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Exploring childcare professionals' pedagogical choice when guiding children's social and behavioral development

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Exploring Childcare Professionals' Pedagogical Choice When Guiding Children's Social and Behavioral Development

by

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DEDICATION

To my mother, Patricia Rogers and my husband, Daniel Harper,

who vehemently remind me,

“We must become the change we want to see.” Mahatma Gandhi

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Exploring Childcare Professionals' Pedagogical Choice

When Guiding Children's Social and Behavioral Development

Mary Harper

ABSTRACT

To date the research in the area of social emotional competence has focused on child-based intervention and outcomes. The findings cite effective approaches to assisting children in the area of social and emotional development involving promotion of appropriate social skills, explicit instruction of behavioral expectations, and support for emotional literacy and awareness (Wester – Stratton, 1990; Hyson, 2004; Fox et al, 2003; Denham & Burton, 1996). These recommended practices requires teacher knowledge and skill, content knowledge in the area of social emotional developmental, and skills in using pedagogical techniques that support acquisition of the aforementioned areas. Educational researchers and specialists cannot begin to support the advancement of teacher practice in the area of social-emotional competence until they are clear on the methods and behaviors childcare professional currently employ.

On the basis of a review of empirical literature, it is clear that limited descriptive information about childcare provider's pedagogical practices in the area of promoting social, emotional, and behavioral competence exists. The intent of this inquiry was to investigate childcare professionals' chosen methods in guiding children's social and behavioral development. After identifying which methods were used, the researcher

sought to describe the childcare professional's intention when choosing to use specific pedagogical techniques during large- and small-group instruction. Specifically, the concentration of interest was on the methods used during teacher-initiated instruction (such as large and small group) to guide children's social skill building and behavioral expectation compliance. Research questions were examined using a mixed methodological framework with a descriptive research design component and a phenomenographic approach incorporating stimulated recall.

Findings suggest childcare professionals readily and proficiently engage in explicit instruction around behavioral expectations. However, they rarely systematically instruct children on social skills. Childcare professionals seem to rely on the implicit nature of day to day interactions to embed social interactions and reactions. Further, childcare professionals seem to be primed for systematic instruction around the promotion of social skills. They are cognoscente of explicit techniques to guide behavioral expectation compliance but seem to have limited transference from this skill to explicit instruction in social skill acquisition. Additional findings and implications are provided in the text.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In early education, there is a significant dilemma emerging that is of epidemic proportions. Children are arriving in schools ill prepared for the rigors of communal educational settings that require cooperating with, listening to, and participating in the activities of learning (Hyson, 2004). As has been documented time and again, through varying formats, children must be ready to enter schools. Teachers have repeatedly acknowledged that children need to come to school with the confidence, capacity, persistence, and concentration to engage in challenging academic tasks (Kaufman, 2002). Additionally, they need to be able to communicate their emotions effectively, listen attentively, and follow directions. It is exactly these social competency skills that may limit children's chances of success upon school entry (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001).

Prosocial behaviors are a part of academic competency. Children's future learning is dependent on prosocial behaviors. There is a relationship between social–emotional outcomes and intellectual outcomes (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, &Wahlberg, 2004). In fact, school failure is a likely outcome for children who lack social and emotional competence (Hyson, 2004). Children who struggle in school due to limited social competency skills are more likely to experience compounding effects to their inability to succeed academically, such as peer rejection, unpleasant teacher interaction, and punitive

contact with parents. Antisocial conduct and poor academic performance is linked (Smith, 2005). An accurate predictor of academic performance in the first-grade year is social and behavioral competence, more so than cognitive skills and family background (Raver & Knitzer, 2002).

Though studies clearly show a need for children to display social and emotional competence upon entry into school, many children are still entering school lacking the social, emotional, and behavioral skills necessary for learning and sustaining school success (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001). Children's limited social–emotional competence results in negative and/or punitive interactions with teachers and parents, as well as a disconnect of support from their peer group. The compounding effects of negative social interactions in both home and school settings cause these struggling students to feel isolated and defeated, thus discouraging future cognitive risk-taking in various settings (Smith, 2005; Raver, 2002).

There is evidence that these children can meet success through early intervention in the form of quality childcare and early education. When children participate in programs that provide highly qualified teachers, low teacher-to-student ratios, developmentally appropriate expectations and curriculum, and family involvement, they are more likely to come to school with the social and pre-academic skills necessary to meet the demands of compulsory education (Galinsky & Freidman, 1993; Duncan, Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994; Frede, 1995; Barnett, 1995). High-quality early education has implications far beyond the limited scope of compulsory education. Quality early intervention has been recognized by many to have positive correlations to higher

education enrollment and completion, professional endeavors that show longevity, and interaction with communities as active constituents (Lazar & Darlington, 1982; Lally, Mangione, Honig, & Witter, 1988; Haskins, 1985; McKay, Condelli, Ganson, Barrett, McConskey, & Plantz, 1985; Galinsky & Freidman, 1993). The literature contends that children who have access to quality early education demonstrate robust gains up through Grade 3 and sustained academic performance up to the seventh-grade year (Lally, Mangione, Honig, & Witter, 1988; Galinsky & Freidman, 1993).

Quality early intervention is contingent on access to and delivery of quality early childhood programs. The major part of any early intervention learning experience is the teacher who structures the environment, experiences, and relationship with which the child will have contact on a regular basis (Sermna, Neilson, Lambros, & Fornes, 2000; Fox, Dunlop, Hemmeter, Joseph, & Strain, 2003). Teachers have been identified as the most influential component in children's learning (Darlington-Hammond & Ball, 1998). Quality early education is directly affected by the quality of early educators and the level of professional development in which these early educators have participated (Neubert, 1998; Foster, Keltsch, Kamrandt, Sosna, & Yang, 2001).

Pedagogical content knowledge is the significant factor in determining how teachers are able to shape and structure their practice to promote the attainment of development and content outcomes (Lyons, 1990; Shulman, 1986, 1987; Bruner, 1990). Pedagogical content knowledge includes knowledge of core content and knowledge of pedagogical techniques that enhance a learner's understanding and use of the content being explored (Copley, 2004). This requires that teachers have both experiential

knowledge of methods and knowledge of specific area content (Strain & Timm, 2001; Heibert & Carpenter, 1992). In the area of teaching social competency skills to young children, this holds especially true. Pedagogical methods for teaching said skills are specific to this unique genre of content (Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, Bryant, & Clifford, 2000). Though it is easy to say that providing pedagogical content knowledge to early educators can solely solve the dilemma of promoting social–emotional competence in early childhood settings, it is relevant to look more closely at practitioners who are working in the early childhood setting.

Minimal qualifications are the norm in most early childhood care systems (Helburn, Culkin, Morris, Mocan, Howes, Phillipsen, Bryant, Cliffford, Cryer, Peisener-Feinburg, Burchinal, Kagan, & Rustici, 1995). Most early childhood professionals are not in public schools and do not hold a bachelor's degree. Most early childhood practitioners are in childcare centers (Ratcliff, Cruz, & McCarthy, 2001). In fact, most early childhood teachers or childcare professionals have earned only a high school diploma or GED and have had no formal training beyond high school. This means this same population of professionals has limited, if any, exposure to pedagogical content knowledge in the complex content area of social–emotional competence or any other subject matter.

There is an inextricable link between educational training and the quality of early educational environments (Epstein, 1993; Waldman, Weinberg, & Scarr, 1994). The majority of early childhood teachers do not have adequate training (Foster, Keltsch, Kamradt, Sosna, & Yang, 2001; Neubert, 1988; Daniels, Kalkman, & McCoombs, 2001; Kelly, 2000). Even postsecondary teacher preparation programs do not provide an

adequate opportunity for aspiring teachers to become familiar with both methods and core content (Ratcliff, Cruz, & McCarthy, 2001). Consequently, it is unlikely that early educators know effective practices for facilitating children's social, emotional, and behavioral development (Hemmeter, Ostrosky, & Fox, 2006; Smith, 2006). In fact, early childhood practitioners have admitted that they themselves feel inadequately prepared to work with children with challenging behaviors and that they lack the skills required to support children's social and emotional development (National Implementation Research Network, 2005). It is relevant to ask, "What are the barriers that keep early professionals from gaining the skills necessary to meet the needs of children in the area of social–emotional competence and thus later academic success?"

The reported barriers for practitioners are (a) access to training that provides knowledge and skills, (b) access to financial resources to support children's additional needs, (c) preconceived beliefs and attitudes teachers hold regarding the topic of social–emotional competence and how to affect challenging behavior in a positive way, and (d) the network of systems of care for children and families (National Implementation Research Network, 2005). In short, these practitioners self-report that they need help and assistance in the classrooms in which they work and that they need access to relevant knowledge and skills in the classrooms in which they learn. With these self-reported challenges of limited ability and knowledge before them, how do childcare professionals practice social, emotional, and behavioral guidance?

The documented research in the area of childcare professional practice is sparse at best. In fact, following this researcher's review of the literature, only two empirical

articles were found. One examines the practice of daycare workers and the discipline techniques they employ (Arnold, McWilliams, & Arnold, 1998), and the second examines the relationship between childcare workers' beliefs and intentions when interacting with children daily (Wilcox-Herzog & Ward, 2004). Arnold et al. allude to the limited research in the area of childcare and to nonexistent research in the area of guiding children's behaviors.

It is on this limited basis of understanding surrounding the practice of childcare professionals in the area of guiding children's social and behavioral development that this study is founded. Understanding what teachers are doing can guide how educational professionals provide more extensive knowledge, skills, and support that can enhance childcare professionals' confidence and practice surrounding children's social–emotional competence. Without this understanding, technical assistance models cannot be developed that assist teachers in demonstrating the effective use of strategies that will later affect positive outcomes for children in the area of social competency skills that can sustain future academic endeavors.

Purpose of Study

On the basis of a review of empirical literature, it is clear that limited descriptive information about childcare providers' pedagogical practices in the area of promoting social, emotional, and behavioral competence exists. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to systematically investigate childcare professionals' chosen methods in guiding children's social and behavioral development and thus identify and describe childcare professionals' intentional impetus for using the pedagogical methods they choose during

large- and small-group instruction in the areas of social skill building and behavioral expectation reinforcement.

Research Questions

The specific questions for this study follow:

1. What pedagogical techniques do childcare professionals in a large urban county in the southeastern United States use when guiding 4-year-old children's social and behavioral development during teacher-initiated activities such as large- and small-group instruction?

2. What is the association between the types of pedagogical techniques selected by childcare professionals in a large urban county in the southeastern United States to guide children's social and behavioral development and the type of teacher-initiated activity (such as large and small group) in which they engage?

3. Why do childcare professionals in a large urban county in the southeastern United States choose particular social skill building and behavioral reinforcement techniques to guide 4-year-old children's social and behavioral development during teacher-initiated activities such as large- and small-group instruction?

Significance

To date, the research in the area of social–emotional competence has focused on child-based intervention and outcomes. The findings cite effective approaches to assisting

children in the area of social and emotional development involving the promotion of appropriate social skills, explicit instruction regarding behavioral expectations, and support for emotional literacy and awareness (Wester–Stratton, 1990; Hyson, 2004; Fox et al., 2003; Denham & Burton, 1996). These recommended practices require teacher knowledge and skill, content knowledge in the area of social–emotional development, and skills in using pedagogical techniques that support acquisition of the aforementioned areas. Educational researchers and specialists cannot begin to support the advancement of teacher practice in the area of social–emotional competence until they are clear on the methods and behaviors childcare professionals currently employ.

Definition of Terms

- **Behavioral expectation**: the behavior people desire to happen when they or other individuals are met with specific and varying stimuli (Berk, 2002). Behavioral expectations are often referred to as the "rules" of a classroom, home, church, library, etc.

- **Behavioral expectation reinforcement**: the consistent practice of aligning an individual's behaviors with the cultural environment's anticipated behaviors and appropriate reactions to varying and specific stimuli (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995).

- **Challenging behaviors**: incidents and activities engaged in by a child that cause emotional or physical harm to self, others, or property (Lawry, Danko, & Strain, 1999).

- **Childcare**: facilities that temporarily (for no more than 12 hours) care for children under the age of 13 when the child's primary caregiver is unavailable (Roopnarine & Johnson, 1993).

- **Childcare professional**: an individual adult who works in a childcare center and whose primary role is the early care and education of young children (under the age of 6) (Roopnarine & Johnson, 1993).

- **Childcare provider**: see *childcare professional*

- **Command stated in the negative**: a declarative statement used to request that an inappropriate behavior stop (e.g., "don't kick" when a child is going to kick something; "stop hitting me" when a child is hitting a teacher's arm; Reichele & Walker, 1993).

- **Command stated in the positive**: a declarative statement used to express a desired expectation (e.g., "foot on the floor" when a child is going to kick something; "gentle touches" when a child is hitting a teacher's arm for attention; Reichele & Walker, 1993).

- **Formalized modeling**: a contrived scenario in which an expert (adult or peer) reacts to an event, situation, or stimulus in a way that promotes appropriate cultural mores. It is shown with the expectation that the observer will use a similar technique in a future event. This model becomes an example of preferred behavior and typically implies a positive outcome from engagement in the behavior (Dunlap & Fox, 1999).

- **Interactive modeling as a participant**: a naturally occurring experience or conversation that involves teachers and children sharing in an event, activity, or conversation that models and promotes engagement with appropriate cultural mores (e.g., During an art activity, the teacher says, “May I have the scissors?” A child hands the teacher the scissors. The teacher responds, “Thank you for handing those to me; now I can use them to finish my picture.” Dunlap & Fox, 1999).

- **Large group**: a teacher-initiated instructional time in which the majority of the children in the class come together in a common area to share stories, songs, music and movement, and group lessons (Epstein, 2003).

- **Observational instrument**: used to quantify/qualify observational episodes by an observer (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).

- **Observational tool**: used to assist in capturing observational events and data (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).
- **Proximity**: the act of positioning a child or the self closely. The teacher positions himself/herself within easy reach or eyesight of a child with the intent of maintaining behavioral expectations. The teacher may also position the child within his or her easy reach and eyesight (e.g., During circle time, Jeremiah was rolling around on the floor. The teacher asked Jeremiah to sit next to her while she finished reading the book; Reichele & Walker, 1993)

- **Redirection to task**: the prompting of an individual to return to the acceptable or preferred behavior or activity. This can be done through verbal, physical, or auditory prompts (e.g., “What are you doing?”; Pointing to the scissors or holding scissors in front of the child’s line of vision; “Show me how to put the blocks away.”; Reichele & Walker, 1993).

- **Role playing**: the engagement with a realistic scenario as an actor for the purpose of practicing reactions and responses to previous and/or future life experiences (Dunlap & Fox, 1999).

- **Rule statement**: the stating of a specific behavioral expectation or rule when an individual is not engaged in appropriate behaviors (e.g., “During circle time, we raise our hand when we want to speak”; Reichele & Walker, 1993).

- **Small group**: a teacher-initiated instructional time in which a group of children (no larger than eight) is provided with an activity that is developed by the teacher to meet the developmental needs of the children in the group. The teacher uses this opportunity to assist children in a more intimate setting (Lawry, Danko, & Strain, 1999). This maximum number of children is based on the National Association for the Education of Young Children’s ratio and group-size recommendations.

- **Social and Behavioral Development Observational Instrument for Teacher Practice** (*sbDOITp*): an observational tool that utilizes a table format. It is divided horizontally into the two main teacher-initiated activities, large and small

group, while the vertical columns denote the type of pedagogical methodology category (social skill building or behavioral expectation reinforcement) and the specific techniques that may have been used in that category. For example, in social skill building, there are such pedagogical techniques as (a) interactive modeling as participant, (b) role playing, (c) visual strategy usage, (d) formalized modeling, and (e) support in problem solving. In the category of behavioral expectation reinforcement, there are techniques such as (a) redirection to task, (b) rule statement, (c) command stated in the positive, (d) command stated in the negative, (e) visual strategy usage, (f) teacher-imposed consequence, (g) specific feedback, (h) formalized modeling, and (i) proximity. It seeks to capture data related to the pedagogical methods used by childcare professionals.

- **Social–emotional competence**: an individual's ability to self-regulate and to monitor social reactions and interactions and emotional shifts to varying stimuli (Dunlap & Fox, 1999).

- **Social skill**: the ability to interact, to react, and to respond to various environmental and social situations in a way that is considered culturally acceptable by the societal majority. The use of the word *skill* implies an ability that is usually learned through training (Berk, 2002).

- **Social skill building**: the systematic and intentional teaching of skills that enhance an individual's ability to interact, to react, and to respond to various environmental and social situations in a way that is considered culturally acceptable by the majority of society (Strain, Kohler, Storey, & Danko, 1994).

- **Specific feedback**: the act of providing descriptive language to individuals about the appropriate behavior in which they are/were engaged (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995). Subjective words like *good* or *great* do not need to be present. However, vocal inflection and positive facial and body expression are required to affirm the approved behavior (e.g., "You put those blocks in the basket and then put them in the correct space on the shelf!" while the teacher is at the child's eye level, making eye contact, and smiling.)

- **Support in problem solving**: the act of an expert (adult and/or peer) guiding the process of problem solving when an individual is in the midst of a problem or dilemma with a peer or adult (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995). The expert is not involved in the immediate problem.

- **Teacher-imposed consequence**: a reprimand is given that revokes an individual's free choice temporarily because the individual engaged in inappropriate behaviors (e.g., a child is sent to "time out" because he threw blocks in the classroom and they hit another child; Reichele & Walker, 1993).

- **Visual strategy usage**: the use of printed pictures, symbols, or gesture to promote cognitive cueing of a behavioral or procedural reaction (Reichele & Wacker, 1993).

- **Vignettes/snippets**: small portions of video documentation that seek to capture a specific episode or incident.

