute to the decision by a child care center director to expel a child from a child care center?

## **Definition of Terms**

Challenging behavior— is “any repeated pattern of behavior that interferes with or is at risk of interfering with optimal learning or engagement in prosocial interactions with peers and adults” (Powell, Fixsen, Smith, & Fox, 2007)

Developmentally appropriate practices—requires meeting children where they are and enabling them to reach goals that are both challenging and achievable; teaching practices appropriate to children’s age and developmental stage; based on best knowledge of how children learn and develop (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009).

Early Learning Coalition— non-profit businesses, and the Redlands Christian Migrant Association to provide early learning services to all 67 counties in the state. Each early learning coalition offers direct services to families and children and maintains a network of more than 12,000 small and large child care businesses including private centers, family

child care homes, public programs, and faith-based settings. (Agency for Workforce Innovation, 2011).

High-quality setting—center or home based providers that identify learning goals and activities that support each child as well as the group as a whole. Providers also plan and provide children with activities to support each child’s interest and, preferably, build on spontaneous opportunities to support the learning goals (Sandstrom, Moodie & Halle, 2011).

No Child Left Behind— made national policy to hold schools accountable for eliminating the persisting gaps in achievement between different groups of children (US Department of Education, 2008).

Preschool expulsion— is defined as the complete and permanent removal of a child from an educational system, e.g., child care center (Gilliam & Shahar, 2006).

Social emotional development—includes interacting positively with others; recognizing and naming feelings; regulating emotions, behavior, and attention; developing a sense of competence and positive attitudes towards learning; resolving conflicts; and developing empathy (Gropper, Hinitz, Sprung, Froschl, 2011).

School Readiness Program— the School Readiness Program is a financial assistance program for working families with low incomes and those with children at risk for abuse, neglect, or future school failure (Agency for Workforce Innovation, 2010).

Transactional model of development—describes development as a product of the ongoing interactions between the child and experiences provided by the environment (i.e., the family, educational setting, and broader context) (Sameroff, 1995).

## **Assumptions and Limitations**

### **Assumptions**

The assumptions that guided this research study include the notion that the researcher collected data in an ethical manner and used documents that were authentic, relevant, and as much as possible, free from bias (Merriam, 1998). It was assumed that the researcher was forthcoming with any bias in the study by using a journal and/ or other methods to ensure full disclosure. It was also assumed that study participants were honest and forthcoming during the completion of the questionnaire and during their participation in the in-depth interview. In most cases, assumptions are coupled with the limitations of the study design as well.

### **Limitations**

As with any research study, there are limitations with the research design. One limitation was the sample size, given that study participants were selected from two counties in the state of Florida. This may have led to a smaller sample size than used in other studies. As a result of the smaller sample size, generalization is not possible. This can be a consideration for use in future studies on the topic.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The literature review for this study focuses on four important issues and how they relate to the impact of challenging behavior and director's process and policies on expelling a child from a preschool setting. The four issues are: challenging behavior of young children, preschool expulsion, child care center directors, and the school climate. The literature used to inform this study was retrieved from a search of online databases that include the American Psychological Association's Psych Info, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), and the Journal Storage Archive (JSTOR). A relevant search of peer reviewed articles was also reviewed in *Young Children*, a journal published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

#### **Challenging Behavior**

The early childhood period, ages birth to eight years, provides the foundation for the acquisition of knowledge and skills needed for success in school and life (Powell, Dunlap & Fox, 2006). Many young children engage in challenging behavior in their early development (Division for Early Childhood-Council for Exceptional Children, 2007). Typically, this behavior is short-term and decreases with age and use of appropriate guidance strategies. However, for some children, challenging behavior may become more consistent despite adult intervention (DEC, 2007). Challenging behavior encompasses a range of activities that include (a) leaving the seat or designated area without teacher permission, (b) walking around the room without engaging in activities, (c) crying or screaming, (d) hitting peers with fists, open hands, or objects,

(e) scratching peers with fingernails, (f) ignoring teacher requests or refusing to comply with directions, (g) pushing, pulling, or taking materials from peers (Cho Blair, Fox, & Lentini 2010).

Many problem behaviors in young children can be associated with lack of experience in group settings and behaviors associated with skill deficits particularly in the areas of language, communication, and social development (Hemmeter, Ostrosky, & Fox 2006). Given the range in personality and temperament, it is possible for one teacher to believe that a behavior is challenging but another teacher, when faced with the same behavior, not believe that is the case. Fundamentally, challenging behaviors are defined on the basis of their effects on the child or on adults and peers (Barbarin & Crawford, 2006).

Recent estimates suggest that 10% to 20% of preschool children exhibit severe problems that place them at risk for social and academic difficulty throughout their school years (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2008). Challenging behaviors have been documented extensively in children who are elementary aged (i.e., kindergarten through grade six); however, the severity of these issues at even younger ages has become a concern (Qi & Kaiser, 2003). There are many effects that stem from expelling a child from a child care setting. As cited by Quesenberry et. al. (2011), often it is children who have complex and intensive social emotional needs who are removed or at risk for being removed from inclusive settings as a result of their challenging behavior.

Snell et. al. (2011) distributed a research survey to early childhood teachers, assistant teachers, and other Head Start staff. The survey included ten demographic questions and four open-ended classroom practice questions. Survey participants were recruited through child care

center directors. Survey data results confirmed previous research that Head Start teachers view children's externalizing behaviors as most problematic. The results emphasize the value of providing staff training on a comprehensive model for dealing with problem behavior in the classroom (Snell, et. al., 2011).

The single best way to address challenging behavior in young children is to take steps to make sure they don't occur (Kaiser & Raminsky, 2012). If the children are engaged with interesting activities and materials that are appropriate for their developmental levels, they will be less likely to engage in challenging behavior (Hemmeter, Ostrosky, & Fox, 2006). Interest in understanding and addressing serious behavior problems in young children has increased substantially in light of growing evidence that patterns of aggression and peer rejection during the early and middle school years have their roots in disruptive behavior detected as early as age three (National Scientific Council, 2002).

Early identification and interventions for children who exhibit challenging behavior is critical. Young children who engage in challenging behaviors receive less teacher feedback, and are less likely to be successful in kindergarten (Hemmeter, Ostrosky, & Fox, 2006). A large body of research exists that links multiple risk factors with childhood behavior problems (Qi & Kaiser, 2003; Kaiser & Raminsky, 2012). When children are able to persist at difficult tasks, communicate their emotions effectively, control their anger and problem solve, they are less likely to engage in challenging behavior (Hemmeter, Ostrosky, & Fox, 2006).

## **Risk Factors-Child Characteristics**

There are a variety of factors that may relate to young children's challenging behavior including biological, developmental, and environmental factors (DEC, 2007). The review of literature categorized the risk factors into child characteristics and socio-demographic characteristics. Difficult temperament, low language skills, deficits in social skills, compromised cognitive development and gender are shown to be associated with challenging behavior (Qi & Kaiser, 2003). The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) defines social-emotional development as the capacity of the child to form close and secure adult and peer relationships, experience, regulate and explore the environment, and learn—all in the context of family, community, and culture.

A child who has strong social-emotional skills is confident and competent at developing relationships; resolving conflicts, persisting when faced with challenges, and managing emotions (CSEFEL, 2008). Social-emotional skills are inter-related with other developmental domains. A young child who is able to relate to others, is motivated to learn, and can calm him/herself or be calmed by others, will be ready to learn and experience in school and in life (CSEFEL, 2008).

## **Risk Factors-Socio-demographic characteristics.**

Significant differences in behavior problems have been found related to ethnicity (Qi & Kaiser, 2003). Since there is a high overlap of race and socio-economic status, it is evident that the ethnic disproportionality in challenging behavior instances is a direct result of living in poverty (Graves & Howes, 2011). Relatedly, one of the most consistent findings in the school psychology and special education literature is the overrepresentation of African American males

in the Emotional and Behavioral Disorder (EBD) category (Graves & Howes, 2011). Life circumstances associated with family stress, persistent poverty, threatening neighborhoods, and very poor child care conditions elevate the risk of serious mental health problems and undermine health functioning in the early years (National Scientific Council, 2008). Qi and Kaiser (2003) found that children living in poverty appear to be especially vulnerable and exhibit higher rates of challenging behaviors.

It is important to consider the question of race in challenging behavior and preschool expulsion because of the ethnic and economic diversity of children and families served in early childhood programs (Barbarian & Crawford, 2006). Early in life, too many children of color, particularly boys, come to learn they are not valued by society (Barbarian & Crawford, 2006). The disproportionate use of expulsion and other severe sanctions of African American boys may unwittingly convey the message that these young children are expendable (Barbarian & Crawford, 2006). Sending the child away does not teach them anything positive (Kaiser, 2007). Rather, it damages self-esteem because it conveys a strong message, "I don't want you here," thereby confirming the child's most negative self-image (Kaiser & Raminsky, 2007).

Learning to play nicely, make friends, and sustain friendships are not easy tasks, and children who do them well tend to have well-structured experiences with peer interactions starting in toddlerhood and preschool (National Academy of Sciences, 2000). Hemmeter, Ostrosky, & Fox (2006) cite the short and long-term consequences of behavioral difficulties as numerous. Children with challenging behavior in preschool have a high probability of continuing to have difficulty in future years at school and are often rejected by their peers. In the instances where challenging behaviors persist, the child may be removed or expelled from the child care

center. The numbers indicate that preschool expulsion is an action that some child care center directors use as a way to solve the issue of challenging behaviors in preschool settings.

### **Preschool Expulsion**

For the purposes of this research study, expulsion is defined as the complete and permanent removal of a child from an educational system (American Academy of Pediatrics, AAP, 2003). In the traditional public school system, which includes children in grades kindergarten through twelfth grade, expulsion is usually the last step of a disciplinary plan. This type of discipline progression plan is not present in early learning programs that serve children aged birth to five years. Without a streamlined system approach, the decision on whether or not to expel a child from the preschool setting is often made by the center director. Expulsion not only segregates the student, but also, their family and community. This, in turn, cultivates an atmosphere of tension and discord between children, teachers, and the community (Michail, 2011).

Unlike K-12 education, which is mandated by law and is a protected civil right, preschool is optional and preschools are not required to retain children who may be disruptive (Kochhar-Bryant & White, 2007). While there is no systematic data available on the decision making processes employed by the preschools for expulsion of children, there is anecdotal information (Bryant & White, 2007). For example, two recent studies provide data on what can happen when child care providers are not equipped to cope with the growing demands of young children with challenging behaviors (Gilliam 2008; Gilliam & Shahar, 2006). In 2006, Gilliam released the results of his study on the topic of preschool expulsion. This study is believed to have begun the

nationwide dialogue focused on the topic of preschool expulsion. The random sample included preschool teachers in Massachusetts (N=119). Gilliam used the U.S. Department of Education's definition of expulsion as "the exclusion of a student from school for disciplinary reasons that results in the student's removal from school attendance" (2006, P. 63). He found that the preschool expulsion rate was 27.42 per 1000 enrollees, more than 34 times the K-12 rate and more than 13 times the national K-12 rate (Gilliam, 2006).

Additionally, Gilliam and Shahar (2006) examined expulsion rates and predictors of expulsion from preschool programs in the state of Massachusetts. A random sample of preschool teachers representing a broad array of settings including non-profit and for-profit child care centers, Head Start programs, and private and public preschools completed a comprehensive survey.

Expulsion rates vary widely from state to state and within individual cities as well. In the end, the child removed from the center is the one who will suffer, as he or she is likely to be the child who needs individualized care and instruction to be successful (AAP, 2003). Only a few empirical studies focus on expulsion or suspension at any grade level and researchers have largely ignored expulsion and suspension during the preschool years (Gilliam and Shahar, 2006). Preschool expulsion can be related to a variety of factors such as the program quality, characteristics of the children in the class, access to comprehensive mental health services and teacher supports within the child care program (Gilliam, 2008). Moreover, there is limited discussion in the literature of the impact of expulsion on children and their families within disadvantaged communities, but the available evidence strongly suggests that the consequences are severe and enduring for all involved (Michail, 2011).

## **Factors contributing to preschool expulsion**

Gilliam's research showed that boys, particularly African-American and Latino boys, are often labeled as having behavior problems and are frequently referred for evaluations, prescribed medication, and even suspended or expelled (2008). Additionally, young children who grow up in seriously troubled families, especially those who are vulnerable temperamentally, are prone to the development of behavioral disorders and conduct problems (National Scientific Council, 2008).

Graves and Howes (2011) conducted a research study examining the role of socio-economic status, child care quality, teacher-child relationships, student racial and gender background and teacher-child ethnic match. The instruments used included the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R), the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), and the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS). The measures indicated the classroom quality, instructional climate, emotional climate, language instruction and provisions for learning. Findings revealed that teacher-child climate was significantly related and when teachers and children are of the same ethnic background, the interactions are more positive and there is less conflict.