Delimitations

Based on the chosen sample population, it is anticipated that generalizations can be made to similar childcare professionals in large urban communities in the southeastern United States.

Limitations

Limitations to this study include (but are not limited to) the following:

1. The researcher's role as the primary investigator could have limited the validity of the qualitative measures of the study through preheld biases from previous work with childcare providers.

2. Observational data were collected during large- and small-group times in the morning only.

3. The Hawthorne Effect (Jex, 2002) may have been present, meaning that participants may have internally monitored their actions and reactions due to the presence of an outside observer

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In 2001, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation represented the first time in history that a national reform effort emphasized the achievement of all student groups with specific emphasis on ethnic minorities, the socioeconomically disadvantaged, and students with special needs. The point of this emphasis was to reduce achievement gaps in groups that are perceived as high risk. This legislation helped to verify for numerous early interventionists and early educational specialists what had been known for decades: that a gap between the wealthy majority and the poor minority exists. What the legislative document do not frame was that the gap can be significantly narrowed in the earliest years through quality intervention that focuses on the whole child, including cognition and language, physical mobility and control, and social–emotional competence (Lazar & Darlington, 1982; Lally, Mangione, Honig, & Witter, 1988).

What has made NCLB frustrating for educators is the heavy and almost exclusive emphasis on academic tasking as a singular marker of growth. As a result, public educational sectors and media are emphasizing the importance of academic task preparedness (e.g., letter identification, number concepts, prewriting dexterity, etc.). What has been lost, by all but educators, is that children must come to school prepared to engage in communal educational settings in which they must listen to, cooperate with, and participate in the activities of learning (Hyson, 2004). The need for children to enter

school ready to learn in an academic social context has been documented time and again; it is the emphasis on the method that has varied. The Kaufman report of 2002 documented what teachers have been trying to communicate for years about the readiness skills students need upon entering school: confidence, the capacity to develop relationships with peers, concentration and persistence when engaging in challenging tasks, the ability to communicate emotions effectively, and the ability to listen attentively and to follow directions. These are the skills that children need in order to be ready for school (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001). These social competency skills are part of the social–emotional domain of development.

Social–Emotional Competence: The Missing Link

Academic readiness includes prosocial behaviors on which later learning depends (Haskins, 1985; McKay, Condelli, Ganson, Barrett, McConskey, & Plantz, 1985). There is a compelling link between social–emotional outcomes and intellectual outcomes, with a direct relationship between antisocial conduct and poor academic performance (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Wahlberg, 2004). Young children who lack social and emotional competence are more likely to experience school failure due to compounding issues of peer rejection and unpleasant teacher interaction followed by punitive contact with parents. “Social and behavioral competence in young children predicts their academic performance in the first grade year over and above their cognitive skills and family background” (Smith & Fox, 2002).

Despite the compelling evidence, there remains a disproportionately large population of children entering school who lack the social, emotional, and behavioral

skills required for learning and school success. In a survey of 3,000 kindergarten teachers by Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, and Cox (2000), 20% claimed that at least half of their incoming students lacked the necessary social skills, while 30% of the students lacked academic skills such as working in groups and following directions.

Social–emotional competence not only affects children's entry into school, but also continues to follow them. Children who display disruptive behavior in school receive less positive feedback from teachers, spend less time on task, and receive less instruction. They rarely engage in learning with peers and experience a disconnect of support from the peers in their class. Without the connection of support from teachers and peers, children may lose interest and feel defeated in their attempts to learn and to participate in the community of learning (Smith, 2005; Raver, 2002).

It is well known and widely accepted that children learn through social interaction (Piaget, 1971; Vygotsky, 1978; Perret-Clermont, 1980; Doise & Mugny, 1984; Forman & Kraker, 1985; Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992; Sophian, 1999; Siegler, 2005). Social interaction promotes cognitive processing through cognitive conflict (Perret-Clermont, 1980). Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1992) suggest that children advance through four steps before assimilating or accommodating information (Piaget, 1971). The first stage is awareness. This is the recognition of objects, people, events, and concepts. Stage two involves the process of exploration of the aforementioned. The third step is inquiry—comparing a personal construct of the object, people, event, or concept through interactions and conversations with peers and adults. During this stage of cognitive adaptation, modifications may be made to the individual's understanding of what is being

examined. Then the final stage is utilization of the new concept. Doise and Mugny (1984) say that the social interactions that contextualize processes provide “social marking” that is used by the learner to determine the relevance of a newly acquired skill or concept and how to best recall and use it in the future. Every learner goes through an individual invention process but must ultimately rely on social verification action (Forman & Kraker, 1985) to commit learning to memory as relevant knowledge for retrieval and usage (Siegler, 2005). Therefore, it is essential that learning opportunities provide contextual marking in social and communal settings. Therefore, children must be prepared for engagement in such environments (Cole, 1991; Saxe, 1992). Children who enter ill prepared for the demands of communal learning in schools are at a distinct disadvantage for continued academic success. There is clear evidence that undertaking social and emotional intervention early results in a significantly positive correlation with success for children entering school (Dodge, 1993; Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, Bryant, & Clifford, 2000; Forness, Serna, Neilson, Lambros, Hale, & Kavale, 2000; Helburn, Culkin, Morris, Mocan, Howes, Phillipsen, Bryant, Clifford, Cryer, Peisner-Feinburg, Burchinal, Kagan, & Rustici, 1995).

Four things are keeping the system from addressing the obvious need for social–emotional support in early educational settings. The first is policymakers’ emphasis on measurable academic readiness skills upon school entry such as letter identification, number concepts, and literacy knowledge. The second is the public’s limited awareness of the crisis in public education surrounding children and challenging behaviors, and the impact that this crisis is having on learning environments. The third is the knowledge and skills early childhood professionals possess as well as lack. The fourth is research related

to the promotion of early educational techniques that impart change in teacher and child behaviors (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Wahlberg, 2004). This author has briefly foreshadowed the impact of educational policy initiatives. The next section will discuss the crisis surrounding young children's issues of social–emotional competence, the childcare workforce.

The Current Situation

In the largest study of its kind, Gilliam (2005) of Yale University's Child Study Center identified that prekindergarten expulsion from private childcare centers exceeds K–12 expulsion rates by 3.2 times. In a flurry to make sure children are "ready" for school, many private for-profit childcare centers are dismissing children who exhibit challenging behaviors at alarming rates (19.9%). Administrators of the childcare facilities are claiming that these children's behavior interferes with the learning of other children and that staff lack the knowledge and skills to serve children with moderate to significant challenging behaviors (National Implementation Research Network, 2005). It is worth noting that of the 3,898 prekindergarten classrooms that were surveyed, all were part of the nation's 52 funded programs that are in located across 40 states to support the accessibility of quality early education for children who are deemed "at risk" for preparedness upon entering school and later sustained academic success.

In an attempt to bridge the achievement gap, these programs were established to provide early intervention models that support children's development in all developmental domains—cognitive, physical, social, and emotional. These programs serve children and their families based on family structure and/or economic criteria.

These two criterion factors most closely align with correlative research showing that poor minority populations perform significantly below their wealthy majority peers (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, & Maritato, 1997; Sachs, 1999; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). Educational opportunity varies by economic opportunity, plagued both by limited access and by previous experience (Singham, 2005). Therefore, programs were established to bridge this achievement gap. In fact, there is much documentation to support early intervention models.

Early intervention in the form of quality childcare shows positive correlations with preacademic skills and language skills in children who attended programs that engage children and families in the process of early education (Duncan, Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994; Frede, 1995; Barnett, 1995). In fact, high-quality early childhood education has long-lasting positive effects for children's success in later life (Frede, 1995). There is evidence that it impacts higher education, professional endeavors, and citizenship (McKay, Condelli, Ganson, Barrett, McConskey, & Plantz, 1985; Galinsky & Freidman, 1993). Early education in the form of quality childcare (high teacher qualifications, low teacher–child ratios, developmentally appropriate expectations and curriculum, and family involvement) has shown sustained and robust gains up through Grade 3 and sustained academic performance up to seventh grade (Lally, Mangione, Honig, & Witter, 1988; Galinsky & Freidman, 1993).

However, it is precisely the children who are being expelled from early learning programs for challenging behaviors who are most impacted by policy procedures that permit the expulsion of such young children. It is this early intervention system that can

most greatly support social skill acquisition prior to these children's arrival in public/compulsory education (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000; Webster-Stratton, Reid, & Hammond, 2001). In fact, the children most often expelled from early learning programs are older (4.5 to 5.2 years of age), Black, male (Gilliam, 2005), and exhibit some form of developmental delay (Smith & Fox, 2002). This relates back to earlier data that cite the achievement gap as a cultural gap between the poor minority and the wealthy majority (Sachs, 1999; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003; Singham, 2005; Lehman, 1999; Dundan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994). The U.S. Department of Education presented findings in 2001 that used a nationally representative cohort of children entering kindergarten to demonstrate that social, racial, and class differences on academic performance measures suggest that kindergarten is too late to intervene in order to lower the achievement gap.

While children may have access to childcare through state systems of support, those programs are not always quality programs. A report from Adams, Zaslow, and Tout (2007) explained that only 27% of childcare centers are judged to be good or excellent early education environments. This leaves the remaining 73% to represent lower quality or even custodial care. There exists a gap between custodial care (care that barely meets health and safety requirements) and early education (care in which children are exposed to enriched environments, significant relationships, and responsive, enhanced interactions). This gap means that numerous children who need extra assistance are entering compulsory school programs that have limited capacity to provide that assistance (Pesiner-Feinberg, Burchinal, Clifford, Culkin, Howes, Kagan, Yazejian, Blyer, Rustici, & Zelazo, 2000). Low-quality childcare is most widely concentrated in

geographic areas of economic disadvantage (NICHD Early Childhood Research Network, 2006). High-quality early childhood programs are rarely available in communities in which people live in poverty (Adams, Zaslow, & Tout, 2007). High-quality childcare is relatively expensive, and there is an apparent tradeoff between cost and quality (Pesiner-Feinburg et al., 2000; NICHD Early Childhood Research Network, 2006).

Most children in childcare that occurs in communities surrounded by economic disadvantage are placed in early childhood centers that are for-profit (Adams, Zaslow, & Tout, 2007). This means that cost is a major concern for proprietors. Quality childcare is expensive to maintain and operate as a business (Peisner-Feinburg et al., 2000). Paying for qualified staff in lower teacher-to-child ratios is a predominant budget item (Adams, Zaslow, & Tout, 2007). Additionally, providing safe and developmentally appropriate equipment in an inviting center puts a strain on tight budgets. To add to that, additional training and access to curriculum experts positions quality care and turning a profit as dichotomous elements when managing a childcare facility. Wallace (2005) also discovered that the highest expulsion rates were in faith-based (43%) and for-profit childcare (46%) facilities, with public schools and Head Start having the lowest (11%) expulsion rates.

There are two speculative reasons for this phenomenon: (a) more children with “at risk” factors are concentrated in these facilities, or (b) the staff members are less skilled in assisting children with varying developmental needs. The first has limited scope for change, as educational experts cannot manipulate the geographic region and location of children and families. The second has direct implications for study and manipulation by

educational experts in the field of early intervention and education to support significant and sustained outcomes for children entering schools.

The Childcare Professional Defined

Teachers have been identified as critical influences on what children learn (Darling-Hammond & Ball, 1998; Ma, 1999). Research has indicated that poor professional development is a major barrier to improving the quality of child outcomes and continued academic success (Neubert, 1988; Daniels, Kalkman, & McCombs, 2001; Foster, Kelsch, Kamradt, Sosna, & Yang, 2001). To improve the teaching of any competency (including social–emotional competence), early childhood educators must have ample pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986, 1987). Pedagogical content knowledge is the knowledge of core content (in this case, children's social skill development and behavioral expectation reinforcement) and knowledge of pedagogical techniques that support the acquisition of that content. To foster such knowledge in teachers, educators must have experiential knowledge in both methods for teaching and methods for core content related to the specific area of development in which they are teaching (Strain & Timm, 2001; Schon, 1983; Copley, 2004; Heibert & Carpenter, 1992). While this is a large part of the solution to better equipping teachers with the tools and the confidence to teach social and emotional content, it is relevant to take a closer look at the type of practitioner who is working in early childhood education.

Recognition of required qualifications needed to teach early childhood, in most cases, is minimal. While most early childhood bachelor's degree programs certify teachers to teach children three years of age to third grade, the majority of practitioners

with degreed certification teach in schools that offer salaries that are commensurate with their educational level. This leaves the remaining early childhood practitioners, without degreed certification, to teach in childcare centers for hourly wages not much higher than minimum wage (Foster, Kelsch, Kamradt, Sosna, & Yang, 2001). With this in mind, the majority of current early childhood teachers or childcare professionals have earned only a high school diploma or GED. In fact, the reality is that few early childhood teachers have had formal education beyond high school. Only 27% have had some college coursework. Most—62%—have at minimum attended workshops on early childhood topics (Neubert, 1988; Daniels, Kalkman, & McCombs, 2001; Foster, Kelsch, Kamradt, Sosna, & Yang, 2001). In some cases, these practitioners may have attended some college yet not obtained a terminal degree. Even among better educated early childhood teachers, only a small number have taken any course related solely to social–emotional content or methods courses on how to structure environments and activities that support the acquisition of these necessary skills (Neubert, 1988; Daniels, Kalkman, & McCombs, 2001). It is this limited preparation of early childhood professionals in the area of social–emotional competence that has led to the poor quality of social skill and behavioral expectation instruction provided to young children (Ball, 1991, 2000).

Promotion of Social–Emotional Competence

Promotion of social–emotional competence, in turn, promotes the prevention of challenging behaviors (Hemmeter, Ostrosky, & Fox, 2006). A clear paradigm for promotion and prevention has been set forth by the Center for Evidence Based Practice and the Center on the Social–Emotional Foundations of Early Learning. Fox, Dunlop,

Hemmeter, Joseph, and Strain (2003) created this model of support to assist classroom practitioners and administrators in fostering children's development in the social and emotional domains of development. The framework is a tiered model with four levels that address (a) promotion and prevention through relationships, (b) environmental design, (c) targeting the task of teaching children necessary social skills and behavioral expectations, and (d) providing individualized, intensive interventions for children who need additional and extra support in attaining new skills.

Promoting and Supporting Positive Relationships

At the very foundation of all early childhood programs should be healthy relationships (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Early childhood professionals and workers benefit from forming relationships with children for two reasons: (a) children are more responsive and receptive to individuals whom they view as significant based on a prior relationship, and (b) children develop positive self-concepts, confidence, and a sense of safety from reciprocal relationships (Webster-Stratton, 1999). This requires no additional materials or excess time.

Prosocial Environmental Support

Environments should support prosocial skill building and competence. This is best achieved through teacher and staff environmental planning and engineering. Once environmental factors are put into place, children often require little intervention to promote and support prosocial living. However, environmental design does require a great deal of planning and organizing on the part of the teacher prior to children's

involvement and success. Four strategies for creating prosocial environments are strategic room arrangement, ample and novel materials, grouping of children, and consistent implementation of systematic routines and schedules (Lawry, Danko, & Strain, 1999).

Room arrangement should provide both active and quiet places, places to be alone or to work with others, and room to move but not to run wild (McCloskey, 1996). Children's moods and interests vary from day to day and moment to moment. Therefore, it is important to offer children a variety of outlets for play and communication.

Materials should include familiar toys and novel items. This balance of materials permits children success and offers innovative ways to use old materials. There should always be ample materials. There needs to be enough so that children don't have to wait for extensive periods of time but not too many so that children are not overstimulated (Dodge & Colker, 1996). Materials should be rotated to pique children's interests and build on previous and new concept development. Cooperative materials should be offered often to encourage children to interact and work with one another (McGee, Daly, Izeman, Mann, & Risley, 1991).

Keeping group sizes intimate is important. This allows children close relations with a core group of children yet allows them to experience multiple personalities and styles of learning. Positioning the children to foster interaction when working collaboratively on projects promotes social interaction (Strain, Kohler, Storey, & Danko, 1994). Children should be able to hear and to see all those involved in the play scenario. Encouraging children with enhanced social skills to work with children who lack such

skills assists less skilled children in learning effective networking skills (Lawry, Danko, & Strain, 1999).

Schedules and routines are structured moments that promote smooth transitions and support collective living. Schedules and routines become an essential ingredient in supporting children's self-monitoring skills and task engagement (Fox, Dunlop, Hemmeter, Joseph, & Strain, 2003). Children who know what is coming next, what the expectations are for engagement, and how to complete an activity exhibit fewer challenging behaviors (Strain & Hemmeter, 1997)

Prosocial Skills and Behavioral Expectations

Engagement in challenging behaviors is typically a result of a child lacking developmental skills, including ones that are physical, cognitive, social, or linguistic (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995). Children often choose to engage in these behaviors because they lack the skill(s) necessary to communicate their needs. They rely on instinctual methods to gain attention, receive an object, escape a task or demand, or soothe a physiological need (Dunlop & Fox, 1999). Children use challenging behavior as a communication tool; therefore, it is important to note that the behavior has a function and the behavior meets a critical need for the child (Reichle & Wacker, 1993). The child typically uses the behavior repeatedly because it works, meaning the child gets what he/she desires. The child will continue to rely on the challenging behavior until an alternative (just as functional) method is identified and practiced (Alberto & Troutman, 1995).

Therefore, it is critical that teachers understand that when challenging behaviors occur, this is evidence of a skill deficiency. When teachers realize this, they can approach the task of skill building (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995). Critical to this task is explicit instruction of prosocial behaviors and expectations (Lawry, Danko, & Strain, 1999). This can be done through role-playing, emotional literacy, capturing the teachable moment before crisis, and coaching of children's problem solving. Social skill building must be integrated into the curriculum because communal living is occurring throughout the classroom environment. Young children learn best through contextualized, relevant experiences that provide support and success (Dodge & Colker, 1996).

Most children require explicit instruction related to the development of such social skills as friendship skills, peer interactions (giving compliments, asking for help, turn taking, and sharing), recognizing and communicating emotions, problem solving, and controlling anger and impulse (Wester–Stratton, 1990; Hyson, 2004; Fox et al., 2003; Denham & Burton, 1996). Social–emotional teaching strategies are the hardest for early educators to implement (Arnold, McWilliams, & Arnold, 1998). This relates to their pedagogical content knowledge. They often have difficulty identifying what social skills are and thus are unsure of what pedagogical techniques best match instruction of said skills (Shulman, 1986, 1987; Eisenberg & Fabes, 1992; Hagekull & Bohlin, 1995). This continues to be an identifiable need for early childhood professionals and workers, not only by their own admission, but also by that of both administrators and policymakers.

Social skill building. A social skill is the ability to interact, react, and respond to various environmental and social situations in a way that is considered culturally

acceptable by the societal majority (Berk, 2002). The use of the word *skill* implies an ability usually learned through training. However, social interaction (the ability to interact in social situations) is considered by most lay persons an innate ability that is present in social beings (e.g., human beings). While most people acquire their interaction methods from observing and interacting with others, many individuals also engage in systematic learning of social mores through explication by teachers, parents, or peers (Odom, McConnell, & McEvoy, 1992). With this said, children who enter school with the social skills necessary to be successful in school have most often had some engagement in social skill building through explicit instruction. In social skill building, children must have experiences in which an adult or a peer a) engage in interactive modeling as actual participants within the social context, b) model a future or previous social experience, c) role play a future or previous social experience, and d) use of printed symbols or pictures (Serna, Neilson, Lambros, & Forness, 2000). Teachers' use of these specific strategies has proven to result in statistically significant growth in the area of social competence for children demonstrating typical developmental attainment, as well as for children with minor delays in developmental acquisition of some milestones (Barnett, 1995).

It is this triangulated use of immediate feedback during an event such as modeling as an actual participant, role playing, and modeling in isolation prior to or following a new social event, and using visual cues as reminders, that help children socially mark newly learned skills for later retrieval. As stated earlier, the social interaction process provides social marking (Doise & Mugny, 1984) that is used to determine for the learner the contextual relevance of a newly acquired skill or concept and how to best recall and

use it in the future. Every learner (and thus child) goes through this individual invention process but then relies on the social verification action (Forman & Kraker, 1985) to commit learning to relevant knowledge for retrieval and usage (Siegler, 2005). Without explicit instruction and support, children struggle to make friends, sustain positive interactions with peers and adults, recognize and respond to their and others' emotions, problem solve alternatives to instinctual reactions, and communicate effectively in social situations (Webster-Stratton, 1999).

Behavioral expectation instruction. A behavioral expectation is the behavior that people desire to happen when they or other individuals are met with specific and varying stimuli (Berk, 2002). Behavioral expectations are often referred to as the "rules" of a classroom, home, church, library, etc. These rules are established to communicate social expectations for that specific location and the individual's participation in that communal area. Rules and behavioral expectations provide young children with a structure in order to teach them which behaviors are appropriate and which behaviors are inappropriate for a specific location or activity (Ratcliff, 2001; Murdick & Petch-Hogan, 1996). One example of a behavioral expectation is the rule for "inside voices" when working in the classroom and the differing rule for "inside" and/or "outside voices" when playing on the playground. Teachers need to teach these rules or expectations for behavior in small steps, paired with positive specific feedback, repeated over time and across situations with differing stimuli (Murdick & Petch-Hogan, 1996; Ostrosky, Jung, Hemmeter, & Thomas, 2003).

Techniques for systematically conveying expectations are the following: use of visual strategies (such as printed pictures/symbols or gesture), modeling expected behavior (for example, a teacher models raising her hand to get children to raise their hands to speak), rule statement during an activity (an example might be saying “Hands are for helping” when a child is hitting another child to get his attention), redirection to the expected behavior (such as having a child who is playing with a toy during circle time count the balloons on the cover of the book the teacher will be reading), specific feedback when performing a behavioral expectation (a teacher might say, “You put those puzzles away” with vocal intonation and a smile to let the child know what he/she did was appropriate), and a command stated in the positive (such as saying “gentle touches” to remind a child to tap lightly when getting the teacher’s attention; (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995; Lawry, Danko, & Strain, 1999). Other techniques are used by teachers but are not considered effective by early childhood researchers (Arnold, McWilliams, & Arnold, 1998). These include stating a command in the negative (e.g., “Don’t hit” vs. “gentle touches” or “hand by your side”) and issuing a punishment, either punitive or nonpunitive.

Behavioral expectations can be taught in the same social marking context (Doise & Mugny, 1984) as social skills by using rituals and routines. Rituals and routines provide a structured context for children to interact in communal settings with peers and teachers. An example of a ritual and routine could be the morning arrival of children to a classroom at a childcare facility. The primary childcare professional might greet the children with a smile, hug, and a brief conversation (ritual). The children then place their personal items in their cubbies, choose table toys from the manipulative shelf, and

proceed to tables to join their peers in solitary, parallel, or cooperative play (routine). This use of structured routines provides the child with the framework and format for engaging in communal living and learning (Ratcliff, 2001). Teachers can use visuals, explicit modeling, and specific feedback to assist children in understanding rules and behavioral expectations.

These techniques require specific pedagogical knowledge, social and behavioral content knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge about the promotion of social–emotional competence. To teach children adequately, teachers must be adequately trained. Unfortunately, there are seldom venues for the education of childcare professionals in the content area of social–emotional competence.

Childcare Professionals' Skill and Ability: The Reason

There is a significant relationship between education and/or training and the eventual quality of early learning environments (Epstein, 1993; Waldman, Weinberg, & Scarr, 1994). The majority of early childhood teachers do not have adequate training (Foster, Kelsch, Kamradt, Sosna, & Yang, 2001; Neubert, 1988; Daniels, Kalkman, & McCombs, 2001). Educators must have experiential knowledge of both methods for teaching and core content. The fact is that early childhood preparation programs, such as college and university programs, are insufficient to meet the demands of such training (Ratcliff, Cruz, & McCarthy, 2001). Additionally, there are data to indicate that most early childhood teachers do not know effective practices for facilitating children's social, emotional, and behavioral development (Hemmeter et al., 2006; Smith, 2006).

In a national survey of higher education faculty, early childhood administrative program directors, and early childhood practitioners such as teachers and childcare professionals, the conclusions were clear: Teachers and staff at all levels are ill prepared to meet the social and emotional demands of their students (National Implementation Research Network, 2005). From this study, teachers identified that their greatest training need was working with children with challenging behaviors and that social–emotional development was their second greatest concern. Eighty percent indicated that challenging behaviors affect their job satisfaction negatively. They reported that 10% to 42% of the children in their classrooms were exhibiting behaviors that challenged the teachers. They noted that the most common support they received when working with these children was removal of the child from the classroom. Thirteen percent also self-reported that at least one child had been asked to leave the program in the last 12 months due to the child's exhibition of challenging behaviors.

The challenges that face practitioners in the effective use of appropriate strategies when working with young children exhibiting challenging behaviors and in need of social skill building are (a) lack of knowledge and skills, (b) limited financial support for additional resources to assist the child, (c) counterproductive beliefs and attitudes teachers carry around the topic of social–emotional competence and challenging behaviors, and (d) lack of collaboration and coordination of systems of support for the child and family (National Implementation Research Network, 2005). With this information in mind, it is relevant to examine the practice of early childhood teachers around the area of social–emotional competence and to assist children with challenging behaviors.

Classroom Pedagogical Techniques of the Childcare Professional: Describing Their Practice

There is limited research documenting what strategies child care professionals are deploying in relation to supporting children's development of social skills and explicit teaching of behavioral expectations. In fact, after an exhaustive review of the literature, only two empirical articles were located. One examined the practice of day care workers and the disciplinary techniques they employed (Arnold, McWilliams, & Arnold, 1998). The second study examined the relationship between teachers' beliefs and intentions when they interacted with children daily (Wilcox-Herzog & Ward, 2004). In the Arnold et al. study, the authors also allude to the limited research in the area of child care and to non-existent research in the area of guiding children's behaviors.

In Arnold, McWilliams, and Arnold's (1998) study, *Teacher discipline and child misbehavior in day care: Untangling causality with correlational data*, the researchers examined "the influence of day-care teachers' lax and overreactive discipline on children's behavior problems … and the influence of children's behavior problems on teachers' discipline." There were 145 children and 16 daycare teachers in eight classrooms in a single childcare center. Each classroom was videotaped. Segments of the video were chosen in which the teacher was engaged in direct instruction and responsible for the whole class. From this segment, 15-minute sections were randomly selected and viewed. A research assistant kept blind to the purpose of the study rated the interactions between teacher-and-child dyads. Tallies for misbehavior were used while ratings were

used for laxness and reactivity. Two techniques were used for estimating the causal relations based on correlational data gathered: two-stage least squares and simultaneous structural equation modeling. Across techniques, teachers' laxness strongly influenced child misbehavior and child misbehavior influenced both teacher laxness and overreactivity (Arnold, McWilliams, & Arnold, 1998). This study closely examined children's misconduct and began to look at teacher characteristics. However, the study failed to examine pedagogical techniques used to guide behavioral expectations and social skills. Additionally, the study did not seek to describe or to understand the teacher's intention in choosing a more lax approach or a highly reactive approach.

The Wilcox-Herzog and Ward (2004) study, *Measuring teachers' perceived interactions with children: A tool for assessing beliefs and intentions*, sought to evaluate the relationships that may exist between teachers' beliefs and intentions about the importance of teacher–child interactions. Seventy-one early childhood teachers with bachelor's degrees, CDAs, or a minimum of 12 college credits (minimum training required for teachers who work with children in the State of California) were surveyed. The self-report study asked childcare practitioners about their educational background (depth of training experience), beliefs and intentions, and reported practices (perceived ability to practice their beliefs). An analysis of variance revealed a significant difference between beliefs and self-described practice intentions [r (65) = .301, $p < .05$], as well as between beliefs and experience [r (65) = .367, $p < .05$]. While the findings indicate that beliefs differ from both practice and course content, this study lacked direct observation of practice and a nationally representative cohort of participants. Self-report is often problematic when describing practice, as it is difficult to extract the self from self-lived

events and to see things more objectively. Thus, participants using self-report tend to overreport positive information about themselves and surrounding circumstances. However, the beliefs and intentions questionnaire demonstrated internal consistency and reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .85. This survey tool showed promise in determining teachers' intentions behind their chosen practices and may serve as a vehicle in future work around teachers' intentionality and chosen interaction/reaction with children.

With limited descriptive research on what teachers are actually doing relative to guiding children's social, emotional, and behavioral development and the intention behind their choice for practice, how can technical assistance models of support be developed to assist teachers in using effective strategies? A paradigm for change exists that incorporates the elements of belief, philosophy, practice and support. It will be examined in the following section. Examining this model, educational specialists may get a deeper understanding of how to change existing practice effectively to better serve young children in the acquisition of social skills and behavioral expectations that guide children's behaviors and support social–emotional outcomes.

The Paradigm of Pedagogical Practice: Epistemology, Philosophy, Implementation, and Support

In acknowledgement of the National Implementation Research Network's (2005) findings that childcare professionals report that they have inadequate skills in the areas of supporting children's social and emotional competence, and linked with the confirmation of higher educational professionals and administrators that the childcare professionals they work with have limited skills in the area of guiding children's social and behavioral

expectations, it is time to examine how best to work with teachers. So how do we better prepare early childhood educators to fuse their knowledge of children's social and emotional development, relational factors in supporting social–emotional competence, the role of environment in supporting autonomous communal living, and the need to teach social skills and behavioral expectations explicitly? In other words, how do we get childcare practitioners to bridge the gap from philosophy to practice in the early childhood classroom?

It is this researcher's position that for practitioners to implement philosophy into practice, childcare professionals must have access to professional development models that first provide subject-specific content knowledge coupled with evidence-based pedagogical techniques. This is supported by Daniels and Shumow (2003), whose research findings suggest that understanding child development contributes to appropriate application of developmentally appropriate curriculum. Child development knowledge is foundational for quality teacher education. Gearhart, Saxe, and Stipek (1995) also found that teachers who focused on student thinking during staff development changed their practice to include more interesting and relevant methods for engaging children in social skill building than did teachers who planned collaboratively without access to research knowledge about students' thinking and pedagogical methods for promoting problem solving in social situations.

Professional training may be practical in relaying knowledge about philosophy and best practice, but how does a professional get this to the implementation stage in the

classroom? To effect change, one must not only impart knowledge, but also hold the belief that the knowledge will yield a significant change.

Rather, it is experience that shapes belief systems, and it is those beliefs that guide chosen practice. With this in mind, it is relevant to engage in inquiry that examines teachers' experiences with the social structures of schools first as participant learners, then as aspiring teachers learning to develop and to deliver social skill instruction and classroom management, and finally as practicing educators teaching young children. All these experiences shape an individual teacher's epistemology.

Examining Epistemology

An epistemology is the set of beliefs one carries about teaching and learning and is typically shaped by experiential success and failures. Development of the same epistemology carried by teachers later begins in childhood as they experience learning as learners. Children exhibit development of their own epistemological beliefs as they travel through school and experience different successes and failures in the scaffolding of new information (Schommer, Calvert, Gariglietti, & Bajaj, 1997). In fact, children are quite capable of forming sophisticated epistemological views and can express them when given the proper language and opportunity (Smith, Maclin, Houghton, & Hennessey, 2000). Students' epistemologies are dynamic and change as they interact with peers during learning and with the teachers who provide learning experiences. Teachers have a noted effect in the development of children's epistemological perspectives (Lyons, 1990). This is partly determined by the teacher's implicit epistemological beliefs: whether a teacher's behaviors model an expectation that students are to be, passive receivers of information

(the objectivist classroom), or as active builders of understanding (the constructivist classroom), or in combination.

A study conducted by Kinchin (2004) examined children's abilities to develop and to express their beliefs about epistemology. Using concept cartoons developed with the assistance of older children, 12-year-old children were asked to choose the style of instruction they most preferred—constructivist or objectivist. Out of the 133 children sampled, 115 chose the constructivist learning model and the remaining chose the objectivist model. The reason for the glaring difference was determined by interviews with the children at the conclusion of their choice. The smaller group who chose the objectivist pictures said it was easier to memorize information and to give it back to the teacher because they were sure how to perform on examinations and could be assured greater success. The majority of children who chose the constructivist cartoon sample chose it because they thought it would be more fun and because it gave them more chances to pursue their interests. It should be noted that the instructors, all from various schools in England, were surprised by the results because their primary mode of instruction was didactic. It becomes pertinent to ask, "If the children find it easier to perform in didactic classrooms, do teachers find it easier to instruct in said environment?" If the aforementioned question is true (that instructors think it is easier and children see it as lacking rigor) then there is validation for the dynamic relationship between instructor and learner, and for the idea that learners' and teachers' epistemologies are not independently formed. "Nested epistemologies" is how Lyons (1990) describes the interplay of teacher and student epistemological development.

It becomes clear when investigating the epistemological beliefs of educators that reflection on their experience as learners and students is critical to understanding what beliefs they bring and carry with them as they enter the classroom and develop as teachers. Early childhood preservice teachers' attitudes toward behavioral expectations and social mores and their confidence to teach them are important in determining both the quality and quantity of social competency skills taught to children (White, 2000). Beliefs influence actions, thought processes, motivation, and affective and psychological states (Wallace & Mulholland, 2001). Enoch and Riggs (1996) explain that there are two belief systems that need to exist to shape quality instruction. The first is the belief that students' learning and future action can be influenced by effective teaching (either constructivist or objectivist). The second is confidence in one's own ability (the teacher's ability) or a person's self-efficacy. The first is of most interest with relation to this research because it calls for the examination of teachers' beliefs, or epistemological perspective, about the intention of the childcare professional's instruction and how pedagogical methods are chosen.

Linking Epistemology and Pedagogical Instruction

It is the exposure and opportunity to teach young children in communal educational settings that shape teachers' feelings and confidence to continue teaching, and thus their epistemology (Wallace & Mulholland, 2001). Unfortunately, most early childhood practitioners do not have ample opportunity or role models in teaching social skills or behavioral expectations. So how do teacher preparation courses shape aspiring teachers' understanding of their beliefs about education and how to implement social–

emotional competence effectively in the classroom? Many teacher preparation models incorporate a self-evaluation of preservice teachers' behavioral expectations with relation to developmental expectations. van Zee (1998) writes about her attempts to help preservice teachers develop into competent, quality educators and practitioner researchers. She begins her courses with students' self-reflection and self-evaluation of their experiences as social learners in compulsory educational environments. The reflection includes an examination of the elements that made learning joyful and accessible and the elements that made it frustrating and intangible. The students continue this reflective work by journaling about their own students' success in learning content in classroom applications and observations.

From this semester of qualitative information, preservice teachers derive claims from their own observations in order to build personal frameworks to guide their current and future instruction. These claims or learning theories will be more meaningful and applicable than a multitude of recommendations from researching experts and district, state, and national sources, as these personal frameworks derived from experience affect the belief system of the preservice learners and transforms their epistemology.

Howes (2002) also uses self-reflection in an attempt to shape preservice teachers' awareness that belief systems shape and guide instructional endeavors. She found that preservice teachers had many strengths; among them are the propensity for inquiry, attention directed to children, and an awareness of school/society relationships. These strengths lend to preservice teachers' ability to construct and reconstruct their epistemology and shape their pedagogical methodologies into practice.