Recently released research shows that these trends do not end in preschool. Minority students across America face harsher discipline, have less access to rigorous high school curricula, and are more often taught by lower-paid and less experienced teachers, according to the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR, 2012). African-American students, particularly males, are far more likely to be suspended or expelled from school than



their peers. Black students made up 18% of the students in the sample, however 35% of them were suspended once and 39% were expelled. OCR's (2012) survey included detailed discipline data, including in-school suspensions, referrals to law enforcement, and school-related arrests.

### **States' response to preschool expulsion**

In recent years, states across the nation have begun to recognize the impact of expulsion and create initiatives to stop the rising trend of young children being removed from their educational setting. These initiatives have increased since the release of Gilliam's 2008 report entitled "Implementing Policies to Reduce Preschool Expulsion." The report provided seven recommendations for the reduction of preschool expulsion. One recommendation was that publicly funded early education and child care programs, like the School Readiness Program in Florida, should provide their state and federal funders with the data necessary to track disenrollment patterns and determine which children are disenrolled due to behavior problems (Gilliam, 2008). Currently, there are no requirements for providing this information in the State of Florida.

In September 2007, staff at the North Dakota Center State Data Center conducted a study for North Dakota Child Care Resource and Referral that explored reasons for and the extent to which children are dismissed from child care programs across the state. Surveys were mailed to 1,518 licensed child care programs. The themes in the questionnaires included (a) characteristics of the dismissed child, (b) characteristics of the child care program, (c) occurrence of dismissal and reason for that decision, and (d) resources and factors that would influence a provider's decision not to dismiss a child.

Survey responses indicated that 20% of providers dismissed at least one child in the previous twelve months. A myriad of reasons for the dismissals included the inability of the parent/guardian to pay for child care, lack of time and/or staff resources to deal with the problem child, lack of training to deal with the child's behavior and issues with the parents. An example of a provider comment on the reason for the dismissal was, "I don't know if I would have had the time this child needed. I am by myself and it isn't fair for the other children when I have no time or energy for them" (North Dakota State Data Center, 2007).

In the winter of 2009/2010, the Supporting Families Together Association (SFTA) collected information from child care providers across Wisconsin on the issue of child care retention and expulsion. The online survey was distributed to 2,800 licensed or certified child care providers and yielded a response rate of 14%. Additionally, 30 providers participated in a guided interview for a period of thirty to sixty minutes.

More than two-thirds of the Wisconsin child care providers asked a family to leave at one point within the past two years. Common reasons included (1) negative provider perceptions of child or family behavior, (2) provider instability to meet child's needs, (3) financial issues, and (4) poor attendance, late pick up and changes in the family circumstances. The responses showed that 1 in 5 providers reported that they had little to no confidence in their ability to deal with challenging behaviors. The survey participants felt confident that support to the early care and education providers and professional development could reduce expulsion (Irvin-Vitela, 2010).

The states engaged in activities to reduce the incidences of preschool expulsion are in various stages of development. As research surrounding the issue continues to grow, it stands to

reason that more initiatives will emerge to support child care providers that care for children at risk for expulsion. The projects created to help alleviate preschool expulsion must consider the environment the child is in each day and the person that provides programmatic oversight.

### **Child Care Center Directors**

The director's role in the child care center is both central and complex. In a number of important ways, the director influences the climate of a center both as a workplace for teaching staff and as an educationally nurturing environment for children (Jorde Bloom, 1992). The child care center director is the architect of the early childhood program. The training and qualifications needed to become a child care center director vary from state to state. Whitted (2011) suggests that preschool administrators or child care center directors have access to training materials that increase their understanding of children's developmental needs so they can be prepared to identify and assist children with challenging behaviors. These components vary from state to state in regards to training for center directors.

Additional training to provide direction to support teachers may be obtained through local training agencies and professional development conferences. This training may or may not align with the director's level of experience or his or her stage of career development. Either way, the training should include topics that are relevant to identify the children with skill deficits and promote a healthy center environment to foster school readiness (Whitted, 2011).

### **Requirements to be a child care center director**

In the state of Florida, the child care director must be at least twenty-one years old, a high school graduate, and possess a Director's Credential (Florida Department of Children and

Families, 2011). The Director's Credential was mandated by the Florida Legislature in 1999 and consists of educational and experiential requirements at three levels, Level I, Level II, and Advanced. Individuals applying for a Director's Credential must take a course approved by the Florida Department of Children and Families entitled, "Overview of Child Care Management". Next, an application is completed and submitted to the Department for processing. The Director's Credential is renewable every five years (Florida Department of Children and Families, 2011).

Operating a child care center has additional requirements set forth by the Department. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) requires ten hours of annual in-service hours for child care center directors (DCF, 2011). This training may be obtained by taking various courses of selected topics including first aid, developmentally appropriate practices, health, safety and nutrition, and other topics related to the field of child care. Similar to the original application for the Director's Credential, the trainings are documented, and submitted to the Department for processing annually.

Currently there are no federal regulations governing the qualifications of child care center directors. Standards for center directors are determined by state regulatory bodies. In most states, the regulation of child care personnel is tied to center licensing (Jorde Bloom, 1992). Jorde Bloom's research also showed that few states have requirements such as coursework in administration. Jorde Bloom (1998) conducted a survey about career development that was completed by 257 child care center directors. The survey elicited background information on the director, reflections about their career decisions, and a description of their role as the center director.

According to research conducted by Jorde Bloom (1998), there are three stages in the director's career cycle: novice, capable, and master. The *novice director* is filled with excitement and anticipation, and is eager to make a meaningful contribution. The *capable director* emerges after a period of one and four years on the job as the director of a child care program. The *master director* is a developmental stage that represents a small percentage of experienced administrators (Bloom, 1998). Approximately 30 percent of child care center directors describe themselves as novice directors; 60 percent fit into the category of a capable director; and only 10 percent believe they are master directors (Bloom, 1998).

Not all directors experience all stages; some directors experience recurring cycles as they move from one early childhood administrative role to another (Jorde Bloom, 1998). Given that the child care center director is an integral part in the overall operation of the center, it is necessary to research the stage of career development as a part of the overall research design. The information generated from the present study will support the notion that all parts of the system combine together to provide a picture of how the center responds to children with behavior challenges.

### **Role of the child care center director**

The child care center director influences the climate of a center as a workplace for teaching staff and a nurturing environment for children (Jorde Bloom, 1992). Jorde Bloom's research has shown that directors can be viewed as a "critical component of child care center program quality" (1992). Related to challenging behavior, child care center directors should review their center's policies and procedures for supporting children with challenging behaviors

to ensure that systems are in place that are (a) understood by everyone, (b) implemented consistently, (c) supported by strong leadership, and (d) able to provide ongoing support for those working directly with children and families (Quesenberry, Hemmeter & Ostrosky, 2010). This is important as he or she will be the deciding factor when it comes to asking a child to leave the facility or not.

### **School Climate**

Classrooms function as ecosystems; the interaction of all classroom elements determines the type of learning the children experiences (Denno, Phillips, Harte, & Moomaw, 2004). Classrooms that include children displaying challenging behaviors require extra planning, evaluation, and implementation. The child care center director plays a key role in providing support to the implementation in the classroom and support to the teacher when behavior escalates or communication with the family is needed to facilitate intervention. The director sets the tone to create an environment that welcomes children of all abilities and challenges and creates a community of learners.

Challenging behaviors occur in multiple settings during a variety of daily routines and activities. High quality child care environments facilitate positive interactions among children and between adults and children (Bredenkamp & Copple, 2009). All children, those who do and do not exhibit challenging behaviors, need their teachers' help to develop a positive sense of self. The preschool classroom within a child care center serves as the primary social experience for many young children. The child care setting should have a developmentally appropriate curriculum and adults that help children recognize and value their unique characteristics while

building social-emotional competence (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009). A high quality program will provide a language rich environment, opportunities for exploratory play and learning experiences and consistent expectations for behavior in a group setting that are important to child development (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009).

### **Summary**

The primary goal of early education is to start children on their educational careers so they can succeed in elementary school and beyond (Gilliam, 2008). Effective models of facilitating strong working relationships between families in staff at early childhood programs should be an integral part in addressing behavioral problems in young children (2008). As early education opportunities continue to increase for preschoolers at risk for educational failure, the potential for preschool expulsion may also increase (Gilliam & Shahar, 2006).

It is not always easy to see the direct impact from expulsion and the long term effects of the abrupt changes are far too often disregarded (Kaiser & Raminsky, 2012). When children are expelled from programs, this causes a disruption in services for both children and families (Quesenberry, Hemmeter & Ostrosky, 2010). Consequently, children may be placed in centers of less quality, emergency care, or parents may have to quit their jobs to care for their children (2010). Such actions would have a direct impact on the workforce and a significant impact on the economic make-up of the communities and states where the families live. There is limited discussion in the research literature on the impact of school expulsion on children but the evidence strongly suggests that the consequences of an infraction are severe and enduring for all involved (Michail, 2011).

# CHAPTER THREE

## METHOD

### Introduction

In this chapter the methodology that was employed in the study is described. First, the qualitative research design is outlined followed by a description of the two data collection approaches that were used. Then, details concerning the participants, procedures, and data analyses are provided as well as a summary of limitations. The study was organized into two separated yet related parts, or studies. The first part, or study one, used a questionnaire survey to collect preliminary data in the form of descriptive information about the nature, extent, and issues related to young children's expulsion from preschool. The second part of the study adopted more of a qualitative approach in an effort to obtain more detail concerning the problem of interest. Specifically, the second part, or study two, involved the collection and analyses of data in the form of in-depth interviews and a review of documents.

Given the exploratory nature of the research study both descriptive as well as qualitative approaches were used. While the descriptive approach offers an overview or general survey of the problem, the qualitative approach is an effort to understand the situation. According to Merriam (1998) qualitative research seeks to understand the problem and its uniqueness as part of a particular context and the related interactions. A qualitative approach was selected for the current study because it is richly descriptive, and because it is a method that is focused on process, meaning, and understanding. In order to create such rich descriptions, qualitative data in the form of quotations, observations, and excerpts from documents is needed (Patton, 2002).



The qualitative approach that was used in the current study enabled the researcher to provide a descriptive illustration of child care center directors in their roles as leaders of quality and program administration and, more importantly perhaps, how they address children's problem behaviors.

### **Research Questions**

Despite the fact that the research was organized as two related studies, they were both guided by one set of questions. The following four questions, therefore served as the primary reference points for the study:

1. What is the nature and extent of preschool children's classroom behaviors that are considered challenging?
2. What practices do child care center directors use to anticipate and prevent challenging behavior in the child care center?
3. What processes and procedures do child care center directors use to address challenging behavior and/or expel children from a child care center?
4. What factors contribute to the decision by a child care center director to expel a child from a child care center?

The first part of the research, or study one, used a survey in the form of a questionnaire to collect demographic information about the child care center directors.

## **Study One**

### **Setting and Participants**

Participating in the study were child care center directors from two counties in the State of Florida. The two identified counties vary in size, demographic make-up, and the number of children participating in the program. One county is located in the Northwest panhandle of the state of Florida and the second is located on the Southwestern coast of the state. The state is organized into thirty-one early learning coalitions which incorporate local priorities to meet the needs of the community. These counties serve as early learning coalitions responsible for administering early learning programs such as the School Readiness Program, the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program, and the Child Care Resource and Referral Program (CCR&R).

Child care center directors were selected because they administer programs that participate in Florida's School Readiness Program. The researcher has extensive experience working with the staff in the early learning coalitions throughout the State. Coalition staff members serve as the first point of contact for training and technical assistance to child care centers in the coalition service delivery area. Research participants were identified and contacted by the early learning coalition staff. The goal was to reach all center directors within the two counties participating in the School Readiness Program.

### **Florida's School Readiness Program**

The study sought information from child care centers and the directors that provide oversight of those programs who are participating in the School Readiness Program. In 1980, ten

states provided publicly funded prekindergarten services. (Gilliam & Shahar, 2006). Today, there are at least 52 statewide prekindergarten systems operating in 40 states (Gilliam & Shahar, 2006). The program in Florida is the School Readiness Program. The School Readiness Program is a preparation and prevention program whose stated goal is to provide a better future for Florida's children by making quality affordable educational opportunities available.

The School Readiness Program is a financial assistance program for working families with low incomes and those with children who are at risk of abuse, neglect, or future school failure (Agency for Workforce Innovation, 2011). In the state Florida, during the fiscal year 2009-2010, approximately 240, 000 families participated in the School Readiness Program. The primary source for funding the School Readiness Program is the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) program. (Schulman & Blank, 2011). CCDBG is administered to states in formula block grants. States use the grants to subsidize child care for working families earning low incomes. Most of the assistance is administered through vouchers or certificates, which can be used by parents for the provider or program of their choice (NACCRRA, 2012).