Kelly (2000) also calls for a constructivist approach to early childhood methods courses, on the premise that preservice teachers gain important understandings about learning and teaching by being encouraged to become both learner and teacher and to reflect about their experiences in both roles. This constructivist approach develops and solidifies the preservice teacher's beliefs about learning and teaching, as well as assisting the aspiring teacher in scaffolding his/her understanding about pedagogical practice and intentionality when supporting children's social–emotional competence.

Pedagogy and Epistemology are the Methods of Change

Many pedagogical strategies used in early childhood methods courses never make it to the classroom because new teachers are not knowledgeable about how to connect social skill content such as friendship skills with the appropriate guidance strategy such as formalized modeling and role playing (Strain & Timm, 2001). The discrepancy is believed to be a result of not establishing a link between content courses (when they are provided in the area of behavioral and social support) and pedagogical methods courses. This is coupled with the reality that aspiring, new, and established teachers have experienced years of passive lecture at the elementary, secondary, and college level. This frequently precludes and obstructs any new perspectives on teaching (Strain & Timm, 2001; Raizen & Michaelson, 1994). It is apparent that pedagogical endeavors are often limited by one's existing beliefs about education. Teachers who have been impacted through reshaped epistemology and effective pedagogical practice promote personal educational change (Anderson, 1997).

Teacher Evolution and change are the results of continued support and scaffolding

While epistemological beliefs and pedagogical methodologies are formed during the act of learning about teaching, these two systems, beliefs and methods, have an impact on eventual classroom implementation. Conversely, this impact can be disturbed and interrupted by the types of support teachers receive in the areas of curricular implementation through administrative supports. There is evidence to support the impact of epistemology and pedagogical methodology on the implementation of social skill instruction during and immediately following new teaching experiences, but there is a belief (though supported by limited research) that the role of curricular support has an equal or greater impact on the continuing evolution of one's personal epistemology and the pedagogical methodology employed in chosen instructional models.

In early childhood education there often exists a need for continuing instruction in curricular implementation. Many childcare systems adopt curricula as well as new content standards, and teachers are encouraged to use them with limited instruction on how to use the contents and how to integrate them into the already existing structures. As stated earlier by Anderson (1997), change is hinged on the teacher. If teachers do not want to or know how to use new curricular support materials, teachers will continue to use and do what is most familiar, which may or may not include updated information, current expectations for young learners, and age-appropriate activities. There is a need for restructuring systems of support so that innovation and improvement are integral to the daily lives of teachers (Fullen, 1982). This is essential to the continuing development of epistemology and pedagogical methodologies that can provide improved intentional instruction and promote student success.

For real change to occur, a restructuring in early childcare systems is needed. The restructuring must acknowledge that teacher learning and practice is ongoing, is ever-evolving, and should include methodical ways that include a beginning, middle, and end (Ancess, 2000). Ancess's model for teacher learning includes experimentation, discovery, and application of new knowledge and skills. This model hinges on the generation of knowledge and function of the innovation, so that it may be more easily and applicably implemented. The vesting of teachers in this approach leads to authentic professional growth and application of techniques that are effective with that specific teacher's students. By engaging in this process of scaffolding new knowledge with current understandings, teachers have an opportunity to solidify and extend content understanding and implementation practice with new curricular texts, standards, and materials (that is, if they have the materials necessary to implement).

To Change, Agents for Change Must Exist

Ancess was not alone in this thinking. According to Schon (1983), teacher change requires that teachers are provided with new pedagogical knowledge and time to implement it, opportunity for reflection, and colleagues from whom to learn. Weissglass (1991) confirmed these findings by stating that change for teachers requires personal transformation and supportive collegial relations. He extended his thinking to include four necessary components to support transformation: obtaining information, reflecting and planning, obtaining emotional support, and taking action. In Langrall, Thornton, Jones, and Malone's work (1996), modifications to Weissglass's model for professional development were made. They used the premise that teacher education needs to provide

knowledge, reflection and planning as part of collaborative support, and time to take action or implement. After implementing this methodology in work with undergraduates in educational methods courses, they discovered a significant shift in practice that reflected more closely the espoused philosophical views of the participants. This further established the concept that professional development for teachers should provide content and pedagogical knowledge, offer a collaborative environment for planning and reflecting, and provide chances to implement new understandings.

Impacting Change in Early Education

To promote change in early education in the area of social skill and behavioral expectation instruction, a professional development model must be developed and implemented. It should be adapted to professionals in the field by individuals who are conscious that beliefs and pedagogical orientation predetermine the participants' acquisition and application of the content presented. The model should provide new knowledge, collegial support in planning and reflection, and an opportunity to practice the new learned understandings. Such professional development models are limited. Most professional development models use a onetime training model that encourages teachers to replicate "externally imported professional development packages" as opposed to generating pedagogical knowledge regarding practical practice strategies (Ancess, 2000). The key in shaping teaching practice through a professional development model is supplying curricular support. A cohesive curricular support model includes the availability of support personnel for collaborative support in planning and reflection.

New Focus, New Techniques, New Methods for Supporting Change: Getting to Improved Practice and Enhanced Outcomes

There is significant evidence upon which to develop models for change in teacher practice in early childhood education. Additionally, it is obvious that children are not receiving the early education and intervention that supports social–emotional competence and thus are entering school ill prepared for the rigors of communal education. With this in mind, it becomes relevant to engage in inquiry around the practice of childcare professionals who serve the largest number of young children. Specifically, we need to identify what childcare teachers are doing and to determine the intentionality of their chosen methods.

Grounded educational research seeks to describe, predict, improve, and explain (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). While these are all relevant aspects of research, these are not separate entities but rather function as a linear model. The description process is intended to produce statistical and narrative data about aspects of educational phenomena. Prediction is used to guide the selection of environmental factors that can enhance measurable outcomes. Improvement is to determine the effectiveness of predictor variables designed to enhance practice. Explanation involves all of the aforementioned to generate theories consisting of several theoretical constructs and their interrelated information. This explanation aligns commonalities of otherwise isolated phenomena and can guide future policy and practice. Research is an endeavor that requires methodical logic to fill the gaps of existing understanding and perpetuate future findings.

With this said, the place to begin the discussion of teacher practice in social–emotional competence is at the beginning. The beginning consists of identifying and describing early childcare professionals' chosen practices when guiding children's social and behavioral development. Thus, three questions emerge:

1. What pedagogical techniques do childcare professionals use when guiding 4-year-old children's social and behavioral development during teacher-initiated activities such as large- and small-group instruction?

2. What is the association between the types of pedagogical techniques selected by childcare professionals in a large urban county in the southeastern United States to guide children's social and behavioral development and the type of teacher-initiated activity (such as large and small group) in which they engage?

3. Why do childcare professionals choose particular social skill building and behavioral reinforcement techniques to guide 4-year-old children's social and behavioral development during teacher-initiated activities such as large- and small-group instruction?

The Beginning

To date, the research in the area of social–emotional competence has focused on child-based intervention and outcomes. The findings suggest that an effective approach to assisting children in the area of social and emotional development involves the promotion of appropriate social skills, explicit instruction regarding behavioral expectations, and

support for emotional literacy and awareness (Wester–Stratton, 1990; Hyson, 2004; Fox et al., 2003; Denham & Burton, 1996). This requires teacher knowledge and skill, content knowledge in the area of social–emotional development, and skills in using pedagogical techniques that support acquisition of the aforementioned areas. We cannot begin to change teacher practice until we are clear on the methods and behaviors childcare professionals are currently using.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

On the basis of the available research literature, it is clear that limited descriptive information about childcare providers' pedagogical practice in the area of promoting social, emotional, and behavioral competence exists. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate childcare professionals' chosen methods in guiding children's social and behavioral development. Thus, the purpose is to identify and describe childcare professionals' intentional impetus for using the pedagogical methods they chose during large- and small-group instruction in the areas of social skill building and behavioral expectation reinforcement. The specific questions for this study follow:

1. What pedagogical techniques do childcare professionals in a large urban county in the southeastern United States use when guiding 4-year-old children's social and behavioral development during teacher-initiated activities such as large- and small-group instruction?

2. What is the association between the types of pedagogical techniques selected by childcare professionals in a large urban county in the southeastern United States to guide children's social and behavioral development and the type of teacher-initiated activity (such as large and small group) in which they engage?

3. Why do childcare professionals in a large urban county in the southeastern United States choose particular social skill building and behavioral reinforcement techniques to guide 4-year-old children's social and behavioral development during teacher-initiated activities such as large- and small-group instruction?

Design

Research questions were examined using a mixed methodological framework with a descriptive research design component and a phenomenographic approach. Quantitative analysis of observational data was used to answer questions 1 and 2 listed above. These questions sought to identify the types and frequencies of pedagogical methodologies used by childcare professionals to guide 4-year-old children's social and behavioral development during teacher-initiated activities such as large- and small-group instruction. Small-group instruction was a teacher-initiated instructional time in which a group of children, no larger than eight, was provided with an activity that was developed by the teacher to meet the developmental needs of children in the group. This maximum number of children was based on the National Association for the Education of Young Children's ratio and group-size recommendations. Large group was a teacher-initiated instructional time in which the majority of the children in the class came together in a communal area to share stories, songs, music and movement activities, and group lessons.

The third research question sought to understand the intentionality of the childcare professionals' chosen pedagogical method used to guide 4-year-old children's social and behavioral development during teacher-initiated activities such as large- and

small-group instruction. Therefore, the third question required a qualitative approach to gain an understanding of the experiences reflected by participants. Following the video-recorded observations of a large-group and small-group activity, participants took part in an individual semistructured interview. During the interview, they were asked to reflect on the events that occurred during the lesson. To stimulate their reflection, participants were provided with visual stimuli (a video recording of the participant engaged in the instruction of a large- and small-group activity with their class). This method of prompting individual participants is referred to as *stimulated recall*. Stimulated recall is a form of introspective research that arouses cognitive processes in participants by prompting retrieval of previously lived experiences through the viewing of a video sequence (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). This procedure typically elicits expert accounts of the events as they unfolded for the participants (Shavelson & Stern, 2001). Stimulated recall is a valuable tool, especially when there is immediacy of recall and a consonance between questions and cognitive organization. Additionally, this technique prompts retrieval of the participant's concurrent thinking during the event (Lyle, 2003). This retrieval promotes a phenomenographic orientation to qualitative data inquiry lines because the participant is recalling the lived experience in that moment. Phenomenographic research is different from phenomenological research in that phenomenographic research seeks to capture the participant's reality surrounding a previously lived experience, while phenomenological research seeks to understand the participant's current reality or understanding of events (Creswell, 1998). Thus, a phenomenographic orientation to the research was required.

A phenomenographic orientation to this work provided the researcher with an opportunity to engage the participants in rich conversation about their conceptions of the events as they unfolded. In short, the participants described the situation in relation to their understanding of the reality surrounding the previously observed event. The video vignettes/snippets served to stimulate the participant's reflection by providing an external lens that captured them in the moment of living. By asking participants to describe the documented video moment and their actions/reactions, a word picture of their reality emerged. This method is often used to investigate individuals' thinking. Since the impetus of this portion of the research inquiry was to understand why childcare professionals choose particular strategies to guide children's social and behavioral development, understanding their thinking about the event was crucial, and thus a phenomenographic method with stimulated recall was chosen.

This research design was divided into three segments: (a) a formative study to identify through observation early childhood teachers' typically used pedagogical techniques in the areas of social skill building and behavioral reinforcement (Appendix E); (b) a pilot study to test procedural methods for the dissertation study and assess the observer reliability on an a priori observational instrument (the Social and Behavioral Development Observational Instrument for Teacher Practice), as well as verify the credibility and dependability of the semistructured interview tool (Appendix F); and (c) a concurrent quantitative and qualitative research dissertation study in which the researcher observed and documented the pedagogical methods used by childcare professionals.

The purpose of the formative research study was exploratory: to identify and label the pedagogical behaviors childcare professionals use in their classrooms to guide children's social skill development and adherence to behavioral expectations. The researcher intended to document and to describe childcare professionals' actions and practices with relation to guiding children's social and behavioral development during large- and small-group instruction. Five prekindergarten classrooms with 4-year-old children were observed in five different childcare facilities. Observational notes were recorded to identify what methods childcare professionals employed when guiding children's social and behavioral development. The notes were then reviewed to identify the methods childcare professionals used. Ten methods were identified: (a) interactive modeling as participant, (b) support in problem solving, (c) redirection to task, (d) rule statement, (e) command stated in the positive, (f) command stated in the negative, (g) visual strategy usage, (h) teacher-imposed consequence, (i) specific feedback when performing a behavioral expectation, and (j) proximity. These identified methods were used in the development of the Social and Behavioral Development Observational Instrument for Teacher Practice (sbDOITp). A more thorough review of this segment of the study can be found in Appendix E, Formative Study.

The purpose of the pilot study was to (a) assess observer reliability and test the procedural use of the observational instrument developed from the information gathered in the formative research (Social and Behavioral Development Observational Instrument for Teacher Practice [sbDOITp]), (b) test the procedural use of the observational tool and digital video recording device, (c) verify the video vignette/snippet selection criteria clarity, (d) validate the credibility and dependability of the semistructured individual

interview format, and (e) test the procedural use of the digital audiorecording device that was used during the interview process. This portion of the study sought to replicate procedures, on a smaller scale, for the dissertation study. Five classrooms were identified from the sites willing to participate in the dissertation study. The procedures for the dissertation study were replicated in their entirety with the exclusion of the data analysis. It was determined at the conclusion of the pilot study that all procedures outlined in the dissertation study were readily implemented and the data collected would serve to illuminate the research inquiry and line of questions. The pilot study can be reviewed in its entirety in Appendix F, Pilot Study.

The dissertation study included observation of childcare professionals engaged in large- and small-group-initiated instruction. Following the observation, participants participated in a semistructured interview. The interview attempted to gain textual data from the participants about the techniques they used during the observation in an attempt to better understand the impetus behind the implementation of chosen pedagogical techniques used to guide children's social and behavioral development. A timeline of this study's three research sections is provided in Appendix D to assist in clarifying the research stages. The formative study and pilot study are discussed in their entirety in Appendix E and Appendix F, respectively, and are only referenced in this body of the text.

Dissertation Study

As stated at the forefront of the methodology section of this text, the purpose of this study is to systematically investigate childcare professionals' chosen methods in

guiding children's social and behavioral development and thus identify and describe childcare professionals' intentional impetus for using the pedagogical methods they choose during large- and small-group instruction in the areas of social skill building and behavioral expectation reinforcement. This study uses a mixed methodological framework, quantitatively seeking to observe and document the pedagogical methods used by childcare professionals and qualitatively seeking to understand the impetus behind the implementation of specific chosen pedagogical techniques used to guide children's social and behavioral development.

Participants

A sample of 30 participants was recruited to participate. The cohort of childcare professionals was drawn from the collective childcare centers in the county in which the research was conducted. Sites in the county were identified to represent multiple geographic (north, south, east, west, and central city) and sociocultural (urban, suburban, and rural) dynamics, as well as economic variation (the majority of children served are living in poverty—less than $20,650 for a household of four, serving children who are not deemed at risk based on economic factors—families making greater than $20,650 for a family of four) of the county in which the study took place. The geographic areas were identified by a county map and school district demographic data. Invitations were sent to 30 randomly selected childcare centers in each of the five geographic regions identified in this county. A total of 150 invitations were issued. An average of nine responses was received from each identified region. However, a total of 42 responses were received. The lowest number of responses came from the central geographic zone, which is an

urban area where the median household income is less than $20,650. A total of seven responses were received from the central geographic zone. Six childcare centers in each geographic region were randomly selected from the region's respondents willing to participate in this research study.

By dividing the selection locations into five geographic, sociocultural, and socioeconomic zones, it was ensured that the childcare professional participants represented the diverse mixture of ages, races, and educational levels that are present in large urban southeastern communities. The sample included 30 female childcare professionals. They represented a mixture of three ethnicities: 43% Black, 20% Hispanic, and 33% White. The majority of participants (43%) had a child development associate's degree. Twenty-seven percent had an associate's degree, while 10% held a bachelor's degree. Participants who held General Education Degrees made up 7% of the sample, while 13% of the sample had high school diplomas. The majority of this sample of teachers had some (approximately 40 training hours for a basic CDA and 10 hours of continuing education each year following) child-specific training in young children's development and early childhood philosophy. See Table 1 for a graphic presentation of these data.

Table 1. Demographic Data for Sample: Educational Level

Educational level	Number in sample	Percent of sample
General Education Degree	2	7%
High school diploma	4	13%
Child development associate's	13	43%
Associate's degree	8	27%
Bachelor's degree	3	10%

The participants typically had 6 to 10 years of experience; this represented 43% of the sample. Seventeen percent of the sample had 1 to 5 years, while 20% had been working in childcare for 11 to 15 years. Both the 16–20 and 21–30 categories for experience made up 10% of the sample. This sample does not have a large number of participants with sustained longevity in childcare. This indicates that childcare professionals may not remain in the field greater than 15 years on average. See Table 2 for a graphic summation of these data.

Table 2. Demographic Data for Sample: Years of Experience

Years of experience	Number in sample	Percent of sample
1–5	5	17%
6–10	13	43%
11–15	6	20%
16–20	3	10%
21–30	3	10%
> 30	0	

The average household income for participants was less than $15,000. This is below the poverty line for families of two or more. Twenty-seven percent had annual household incomes between $15,000 and $30,000, while 17% earned, as a household, $30,000 to $45,000. Ten percent of the participants were earning $45,000 to $60,000 annually per household. Six and a half percent of the sample earned $60,000 to $75,000 and greater than $90,000. This left 3% of the sample earning $75,000 to $90,000 per household. Collectively, this sample's data indicate that childcare professionals rarely make greater than $30,000 annually. This may have relevance to the number of years in which childcare professionals remain in the field of early childhood. A summation of these data is provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Demographic Data for Sample: Annual Household Income

Average annual household income in dollars	**Number in sample**	**Percent of sample**
0–15,000	9	30%
15,001–30,000	8	27%
30,001–45,000	5	17%
45,001–60,000	3	10%
60,001–75,000	2	6.5%
75,001–90,000	1	3%
> 90,001	2	6.5%

After sites and childcare professional participants were randomly selected from each region, contact was made by phone to schedule an initial meeting with the childcare

professional who would serve as a participant to discuss the nature of the study, discuss the requirements of participation, review the informed consent, and establish an agreeable date for observation and the corresponding interview. Additionally, this provided the researcher with an opportunity to develop a rapport with the participant.

When the informed consent form was shared, the principal investigator led a conversation on the research project. The voluntary nature of the subject's participation, the right to withdraw at any time, and the confidentiality of the information gathered were thoroughly discussed. Upon receipt of the signed permission via the consent form, participants were added to the study and assigned numbers known only by the researcher. These numbers were used throughout the remainder of the investigation. All data gathered, reported, or published were and are reported using assigned numbers and with aggregated data. Furthermore, the data collected were and are currently stored in a locked filing cabinet separate from the informed consent and the assigned number register.

There were no anticipated benefits. However, the participants who engaged in the study might have enjoyed the opportunity to reflect and might have experienced some indirect benefits from the relevant discussion of applied pedagogical practice. Additionally, all particpants received a free boxed lunch on the day of the scheduled interview, five children's trade books that support the explicit instruction of emotional literacy, and one training hour toward renewal or attainment of their child development associate's certification.

Instruments

During this study, one observational instrument and one observational tool were used. The observational instrument included a tally sheet that captured the types and frequencies of pedagogical techniques used by childcare professionals to guide 4-year-old children's social and behavioral development during large- and small-group instruction. The observational tool was a digital video camera. The video camera served two purposes: (a) to capture observational vignettes/snippets to be used during the interview following the observation and (b) to assist the researcher with observer reliability by providing an opportunity for three research assistants to check the accuracy of the documentation gathered during the observation. These aforementioned instruments and tools are described in depth in the following sections.

The observational instrument, the Social and Behavioral Development Observational Instrument for Teacher Practice (sbDOITp), was developed by this researcher from the findings listed in the formative research study (Appendix E). From that study, 10 pedagogical methods were observed in the guiding of children's social and behavioral development. These behaviors included (a) interactive modeling as participant, (b) support in problem solving, (c) redirection to task, (d) rule statement, (e) command stated in the positive, (f) command stated in the negative, (g) visual strategy usage, (h) teacher-imposed consequence, (i) specific feedback when performing behavioral expectations, and (j) proximity. These methods were used either to guide children's development of social skills such as making friends, social vocabulary usage, giving compliments, helping a peer in need, etc., or to support children's compliance with

behavioral expectations such as following directions, listening to adults and peers, walking in a line or group, sitting appropriately at tables, etc. Specifically, the pedagogical techniques were divided between the two categories as follows:

In supporting social skill building, techniques used included the following:

a) Interactive modeling as participant: a naturally occurring experience or conversation that involves teachers and children sharing in an event, activity, or conversation that models and promotes engagement with appropriate cultural mores (e.g., During an art activity, the teacher says, “May I have the scissors?” A child hands the teacher the scissors. The teacher responds, “Thank you for handing those to me; now I can use them to finish my picture.”).

b) Visual strategy usage: the use of printed pictures or symbols and use of gestures that promote cognitive cueing of a socially acceptable reaction and/or interaction (e.g., Children are working at the table with puzzles. A child wants a new puzzle and stares at a peer's puzzle. The teacher shows the child a picture of a child trading a toy with another child. The child holds out the old puzzle to the other child, and the children trade.).

c) Support in problem solving: the act of an expert (adult and/or peer) guiding the process of problem solving when an individual is in the midst of a problem or dilemma with a peer or adult. The expert is not involved in the immediate problem (e.g., Two children are arguing over a truck. The

teacher observes and then approaches the two children. She has the children explain the problem, generate possible solutions, and then settle on a choice.).

In reinforcing behavioral expectations for children, childcare professionals used the following:

a) Redirection to task: the prompting of an individual to return to the acceptable or preferred behavior or activity. This can be done through verbal, physical, or auditory prompts (e.g., “What are you doing?”; Pointing to the scissors or holding scissors in front of the child’s line of vision; “Show me how to put the blocks away.”).

b) Rule statement: the stating of a specific behavioral expectation or rule when an individual is not engaged in appropriate behaviors (e.g., “During circle time, we raise our hand when we want to speak.”).

c) Command stated in the positive: a declarative statement used to express a desired expectation (e.g., “foot on the floor” when a child is going to kick something; “gentle touches” when a child is hitting a teacher’s arm for attention).

d) Command stated in the negative: a declarative statement used to request that an inappropriate behavior stop (e.g., “Don’t kick” when a child is going to kick something; “Stop hitting me” when a child is hitting a teacher’s arm for attention).

e) Visual strategy usage: the use of printed pictures/symbols and use of gestures that promote cognitive cueing of a behavioral or procedural reaction (e.g., The teacher points to the child's picture on the carpet to remind the child to sit criss-cross on the carpet.).

f) Teacher-imposed consequence: a reprimand is given that involves an individual's free choice being taken away temporarily because the individual engaged in inappropriate behaviors (e.g., a child is sent to "time out" because he threw blocks in the classroom and they hit another child).

g) Specific feedback: the act of providing descriptive language to individuals about the appropriate behavior in which they are/were engaged. Subjective words like *good* or *great* do not need to be present; however, vocal inflection and positive facial and body expressions are required to affirm the approved behavior (e.g., "You put those blocks in the basket and then put them in the correct space on the shelf!" Teacher is at child's eye level, making eye contact, and smiling).

h) Proximity: the act of positioning a child or oneself closely. The teacher positions himself/herself within easy reach or eyesight of a child with the intent of maintaining behavioral expectations. The teacher may also position the child within his/her easy reach and eyesight (e.g., During circle time, Jeremiah was rolling around on the floor. The teacher asked Jeremiah to sit next to her while she finished reading the book.).

Of the 10 methods identified and observed, all 10 had been identified as pedagogical practices used or recommended in early childhood classrooms for the purpose of guiding children's social and behavioral development. However, while 10 of the pedagogical techniques reviewed in the literature were observed during the observational periods, the research literature indicated that there are three suggested practices that may exist in highly skilled childcare centers. These techniques and strategies include (a) formalized modeling and (b) role playing when supporting social skill development and (c) formalized modeling when promoting behavioral expectation compliance. Though none of these methods were present in the formative research study, the researcher added them to the list under the two categories of social skill development and behavioral expectation reinforcement in order to provide for an observational event in which the use of these strategies might occur in a larger and more diverse sample used during the dissertation study.

The Social and Behavioral Development Observational Instrument for Teacher Practice (sbDOITp, provided in Appendix A) utilizes a clear format of a table divided horizontally into the two dimensions of teacher-initiated activities of large and small group. Vertical columns denote the type of pedagogical method (social skill building or behavioral expectation reinforcement) and the specific techniques that may have been used in that category. For example, social skill building pedagogical techniques include (a) interactive modeling as participant, (b) role playing, (c) formalized modeling, (d) visual strategy usage, and (e) support in problem solving. In the category of behavioral expectation reinforcement, techniques include (a) redirection to task, (b) rule statement, (c) command stated in the positive, (d) command stated in the negative, (e) visual

strategy usage, (f) teacher-imposed consequence, (g) specific feedback, (h) formalized modeling, and (i) proximity. Definitions are provided on the back of the second page of the observational tool (refer to Appendix A). At the conclusion of the observation, two Likert scale items were given to the teachers. The items asked teachers, on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the highest, 1 being the lowest), to rate (a) how typical this day was for the children and (b) how typical this day was for the teacher. Additionally, the observational tool has an area designated for recording the times of observed small- and large-group instruction, as well as teacher-to-child ratio information. This information provided contextual information during the analysis of the dissertation study.

The categories and specific strategies for the development of this tool were identified during the formative research study and a prior review of literature on pedagogical methods and practices that can either support or hinder social–emotional competence and child outcomes. As child outcome research is rich and these methods have been studied in relation to child outcomes, this was a relevant source for identifying practice components. The predominant literature came from the Center for Evidence Based Practice in collaboration with the primary research partners Fox, Dunlop, Hemmeter, Joseph, and Strain (2003) and use of the Positive Behavioral Support Model for Young Children. This literature and model have been supported across early childhood research and philosophical orientations as supporting the acquisition of social–emotional outcomes in young children. These researchers' conceptual model represents proactive strategies in environmental design and pedagogical methods that lead to gains in social skill application and behavioral expectation compliance. They suggest a system of discrete behaviors in which a teacher may engage to support the acquisition of social

skills and behavioral expectation compliance. Individual children have shown significant gains in developmental milestone attainment. While this model's research focused on individual child outcomes, the techniques suggested and taught to providers, as well as observed by these researchers, were seen as intervention strategies and thus resulted in children's attainment of social skills. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that these same techniques may coordinate with practices currently employed by childcare professionals.

To examine the content validity of the sbDOITp, C. H. Lawshe's method (Lawshe, 1975; Pennington, 2003) was used. This method uses experts in a given field to evaluate and judge the essential nature of listed items or criteria. Lawshe proposed that each rating judge respond to each of the measurable items on a scale or test by answering the question, "Is this item essential/useful but not essential/not necessary to the performance of the construct?" If more than half of the judging panelists indicated that an item is essential, that item was thought to have at least some content validity. To determine a greater level of content validity, a larger number of panelists need to agree that an item is essential. The following formula—the content validity ratio (CVR) formula—will be used to determine the content validity of each item listed on the sbDOITp.

$$CVR = (n_e - N/2) / (N/2)$$

n_e = number of panelists indicating essential, N = total number of panelists

Eight panelists were sought as experts in the field of early childhood teacher pedagogical practice and young children's social and emotional competence. The eight

panelists included three curriculum specialists and three intervention specialists/diagnostic evaluators from the early childhood learning programs in the school district in which the research is taking place. Additionally, one administrative resource teacher and one supervisor for the Exceptional Early Learning Programs in the school district in which the research is being conducted were part of the panel. All panelists had advanced degrees in early childhood education or special education with an emphasis in early childhood. All panelists had been teachers in preschool or elementary classrooms and had taught children age 4 or older and, at the time of the study, served as consultants in private childcare facilities that served children between birth and age 5, or in early exceptional educational classrooms in the school district serving children 3 to 5 years of age.

The panelists were provided the observation instrument and the definitions that define the observable behaviors (Appendix A). These panelists were provided with the question, "Is this item essential/useful but not essential/not necessary to the performance of the construct?" and asked to respond on the individual items listed on the tool itself with a *yes* or *no* in the corresponding column. The panelists responded, and the sbDOITp was collected. The CVR results for each item on the sbDOITp follow.

Table 4. Social skill building pedagogical techniques:	Content Validity Ratio
Interactive modeling as participant	1.0
Role playing	1.0
Formalized modeling	1.0
Visual strategy	1.0
Support in problem solving	1.0

Table 5. Behavioral expectation reinforcement techniques:	Content Validity Ratio
Redirection to task	1.0
Rule statement	.75
Command stated in the positive	1.0
Command stated in the negative	.75
Visual strategy usage	1.0
Teacher-imposed consequence	.50
Specific feedback	1.0
Formalized modeling	1.0
Proximity	1.0

The content validity ratio requires that with eight panelists, a minimum value of .75 is required to ensure the individual item's content validity. All items met this requirement with the exception of teacher-imposed consequence. Upon review of the formative research observations, the researcher decided to include this item because it was used at least once in four out of the five classrooms observed. At times, this method of behavioral expectation compliance was used more than once and appeared to be the preferred method of behavioral expectation reinforcement.

The observational tool that was used to record observations of teachers' practice was enhanced with a digital video recorder. Throughout the duration of teacher-initiated activities such as large-group (approximately 15 minutes) and small-group (approximately 20 minutes) instruction, video documentation occurred while the researcher simultaneously recorded observational data on the Social and Behavioral Development Observational Instrument for Teacher Practice (sbDOITp). The video recording was later used for two purposes: (a) to capture video vignettes/snippets to be used during the interview following the observation (the choices of video segments that were presented to the teacher for their comments are detailed in the next section), and (b)

to assist the researcher with observer reliability on the sbDOITp by providing an opportunity for three research assistants to check the reliability of the researcher's documentation gathered during the observation.

During the observations, the researcher was the primary observer and recorder of data. Therefore, to avoid compromises to the data, the researcher employed the use of video-recorded observations to enhance observer reliability. While observing the childcare professional, the researcher documented the frequency and type of pedagogical techniques used to support social and behavioral development during large- and small-group instruction. Following the observation, the researcher provided the video portions of small- and large-group instruction to one of three research assistants. The research assistant then reviewed the video content and independently recorded the frequency and type of pedagogical methodology used to support 4-year-old children's social and behavioral development. These data were then compared to those of the researcher.

In cases in which discrepancies occurred between the researcher and the research assistant, a second research assistant was asked to review the video content and independently record the frequency and type of pedagogical methodology used to support 4-year-old children's social and behavioral development. That information was then compared to the first two completed sbDOITp forms to determine where the inaccuracies occurred, and then corrections were made to support what the majority of independent observers recorded. An instance of discrepant coding did not occur during the pilot study; however, this procedure was used 4 times in the dissertation study.

Research assistants were trained over the course of two sessions. Each session was approximately 2 hours in length. The researcher, who was also the developer of the sbDOITp, served as the primary trainer. The researcher/developer used video footage previously gathered from various childcare centers for the original purpose of curricular coaching. As many of the prerecorded video vignettes/snippets concentrated on large- and small-group teacher-initiated instruction, the content of the videos was relevant to the intended use of the sbDOITp.

During the training, the researcher and the research assistants reviewed the definitions on the back side of the sbDOITp, and a discussion of observable behaviors followed. Then video vignettes/snippets provided by the previously recorded coaching video footage were observed, and the training group sought to identify the social skill building methods used, such as (a) interactive modeling as participant, (b) role playing, (c) formalized modeling, (d) visual strategy usage, and (e) support in problem solving. The training group also looked for and coded the behavioral expectation reinforcement techniques used, such as (a) redirection to task, (b) rule statement, (c) command stated in the positive, (d) command stated in the negative, (e) visual strategy usage, (f) teacher-imposed consequence, (g) specific feedback, (h) formalized modeling, and (i) proximity. Once training participants felt comfortable with identification of the aforementioned elements, the training participants attempted to use the observational instrument with the videos. The training participants engaged in the observation of five prerecorded large-group times. Concurrence was met on five out of the five examples of large group, thus providing an interrater reliability of $r = 1.0$.

During the second training session, video vignettes/snippets were provided of small-group times. Video footage was observed, and the training group sought to identify the social skill building methods and the behavioral expectation reinforcement techniques. Once training participants felt comfortable with identification of the aforementioned elements, the training participants attempted to use the observational instrument. The training participants engaged in observation of five prerecorded small-group times. Concurrence of observations was met in four out of the five examples of small group. Therefore, an interrater reliability of $r = .80$ was established.

The Video Vignette/Snippet Selection Criteria (Appendix C) is a predetermined, established, and written criterion that outlines video vignette/snippet selection requirements for the stimulated recall observation portion of the semistructured interview. Video vignettes/snippets were chosen from the researcher's observational opportunities when watching the participants engaged in the instruction of a large-group (approximately 15 minutes) and a small-group activity (approximately 20 minutes). Classroom observational portions that did not relate to teacher-initiated activities were not considered for recording. Only small- and large-group instruction was considered for recording and review of stimulated recall observation opportunities during the semistructured interview.

Video snippets/vignettes were chosen when they related to a pedagogical technique used to guide children's social and behavioral development that fell into a predetermined category (social skill building and/or behavioral reinforcement techniques) and demonstrated an identified methodology under aforementioned categories, such as in

the social skill building category—(a) interactive modeling as participant, (b) role playing, (c) visual strategy usage, (d) formalized modeling, and (e) support in problem solving—and as in the category of behavioral expectation reinforcement technique—(a) redirection to task, b) rule statement, (c) command stated in the positive, (d) command stated in the negative, (e) visual strategy usage, (f) teacher-imposed consequence, (g) specific feedback, (h) formalized modeling, and (i) proximity.

A minimum of two video vignettes/snippets were chosen. The researcher sought to align, through review of frequency totals on the sbDOITp, the snippets/vignettes with the childcare professional's most often demonstrated pedagogical methodology used to guide children's social and behavioral development. The highest frequency totals denoted the childcare professional's dominant strategy. The video portion that related to teacher-initiated large- and small-group instruction were reviewed to identify a clearly recorded example. Stimulated recall video vignettes/snippets had to be (a) visually distinct, (b) auditorally discrete, and (c) of sufficient length to show a complete episode with a beginning, middle, and end to the pedagogical technique being used. Time for each snippet could not exceed 2 minutes. At least two vignettes/snippets were identified for each participant, one showing an example of the participant's predominant method in large group and one showing the participant's predominant method in small group. Occasionally, an additional vignette/snippet was shown if the frequencies indicated an additional method was used with equally high levels of frequency.

The semistructured interview protocol was developed to elicit reflective, textually rich responses that offered insight into the impetus behind the implementation of chosen

pedagogical techniques used by childcare professionals to guide children's social and behavioral development. The semistructured interview protocol was used in conjunction with video footage that was recorded during observational sessions. Specific portions of the video were chosen based on pre-established criteria (see criteria for video footage selection in the section following and in Appendix C). The interviewer sought to have the childcare professional describe the footage selected and reflect on what happened prior to, during, and following the pedagogical technique used. The intent was to gain insight as to childcare professionals' choice of pedagogical technique. Included in, but not limited to, the content of the semistructured interview was (a) why the method was chosen, (b) where they learned that particular method, (c) when they typically use that method, (d) who they typically use that method with, and (e) what happens most often when using that method. The semistructured interview protocol was used as a guide for interviewing willing participants. The researcher deviated from the protocol, within professional boundaries, to elicit expansion of ideas or thoughts related to the reflection of pedagogical practice. The interview format is provided in Appendix B.