The overall goal of the School Readiness Program is well supported in the literature and it encompasses all of the child developmental domains (i.e., physical health, approaches to learning, social/emotional, and cognitive development and general development) (Agency for Workforce Innovation, 2011). The center directors participating in the School Readiness Program were recruited for this research study due to the fact that they were an accessible and identifiable population by way of the early learning coalitions. This, the researcher was able to identify the directors and collaborate with the coalitions in order to distribute the items (e.g.,

questionnaires) that were used as a part of the data collection procedures. In the first study, the primary method of data collection was a survey on the form of a questionnaire.

### **Instrument-Questionnaire**

A paper questionnaire was used to maximize the ability to draw on existing instruments, easy and efficient to administer and manage (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The primary purpose of the questionnaire, which was titled, *Challenging Behaviors and Belief Survey*, was to allow participants to share information about their child care center, report their frequently observed challenging behaviors and ways they worked with them in their center. The questionnaire was a set of fix-format, self-report items that was completed by respondents at their own pace, often without supervision (Stangor, 2004). The approximate time to complete the questionnaire was ten to fifteen minutes.

The questionnaire was adapted by the researcher with small adaptations from related studies (see Appendix A). The questionnaire was organized into three parts: background/demographic information, child care center administration, and questions on challenging behavior and dismissal. To strengthen internal validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by child care center directors that were not included in the sample and early childhood professionals with expertise and experience in the field. Modifications were made to the questionnaire based on their input and suggestions. Additionally because some of the questions were adapted from the Social Skills Improvement System (Gresham & Elliott, 2008), internal validity of the questionnaire was strengthened. Once the questionnaire was finalized, the participants were contacted to begin the dissemination of the questionnaire.

## Data Collection

Access to respondents was coordinated with the staff at the early learning coalitions located in two counties. Distribution of the questionnaire included physically handing the center director a copy of the questionnaire and sending the questionnaire as a part of the monthly email communication to child care centers. The two counties participating in this research study had a total of 844 centers participating in the School Readiness Program. Each child care center director served as a potential participant in this research study.

A total of 104 questionnaires were completed as a part of the data collection. Additional distribution efforts were employed by the researcher that included contacting the state office for early childhood professional development. The following table, Table 3.1, provides demographic information on the child care center directors who completed the questionnaire.

**Table 3.1 Relevant Participant Data-Questionnaire**

	Total (n=104)
<b><u>Sex:</u></b>	
Male	3 (3%)
Female	101 (97%)
<b><u>Ethnicity:</u></b>	
White/Caucasian	50 (48%)
Black	46 (44%)
Asian	1 (1%)
Hispanic/Latino	5 (5%)
Other	1 (1%)
<b><u>Age</u></b>	
21-30 years old	18 (17%)
31-40 years old	24 (23%)
41-50 years old	30 (29%)
51-60 years old	24 (23%)
61-70 years old	7 (7%)
Other	1 (1%)

**Table 3.1 Relevant Participant Data-Questionnaire (continued)**

<b><u>Highest Degree Held:</u></b>	
High School Diploma	9 (9%)
FCCPC	19 (18%)
Director Credential	1 (1%)
National CDA	6 (6%)
Associate's Degree	24 (23%)
Bachelor's Degree	27 (26%)
Master's Degree	9 (9%)
Ph.D.	4 (4%)
<b><u>Member of ECE Org.</u></b>	
No	47 (45%)
Yes	57 (55%)
<b><u>Previous Director Experience</u></b>	
No	44 (42%)
Yes	58 (56%)

*Note: Some Sections do not total to 100% because of missing data*

In addition to the demographic data collected on the child care center director, the questionnaire collected information on the composition of the child care centers. This information included the number of children enrolled, the accreditation status of the center, the center type and supplemental programs offered at the center. Table 3.2 provides a summary of the data collected from respondents.

**Table 3.2 Relevant Child Care Center Data-Questionnaire**

	Total (n=104)
<b><u>Accredited</u></b>	
No	78 (75%)
Yes	24 (23%)
<b><u>Center Capacity</u></b>	
0-35 enrolled	19 (18%)
36-75 enrolled	30 (29%)
76-125 enrolled	32 (31%)
126-150 enrolled	8 (8%)
150+ enrolled	12 (12%)
<b><u>Center Type</u></b>	
Faith Based	18 (17%)
Private, for profit	38 (37%)
Private, non-profit	13 (13%)
Public School	14 (13%)
Family Child Care Home	14 (13%)
School Based	2 (2%)
<b><u>Voluntary PreK</u></b>	
No	26 (25%)
Yes	77 (74%)
<b><u>Early Steps</u></b>	
No	73 (70%)
Yes	27 (26%)
<b><u>School District PreK</u></b>	
No	85 (82%)
Yes	15 (14%)

*Note: Some sections do not total to 100% because of missing data*

### **Response Rate**

The table above provides demographic information on the 104 child care center directors who completed the questionnaire. The response rate for the questionnaire was 12%. To conduct research and publish the results, scholars depend on the willingness to respond to questionnaires (Dey, 1997). At times, distributing a questionnaire may yield a low response rate, or the questionnaires that were returned incomplete, as in this case. It may be that a survey yields a

very low response rate, 10%, accurately represents the population from which the sample was originally drawn (Dey, 1997).

## **Data Analysis**

Data collected was transformed into a way that allows for meaningful information to be generated and interpreted. Data from the questionnaires were entered into an Excel Spreadsheet and imported into a data management program, SPSS, 17. The data generated from the questionnaire provided descriptive statistics, numbers that summarize the pattern of responses, frequency distribution, charts and tables that indicate how many, number of cases, and categories; and measures of central tendency (Stangor, 2004). The use of this analysis provides a snapshot of the raw data and allow for summarization and accurate interpretation.

## **Study Two**

### **Data Collection**

#### **In-depth Interviews**

In an effort to obtain more detailed information from the respondents, in-depth interviews were conducted with a sample of those center directors who had completed the questionnaire. The benefits of using face to face interviews as a form of data collection are well established. For example, interviews with research study participants are useful for uncovering different perspectives. Similarly, interviews are particularly useful in describing complex interactions. More important for the researcher, perhaps, is that the interview can be effectively and efficiently analyzed, and it's validity easily checked (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The primary advantage



of in-depth interviewing is that it permits an explicit focus on the researcher's personal experience combined with those of the interviewees (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

The in-depth interviews were scheduled by the researcher, based on the availability of the participants. This procedure was unavoidable given the unpredictable schedule of operating a child care center. Prior to the interview, the participants were emailed confirmation letters outlining the purpose of the interview, the overall goal of the research study, and they were provided with a detailed list of documents that could be used as a part of the document review.

The in-depth interviews were organized using an interview guide that had been developed by the researcher (see Appendix B). An interview guide is prepared to ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each person interviewed (Patton, 2002). Typically, an interview guide includes questions concerning individuals' opinions as well as questions concerning values questions (e.g., what people think about some experience or issue) (Patton, 2002). The interview guide used in this study contained a total of five questions. Further to its development, it was reviewed by experts, primarily for validity purposes. These experts were selected based on their extensive experience in the field of early childhood education as well as their professional standing in the field (e.g., child care center directors, early childhood consultants, and knowledge of the trends in the field).

The role of the researcher during the in-depth interviews was to contact the participant prior to the face to face interview. Then, during the interview, the researcher sought to establish rapport with the selected participants, and use her knowledge of the early childhood field to help participants extend their answers. Such an approach is consistent with Merriam's (1998) position

that qualitative interviewing makes it possible for the interviewer to probe for more details and assure that the questions are understood and interpreted correctly.

## **Participants**

A total of 13 in-depth interviews were conducted on site at the center's physical location. The approximate time to conduct the interview was thirty minutes depending on the information provided by the interview participants. In-depth interview participants were selected from questionnaire responses using purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is an approach that is based on the assumption that the researcher wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned (Merriam, 1998). In-depth interview participants were selected from the pool of child care centers directors that had completed and returned the questionnaire. Participants were asked to indicate on the questionnaire form their willingness to participate in face to face interviews. Their consent to participate in the interviews was noted on the form by including their contact information. This information was subsequently used in order to schedule the interviews.

Participants selected to participate in the in-depth interviews were classified as information-rich cases. Information rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry (Patton, 2002). Given that the child care center directors are the primary decision makers with regard to child discipline issues, then they can be considered as rich sources of relevant information. In addition, interview participants were selected based on the following criteria: a) having dismissed a child from the child care center during the past 12 months; (b) agreeing to participate in the in-depth interviews,

and (c) agreeing to provide specific supplemental documents for review. The table below, Table 3.3 provides demographic information on the in-depth interview participants. The demographic information includes their gender, ethnicity, age, and whether or not they had previous experience as a child care center director.

**Table 3.3 In-Depth Interview Participants**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Previous Exp.</b>
White	Female	41-50	FCCPC	No
Black	Female	51-60	FCCPC	No
Hispanic	Female	61-70	Bachelors	Yes, 20+ yrs
White	Female	21-30	Masters	Yes, 2 yrs
White	Female	51-60	Associates	No
White	Female	41-50	Masters	Yes, 22 yrs
White	Female	41-50	Bachelors	Yes, 5 yrs
White	Female	51-60	National CDA	Yes, 12 yrs
Black	Female	21-30	HS diploma	Yes, 1 yr
Black	Female	41-50	Associates	Yes
Black	Female	41-50	Bachelors	Yes, 7 yrs
White	Female	41-50	Associates	Yes, 3 yrs
White	Female	31-40	FCCPC	Yes, 7 yrs

### **Document Review**

In addition to the in-depth interviews, a review of documents was used in the second study. The documents were collected during the in-depth interviews and reviewed after the

completion of the interview. Documents are, in fact, ready-made sources of data easily accessible to the imaginative and resourceful researcher. Documentary data are “objective” sources of data compared to other forms (Merriam, 1998). The documents collected for this study included child care center discipline policies, accident reports, behavior notification forms, probation letters, and parent handbooks. These items were coded for reoccurring themes and organized by frequency of the themes. The themes generated from all sources of data collected (i.e., the documents, in-depth interviews, and questionnaires) created an organizational tool that provided a story of the journey of working with children displaying challenging behavior. The data gathered provides a step by step plan that is used to in the early learning program.

Program documents can provide a behind-the-scene look at program processes and how they came into being (Patton, 2002). Noted strengths in the use of document analysis as a form of data collection include the ability for the researcher to document major events (e.g., accidents/incidents), providing context information, and data that may be easy to manipulate and categorize for analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Probably the greatest strength of document analysis is that it is unobtrusive and nonreactive: it can be conducted without disturbing the setting in any way (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The documents reviewed for this research study included the participating child care center’s discipline policy and/ philosophy, training materials used by the director to train child care center staff. Information derived from the documents used in document analysis was detailed on a Document Summary Form (see Appendix C). This form puts the document in context, explains its significance, and gives a brief summary (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This provided a foundation for the subsequent analyses of the data.

## **Data Analysis**

To assist in bringing order and process to the large amount of data generated, a process data analysis was employed. Interview sessions were tape recorded and transcribed into a Microsoft Word document. The in-depth interview transcripts were read and reread several times by the researcher, with notes made on how the participants responded to challenging behavior (Creswell, 2007). The transcribed interviews were formatted and imported into NVivo 9 data management software. Transcripts were analyzed for recurring themes across interviews.

Coding is a process of sorting and defining collected data; it is about creating an organization framework (Glesne, 1999). A list of starter codes was developed prior to conducting the in-depth interviews based upon the main themes from the conceptual framework, the literature reviewed, and the research questions. As themes emerged from the data collected, additional codes were added to the list. The in-depth interviews explored a few general points to help uncover the participant's views on the topic but otherwise respected how the participant framed and structured the responses (Marshall and Rossman, 1999).

The final strategy used for data analysis was the employment of an iteration process. This process included five iterations of analysis to bring meaning to the vast amount of data collected. In the first iteration, Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that initial coding be conducted to find conditions among the participants, as a method of pointing to regularities in the setting (Anafara, Brown & Mangione, 2002). The second iteration provided analysis within the patterns and themes that have emerged. The third iteration included member checking with in-depth interview participants. Transcripts were reviewed to ensure the captured responses are accurate.

The fourth and fifth iteration included a process for reaching a consensus if there is a discrepancy and applying the final transcript back to the original research questions and initial starter codes.

A copy of the Iteration Table that was used for data analysis may be found in Appendix E.

### **Quality Concerns in Qualitative Research**

A key part of qualitative research is how we account for ourselves throughout the research process (Anfara, Brown & Magione, 2006). Throughout data collection and analyses in both parts of the research an effort was made to establish and maintain quality and rigor. Such steps are considered a necessary element quality concerns that are evident in qualitative research. If the goal of research is to contribute knowledge through a process of revision and enrichment of understanding of the experience, then there is a need to make the interpretations trustworthy (Glesne, 1999). The following important concerns of qualitative research are addressed: credibility and dependability.

#### **Credibility**

To ensure credibility, sufficient amounts of data from different sources must be collected and thick descriptions must be recorded (Glesne, 1999). In this study, methodological triangulation combined the questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and documents in order to provide support for the meaning of the phenomena (Creswell, 2007). Triangulation means that researchers use multiple data-collection methods, multiple sources, multiple investigators, or multiple theoretical perspectives (Glesne, 1999). The rationale for this strategy was that by combining methods, the researcher could overcome deficiencies of each method and develop a fuller understanding of the directors' responses to challenging behavior. In short, cross verification should lead to more valid findings.

In an additional effort to ensure credibility, the researcher used member checking to review the various interpretations of the interviews. Member checking was completed when the researcher emailed interview participants a copy of their interview transcript for review and the opportunity to provide feedback and/or changes to the content. Four of the interview participants responded with changes to the interview transcript and those changes were incorporated into the final transcript for analysis. In addition to steps to add to the credibility of the study, the researcher took steps to certify the dependability of the study. These steps included the use of a reflective journal.

### **Dependability**

To maintain evidence in an organized fashion and to facilitate dependability, the researcher kept a reflective journal. The reflective journal was where the researcher jotted down her thoughts about conversations, events, and people she contacted during the data collection process. This reflective journal also allowed the researcher to identify any bias that she may encounter during the data collection process. A researcher must be aware of any personal biases and how they might affect the research process (Merriam, 1998). To avoid the imposition of subjectivity, the researcher explicated her past experiences as a child care center director and the parent of a child with challenging behaviors. The following table, Table 3.5, includes the strategies used in this research study to ensure that rigor was established. The use of triangulation, member checks, and thick description are outlined to achieve credibility and dependability.

**Table 3.4 Quantitative and Qualitative Criteria for Assessing Research- Applicability to Research Study**

Quantitative Term	Qualitative Term	Strategy Employed
Internal Validity	Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Triangulation</li> <li>• Member Checks</li> <li>• Provide thick description</li> </ul>
External Validity	Transferability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide thick description</li> </ul>
Reliability	Dependability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Triangulation</li> </ul>
Objectivity	Confirmability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Triangulation</li> </ul>

### **Participant's Rights**

Throughout the data collection and analyses as part of the research study, the rights of the participants were protected. To ensure all proper protocols are followed, the researcher obtained approval from the Human Subjects Committee, Internal Review Board at the university before any data collection activities were begun. As a part of this process, potential study participants were given a letter explaining the nature and duration of the study and asked to sign a consent form before participation. The consent contained information about the project, what would be asked during the in-depth interview, and the risks and benefits involved with participating in the study (Patton, 2002).

Once the consent forms were signed, the data collection activities began. The researcher reiterated the contents of the consent form including the use of confidentiality, at each step of the process beginning with the questionnaire. Every possible avenue was utilized to protect the anonymity of the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).



## **Limitations**

This research study did not seek to make generalizations. Rather, it was an attempt to provide a foundation of a sample of child care center directors' responses to challenging behaviors and the processes used to address them, including preschool expulsion.

## **Summary**

This chapter presented the methodology used to collect data for this study. The methods used provide data to be triangulated to increase the validity and reliability of the findings. The data collection procedures used in the two parts of the study were described including the use of a questionnaire, in-depth interviews, and document review respectively. Finally the quality concerns of qualitative research and limitations of this research study were addressed.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine challenging behavior and the role it plays in child care center directors' decision making process regarding whether or not to expel a child from their center. In this chapter the results are reported. The chapter is organized around the four research questions as well as the themes that emerged from the analyses. Given the exploratory nature of the study, no attempt was made to generalize the findings to other populations or contexts. Instead, the effort is made to provide the reader with a rich description that may be applied or considered in other contexts or settings. Thus, the data generated and reported in this study provides an initial preview of how child care center directors respond to challenging behavior by preschool aged children.

#### Research Question One

Recent research suggests that there has been a significant increase in incidents of aggressive behaviors amongst American kindergarteners. These behaviors include talking back, profanity, and kicking and hitting adults (Wilson & Hanson, 2010). Determining the extent of such behaviors amongst preschool aged children attending child care centers was the focus of the first research question: *What is the nature and extent of preschool children's classroom behaviors that are considered challenging?* The primary source of data collected to answer this research question was the questionnaire survey distributed to the child care center directors. The questionnaire asked center directors to identify the top three challenging behaviors evident in particular centers. The center directors were able to select the challenging behaviors from a pre-

generated list. The identified behaviors were tabulated and used to populate a table showing the number of respondents for each behavior and the percentage of the behaviors based on the total number of respondents. This information is included below in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1 Questionnaires: Top Three Challenging Behaviors Present in Centers**

Behavior	Respondents	Percentage
Acting without thinking	40	38%
Bullying	8	8%
Fidgeting or moving around too much	26	25%
Temper tantrums	52	50%
Aggression toward people or objects	34	33%
Fighting with others	14	13%
Disobeying rules or requests	32	31%
Talking back to adults	9	9%
Lying or not telling the truth	12	12%
Breaking into groups	5	5%
Inattention	14	13%
Getting distracted easily	27	30%
Internalizing/withdrawing (e.g., acting lonely)	0	0%

*Note: Respondents gave multiple answers to each question*

As identified in the above table, the three most common challenging behaviors present in the centers represented in this study included temper tantrums, acting without thinking and aggression towards people or objects. In addition to the questionnaire responses identified in the

table above, data were collected from the in-depth interviews and document review. The data were coded and organized into themes based on the statements made by the center directors. The themes coded included, risk factors, observed trends of challenging behavior, and aggression. The first theme that emerged from the data was the observation of trends in challenging behavior during the past year.

### **Risk Factors and Trends**

During the in-depth interview session, each center directors was asked to identify any trends they have noticed in the past twelve months related to children's challenging behaviors. Ten out of the thirteen center directors shared that they had noticed “more anger” from the children. Some preschool directors reported that they had observed a sharp rise since the 1970s in the number of children with behavioral problems. One director stated, “I see a lot of emotional and behavioral issues with children being raised by family foster care, where mom and dad are both in jail or they have seen abuse in the home.”

A second director, Ellen, provided a specific example of the experiences in her community and how it may be impacting the children in her care: “It’s the turnover of relative care. Of it not being mom and dad. That’s what we have here; it’s mainly aunts, uncles, grandmothers, and grandfathers taking care of the children. I have one foster parent with six children in my center. You don’t really understand until you see it.” Ellen’s child care center served as a private school in the community and in the preceding years, offered programs for children in the elementary grades. Recently, the program downsized, and enrolled children aged one through preschool and provided after school care.

Ellen contacted her local early learning coalition to learn about the Peace Program. She knew it was a program that helped centers work with children who have challenging behaviors. The impetus for contacting the coalition was a child she'd recently enrolled in her center. She said the child was exposed to drugs during pregnancy. "He is now three and the behaviors are coming out.....we have no idea on what to do....and it's not just my center." Ellen was able to identify the behaviors that have been deemed as challenging and is working with the community resource to appropriately respond to them. She'd observed that just making "quiet centers" in the classrooms (quiet centers are similar to time out areas), wasn't working. Her teachers need to change the way they interacted with the children, change the classroom layout, and overall, "reach out for help" as she accurately described.

Creating environments for children with challenging behaviors requires careful planning, implementation, evaluation, and reflection (Bell, Carr, Denno, Johnson, and Phillips, 2004). A supportive environment is created like a patchwork quilt. It incorporates many elements to ensure that each child is successful. As outlined in Gilliam and Shahar (2006), "structural characteristics of the preschool setting may be related to the risk for expulsion and suspension. The child care centers in this study included organized classrooms, adequate materials and trained teachers. The directors provided information on the organization of their classrooms and other information during the in-depth interviews.

### **Research Question Two**

Physical environments that are well-designed and well supplied (e.g., ample space for children to move and play, and plenty of materials), facilitate the caregivers ability to

successfully care for children and are considered components of high quality child care (Hunter and Hemmeter, 2009). These components of high quality child care were the themes that emerged in the coding of the in-depth interviews and they were used to answer research question number two: *What practices do child care center directors use to anticipate and prevent challenging behavior in the child care center?* The directors provided information during the interviews that provided categories of the techniques they rely on to head off any challenging behavior before it arises. Statements from the child care center directors are organized by theme in the table below, Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2 Statements on Preventing Challenging Behavior by Theme**

Interactions with Children	Physical Environment	Materials/Equipment	Other Prevention Methods
<i>We make sure each child is greeted every day, by name, and that they know they're special.</i>	<i>Our big classrooms are a plus and a minus. They're big so sometimes they can be too loud, there are multiple teachers and groups in the room and if I'm struggling and/or hurting friends, I can go visit with another group.</i>	<i>One thing is we try to have enough materials for everyone so that we're not fighting over one particular toy.</i>	<i>I think the biggest thing that helps us is our low ratios. We have well below the state requirements in ratios, which always provides us an extra adult if we need it to focus on one or two children that may need extra attentions.</i>
<i>We try to anticipate behaviors because through those relationships you really get to know those children so you can kind of learn what will be those buttons for those children.</i>	<i>We're definitely routine oriented. The children who come first thing in the morning know that we're gonna be in the great room, we're gonna have a coloring table set up</i>	<i>We always have plenty of crayons, markers, and play dough. The environment is prepared.</i>	<i>We recognize what causes the challenging behavior, what triggers it. Sometimes it may be another student so we try to keep those students away from each other.</i>

The above table provides specific methods identified by the child care center directors to arrange the environment (including providing adequate materials for the number of children enrolled), build relationships with the children to know the triggers of the challenging behaviors, and plan the daily schedule so it meets the needs of the children. Harriett, a child care center director shared that her primary reason for opening her center was to “leave the larger setting that she was previously working in and go to a smaller one.” Harriett’s center is licensed for 36-75 children but they typically do not enroll more than 50 at one time. She adds that the intimacy of the size allows her and the staff at the center to “know all of the children and families enrolled.” During her interview she summarized, “...the children I have, I know them. I know if they haven’t ate, I know if they’re tired, I know if they’re in a grumpy mood. I wouldn’t change that.”

In addition to knowing the children in the center, the in-depth interviews provided data on ways the centers establish routines and structure to prevent challenging behaviors. Caitlyn, the center director of a newly established program stated,

“...we have a specific way we sit down to eat, we sit down with our hands in our lap and a smile on our face. If the teachers do not see that, they provide gentle reminders to the children, nine times out of ten that child will just pop into place.”

Another center director, Caitlyn provided documents that also outlined the professional development for teachers in her program. The center she administers offers two training days for the teachers. During these days, the center closes and children do not attend. She stated that “she would like to have a trainer come in on one of those days and talk about difficult behaviors.”

This training, in Caitlyn’s opinion, helps her staff remain top notch. She describes her teachers as “focused, prepared, and they have their materials ready to go.”

These methods are mostly structural and may be visibly identified by the families that enroll in the program. These techniques could serve as a reason the program is selected in the first place. In addition to the physical space and arrangement of the child care program, the families enrolling in the center will learn information about the center’s philosophy, the curriculum used in the center, special distinctions about the center (e.g., accreditation information) and the discipline policy employed.

### **Research Question Three**

Distribution of the center’s discipline policy is required by the State of Florida. This policy allows the center to share their process and procedures for working with challenging behavior should it arise in the program. These were identified in response to research question three: *What processes and procedures do child care center directors use to address challenging behavior and/or expel children from a child care center?* Table 4.3, included below, provides the responses to the question that asked directors to select ways they involve family members when children display challenging behavior.

**Table 4.3 Questionnaire: Family Involvement in Response to Challenging Behavior**

Strategies	Respondents	Percentage
Communication (verbal and/or written)	97	93%
Conferences or meetings	84	81%
Work with family members	66	63%



**Table 4.3 Questionnaire: Family Involvement in Response to Challenging Behavior (cont.)**

Strategies	Respondents	Percentage
Ask parents to come to the school	67	64%
Ask family to reinforce good behavior at home	70	67%
Develop a plan to address child's behavior	71	68%
Link families to additional support services	65	63%
Share information on development and behavior management	67	64%
Share program policies	66	63%

*Note: Respondents gave multiple answers to each question*

In addition to the responses provided in the questionnaire, the in-depth interviews identified several methods used by child care center directors to recognize and decrease the presence of challenging behavior. These methods were transcribed and coded for emerging themes. Three themes identified from the transcripts included written documentation (parent contact), redirection, and punishment. The written documentation used in the programs served two purposes. It allowed the center directors to maintain a copy of the behavior displayed in the classroom and it also met the requirement by Florida Administrative Code to document accidents and or incidents, and also notify parents of any problem behavior and or incidents during the day (Florida Department of Children and Families, 2011).