To validate the dependability and credibility of the questions and structure of the interview, the textual data gathered during the pilot study (Appendix F) were reviewed by the researcher and an expert in qualitative research and social–emotional developmental theory for young children. The pilot study interview text was evaluated to determine if the exploratory nature of the answers sought in the research question were adequately targeted through the type of questions and the use of the video vignette/snippet selected. It was concluded that the textual data gained from the semistructured interviews gained a richness of subject and reflected participants' understandings of the methods they used,

the context of their use, and the outcomes of use. Therefore, the semistructured interview format was considered to be appropriate for use in this dissertation study.

The interview recording device was an MP3 digital recording device with 2GB of memory. The digital recording device was used to record the auditory portion of the interview. Because of its sleek design and powerful memory, it made it an appropriate choice for recording interview data. It was small enough to be unobtrusive and powerful enough to record lengthy conversational interviews. It was technologically consistent with the ability and need to store data on flash drives as well as exporting that data to transcriptionists.

A demographic data form was developed to gain information about the sample used in this study. The close-ended survey form asked participants for basic demographic information including gender, ethnicity, educational level, years of experience, and annual household income. Because participants had to choose a response, data were easily coded on a dichotomous scale. A sample of this form is in Appendix G.

Procedures

The researcher contacted each participant by phone the day before the scheduled observation to verify the prearranged appointment. All appointments stayed as scheduled, with the exception of one participant who was ill. Her appointment was rescheduled to a date after all other scheduled observations and interviews had been completed. This allowed her ample time for health recovery and did not interfere with previously arranged observations and interviews.

All observation appointments were scheduled during the summer. Since childcare facilities are open to serve working families most programs run their educational programs twelve months. This was true of all the sites contacted.

Following each appointment verification, the digital camera's battery was checked for a substantial charge, a participant folder was created (labeled with the participant's number and containing the sbDOITp observational form, semistructured interview format, deli menu and order form, and training hour certificate), directions were printed, and lastly, the tripod, camera, and folder were placed in the car.

On the day of the observation, the researcher arrived 30 minutes prior to the agreed observation time to prepare the video equipment and review the planned itinerary for the prekindergarten class that day. The review-of-schedule process ensured proper placement of the video camera to (a) capture the observational data related to teacher behaviors and practice and (b) make certain that the children's faces were shielded from the camera's focal point by placing their backs toward the lens of the camera. The shielding of children's faces through camera placement was aided by the fact that the children were engaged in teacher-initiated instruction and thus their orientation was toward the teacher and away from the camera. This technique is in line with educational research inquiries that utilize video-recording tools to capture teacher behaviors. Additionally, with the use of digital video documentation, when a child's face was captured on tape due to body movement, that child's face was "blacked out" as part of the camera's capabilities. To restate, the intent of this inquiry was to document pedagogical techniques used by childcare professionals to guide children's social and behavioral

development. Thus, children's actions and reactions were of little interest to this study and did not require documentation.

Following the review of the schedule and verification of proper placement of the camera, the Social and Behavioral Development Observational Instrument for Teacher Practice (sbDOITp) was filled out with the date and time of the observation. When the small or large group started, the video recorder was also started, and the formal observation began. Data were recorded only during teacher-initiated activities such as large- and small-group instruction. No data were recorded for other times/activities that took place during the 3-hour morning routine. During the observation, frequencies, in the form of tally marks, were recorded on the sbDOITp. Frequencies were recorded under the corresponding pedagogical technique and teacher-directed activity. Additionally, the time track that was displayed in the digital recording device was recorded next to most recorded behaviors to aid with identifying (and later editing) vignettes/snippets.

At the conclusion of the observation, the researcher asked the teacher to respond to two Likert scale items. The items were on a five-point scale, 5 indicating the highest correlate and 1 the least. The items they were asked to respond to were the following: (a) "Rate how typical this day was for the children," and (b) "Rate how typical this day was for you." Then the researcher provided the participant with a deli menu and assisted the teacher in completing the deli order form to assure that lunch was ordered accurately. If an assistant teacher worked with the teacher during the observation, a lunch order was also taken for that teacher. However, assistants were not observed, documented, videotaped, or interviewed, so the books and training hour were not provided to those

individuals. Once the lunch orders were collected, the researcher gathered her equipment, expressed her thanks, and verified the scheduled follow-up inteview for the following day around noon. This time was consistently most convienent to the participants because it was rest time for the children and prior to most scheduled breaks. In one case, a participant requested an interview time of 3:00 p.m. Therefore, that time was accomodated and a gift card was provided to that teacher so she could purchase a lunch at her convenience and discretion.

The researcher then retired to another location to review the sbDOITp and have the observational reliability verified by a trained research assistant. Observational reliability was confirmed 26 out of 30 times with the use of a single research assistant. Consensus by the research team was required for four observations in which a second observer was used.

Once observer relibilty was verified, the researcher chose the video snippets/vignettes based on the criteria presented in the VideoVignette/Snippet Selection Criteria (Appendix C). A minimum of two video vignettes/snippets were chosen. The researcher sought to align, through review of frequency totals on the sbDOITp, the snippets/vignettes with the childcare professional's most often demonstrated pedagogical methodology used to guide children's social and behavioral development. The identification and selection of video vignettes/snippets was aided by the fact that the researcher and primary observer documented the digital recorder time counter reading near the tally marks that corresponded to the methods used by the research participant. When the predominant method was identified, the times recorded on the sbDOITp were

referenced and the video was reviewed that corresponded to the documented recording times. Editing small clips was aided by the digital video recording software installed on the laptop, as well as the touch screen on the camera. Clips could be edited in still frame within tenths of a second; thus, the researcher had the technology to accurately extract full-length examples that did not overlap with other observational content captured on the video recorder.

The video portions that related to the predominant method used in large-group instruction and the predominant method used in small-group instruction were reviewed to identify a clearly recorded example. The stimulated recall video vignettes/snippets had to be (a) visually distinct, (b) auditorally discrete, and (c) of sufficient length to show a complete episode with a beginning, middle, and end to the pedagogical technique being used. Time for each snippet did not exceed 2 minutes. At least two vignettes/snippets were identified for each participant, one showing an example of their predominant method in large-group instruction and one showing their predominant method in small-group instruction. Occasionally, an additional vignette/snippet was shown if the frequencies indicated that an additional method was used with sufficiently high levels of frequency.

In most cases, predominant techniques used by the childcare professional to gain a desired effect could be isolated in a single video clip. These video snippets/vignettes captured a beginning, middle, and an end to the scenario. Here is an example: A childcare professional sees a child swinging a block in the block center while she is working with other children in a small group. She says, “Sara, the blocks are for building. That is the

rule." Then the child looks at the teacher, looks at the blocks, kneels down with the blocks, and starts to build. This is a complete episode in which the teacher uses rule statement to gain a behavioral expectation.

However, in some cases, techniques were chained to get a desired effect. For instance, a childcare professional might want to redirect the attention of a child during a large-group activity in which the teacher is reading a book. To gain the child's focus, the teacher might say, "Michael, sit on your bottom. (The teacher waits for child to comply.) Now, what did the rabbit just do in the story?" (The child comments.) The teacher says, "You were listening to the story" (smiles at the child). This teacher is using multiple methods in one snippet to get a desired outcome, the child's focus on the story being read. All these techniques are under the category of behavioral expectation compliance. First, the teacher uses command stated in the positive ("Michael, sit on your bottom"). Next, the teacher redirects the child's attention the task ("What is the rabbit doing in the story?"). Last, the teacher provides specific feedback ("You were listening") and smiles.

The snippets/vignettes chosen were labeled as "snippet #a," "snippet #b," and possibly "snippet #c" (the # corresponded to the participant's assigned number.) Then the snippets/vignettes were transferred to a scan disk and/or the researcher's laptop. As the video snippets/vignettes were digitally recorded, they were easily made available for review at the childcare facility through the use of a media player device on the researcher's laptop. This kept the interview setting intimate, professional, and confidential from the participant's colleagues and the administration.

The snippets/vignettes chosen were edited to ensure teacher behaviors were captured and children's faces were screened from visual identification. Additionally, snippets/vignettes remained concise and time efficient. This was in line with the preselection criteria.

The day prior to each interview, the participant's folder was reviewed to verify that the Semistructured Interview Format was preprinted for the researcher's reference and note taking. The MP3 digital recording device was tested for ample battery power and to verify memory capacity. Next, the deli order was submitted for pickup on the morning of the interview. Lunch was kept in a cooler until the time came for the scheduled interview. Last, the book basket was put together and the training certificate was completed with the participant's information.

The researcher arrived at the childcare facility 15 minutes prior to the scheduled interview. Once the researcher returned to the childcare professional's facility, an intimate location was chosen that allowed for undistracted conversation and interaction. The laptop and MP3 device were prepared for the interview.

During the interview, the semistructured protocol was followed; minor deviations were noted on the preprinted interview format sheet. The researcher remained actively engaged by keeping eye contact, repeating last statements, giving 7 to 10 seconds of wait time between questions, and restating what was said to gain clarification.

Following the interview, the participant was thanked and provided with the demographic data form. Participants were asked to complete only the information they

were comfortable sharing. All participants completed the form in its entirety. Then the book basket was shared and ideas for using the books in small and large groups were explained. The training hour and full lunch order were provided. The MP3 audiorecorded data were uploaded to the laptop onsite to verify that all conversational data were captured.

After the observation and interview were completed, the observational and demographic data were recorded in an Excel file to be used during the statistical analysis portion of the study. Then the observational data were stored in a locked file cabinet along with the digital recording. Audiorecorded data were emailed to the transcriptionist so that textual data could be formed for review. The transcription process took approximately 3 days. The transcriptionist was able to understand the dialogue with 98% accuracy. The 2% of inaccuracy was denoted by blanks when a single word or phrase was not recognizable. The researcher verified accuracy by reviewing each transcribed document and listening to the recorded interview. Eighty percent of the time, the researcher was able to insert the missing word or phrase. Many such words and phrases were related to professional educational jargon. When the word or phrase could not be exactly identified, a best recollection was used; italics were used for assumed dialogue. These instances were very rare and did not affect the integrity of the textual interview data collected.

Analysis

To describe the pedagogical techniques used by childcare professionals in a large urban county in the southeast region of the United States when guiding 4-year-old

children's social and behavioral reinforcement during teacher-initiated activities such as large- and small-group instruction, descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Data were recorded using a ratio scale.

The descriptive statistics examined recorded frequencies of each pedagogical technique occurrence in each of the two teacher-initiated times, small and large group. Frequencies were quantified and reported as related to the types of pedagogical techniques childcare professionals use when guiding children's social and behavioral development in small- and large-group instruction.

Additionally, nonparametric statistical analysis was used to determine the association between the types of pedagogical techniques selected for social skill building and behavioral reinforcement and the type of teacher-initiated activity, such as large- and small-group instruction. For this determination, a chi-square (χ^2) was used to determine if frequency counts (ratio scale) were distributed differently among the pedagogical techniques categories (nominal scale). Two categories were used to divide the frequency counts: (a) large-group instruction and (b) small-group instruction. The level of significance was set at $p \leq .05$ for this one-tailed test. A contingency coefficient was generated as part of the analysis to provide an estimate of the magnitude of the relationship between each of the teacher-initiated activity variables—large- and small-group instruction—and the categories, pedagogical technique used, within the two variables.

Transcripts of the audio portion of the interviews were reviewed to identify themes, patterns, and constructs that emerged within the subsections of the

semistructured interview. This review process sought to identify patterns across interviewees' responses and their perceived application of social and behavioral methodologies used with 4-year-old children. The subsectioned themes—(a) describing the technique, (b) how the technique was used, (c) when the technique was used, and (d) why the technique was used—were coded as patterns in participants' dialogue responses. The coded responses were then grouped across separate interviews to develop cohesive integration among data with which to summarize findings and develop descriptive information about why childcare professionals chose specific social skill building and behavioral reinforcement techniques to guide 4-year-old children's social and behavioral development during teacher-initiated activities such as large- and small-group times. The findings exposed in chapter four were then compared and contrasted to the recommended practices for guiding children's social and behavioral development in chapter five.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The intent of this inquiry was to investigate childcare professionals' chosen methods in guiding children's social and behavioral development. After identifying which methods were used, the researcher sought to describe the childcare professional's intention when choosing to use specific pedagogical techniques during large- and small-group instruction. Specifically, the concentration of interest was on the methods used during teacher-initiated instruction (such as large and small group) to guide children's social skill building and behavioral expectation compliance. Teachers in this study generally rated their day and the children's day as "typical". Thus, the data should provide insight into these specific questions for this study:

1. What pedagogical techniques do childcare professionals in a large urban county in the southeastern United States use when guiding 4-year-old children's social and behavioral development during teacher-initiated activities such as large- and small-group instruction?

2. What is the association between the types of pedagogical techniques selected by childcare professionals in a large urban county in the southeastern United States to guide children's social and behavioral development and the type of teacher-initiated activity (such as large and small group) in which they engage?

3. Why do childcare professionals in a large urban county in the southeastern United States choose particular social skill building and behavioral reinforcement techniques to guide 4-year-old children's social and behavioral development during teacher-initiated activities such as large- and small-group instruction?

The results of the study will be discussed in relation to the aforementioned research questions and will follow a format that is sequential to the order of the questions.

Research Question 1

Through the use of this question, the researcher sought to identify types and capture frequencies of the pedagogical methods childcare professionals used to guide children's (a) social skill development and (b) behavioral expectation compliance during teacher-initiated activities such as large-and small-group instruction. Methods used by participants to support social skill building included but were not limited to the following:

a) Interactive modeling as participant: a naturally occurring experience or conversation that involves teachers and children sharing in an event, activity, or conversation that models and promotes engagement with appropriate cultural mores (e.g., During an art activity, the teacher says, "May I have the scissors?" A child hands the teacher the scissors. The teacher responds, "Thank you for handing those to me; now I can use them to finish my picture.").

b) Visual strategy usage: the use of printed pictures or symbols and use of gestures that promote cognitive cueing of a socially acceptable reaction and/or interaction (e.g., Children are working at the table with puzzles. A child wants a new puzzle and stares at a peer's puzzle. The teacher shows the child a picture of a child trading a toy with another child. The child holds out the old puzzle to the other child, and the children trade.).

c) Support in problem solving: the act of an expert (adult and/or peer) guiding the process of problem solving when an individual is in the midst of a problem or dilemma with a peer or adult. The expert is not involved in the immediate problem (e.g., Two children are arguing over a truck. The teacher observes and then approaches the two children. She has the children explain the problem, generate possible solutions, and then settle on a choice.).

d) Formalized modeling: a contrived scenario in which an expert (adult or peer) reacts to an event, situation, or stimulus in a way that promotes appropriate cultural mores. It is shown with the expectation that the observer will use a similar technique in a future event. It becomes an example of preferred behavior and typically implies a positive outcome from engagement in the behavior (e.g., A teacher wants her students to learn to say thank you when someone shares with them. She sets up a situation during circle time in which a student hands her a block and she

says, “Thank you.” Then she hands the block back to the student and says, “Thank you.” They model a few more examples with different materials.).

e) Role playing: the engagement in a realistic scenario as an actor for the purpose of practicing reactions and responses to previous and/or future life experiences (e.g., The teacher describes a situation in which two children get in an argument. Then she picks two children to act out how to solve the problem. The teacher stops the role play intermittently to get feedback from children watching.).

Childcare professionals reinforced behavioral expectations by using techniques such as the following:

a) Redirection to task: the prompting of an individual to return to the acceptable or preferred behavior or activity. This can be done through verbal, physical, or auditory prompts (e.g., “What are you doing?”; Pointing to the scissors or holding scissors in front of the child’s line of vision; “Show me how to put the blocks away.”).

b) Formalized modeling: a contrived scenario in which an expert (adult or peer) reacts to an event, situation, or stimulus in a way that promotes appropriate cultural mores. It is shown with the expectation that the observer will use a similar technique in a future event. It becomes an example of preferred behavior and typically implies a positive outcome from engagement in the behavior (e.g., A teacher wants her class to sit

criss-cross during circle time. She sits criss-cross at the beginning of circle time and says, “I am sitting criss-cross because I am ready to begin circle. I will know you are ready when you sit like this.” The children all sit criss-cross.).

c) Rule statement: the stating of a specific behavioral expectation or rule when an individual is not engaged in appropriate behaviors (e.g., “During circle time, we raise our hand when we want to speak.”).

d) Command stated in the positive: a declarative statement that is used to express a desired expectation (e.g., “foot on the floor” when a child is going to kick something; “gentle touches” when a child is hitting a teacher’s arm for attention).

e) Command stated in the negative: a declarative statement used to request that an inappropriate behavior stop (e.g., “Don’t kick” when a child is going to kick something; “Stop hitting me” when a child is hitting a teacher’s arm for attention).

f) Visual strategy usage: the use of printed pictures/symbols and use of gestures that promote cognitive cueing of a behavioral or procedural reaction (e.g., The teacher points to the child’s picture on the carpet to remind the child to sit criss-cross on the carpet.).

g) Teacher-imposed consequence: a reprimand is given that involves an individual’s free choice being taken away temporarily because the

individual engaged in inappropriate behaviors (e.g., A child is sent to "time out" because he threw blocks in the classroom and they hit another child.).

h) Specific feedback: the act of providing descriptive language to individuals about the appropriate behavior in which they are/were engaged. Subjective words like *good* or *great* do not need to be present; however, vocal inflection and positive facial and body expressions are required to affirm the approved behavior (e.g., "You put those blocks in the basket and then put them in the correct space on the shelf!" The teacher is at the child's eye level, making eye contact, and smiling.).

i) Proximity: the act of positioning a child or oneself closely. The teacher positions himself/herself within easy reach or eyesight of a child with the intent of maintaining behavioral expectations. The teacher may also position the child within his/her easy reach and eyesight (e.g., During circle time, Jeremiah was rolling around on the floor. The teacher asked Jeremiah to sit next to her while she finished reading the book.).