## Written Documentation

### Accident/Incident Reports

Many centers used the incident/accident forms as a way to create a “paper trail” for a child with challenging behaviors. The center directors shared the use of the accident/incident reports during the interview process. One director, Laurie, shared that on the morning of the interview, she’d already written four reports. The interview was scheduled for 11:00 a.m. Laurie was the director of a private, for profit child care center and had served as the center director for the past three years. The program she administered served children aged 12 months to school age. The accident reports she wrote involved incidents where a child hit a teacher and then subsequently, another child. As part of the center’s discipline policy, once the parent receives the accident report, the parent will be required to sign each copy and the documents will remain in the child’s file as long as he or she is enrolled in the center.

Additional uses for the incident/accident forms are that they may be used as an opportunity to track activity in a classroom, as well as for reflection and growth. Laurie also shared that she uses the accident/incident reports for this purpose. Specifically, during a review of a child’s folder, she counted a total of 48 incident reports over a period of 12 months. She was able to read through the reports and identify the cause of the report (i.e., biting). The child was a toddler (ages 12 to 18 months old and which she felt was an appropriate age for biting to occur). From the reports, Laurie was able to discern that the bites were provoked (e.g., another child took away her toy). She was not using the reports to build a case to take any disciplinary action but rather for information gathering and to review activity in the classrooms.

To support the incident/accident reports, there are some centers that have developed policies such as “three bites and you’re out.” If this were the case for Laurie’s program as mentioned above, the child with the 48 incident/accident reports would have been asked to find another child care center. These policies are typically included in the overall discipline policy for the center and are implemented through other written forms of documentation such as probation letters, behavior notifications, and specific policies addressing suspension and expulsion. The document review provided concrete examples of this written documentation. The first identified was the probation letter.

### **Probation letter**

Another method used by a center director to address challenging behavior was the creation and implementation of a “probation letter.” The probation letter is a written document, similar to the incident/accident report but includes and outlines the next step in the center’s discipline policy. The probation letter identifies the challenging behavior, the way staff collaborated with the family to address the behaviors (e.g., providing a thinking chair), and an outcome for the family if the behavior isn’t resolved within a certain time. For example, the common use for the probation letter is to notify the family of their dismissal from their program after a certain amount of time (e.g., thirty days). The probation letter was an example from one child care center and was included in the center’s discipline policy as a plan to address the behaviors present in the center. Another example of written documentation used in child care centers is the Behavior Notification or Behavior Report.

## **Behavior Notification/Report**

Behavior Notifications were found to be similar to the accident/incident form but provided additional information where the provider described the behavior displayed, included information on how the center responded, and asked for a parent signature to acknowledge receipt. Carla was the center director of a small private preschool that served children aged birth to school age. She didn't have any previous experience as a center director and found the behavior notifications to be a helpful way to document children's behavior in the classroom. She shared that many times, she only had to ask the children, "do you want a behavior report?" and that would prevent any further problem behavior.

The use of incident/accident forms and probation letters, if applicable, are typically outlined in the center's discipline policy. Often a center will have a stated policy, but the way that policy is carried out is very different than what appears in writing (Jorde Bloom, 1991). In addition to responses to overt problem behavior, the review of center documents also identified techniques used by teachers, including redirection.

## **Redirection**

All of the written documentation and discipline policies did not include punitive examples of what would happen when challenging behavior was observed. Some of the discipline policies provided specific information on redirection and other practices the center staff would use in response to challenging behavior. Nicole's center relied heavily on redirection and utilized a specific framework that supported the building of relationships with the children, families and everyone in the program. The discipline policy in Nicole's center included the

wording, “teachers will lead by example, responding to each child with understanding, respect and by modeling composure and compassion,” “and “we shall use discipline techniques that foster kindness and respect.”

Nicole’s center was a faith based program serving children aged birth to five years old. The center was accredited by a nationally recognized early childhood program and during that process, Nicole shared that her center was required to provide evidence on methods they used for working with children displaying challenging behaviors. This self-assessment process provided a way for her to infuse the notion of redirection and positive guidance in her center. Nicole recently became the director (she was previously a Lead Teacher) when the center’s founding director resigned to begin consulting work. Nicole shared that “we try very hard not to use negative language.....when a challenging behavior arises whether it be a teacher, a parent, or a child; we try to help them have the skill of assuming the best in them.”

Nicole’s use of self-assessment to review and revise her center’s discipline policy was an example of continuous program improvement. Additionally, this research study provided another center director the opportunity to review her center’s discipline policy. Paula was the director of a small preschool with a long standing reputation in the community she serves. She has over 30 years of experience in early childhood education. She shared that she meets with other directors in the community, in a “support group” like fashion and suggested that they take their center handbooks and specifically their discipline policies to the next meeting to brainstorm. She wanted to have as much “detailed information” as possible in her discipline policy to give to the parents at her center.

## Research Question Four

Child care center directors use the center’s discipline policy to outline how they will work with children displaying challenging behaviors. In some cases, the final step of a discipline policy is to ask a child to leave the center. Data were collected to answer research question four: *What factors contribute to the decision by a child care center director to expel a child from a child care center?* In the questionnaire, child care center directors were asked to indicate whether they had dismissed a child during the last 12 months. A total of 38 center directors indicated that they had asked a child to leave their center. This information was calculated, and organized into a table for analysis. This table, Table 4.4, included below, provides information on the child care center directors that affirmed they’d dismissed at least one child in the past twelve months.

**Table 4.4: Demographic Characteristics of Directors with Child Dismissals**

	<b>Total (n=38)</b>
<b><u>Center Capacity</u></b>	
0-35 enrolled	3 (8%)
36-75 enrolled	10 (26%)
76-125 enrolled	13 (34%)
126-150 enrolled	3 (8%)
150+ enrolled	7 (18%)
Not Reported	2 (5%)
<b><u>Center Accreditation</u></b>	
No	26 (68%)
Yes	11 (29%)
Not Reported	1 (3%)
<b><u>Sex</u></b>	
Male	1 (3%)
Female	37 (97%)

**Table 4.4: Demographic Characteristics of Directors with Child Dismissals (cont.)**

	<b>Total (n=38)</b>
<b><u>Ethnicity</u></b>	
White/Caucasian	25 (65%)
Black	9 (24%)
Asian	1 (3%)
Hispanic/Latino	2 (5%)
Other	1 (3%)
<b><u>Age</u></b>	
21-30 years old	6 (16%)
31-40 years old	9 (24%)
41-50 years old	9 (24%)
51-60 years old	12 (32%)
61-70 years old	2 (5%)
<b><u>Director Highest Degree Held</u></b>	
High School Diploma	3 (8%)
FCCPC	9 (24%)
National CDA	1 (3%)
Associate's Degree	9 (24%)
Bachelor's Degree	12 (32%)
Master's Degree	2 (6%)
Not Reported	2 (6%)
<b><u>Previous Director Experience:</u></b>	
No	13 (34%)
Yes	2 (63%)
Not Reported	1 (3%)
<b><u># of Children Dismissed (12 mths)</u></b>	
One child	17 (45%)
Two children	12 (32%)
Three children	3 (8%)
Four children	3 (8%)
Five children	1 (3%)
Seven children	1 (3%)
Ten children	1 (3%)

The table above shows that 63% of the child care center directors reported that they'd previously served as a director. 97% of the center directors were female. 45% of the center directors who affirmed they had dismissed a child in the past twelve months, state that one child was asked to leave their center. Conversely, one child care center director had asked ten children to leave her center. It is important to note, however, that the reason for asking the children to

leave was not related to challenging behavior, but rather because of non-payment of fees for services.

In addition to the questionnaire, the data from the in-depth interviews and documents were coded for themes. Themes generated included reasons for expulsion, policies to address expulsion and resources to retain the child. The reasons for the expulsions were first identified in the questionnaire, and are displayed in Table 4.5 (included below).

**Table 4.5 Questionnaire: Reasons for the dismissal of the child/children**

Reasons	Respondents	Percentage
Inability of parent to pay for child care	4	11%
Changes in funding	5	13%
Physical limitations of caregiver	1	3%
Safety of other children	25	66%
Child care setting provided too much stimulation for the child	3	8%
Child care setting not challenging enough for the child	0	0
Behavior problems of the child	22	58%
Parent's expectations could not be met	1	3%
Other: (Sensory Processing Disorder and Bed Bugs)	2	5%

*Note: Respondents gave multiple answers to each question*

The table above confirms that the main reason 68% of children were dismissed from a child care center was the safety of other children. In this case, this was the reason given by 66% of the respondents. Similarly, 58% reported that behavior problems were the main reason for



expelling young children. One questionnaire respondent added a statement that supported why they chose to dismiss the child; “We had several meetings with the parents on how to help manage the child’s behaviors. In the end, we offered several suggestions of other centers that could meet his needs.”

This director’s statement aligns with the center’s policy to address challenging behavior and the response they will use that may include expulsion. This information may be found in the center’s discipline policy with the other specifics distributed to families upon enrollment. The document review generated policies that outlined the procedures that the center would employ that could lead to expulsion. The documents that were reviewed included information concerning policies for suspension as well as expulsion.

### **Suspension and Expulsion Policies**

The documents reviewed introduced additional policies and procedures for suspension (criteria included fighting, excessive aggression, and biting). These items varied by child care center, curriculum and philosophy, and affiliation. One center’s policy explicitly stated that “if a child receives three write ups for inappropriate behavior, s/he will receive a minimum one-day suspension. Additional days of suspension are based on the child’s age and severity of the behavior.” Two child care centers provided “Terms for Suspension/Dismissal” policies that outlined circumstances that could cause a child to be suspended or dismissed. In one policy, these circumstances included;

- failure to pay fees in a timely manner,
- threatening to do harm to children or staff,

- children or parents coming to school smelling of any kind of smoke,
- And failure to attend mandatory meetings.

In addition to the suspension and expulsion policies, some of the centers provided policies related specifically to behaviors that were found to be a trend in the center for various reasons and what the outcome would be if that specific behavior did not cease. The most common behavior that was identified in the policies (three specifically) was aggression. The first policy stated, “After three incidents have been documented, a conference between the parents will take place to decide the appropriate plan of action. If the behavior continues, the parent will be asked to find alternative child care.” The second center’s policy stated, “After two aggressive behaviors resulting in injuries to another child, in one day, the parent will be called to pick up the child. The center reserves the right to ask that the child be removed from the school permanently.”

In addition to the policies to address suspension and expulsion, and the number of dismissals, the child care center directors were asked to identify resources that would have allowed them to continue to serve the children they’d asked to leave. The responses were open-ended and provided on the questionnaire and during the in-depth interview. Responses included: additional funding (for those dismissed for nonpayment), additional community resources (e.g., therapists), more parent workshops, more training (suggested topics included bullying, positive discipline, children with special needs). Karen, a center director of a small faith-based program eloquently stated “...if we don’t know where to go, if funding continues to be cut, I think the fall

out is going to be more expulsion because we'll have no choice but to say, we don't have the resources to serve you.”

### **Summary**

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the policies, procedures, and practices used to address challenging behavior in the child care setting. This chapter discussed the finding relevant to the research questions that guided the inquiry. The data suggests there are many ways child care center directors anticipate and prevent challenging behavior. There are also a variety of methods used to address the behavior and the next steps in the discipline plan, which could include expulsion from the child care center. It was also discovered that there are many trends that impact the presence of challenging behavior including increased aggression and the impact of family circumstances (e.g., foster families). The next chapter provides a discussion of the conclusions and implications generated from this research study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine challenging behavior and the role it plays in child care center directors' decision making process regarding whether or not to expel a child from their center. In this chapter, the researcher's personal experience is outlined followed by the theoretical framework that guided the study. Next, the chapter includes conclusions organized by themes generated through the data collection, suggestions for future research and limitations of the research study.

#### **Child Care Center Director-Personal Experience**

A way to provide context to this research study is to explain my interest in the topic, its relevance and why it was selected. I earned my Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education from Florida State University in 2000. During my graduate studies, most of my research and projects focused on my goal of opening a child care center. After graduation, I accepted a position as a child care center director for an employer sponsored center serving approximately 150 children ages birth to five years. This opportunity provided me invaluable "first hand" experience with creating and maintaining a quality early learning environment and obtaining accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

As a center director, I was responsible for creating and implementing policies for the overall operation of the program. These policies included a developmentally appropriate curriculum, a discipline policy, and a transition policy for children moving from one classroom

to another. I was also responsible for a staff of twenty-seven early childhood professionals who ranged in education, experience, and age. I served in this capacity for five years.

Throughout this time, I distinctly remember one situation that involved a child displaying challenging behaviors. This child was a three-year-old boy who possessed a great deal of energy and enthusiasm, was very bright, and always “on the go.” The center’s environmental structure had an open design (no walls or doors) where preschool children rotated through learning centers in groups of ten with a primary caregiver. Many of the teachers in the center worked together to provide “breaks” for his primary teacher when she reached her “wits end” and to ensure that he was successful in the daily activities.

One of the ways I responded to the child’s challenging behavior (e.g., running away from the group, becoming easily distracted) was by calling his father and asking him to come to the center to watch his child on the video camera. I hoped this would provide opportunities for us to brainstorm ways to help his child stay with the group, stay interested in the planned activities, and see what the teachers worked with on a daily basis. In retrospect, this course of action was not successful as his behavior did not change and the classroom teachers remained frustrated. Ultimately, the child’s father opted to find another center that would “meet his needs,” and the teachers and I breathed a sigh of relief. Little did I know how this situation would resurface in years to come.

### **Challenging Behavior-A Parent’s Perspective**

I became pregnant my third year of running the center. My son was born twelve weeks premature with some breathing difficulties. I began looking for a smaller environment to place

him in. I wanted him to receive more attention than he would in a large center setting (i.e., the center that I ran), where teacher to child ratios are often higher so I began to look for a small child care center to place him in. I identified a family child care center for him and he attended there until he was two years old. We relocated to a different city and I placed him in a child care center where he began displaying challenging behaviors (e.g., biting, noncompliance, temper tantrums). As a result of these behaviors, we were asked to leave the center and find other arrangements. This type of expulsion happened twice before he was five years old.

I spent the next few weeks scrambling to find a center that would be willing to work with us, provide a smaller setting and teacher to child ratio, and overall, was quite embarrassed about the entire situation. I had a short period of time to locate another setting, speak with the center director and reassure him/her that we were working on addressing the challenging behaviors, and hope they were willing to cooperate with us and allow us to enroll. At the same time, I was working to identify resources to help us as a family (e.g., occupational therapy, counseling) to ensure this didn't happen in the future.

These experiences fueled my interest in the phenomenon of preschool expulsion. I possessed the formal education in early childhood, had what I thought to be adequate resources, yet I still struggled to find an environment where my son could be successful. I made many attempts to locate a child psychologist that would work with our family and the preschool to mediate some of these behaviors. I was a mother, a child care center director, an educated professional, and the parent of a child with challenging behaviors-who was expelled from preschool. I was intent on finding out how other center directors balanced the responsibility of

providing quality care for children and meeting the needs of those who displayed challenging behaviors.

### **Conclusions**

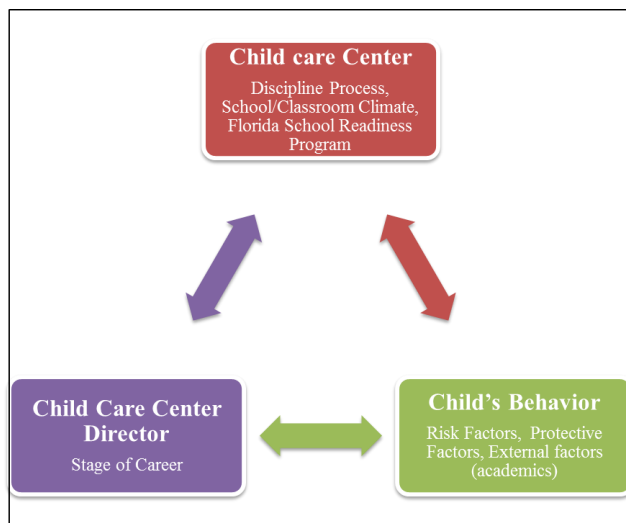
Child care is a valuable commodity in our society. As cited in Buck and Ambrosino 2004, families can take between two and seven weeks to find child care for their children. Parents with children who have been removed from care due to behavior problems are face with additional challenges finding alternative care. Center directors have the additional responsibility of creating an environment that meets the needs of all children enrolled.

Young children with challenging behavior face many difficulties if early intervention is not received. These children are more likely to be removed from multiple early childhood settings (Powell, Dunlap, & Fox, 2006). Unfortunately, the presence of challenging behaviors has appeared to be increasing (Mitchell & Cram, 2009) and the actions taken by child care center directors could result in expulsion from care. Challenging behavior and how it impacts preschool expulsion relies on many factors.

These factors can be explained through this research study's conceptual framework, the transactional model of learning. A transactional model is described that explains behavioral outcomes as the mutual effects as of context on child, and child on context (Sameroff 2010). No single factor is damaging or facilitating for children. Rather, the power of an individual factor or set of factors lies in their accumulation in the life of any child.

## Theoretical Framework

Sameroff's model of transactional development provides a useful framework for understanding the development of young children, as well as the development of problem behaviors (2010). Transactions between a child and a childcare provider occur during the day, and by the very definition of transaction, subsequently impact both the child and childcare provider equally. Behavior, in general, and in particular, cannot be separated from the social context (Sameroff, 2010). A notion that is important in the role of the transactional model of development is the emphasis placed on the bi-directional effects of the child and of the environment (Sameroff and Mackenzie, 2003).



**Figure 5.1 -Conceptual Framework**

Parenting styles, family interpersonal dynamics, socioeconomic status, health, and general living conditions all serve to influence a child's readiness to learn (Beebe-Frankerberger, Lane, Gresham, and MacMillan, 2005). When children enter school in kindergarten, their behaviors are a unique combination of the first two of these influences. As stated in Sutherland



and Oswald (2005), “the more serious the behavior dysfunction, the more likely it is that multiple risk factors have contributed to its genesis and evolution.

The data collected in this study aligns with Sameroff’s model that suggests other factors influence classroom behavior such as the physical arrangement of the classroom, curricular demands placed on the student, and risk factors (Sutherland and Oswald, 2005). In all aspects of identification, prevention, and treatment of child behavior problems, adult behavior is a factor. Even when adults do not cause the child’s behavior problems, they are a necessary part of the solution (Kaiser, 2007). Using the transactional model of development as a guide, child behavior problems appear to be the result of an interaction among child characteristics (e.g., social skills, cognitive ability), parent characteristics, and socio-demographic risk factors. The findings generated from this research study support the framework’s suggestion that behavior is not an isolated action.

### **Challenging Behaviors**

The reasons some young children display challenging behaviors and others do not are still being investigated. Some research indicates that when multiple risk factors (e.g., exposure to violence, abuse, and poverty) are present, a child may be more likely to display challenging behaviors (Jolivet and Steed, 2010). Research has shown an increase in aggressive behaviors among American kindergarteners. These behaviors include talking back, profanity, and kicking and hitting adults (Wilson and Hanson, 2010). The data collected during this research study confirmed the presence of challenging behaviors in the child care centers and the high frequency at which they occur.

As noted in Whitted (2011), “children who display aggressive behaviors during their preschool years are likely to continue to engage in aggressive behavior if intervention is not initiated.” Preschool teachers report that disruptive behavior is the single greatest challenge that they face and that there seems to be increasing numbers in disruptive and aggressive children (Raver and Knitzer, 2002). The number of preschool expulsions identified in this research study provided preliminary information on the rates of dismissals in the sample of respondents.

Nationally, the preschool expulsion rate is more than three times the rate found among K-12 students (Gilliam, 2005) with some individual states reporting preschool expulsion rates that are more than 13 times K-12 rates (Gilliam & Shahar, 2006). Schools typically respond to disruptive students with external discipline, which consists of sanctions and punishment such as office referrals, suspensions, and expulsion (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010). Preschool expulsion interrupts a child’s bonding process with his or her caregiver, increases parental stress within the family and workplace, and has negative economic impacts on the parents and child care professionals (Kaiser, 2007).

At school entry, children are faced with heightened demands for well-regulated and goal-directed activities, including sustained behavioral inhibition, compliance with rules, and the capacity to initiate and sustain positive interpersonal relationships with teacher and peers (Whitted, 2011). A nationally representative sample of surveyed kindergarten teachers indicated that 50% or more of the children in their classrooms were experiencing problems with self-regulation, following directions, and controlling attention (Rimm-Kauffman, Pianta, and Cox, 2000).

Establishing a trusting relationship with each family ensures that if a child does exhibit challenging behavior it can be addressed openly in the context of an existing trusting relationship (Hunter & Hemmeter, 2009). One statement in a center's discipline policy supported the theme of how families contribute to the community by stating, "we seek parental input and support." These findings support the family's role in addressing challenging behavior.

### **The Role of Families**

Reducing the practice of segregating misbehaving children requires not only institutional supports for teachers but also special attention to relationships with families (Barbarin and Crawford, 2006). This statement is supported with a reoccurring theme that emerged during the data collection process. This theme was the involvement of families and how they are an important part of working with children. Directors shared sentiments on the role of the family and how their involvement can help them stay the course of working with behavior that proves to be challenging. For example one director stated, "I think it's critical when you have a child that's choosing to use challenging behaviors to communicate that work closely with that family." Working with and supporting families are critical components to help children reach their full potential in early childhood programs (Bell, Carr, Denno, Johnson, and Phillips, 2004).

### **Need for Specialized Training**

Implications from this study suggest the need for child care center directors and teachers to obtain additional training to work with children displaying challenging behaviors. As cited in Hemmeter, Santos and Ostrosky (2008), many early childhood practitioners do not feel prepared to meet the needs of children who have significant social-emotional needs and/or challenging

behavior. Directors' statements generated from the research study support the findings from Gilliam's (2005) findings that enhanced training and support is needed for early care and education providers in the area of child guidance and behavior management. As one director stated:

“Other fields that have administrator training, you know principals and kind of other settings that can be similar to ours, there is quite a bit of training and things they have to do before they become principal of a school.”

Child development experts believe that teacher training and support is essential to providing the positive and consistent environment that children need (Buck and Ambrosino, 2004). For teachers of children with challenging behavior, a variety of classroom management strategies are needed to prevent future occurrences of challenging behavior and to promote children's social development (Jolivette and Steed, 2010). In addition to specific training to address challenging behaviors, the data gathered from the research study provided information on the impact of challenging behavior on the entire classroom/school climate.

Teachers of young children are often the first to recognize serious problems with controlling impulses, focusing attention, staying organized, and following instructions (Center on the Developing Child, 2011). During the interview, one center director reported, “...we need training that offers specific ideas.” One suggestion was to have training sessions with a long period of question and answers so teachers and directors can give examples of the behaviors they are observing. The director added, “even though I've been doing this (administering a child care center), I never thought to use a weighted blanket at nap time to help the child relax.

Whitted (2011) confirms that “preschool administrators and staff must have access to training materials that increase their understanding of children’s developmental needs so they can be prepared to identify and assist children with skill deficits.” In addition to working with families, child care center directors provide initial training to the staff working at the center. This is a necessary component of preventing challenging behaviors and as stated in Buck and Ambrosino (2004), teacher training and support is essential to providing the positive and consistent environment that children need.

### **Intervention/Supports for the Child**

Children who are most likely to be suspended or expelled are those most in need of adult supervision and professional help (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2003). One director confided, “when it comes to true negative aggressive behavior, I don’t know where to go other than reach out to the parent.” She was asked to expand on her answer and if she received support when she spoke with the parent. Her response was, “sometimes yes and sometimes no. Sometimes, I talk to the parent and they take the out of the center-because they don’t know what to do either.” Effective models of facilitating strong working relationships between families and staff at early education programs should be an integral component to addressing behavior problems in young children (Gilliam, 2008).

Respondents were asked to indicate the types of supports and materials that might assist them in better preparing the children in their programs. Most of the child care center directors were able to name the entities that provide support and intervention for children with developmental delays and/or challenging behaviors. These included the Florida Diagnostic and

Learning Resource System (FDLRS), Child Find, the Early Learning Coalition and the Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD). Several directors reported that the response time from the completion of a referral until an observation is conducted on the child, is often long, up to six weeks.

As cited in Buck and Ambrosino (2010), the process of looking for childcare can be even more daunting for a low-income family due to the shortage of child care centers in the low income areas and long waiting lists. Many of the center directors who completed the questionnaire stated that they provided assistance to help families find alternate care when they could no longer meet the needs of their child (ren). This assistance came in a variety of methods including the director's assistance through the screening process until the child was staffed into a school district program, additional time to find another place (delay of the dismissal), and referrals to other centers in the area that could accommodate the child's needs, e.g., smaller class size/ratio, less tuition.

One director shared that she knew the child needed to stay in care but the parents could not afford it. Since her program was a ministry, she offered to have the child stay enrolled at a significantly reduced tuition rate-even though she displayed challenging behaviors. The belief that children who display challenging behaviors will independently and without intervention change their behavior on their own or grow out of it as they develop is false (Jolivette and Steed, 2010). An interviewee shared, "we are a ministry to pay so I still have to collect tuition but it makes us different from the business of for-profit child care centers." Summarized nicely in an interview, one director stated, "of course you can't help every single body but you know the goal is to try. If you don't try you're not going to get anywhere."