All of these observed teacher practices were captured on the Social and Behavioral Development Observational Instrument for Teacher Practice (sbDOITp). The frequency totals as displayed in Table 6, indicate that dominant methods surfaced with relation to techniques specific to social skill building and techniques specific to behavioral expectation compliance.

Table 6. Social Skill Building & Behavioral Expectation Compliance Techniques: Frequency Counts

Type/Method	**# of Times**	**% of Times**	**# of Teachers Using**
Social Skill Building			
Role Playing	12	0.5%	5
Visual Strategy Usage	14	0.6%	7
Formalized Modeling	40	1.8%	17
Support in Problem Solving	119	5.4%	23
Interactive Modeling	256	11.6%	29
Total	441	19.9%	30
Behavioral Expectation Compliance			
Formalized Modeling	19	0.9%	11
Redirection to Task	454	20.5%	30
Rule Statement	142	6.4%	25
Command Stated in the Positive	607	27.4%	30
Command Stated in the Negative	90	4.1%	22
Visual Strategy Usage	60	2.7%	22
Teacher Imposed Consequence	37	1.6%	13
Specific Feedback	280	12.6%	29
Proximity	86	3.9%	23
Total	1775	80.1%	30
Total for All Categories	**2216**	**100.0%**	**30**

In a review of the data totals, it is evident that childcare professionals used behavioral expectation compliance with greater frequency, with a total of 1,775 documented occurrences compared to 441 observed occurrences for social skill building techniques. This indicates that on average, childcare professionals engaged in pedagogical methods that supported behavioral expectation compliance 80.1% of the time, while engagement in social skill building methodologies totaled only 19.9% of teachers' direct instructional methods.

Method Choice Differences in Large and Small Group

Frequencies for methodological choice varied little by group size. As displayed in Table7, large and small group were dominated by behavioral expectation compliance. However, during small group social skill building occurred more often than in large group. While social skill building techniques were more often used in small group than in large group, behavioral expectation compliance was still the dominate method. A detailed discussion follows related to the differences in pedagogical method usage during large and small groups when guiding children's social and behavioral development.

Table 7: Large and Small Group Frequencies for Guiding Children's Social and Behavioral Development

	Large Group			Small Group		
Type/Method	**# of participants using technique**	**Range of frequency for participant usage**	**Proportion times technique used by participants**	**# of participants using technique**	**Range of frequency for participant usage**	**Proportion of times technique used by participants**
Social Skill Building						
Role Playing	3	1-2	.40%	2	1-6	.65%
Visual Strategy Usage	3	1-2	.51%	4	1-6	.73%
Formalized Modeling	10	1-3	1.52%	11	1-4	2.03%
Support in Problem Solving	14	1-5	2.84%	22	1-12	7.40%
Interactive Modeling	27	1-9	9.73%	25	1-17	13.02%
Behavioral Expectation Compliance						
Formalized Modeling	5	1-2	.61%	9	1-3	1.06%
Redirection to Task	29	1-12	17.43%	30	1-20	22.94%
Rule Statement	22	1-8	10.23%	17	1-7	3.34%
Command Stated in the Positive	30	1-24	32.12%	29	3-25	23.60%
Command Stated in the Negative	11	1-11	3.14%	20	1-7	4.80%
Visual Strategy Usage	17	1-5	3.24%	15	1-4	2.28%
Teacher Imposed Consequence	6	1-2	.81%	11	1-6	2.36%
Specific Feedback	25	1-2	13.68%	28	1-17	11.80%
Proximity	16	1-9	3.75%	20	1-12	3.99%

Large Group: Social Skill Building

During large-group instruction, participants relied on interactive modeling and support in problem solving for social skill building while rarely engaging in role playing, visual strategy usage, and/or formalized modeling. It should be noted that teachers who did engage in the use of role playing, visual strategy usage, and/or formalized modeling did so infrequently and used these methods sporadically during the large-group time. The

frequency range for a single participant using role playing was 1–2, with three participants using the method. For visual strategy usage, there was a range of 1–2, with three participants using the method. For formalized modeling, the range was 1–3, with 10 participants using the method. Conversely, a total of 14 participants used support in problem solving with a range of 1–5 incidences, and a single participant using this strategy averaged two incidences of use per large group. Interactive modeling was observed to be used by 27 participants with a range of 1–9, with each participant who utilized this strategy averaging 3.5 incidences of usage per large group.

Large Group: Behavioral Expectation Compliance

Participants engaged in more behavioral expectation techniques during large group. More frequent techniques during large group included redirection to task, rule statement, command stated in the positive, and specific feedback. Less-utilized techniques were formalized modeling, command in the negative, visual strategy usage, teacher-imposed consequence, and proximity. The most frequent techniques were used by almost all the participants. Redirection to task was used by 29 participants, with a range of 1–12 frequencies per lesson and an average usage by participants incorporating this strategy of 5.9 times per large-group lesson. Twenty-two participants used rule statement, with a range of 1–8 times per lesson and an average usage per large-group lesson of 4.6 times. All 30 participants used command in the positive. It was the most frequent pedagogical method used by the sample. The range for this technique was 1–24, with an average usage of 11.3 times per lesson in a large-group setting. Specific feedback was used by 25 participants with a frequency range of 1–12 times per lesson. The technique of

specific feedback was used on an average of 5.4 times per lesson by the participants who employed this technique during large group. The less-utilized techniques of formalized modeling, visual strategy usage, and teacher-imposed consequence were used infrequently by the participants who demonstrated the techniques and usually had small ranges. However, techniques like command in the negative and proximity were used repeatedly by participants who used the technique. For instance, command in the negative was used by 12 participants with a range of 1–11, averaging 2.8 times per lesson in a large-group setting, whereas proximity was used by 16 participants with a range of 1–9, averaging 2.3 times by participants who employed this strategy during large-group instruction.

Small Group: Social Skill Building

Review of the small-group data indicates that childcare professionals utilized more opportunities for social skill building during small-group instruction than they did during large-group instruction. However, it is worth noting that the techniques that were predominantly demonstrated were support in problem solving and interactive modeling, with frequencies of 91 and 160, respectively. Role playing, visual strategy usage, and formalized modeling were still used modestly by some participants. Role playing was used by two participants. Participant 27 used the technique a total of 4 times in a small group lesson about “what to do when someone won’t let you play with their toy.” Each child in the small group who wished to role play was given an opportunity. This explains the high frequency count in this room. Another participant used the role playing method 2 times during a small group when she spontaneously followed the lead of some children expressing what happened when they felt angry. These two examples were the only two

that used role playing. Visual strategy usage was always gesture with the exception of Participant 27, who used self-made books and photographs to discuss social skills during the aforementioned small-group lesson. In total, three participants used visual strategies with a frequency of 1, and Participant 27 used the method 6 times. Formalized modeling was used by 11 participants with a range of frequencies for this method of 1–4. The average use of formalized modeling done by each participant was 2.2 times per lesson of observable incidence and an average of .87 times per small group.

Small Group: Behavioral Expectation Compliance

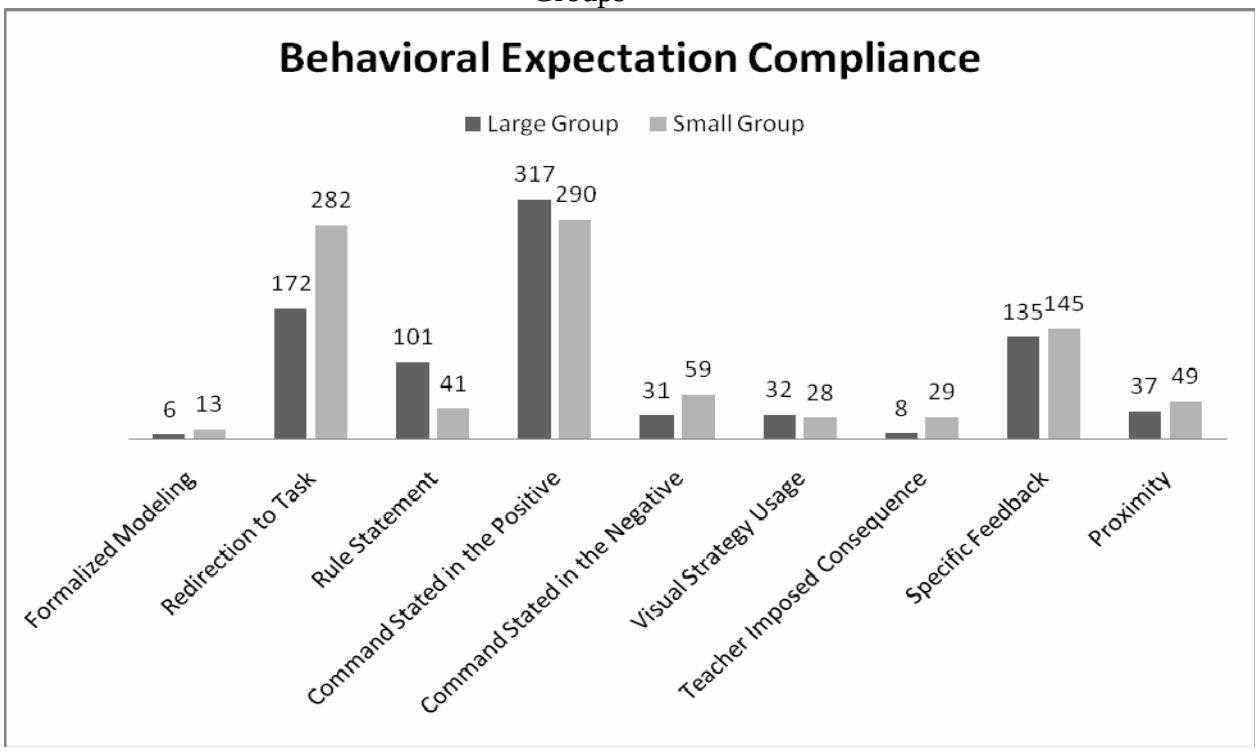
Small-group frequencies show the most frequently used techniques to be in the category of behavioral expectation compliance. The preferred techniques were redirection to task, command stated in the positive, and specific feedback. Redirection to task had a frequency count for all participants of 282, with all 30 participants utilizing this technique. This technique was used with a range of 1–20. (It should be noted that the number of small groups varied for each classroom. Approximately 2.63 small groups were held each day per participant classroom). Command stated in the positive was used an average of 10 times during all small groups. This was an average of 3.8 times per each small group with 29 participants using this technique with a range of 2–25 times. Specific feedback was used an average of 5 times through small groups with an average usage of 1.9 times during each separate small group. The range of use for the specific feedback technique was 1–17, with 28 participants demonstrating use of this technique. Command stated in the negative was used an average of 2.95 times, or 1.12 times per small group. The range of use for this technique was 1–7 times, with a total of 17 participants using the strategy of command stated in the negative. The least-used technique was formalized

modeling, with an incidence of 13 and an average for each individual small group of .5. Rule statement, visual strategy usage, teacher-imposed consequence, and proximity were all used less than one time per small group.

Summation of Behavioral Expectation Compliance and Social Skill Building

Overall, the frequency data indicate that childcare professionals use more behavioral expectation compliance techniques than social skill building methods in both small- and large-group settings. When using behavioral expectation compliance, participants prefer the use of command stated in the positive, redirection to task, and specific feedback. Childcare professionals in this study used formalized modeling and proximity the least. Figure 1 presents this data in a pictorial display.

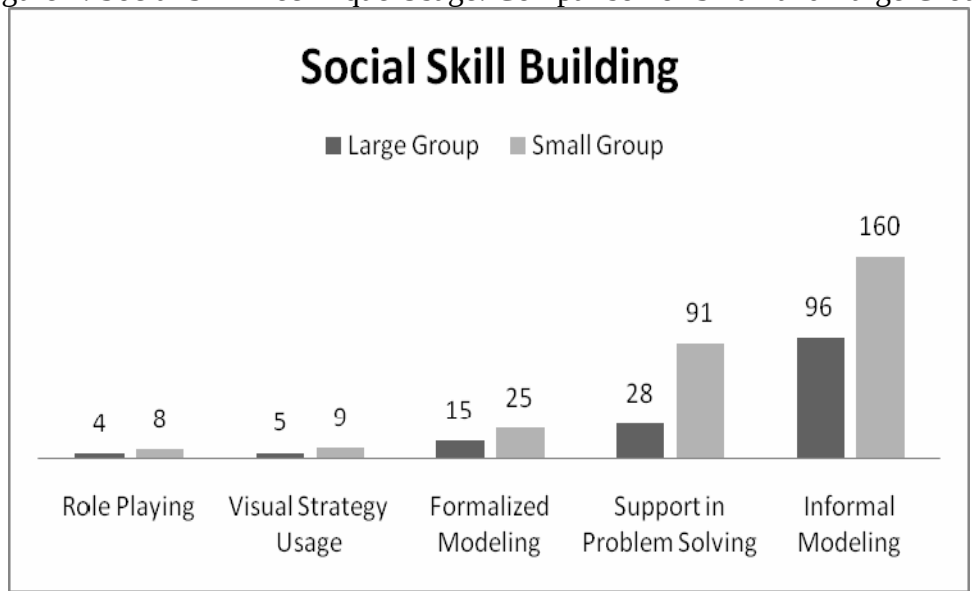
Figure 1. Behavioral Expectation Technique Usage: Comparison of Small and Large Groups



Techniques used by participants in small groups differed from the dominant techniques used in large groups to support behavioral expectation compliance. The

degree to which they differed will be discussed in the next section when data are reviewed for question 2. At this stage, the frequencies indicate that professionals still used redirection to task, command in the positive, and specific feedback as their dominant techniques with frequencies showing 282, 290, and 145, respectively. There are two notable differences in the techniques between large and small groups and the techniques employed for behavioral expectation compliance. The first is that redirection to task increased by almost 110 incidences for small groups. This is noteworthy, as a small group is on average 3.2 minutes shorter and has approximately 5.5 children less than a large group. The second notable difference between large-group techniques and small-group techniques is that teacher-imposed consequence was used more often in small groups than in large groups. Small-group teacher-imposed consequence accounted for 78% of the teacher-imposed consequence totals. Formalized modeling saw a generous increase of 36% from large to small groups and accounted for 68% of this technique's total usage across large- and small-group times. However, it is worth noting that while this increase appears large, the total frequency for use of this technique in small group was only 13. Rule statement saw a large decrease of usage during small groups—a 42% drop from the large-group totals. The frequency for rule statement in small groups was 41, while large-group frequency for this technique was 101. In short, while the three dominant methods for large group and small group were command in the positive, redirection to task, and specific feedback, these two instructional times differed. Small groups used less rule statement but more formalized modeling and teacher-imposed consequence.

Figure 2. Social Skill Technique Usage: Comparison of Small and Large Groups



Social skill building was largely represented by support in problem solving and interactive modeling. Childcare professionals in this study rarely used role playing, with a total of only 12 observed incidences. Visual strategy usage occurred a total of 14 times, and formalized modeling was observed 40 times. Support in problem solving and interactive modeling were observed more in small-group than in large-group settings. Support in problem solving during small groups made up 76% of the observed frequency of this technique. Interactive modeling during small groups accounted for 62% of this method's observed frequency. In fact, as a whole, social skill building technique usage was higher in small groups than in large groups. The difference in the average incidence drops per small group session because the average incidence of each behavior, for each participant, is divided by the average number of small groups, 2.63. (A reminder: The number of small groups varied for each classroom. Approximately 2.63 small groups were held each day per participant's classroom). This means each method occurred between .83 and 2.4 times per small group. Specifically, role playing occurred 1.5 times,

visual strategy usage occurred .83 times, formalized modeling occurred .87 times, support in problem solving occurred 1.5 times, and interactive modeling occurred 2.4 times per small group each participant held. Now that frequencies of method usage have been discussed, it is relevant to examine the proportional relationship between instructional times and chosen methods to guide children's social and behavioral development.

Research Question 2

This question sought to understand the association or relationship between instructional time (such as large- and small-group instructional times) and the methods used to guide children's social and behavioral development during those times. To evaluate the relationship between large- and small-group times and the techniques used by childcare professionals, a chi-square test of independence was performed. This allowed the researcher to compare the proportion of each instructional method variable separately, within the context of the small- and large-group variables.

First, the researcher compared the social skill building techniques of role playing, visual strategy usage, formalized modeling, support in problem solving, and interactive modeling used in large-group and small-group instruction. See Table 8.

Table 8. Chi-square test of independence for Social Skill Building

Social Skill Building	Formalized Modeling	Interactive Modeling	Role Playing	Support in Problem Solving	Visual Strategy Usage	Totals
Large group Freq.	15	96	4	28	5	148
Percent relative to total	3.4	21.77	.91	6.35	1.13	33.56
Small group Freq.	25	160	8	91	9	293
Percent relative to total	5.67	36.28	1.81	20.63	2.04	66.44
Total Freq.	40	256	12	119	14	441
Percent relative to total	9.07	58.05	2.72	26.98	3.17	100.00

There was no significant relationship between type of teacher-initiated activity (large or small group) and the pedagogical technique selected by childcare professionals to support social skill building, $\chi 2(4, N = 441) = 7.46, p = 0.1135$.