## **Suggestions for Future Research**

Often children who are at risk for school failure are viewed only through the lens of what they lack. Their strengths also need to be recognized (Miller & Almon, 2009). The transactional model was originally described to emphasize the dynamic relation between child and context across time with particular relevance to developmental outcomes (Sameroff and Mackenzie, 2003). Future research could review the components of the model and its impact on the challenging behavior. For example, the population of child care centers included those providing the School Readiness Program; future studies could compare this program to Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education program.

While there is no systematic data available on the decision making processes employed by preschools for the expulsion of children, there is anecdotal information (Kochhar-Bryant and White, 2007). This research study aimed to provide data on the phenomenon of preschool expulsion in two counties in the State of Florida. One of the suggestions for future research is the establishment of a systematic data collection method for the State. This would provide longitudinal data to help guide the policy decisions made that impact young children.

Future research on the topic of challenging behavior and its impact on preschool expulsion could focus on the role of center director and how the center's policies impact the decision to expel a child. This was reinforced by the variations in the discipline policies given to families and the lack of standardization across the state. The administration of a school setting needs attention to financing, hiring, training of staff, and building maintenance, before it can perform the function of caring for or educating children (Sameroff, 2010).

## **Limitations**

This qualitative research study focused on child care center directors in School Readiness Programs in two Florida counties. The data collection methods included a questionnaire, in-depth interview with a random sample of respondents, and document analysis. One limitation of the study could be the low response rate in one of the counties. Two principal reasons for potential respondents not completing the survey include the failure to deliver the questionnaires to the target population and the reluctance of people to respond (Baruch and Holtom, 2008). Given the sensitive nature of the research topic, it is possible that child care center directors in the second county did not feel comfortable answering the questionnaire-even though confidentiality was assured.

A second limitation of my study may have been my role as a parent of a child who's previously been expelled from a child care center and a former child care center director. While this background provided me a common frame of reference to establish rapport with the in-depth interview participants, it could be argued that the participants provided answers unlike their natural behavior to accommodate the researcher (Patton, 2002). Many preemptive steps were taken to guard against this bias. First, I did not share that my child was previously expelled from a program. However, it should be disclosed that I know some of the in-depth interview participants personally and they are aware of this information. All study participants were provided with the same materials; a consent letter fully outlining the research study, a questionnaire, and an interview protocol (for those participating in the interviews).



A final limitation would be given the small sample size this study does not lend itself to large scale generalizations. However, generalization in qualitative research must be viewed differently than generalizability in quantitative research (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative studies embrace the specific context to each participant (Yin, 2009). As a result, generalizability in the qualitative sense becomes context specific and applicable only to other similar situations (Merriam, 2009). This possible limitation allows for future studies to be designed with this in mind and contain a larger sample size, if needed.

## Appendix A

### “CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS AND BELIEF SURVEY”

*Please answer these questions pertaining to your child care center’s policies and procedures on challenging behaviors. Some questions have a section to list additional information. Please use this space to provide additional information e.g. the type of curriculum used in the center. We anticipate this survey will take ten to fifteen minutes to complete. Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in this worthwhile research.*

#### Demographic Information

<p>Sex:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Male</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Female</p>	<p>Age:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 21-30 years old</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 31-40 years old</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 41-50 years old</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 51-60 years old</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 61-70 years old</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other, please list</p> <hr style="width: 100%;"/>
<p>Race</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> White</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Black or African American</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> American Indian or Alaska Native</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Asian</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other</p>	<p>Highest Education Level</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> High School Diploma</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> GED</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Florida Child Care Professional Certificate (FCCPC)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> National CDA</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Associate Degree (AS, AA, AAS)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bachelors Degree</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Masters Degree</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Ph.D.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other, please list</p> <hr style="width: 100%;"/>
<p>Are you a member of any early childhood professional development organization?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please specify which one:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Child Development Education Association (CDEA)</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Florida Association for the Education of Young Children (FLAEYC)</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Florida Family Child Care Association (FFCCA)</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Florida Association of Child Care Management (FACCM)</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Division of Early Childhood (DEC)</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Zero to Three</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Other, please list</p> <hr style="width: 30%; margin-left: 0;"/>	

### Child Care Center Administration

<p>What type of child care center do you currently administer?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Private, for profit</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Private, non-profit</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Faith-based</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Family child care home</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Public</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other, please list _____</li> </ul>	<p>What are the ages of children served in the center?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Infants (Birth-12 months)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Toddlers (12-36 months)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Preschool (36-60 months)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> School Age (Kindergarten-12 years)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other, please list: _____</li> </ul>
<p>Is the child care center accredited?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please select which one: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Accredited Professional Preschool Learning Environment (APPLE)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> National Accreditation Commission for Early Childhood Programs (NAC)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Council on Accreditation (COA)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Association of Christian Teachers and Schools (ACTS)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other, please list _____</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>What is the capacity of the child care center you administer? (e.g., how many children are you licensed to serve)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 0-35 children</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 36-75 children</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 76-125 children</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 126-150 children</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 150+ children</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other, please list: _____</li> </ul>
<p>Does your child care center participate in the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</li> </ul>	<p>Does your child care center participate in the School Readiness Program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</li> </ul>
<p>Have you previously served as a child care center director?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If yes, how many years did you serve as a director previously? _____</li> </ul>	<p>Does your child care center have a contract with the school district or other entity to provide prekindergarten special education services?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</li> </ul>
<p>Do any children enrolled participate in the Early Steps program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</li> </ul>	

## Challenging Behavior

Please identify the top three challenging behaviors present in your child care center:

Check all that apply:

- Acting without thinking
- Bullying
- Fidgeting or moving around too much
- Temper tantrums
- Aggression toward people or objects
- Fighting with others
- Disobeying rules or requests
- Talking back to adults
- Lying or not telling the truth
- Breaking into or stopping group activities
- Inattention
- Getting distracted easily
- Internalizing/withdrawing (e.g., acting lonely, acting sad, getting embarrassed easily)

How do you involve family members when a child in your center is consistently displaying challenging behavior?

- Communication (verbal and/or written)
- Conferences or meetings
- Work with family members
- Ask parents to come to the school
- Ask family to reinforce good behavior at home
- Develop a plan to address child's behavior
- Link families to additional support services
- Share information on development and behavior management
- Share program policies
- Other procedures (please specify)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Dismissal Information**

Have you had any additional training related to child development and/or early childhood education?

- No
- Yes, please identify which trainings:

---

---

How many children have been dismissed or asked to leave your program in the past twelve months?

---

What were the reasons for the dismissal of the child/children? Check all that apply:

- Inability of parent/guardian(s) to pay for child care
- Changes in funding
- Lack of resources
- Physical limitations of caregiver
- Safety of other children
- Child care setting provided too much stimulation for the child
- Child care setting not challenging enough for the child
- Behavior problems of the child
- Parent/guardian expectations could not be met
- Other, please specify

---

What resources would have been helpful to help you retain the child/children?

---

---

---

---

How did you work with the family to help them find a suitable arrangement for their child?

---

As a follow up to this survey, we would like to interview you to learn more about how your child care center creates and implements policies to work with children displaying challenging behavior. If you are willing to participate in this interview, please fill out the information below and you will be contacted to schedule an interview.

**You are not required to fill out this information!**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

Child Care Center: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B

### “IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW”

Opening Script:

*Thank you for your willingness to participate in this in-depth interview. This will allow me to gather additional information on how your child care center works with children displaying challenging behaviors. This interview should take approximately fifteen to thirty minutes.*

*In order to capture your answers appropriately, I would like to tape record this interview. Would you provide your consent to allow me to tape this interview? I would also like to assure you that your responses will remain confidential. To achieve this, I would like to code your answers. Would you mind giving me a code that includes your birth date (month and year) and a four digit part of a phone number you use regularly?*

**Interview Questions:**

1. What do you do to prevent challenging behavior?

*Script/Examples: Do you establish clear rules, expectations and/or routines?  
Do you work with families and outside agencies (e.g., the coalition, Early Steps?)*

2. How do you respond to challenging behavior?

*Script/Examples: Do you provide more training for the teachers? Do you model in the classroom?*

3. What additional resources/supports would help your role as a director in a center to respond to challenging behaviors?

*Script/Examples: Is there anything else that would have helped you work with this child?*

4. Have you seen any trends in the past twelve months related to challenging behaviors?

5. Which technique has been most successful related to working with children displaying challenging behaviors?

*Script/Examples: Is there one scenario or story that you can recall where you were successful?*

Closing Script:

*Thank you so much for your time. Do you have any questions before I stop recording?*

## APPENDIX C

### List of Starter Codes

Topic	Code	Location
<b><u>Challenging Behavior</u></b>		
CH: Challenging Behavior Definition	CB	
CH: Challenging Behavior-Prevention	CH-PV	
CH: Challenging Behavior-Parent Involvement	CH-PI	
CH: Resources to Prevent Behavior	CH-RSP	
CH: Response to Challenging Behavior	CH-RESP	
CH: Additional Training to Address Behavior	CH-ATAB	
<b><u>Dismissal</u></b>		
DE: Reasons for Expulsion	DE-REA	
DE: Number of Expulsion (12 months)	DE-NUM	
DE: Assist Family Find Other Arrangement	DE-OA	
DE: Resources to Retain Child	DE-RHRC	



## Appendix D

### Iteration Table (to be read from the bottom up)

<b>Fifth Iteration: Application to Data Set</b>		
<b>Fourth Iteration: Process for Reaching Agreement on Member Check</b>		
<b>Third Iteration: Reliability: Member Checks</b>		
Allow interview participants to review transcript of interview. Come to an agreement on data collected.		
<b>Second Iteration: Analyze using common themes</b>		
CH-RSP-More training to prevent challenging behavior	DE-RHRC-Creating a community within child care center	FI5: Additional Community Resources for Teachers and Families working with Challenging Behavior
<b>First Iteration: Initial Code /Content Analysis</b>		
CH-PV: Challenging Behavior-Prevention  CH-PI :Challenging Behavior-Parent Involvement  CH-RSP: Resources to Prevent Behavior  CH-RESP: Response to Challenging Behavior  CH-ATAB: Additional Training to Address Behavior	DE-REA: Reasons for Expulsion  DE-NUM: Number of Expulsions  DE-OA: Assist Family Find Other Arrangement  DE-RHRC: Resources to Retain Child	FI1: Communication  FI2: Conferences or Meetings  FI3: Work with Family Members  FI4: Develop a plan to address behavior  FI5: Link family to additional services
QUESTIONNAIRE	IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW	DOCUMENT REVIEW

## **Appendix E: IRB Human Subjects Approval**

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 2/28/2012

To: Dawn Bee

Address: [REDACTED]  
Dept.: EDUCATION

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research  
This Is It! An Exploratory Study on Child Care Center Directors' Response to Challenging Behaviors and Its Impact on Preschool Expulsion in Two Florida Counties

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and one member of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Expedited per 45 CFR § 46.110(7) and has been approved by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 2/21/2013 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is FWA00000168/IRB number IRB00000446.

Cc: Ithel Jones, Advisor  
HSC No. 2011.7544

## **APPENDIX F: Participant Consent Letter**

January 17, 2012

Dear Participant:

You are invited to participate in a research study on challenging behavior and its impact on preschool expulsion. You were selected as a possible participant because of your experience operating a child care center for children participating in the School Readiness Program in Florida. This research study will take place from February-April 2012. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in this study.

This study is being conducted by Noelle Bee, a Ph.D. candidate in the School of Teacher Education at The Florida State University.

### **Background:**

The purpose of this study is to identify ways that child care center directors identify challenging behaviors and the policies and procedures they utilize to address them, including possible removal from the child care center.

### **Procedures:**

If you agree to this study, we would ask that you do the following things. We would like you to complete a paper survey. The survey will take approximately ten to fifteen minutes to complete. After the survey, if selected, I would like to interview you and tape record the session to ask additional questions on the policies and procedures used in your child care center. If you are selected for a face to face interview, the length of the interview will be no longer than thirty minutes. Center administrative documents such as the center discipline policy and procedures for working with parents will be reviewed.

**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept confidential and private to the extent permitted by law. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject or your child care center. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. The tape recordings will only be used for educational purposes and will be erased after five years.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the Florida State University, the Early Learning Coalition or myself. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Noelle Bee. You may ask any questions of her before making your final decision. If you have a question later, you are encouraged to email her at [redacted] at Florida State University. My major professor at Florida State University is Dr. Ithel Jones. His email address is [redacted]

If you have questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than Noelle Bee, you are encouraged to contact the [redacted]. You may reach them by email at [redacted] or by phone at [redacted]

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I consent to participate in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## REFERENCES

- Adams, G. & Capizzano, J. (2000). The Number of Child Care Arrangements by Children Under Five: *The Urban Institute*.
- Agency for Workforce Innovation's Office of Early Learning Annual Report 2009-2010*  
Retrieved from <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com>
- American Academy of Pediatrics (2003). Out-of-School Suspension and Expulsion. *Pediatrics*, 112(5), 1206-1209.
- Anfara, V., Brown, K., & Mangione, T. (2002). Qualitative Analysis on Stage: Making the Research Process More Public. *Educational Researcher*.
- Ayres, L., Kavanaugh, K., & Knafl, K. (2003). Within-Case and Across-Case Approaches to Qualitative Data Analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*. 13(6). 871-883.
- Barbarin, O., & Crawford, G. (2006). Acknowledging and Reducing Stigmatization of African American Boys. *Young Children* 79-86.
- Barnett, D., Elliot, N., Wolsing, L., Bunker, C., Haski, H., McKissick, Vander Meer, C., (2006). Response to Intervention for Young Children with Extremely Challenging Behaviors: What It Might Look Like. *School Psychology Review*. 35(4). 568-582.
- Baruch, Y., & Holtom, B. (2008). Survey Response Rate Levels and Trends in Organizational Research. *Human Relations*. 61(8). 1139-1160.
- Beebe-Frankerberger, M., Lane, K., Gresham, F., & MacMillian, D. (2005). Students With or At Risk for Problem Behavior: Betwixt & Between Teacher and Parent Expectations. *Preventing School Failure*. 49(2). 10-17.
- Borstein, M. (2009). Toward a Model of Culture, Parent, and Child Transactions. In A. Sameroff (Eds) *The Transactional Model of Development* (pp. 139-162). Washington DC: American Psychological Association.
- Bredenkamp, S., & Copple, C. (2009). *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8*. National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Buck, K., & Ambrosino, R. (2004). Children with Severe Behavior Problems: A Survey of Texas Child Care Centers' Responses. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 34(4). 241-246.

- Carr, V., Johnson, L., & Corkwell, S., (2004). *Challenging Behaviors in Early Childhood Settings: Creating a Place for All Children*. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing.
- Cho Blair, K., Fox, L., & Lentini, R. (2010). Use of Positive Behavior Support to Address the Challenging Behavior of Young Children Within A Community Early Childhood Program. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*. 20(10), 1-12.
- Cresswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. United States: Sage Publications.
- Denno, D., Phillips, L., Harte, H., & Moomaw, S. (2004). Creating a Supportive Classroom Environment. In Bell, Carr, Denno, Johnson, & Phillips (Eds). *Challenging Behaviors in Early Childhood Settings: Creating a Place for All Children* (pp.49-66). Baltimore: Brookes Publishing.
- deShipper, Van IJzendoorn, & Tavecchio (2004). Stability in Center Day Care: Relations with Children's Well-being and Problem in Day Care. *Social Development*. 13(4).
- Dey, E. Working with Low Survey Response Rates: The Efficacy of Weighting Adjustments. *Research in Higher Education*. 38(2). 215-227.
- Division for Early Childhood (2007). Identification of and Intervention with Challenging Behavior. Missoula, MT.
- Florida Department of Children and Families. Chapter 65C-22: Florida Administrative Code Child Care Standards. Retrieved from [http:// http://ccrain.fl-dcf.org/documents/2/470.pdf](http://http://ccrain.fl-dcf.org/documents/2/470.pdf)
- Gettinger, M., Stoiber, K., & Kosick, R. (2008). Effects of a Preparation Program Focused on Accommodating Children with Challenging Behaviors. *Teacher Education and Special Education*. 31(3). 164-181.
- Gilliam, W., & Shahar, G. (2006). Preschool and Child Care Expulsion and Suspension: Rates and Predictors in One State. *Infants & Young Children*, 19(3), 228-245.
- Gilliam, W. (2008). Implementing Policies to Reduce the Likelihood of Preschool Expulsion. *Foundation for Child Development*.
- Goldman, D. (1995). Emotional Intelligence. New York. Random House
- Graves, S., & Howes, C. (2011). Ethnic Differences in Social-Emotional Development in Preschool: The Impact of Teacher Child Relationships and Classroom Quality. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 26(3), 202-214.
- Gresham, F. & Elliott, S. (2008). Social Skills Improvement System. Pearson

- Hemmeter, M.L., & Hunter, A. (2009) Addressing Challenging Behavior in Infants and Toddlers. *Zero to Three*. 29(3). 5-12.
- Hemmeter, M., Santos, R., Ostrosky (2008). Preparing Early Childhood Educators to Address Young Childrens Social Emotional Development and Challenging Behavior: A Survey of Higher Education Programs. *Journal of Early Intervention*.
- Hemmeter, M.L., Ostrosky, M., & Fox, L. (2006). Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning: A Conceptual Model for Intervention. *School Psychology Review*. 35(4). 583-601.
- Irvin-Vitela, L. (2010). *Child Retention in Wisconsin Child Care Settings: Understanding the Attitudes, Beliefs, and Behaviors that Impact Expulsion and Retention in Early Care and Education*. Supporting Families Together Association.
- Jimerson (2001). A Synthesis of Grade Retention Research: Looking Back and Moving Forward. *The California School Psychologist*. 6. pp.47-59.
- Joseph, G., Strain, J., & Skinner (2003) Engaged Supervision to Support Recommended Practices for Young Children with Challenging Behavior. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*. 24(1). 39-50.
- Jorde Bloom, P. (2007). *From the Inside Out: The Power of Reflection and Self-Awareness- A Management Series for Early Childhood Administrators*. Illinois: New Horizons
- Jorde Bloom, P. (1998). Navigating the Rapids: Directors Reflect on Their Careers and Professional Development. *Young Children* pp. 32-36.
- Jorde Bloom, P. (1992). The Child Care Center Director: A Critical Component of Program Quality. *Educational Horizons*. pp.138-145.
- Kaiser, A. (2007). Addressing Challenging Behavior: Systematic Problems, Systematic Solutions. *Journal of Early Intervention*. 29(2). 114-118.
- Kaiser, B., & Rasminksy, B. (2012) *Challenging Behavior in Young Children: Understanding, Preventing, and Responding Effectively*. Boston: Pearson.
- Kaiser, B., & Rasminksy, B. (2007) *Challenging Behavior in Young Children: Understanding, Preventing, and Responding Effectively*. Boston: Pearson.
- Kocchar C., Bryant, White (2007). Issue Brief: Early Care and Education Brief. Hamilton Fish Institute.
- Light, Singer, J. & Willett, J. (1990) *By Design: Planning Research on Higher Education*



- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (1999). *Designing Qualitative Research*. United States: Sage Publications.
- Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*. United States. John Wiley & Sons.
- Michail, S. (2011). Understanding School Responses to Students' Challenging Behavior: A Review of Literature. *Improving Schools*. 14(2). 156-171.
- Miles, M., & Huberman, A. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. California. Sage Publications.
- Miller, E. & Almon, J. (2009). *Crisis in the Kindergarten: Why Children Need to Play in School*. Alliance for Childhood.
- Mitchell, D., & Cram, P. (2009). Early Predictors of Behavior Problems: Two Years After Early Intervention. *Journal of Early Intervention*. 32(3). 3-16.
- Morrissey, T. (2009). Multiple Child-Care Arrangements and Young Children's Behavioral Outcomes. *Child Development*, 80(1),59-76.
- National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (2012). *Capitol Connection Guidebook: A Congressional Resource for CCR&Rs*. Washington DC.
- National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2008). *Mental Health Problems in Early Childhood Can Impair Learning Behavior for Life*. Working Paper No. 6. Retrieved from <http://www.developingchild.net>.
- National Academy of Sciences. (2000) *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*. Washington DC. National Academy Press.
- North Dakota State Data Center. (2007) Licensed Child Care Dismissal Study. Retrieved from: <http://www.ndsu.edu/sdc>
- Osher, D., Bear, G., Sprague, J., & Doyle, W. (2010). How Can We Improve School Discipline. *Educational Researcher*. 39(1). 48-58.
- Olson, S. & Lunkenheimer, E. (2009) Expanding Concepts of Self-Regulation to Social Relationships: Transactional Process in the Development of Early Behavioral Adjustment. In A. Sameroff (Eds) *The Transactional Model of Development* (pp. 55-76). Washington DC: American Psychological Association.
- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research Evaluation Methods*. California. Sage Publications, Inc.

- Powell, D.; Dunlap, G. & Fox, L. (2006). Prevention and Intervention for the Challenging Behaviors of Toddlers and Preschoolers. *Infants & Young Children*, 19(1), 25-35.
- Qi, C. & Kaiser, A. (2003). Behavior Problems of Preschool Children from Low-Income Families: Review of the Literature. *Topics in Special Education*.
- Quesenberry, A., Hemmeter, M.L., & Ostrosky, M. (2010). Addressing Challenging Behaviors in Head Start: A Closer Look at Program Policies and Procedures. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 30 (4), 209-220.
- Raver, C. (2002). Emotions Matter: Making the Case for the Role of Young Children's Emotional Development for Early School Readiness. *Society for Research in Child Development*, 16(3).
- Raver, C., Jones, S., Li-Grining, C., Zhai, F., (2009). Targeting Children's Behavior Problems in Preschool Classrooms: A Cluster-Randomized Control Trial. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 77(2), 302-316.
- Ray, R., Bowman, B. & Brownell, J. (2006). Teacher-Child Relationships, Social-Emotional Development and School Achievement. In Barbara Bowman & Evelyn Moore (Eds), *School Readiness and Social Emotional Development: Perspectives on Cultural Diversity* (pp. 7-21).
- Rimm-Kaufmann, S., Pianta, R., Cox, M. (2000). Teacher's Judgements of Problems in the Transition to Kindergarten. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. (15)2. 147-166.
- Sameroff, A. (2010). A Unified Theory of Development: A Dialectic Integration of Nature and Nurture. *Child Development*. 81(1). 6-22.
- Sameroff, A. (2009). The Transactional Model. *The Transactional Model of Development: How Children and Contexts Shape Each Other* pp. 3-21.
- Sameroff, A., & Mackenzie, M. (2003). Research Strategies for Capturing Transactional Models of Development: The Limits of the Possible. *Development and Psychopathology*. 15. 613-640.
- Schulman, K., & Blank, H. (2011). *State Child Care Assistance Policies 2011: Reduced Support for Families in Challenging Times*. National Women's Law Center.
- Sutherland, K., & Oswald, D. (2005). The Relationship Between Teacher and Student Behavior in Classrooms for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: Transactional Processes. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*. 14(1). 1-14.
- Snell, M., Berlin, R., Voorhees, M., Stanton-Chapman, & Hadden. (2011). A Survey of Preschool Staff Concerning Problem Behavior and its Prevention in Head Start Classrooms. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*. (20)10. 1-11.

- Stormont, M., (2002). Externalizing Behavior Problems in Young Children: Contributing Factor and Early Intervention. *Psychology in Schools* (39) 2. 127-138.
- Stangor, C. (2004). *Research Methods for the Behavioral Sciences*. Houghton Mifflin Company.
- United States Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. (2012). *Part II: 2009-2010 Civil Rights Data Collection*. Retrieved from: <http://ocrdata.ed.gov>
- Walker, H., & Golly, A. (1999). Developing Behavioral Alternatives for Antisocial Children at the Point of school Entry. *The Clearing House*. 73(2). 104-106.
- Westling, D. (2010). Teachers and Challenging Behavior: Knowledge, Views, and Practices. *Remedial and Special Education*. 31(1). 48-63.
- Whitted, K. (2011). Understanding How Social and Emotional Skill Deficits Contribute to School Failure. *Preventing School Failure*, 55(1), 10-16.
- Wilson & Hanson (2010). *Effective Policies for Promoting Early Behavioral Development*.
- Wood, B., Blair, K., Ferro, J. (2009). Young Children With Challenging Behavior: Function Based Assessment and Intervention. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*. 29(2). 68-78.
- Yates, (2008). *Research Synthesis on Screening and Assessing Social- Emotional Competence*. The Center for the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Dawn Noelle Bee is a lifelong learner who is committed to the field of early childhood education. She began her Ph.D. coursework as an effort to renew her Florida's Teacher Certificate and said, "*why don't I just work on my terminal degree?*" During this process, she's found her love of research and embraced the world of problem solving. Dawn Noelle Bee has extensive experience in the field of early childhood. She's served as a preschool director, a prekindergarten teacher, and a policy analyst in the State's Office of Early Learning.

Dawn Noelle Bee is committed to making a difference in the life of children and families. She has known from a young age that she wanted to become a teacher, but did not realize the realm of possibilities awaiting her. She is a critical thinker, a committed advocate, and a loving person. Her impact to the field will be felt for years to come.