In comparing behavioral expectation compliance techniques such as formalized modeling, redirection to task, rule statement, command stated in the positive, command stated in the negative, visual strategy usage, teacher-imposed consequence, specific feedback, and proximity in large- and small-group instruction, the chi-square test of independence indicates that there was an overall difference between large- and small-group methods. Therefore, the type of teacher-initiated activity (large or small group) and the type of pedagogical technique selected by childcare professionals to promote behavioral expectation compliance are related, $\chi 2(8, N = 1775) = 73.6313, p < .0001$. Table 9 illustrates the findings.

Table 9. Chi-square test of independence for Behavioral Expectation Compliance

Behavioral Expectation Compliance	Com-mand Stated in the Negative	Com-mand Stated in the Positive	For-malized Model-ing	Prox-imity	Rule State-ment	Redir ection to task	Specific Feed-back	Teacher-Imposed Con-sequence	Visual Strategy Usage	Totals
Large group Freq.	31	317	6	37	101	172	135	8	32	839
Percent relative to totals	1.75	17.86	.34	2.08	5.69	9.69	7.61	.45	1.80	47.57
Small group Freq.	59	290	13	49	41	282	145	29	28	936
Percent relative to totals	3.32	16.34	.73	2.76	2.31	15.89	8.17	1.63	1.58	2.73
Total Freq.	90	607	19	86	142	454	280	37	60	1775
Percent relative to totals	5.07	34.50	1.07	4.85	8.00	25.58	15.77	2.08	3.38	100.00

Sources for these differences may be related to the differences in rule statement and redirection to task. It appears that there is a higher proportion of rule statement in large groups and a higher proportion of redirection to task in small groups. An additional source for the differences between type of instruction (large- and small-group) and method used in behavioral expectation compliance may be the use of teacher-imposed consequence in small groups and its limited use in large groups. While rule statement, redirection to task, and teacher-imposed consequence are all proportionately different, it cannot be assumed which affected the association most. The qualitative section of this paper that follows may provide insight into the variation between type of methods used to guide behavioral expectation compliance in large and small groups.

Research Question 3

The third research question for this dissertation study sought to discover why childcare professionals choose particular social skill building and behavioral

reinforcement techniques. To gather insight into the choices childcare professionals make about the pedagogical techniques they choose when guiding children's social and behavioral development, qualitative data were gathered through semistructured interviews. During those interviews, participants were shown video snippets/vignettes of themselves engaged in teaching large and small groups. The snippets were used as stimulated recall (Shavelson & Stern, 2001; Lyle, 2003) events and reflected childcare professionals' dominant technique choices, demonstrated to guide children's social or behavioral development during large- and small-group instruction. All participants saw at least two snippets, one from large-group instruction and one from small-group instruction. Some participants saw more than two snippets; in these cases, more than one may have been shown for large or small group, if their dominant methods included more than one technique.

To choose the technique(s), the researcher referred to the frequency counts recorded in the observational tool the Social and Behavioral Development Observational Instrument for Teacher Practice (sbDOITp). Based on the results captured on the sbDOITp, the researcher chose well-recorded snippets that captured, in their entirety, the episode (this was in line with the Video Vignette/Snippet Selection Criteria provided in Appendix C). Teachers were shown the short snippets (none exceeded 2 minutes). Through the structure of the semistructured interview format, participants were asked to reflect and discuss the technique in terms of (a) what they are doing during the snippet/vignette, (b) why they are using it, (c) when they typically use it, (d) what usually happens when they use it, and (e) how they learned that technique.

Based on the results of research questions 1 and 2, dominant strategies emerged among the participants that will guide this discussion. Therefore, the qualitative data are shared in terms of types of techniques used to guide (a) behavioral expectation compliance and (b) social skill building. During the discussion of behavioral expectation compliance techniques, four dominant strategies emerged from questions 1 and 2 and will be discussed. Since these were the most frequently used strategies by participants, there was much textual interview data gathered about these techniques. The most frequently used behavioral expectation compliance techniques were (a) command stated in the positive, (b) redirection to task, (c) specific feedback, and (d) rule statement. The dominant social skill building techniques were informal modeling and support in problem solving.

Each of the techniques listed above from behavioral expectation compliance and social skill building will be illuminated through the language of childcare professionals about their use of the aforementioned techniques. The textual data gathered will be linked to create a textual document that describes, in the participants' words, (a) the techniques they are using, (b) how they are using them, (c) when they use the techniques they describe, and (d) why they use them with children. Following the discussion of dominant or most frequently used techniques, a discussion of secondary techniques will be shared. The secondary techniques have less textual interview data, as these were not the strategies most frequently used by childcare professionals and thus interviews rarely included the discussion of less frequently observed strategies. Therefore, the secondary techniques section will look at childcare professionals' dialogue about (a) the use of visual strategies, examining gesture as a separate strategy to photos/books/pictures; and

(b) formalized modeling in behavioral expectation compliance and its use in social skill building. The final section, for question 3, will use childcare professionals' words to illustrate how they came to understand and use the strategies and techniques they used to guide children's social and behavioral development.

Dominant Strategies

Command stated in the positive is defined as a declarative statement that is stated so that the desired expectation is expressed (Reichele & Walker, 1993). Command stated in the positive explicitly declares what behaviors are desired. For instance, if a teacher sees that a child is preparing to kick another child, she might say, "Foot on the floor." This provides an explicit verbal cue that denotes the exact action a child should take. This was the dominant strategy used by childcare professionals in this study. What follows are the terms participants used to label or define this technique when they watched themselves engaged in the use of this technique.

Command Stated in the Positive

Childcare professionals labeled this technique as "directions." In fact, the majority of respondents referred to the "directions" that they gave to children. They described "directions" as "When I tell them what to do then they understand that better" or "(I) tell them what to do and they do it." Participant 7 explained this process of giving directions or telling children what to do as "trying to be firm in my position." These descriptors assist in understanding that command stated in the positive is used when children are

being told what to do so that there is no misunderstanding and the expectation is that children will comply.

Next, it is relevant to examine how childcare professionals used this strategy. Childcare professionals' own words are used to explain how they used this technique. Participant 12 said this of her observed practice: "I'm getting the children ready for the next activity and giving them directions. I said 'sit here' and pointed to where they needed to be because there's no letters there and it's not gonna be a big area so that just show 'em where they could be. The kids can see verbally and visually where they can sit around the group, so it stops the chaos and they know where to go." In this statement, it is clear that she is orienting children to the expectation that they are to sit in a specific location. She uses the command "sit here" and then gestures to the appropriate location.

Participant 26 had a unique way of using command stated in the positive. This is her comment about using this technique: "What I'm doing as a teacher, I was interrupted (by the children), and so my technique is to, pretty much, stop what I'm doing and use that song as a way for them to know that, okay, we're talking, so we need to do what, you know, Miss ----'s doing, and it works wonderfully because I am singing exactly what I want them to do. (Singing … I am listening, I am listening, to my friends, to my friends, I am on my bottom, I am on my bottom, let's begin, let's begin)." In this example, the technique of stating the behavioral expectation in the positive is the same, but the method is varied. This participant used singing to explicitly orient children to sit on their bottoms and listen to her and each other. While this technique was unique, two other teachers were observed using song as a means of stating their expectations in the positive.

Other participants took a very simple approach by stating their expectation quickly and then waiting for compliance. During such an example, Participant 3 said, “So I look at her. That way, she can know I am talking to her and I touched (patted) my knees and I said, ‘You sit criss-cross applesauce.’ I waited, and she did it.” Participant 18 used a similar method. “Okay, he’s blocking everyone, so I’m trying to get him to put his feet down and to have a seat. So I say, ‘put your feet on the floor and look up here.’ He put them [his feet] down and looked at the book.” Simply stated and direct, this technique is about stating what behaviors the teacher wishes for the child to engage in, and then waiting for the child to comply. Participant 11 said, “Okay. Right there, I’m gonna start a story, and there’s a girl, that she doesn’t want to sit down—she’s sitting in not the right place. I want her to sit not like really next to me, but that she can see the book at the same time. So as soon as I approached her to say to her where I want her to sit here, and she does it.”

Many participants spoke about “types of children” that this technique works with best. Participant 17 described her use of this technique with a particular child in her classroom. “Yeah. That’s part of my problem with him; I have to call him by his name. ‘----, could you put your feet down, please?’ And he’ll put it down and he’ll sit, but some of them I can just look at [them], where I have to just actually call their [other children’s] name and tell them what I expect.” The use of this method to assist children with more behavioral transgressions was a theme for Participant 21 as well. She described not only how she used this technique with the child in the video snippet/vignette, but also how she handled it with other children who also had difficulty following directions. “This individual child tends to act out in large group. He focused for quite a while. He tends to,

though, get up and either want to remove himself or leave from the circle or be disruptive, and today, he wanted to go find some paint. I believe that [the paint] was in a different room; I gathered him back to the rug and told him I was waiting for him and I wasn't going to go to the next two children until I finished with him. With this individual child, consistency works; he knows that I am waiting. I am waiting and repeating, 'Come sit on the carpet.' I gave him the directions I wanted him to follow, and he did after a few repetitions.… I guess I use this with a lot of the children. When they are distracted, I am firm, consistent, and patient. I just let them know what I want, and I give them time to do it."

For the all the participants who used this technique and who talked about the use of this technique, it was about saying what they wanted the child to do, like Participant 14. "Everybody was right in front of me, not able to—I feel like I can't function when they're like right here and the kids cannot function either like that. So I asked them to scoot back, get on their letter, to scoot back, to criss-cross and wait for their name. You know, I gave them the exact direction." Participant 10 stated the logic as follows: "You have to tell kids because they can't read your mind, and so you got to tell them."

Childcare professionals use command stated in the positive during various times throughout the day. As Participant 10 stated, she uses it "all the time." She was not the only one. Most participants who used this method said things like "all day, every day," "very often, daily, if not more than once a day. We do it in most groups," and "Yes, usually I do it a lot. Throughout the day." More specifically, Participant 6 said this about when she uses the technique of command stated in the positive: "Pretty much all day to

keep them going. I find that when you give them too many directions and a, you know, a run-on sentence, it does confuse them, so you need to be short with your directions until you get to a part—they finish the first couple parts, then you get them to move on with it. At this age, at 4, 5, they're not quite ready for five or six things in a sentence, cause I'm not." This lets the outsider see that command in the positive works not only to guide behavioral expectations, but also to keep children on task and engaged, which typically leads to fewer discipline problems.

Now that the what, how, and when have been established for the technique of command stated in the positive, it is important to illuminate why childcare professionals engage in the use of this practice. Examining what participants said about their practice and the outcomes they experienced from using this technique can lead to understanding about this technique's usage with young children.

The simplest reason participants use this technique was stated by Participant 29: "When I tell them what I want them to do, it works good. It works great. They get it real good." "You need to be specific about what you want. If you're too general, they get confused; they're not sure exactly what you want them to do," concurred Participant 30 during her interview. The results they got from the children were what encouraged them to use this technique, as explained by Participant 11: "They just follow. You'll have one or two, but basically the majority of them do what they need to do." Participant 26 talked about the long-term implications of this technique's use: "[Outcome] Varies; they'll either follow through with my directions, or I'll repeat myself and redirect. It's not always successful, but over the years, I've learned that if I'm consistent from the

beginning in gaining their respect, then normally the follow through will be excellent. If it wasn't, I would have found a new way [technique] by now."

Other participants agreed that this was a very useful technique and that they had used it for many years. Participant 28 said, "Because kids need to have something to go to, so if you give them a direction and where to go, then they'll know what. It's what to expect, because if they don't know what to expect, then they're gonna make up their own plan. So, it's just something I've learned over the years—just give 'em something to do." Participant 5 said this: "I think somewhere along the line I learned they need to know what's going on in the classroom. I think that is what I was told. If they know what's expected and what's going on and what they need to do, and I just use it with everything that I do because that's what kids need to know, what's gonna happen, cause if they don't know what's gonna happen then they're just gonna do what they want to do, just like when they're in line, you need to let them know what to do cause if you don't give them something to do, they're gonna make up their own touching, hitting, whatever. So, as long as they know what they have to do, then they're gonna follow your direction instead of what they want to do." She is not unlike most of the participants who used this strategy; she believed it kept children focused and out of trouble. As Participant 21 summarized, "For the most part, you get what you want from them without a lot of hassle."

Redirection to Task

For the context of this paper, *redirection to a task* is defined as the prompting of an individual to return to the acceptable or preferred behavior or activity. This can be

done through verbal, physical, or auditory prompts (Reichele & Walker, 1993). The following is an example: A child is distracted and not engaged while the teacher is reading a story. The teacher notices this because the child is staring at another child while he rocks from side to side and is moving his hands in the air. The teacher attempts to regain the child's attention by saying, "Michael, what is the boy getting ready to do in this story?" Michael reorients his attention to the book that is being held up, pauses and looks at the pictures for a few seconds, and then says, "He is putting on his shoes for a walk." The teacher smiles and continues to read as Michael watches. This method is used to reorient individual children to the task to which the teacher intends the child(ren) to pay attention.

"Hav(ing) to redirect them. That's what we call it," said Participant 5 when asked what she calls the technique she used. In fact, most participants called it "redirect"; others used phrasing like "getting their attention" or "keeping it going." Participant 13 described it as "just talking to them and telling them what's coming up next, pretty much, and trying to keep them focused. That's my main thing." This indicates that participants' intent was to maintain and regain children's attention on the teacher-directed instruction.

Participant 18 described using the redirection-to-task technique by inquiring of the children if they are "ready" to begin the activity. She would say, "----, are you ready?" or ask the entire class, "Are you ready?" These were her words for describing how she used this technique: "Just trying to keep the kids—trying to keep them focused on what I'm doing, because I know that some kids could take that (one child talking about something not related to the story) and run with it, and keep going and going and

going. So that's my way of getting them focused, and also to be polite by asking is they ready." Participant 26 used this exact method with her class: "I was trying to get his attention to focus. By asking him was he ready instead of just pointing him out, yelling at him, 'Turn around and be quiet.' Just get him interested in the [activity] and asking him if he's ready to [do the activity], and it caught his attention. He was like, 'yes.'" Many participants described using a technique very similar to Participants 18 and 26. They used verbal cues or single-word statements to orient children's attention. Participant 10 summed up this method's use: "I said, 'Are you ready?' Then I said it again, to let them know that I'm ready to begin the class. Then they looked at me."

Another example of a verbal cue was explained by Participant 23: "I say, 'Watch.' More like to remind them. Probably both remind and to get their attention and to remind them what I had just told them we were doing." Here, this sounds like a command in the positive, but because the intent is redirection and it is used repetitively to gain attention, it takes a different role in behavioral expectation compliance. Participant 14 used the calling of a child's name as a redirection tool. She described it in this way: "When I call their name, they know what they need to do. Look at me and listen." Participant 20 described using a different form of the same technique. She said, "I will clap. We will clap. So if they hear me go [clapping], somebody else will repeat the same clap and they'll know, 'Okay, we're gonna sit and look at the teacher.' Then they are ready to learn what's next." Here, she is using an auditory signal to orient children to the task of listening for teacher directions.

There were some participants who did not use single-word verbal or auditory cues. A number of participants used questions about the activity to redirect children's attention and focus. Here is an example of that technique's usage by Participant 8. She said, "---- doesn't like to sit still during story time. I don't mind that she doesn't sit still because I fidget sometimes, too. But I was trying to engage her to make sure she was paying attention to the story and just not playing around. I just asked her how many balloons there were in the page and tried to get her to count along with us so that I knew that she was listening to the story and engaged with us." Another example of this same technique was described by Participant 16: "He is very easily distracted, so I called on him to get his attention to what we were doing. So I called on him by asking if he saw what was on the cover of the book to see if he was listening to me. He wasn't sure, so I showed the cover again. He saw the mouse on the cover and said, 'mouse and cheese.' Then he watched while I started reading the story. I just hate to leave him out of the learning." This comment illuminates the desire of teachers to include children and have them be active participants in the teacher-directed lesson.

Participant 24 talked about the use of redirecting children in small group by reorienting them by using choice, but within structured boundaries. These were her words: "Okay. Right there, I have a little boy that he's very creative. Right? The thing that I had for the activity was transportation, and they had to do like buses, trucks, cars. He wanted to make a cake. I told him, 'Look, the theme is about transportation. I have this book. Look how many colors, how beautiful. You can choose from one of these ones. Try it. It will be fun. On the side, you can make a little cake.' You know? And that's the way I worked. And he started choosing the one he wants to do from transportation."

Here, she describes refocusing him by reminding him of the object of the activity and then having him choose from only a few transportation items to make his project.

Here is Participant 1's version of how she redirected children by having them ask questions about the work that the child was engaged in. "I was doing a small group with one, a few kids, but that day, I was alone without my assistant, but I have eyes in everywhere because I opened the center in the morning. After morning meeting, we open all the centers, okay, all the centers are open at that time, and I have one child playing blocks, one then, then doing not what he is supposed to do. So I have to, you know, go and tell what to do or, you know, there's trouble everywhere, I was doing my small group, I was concentrating with them, I was panning in all my children. Because he wasn't building blocks, and I was observing from my chair, I was observing. I say, 'Are you building?' He look at me. He, I think, automatically, he stopped doing what he was doing and he start his interaction with the blocks." She used questions about the child's task to redirect his efforts and avoid possible behavior problems.

Participants described when they used the technique of redirection to a task as follows: "Every day, all day"; "I have to use it a lot. Yeah. Mostly every day"; "Every day at circle time"; "When we're doing an organized activity"; "Small group, [and] at home with my kids"; and "At my house with my daughter." It was summed up best by Participant 16: "Consistently through the day. If we have a small group, a large group, or even outside playing, we'll do that to see if they're focused on whatever activity we're doing."

When participants described why they used redirection to task, they cited that they saw results, suggesting that children typically refocused and participated on the expected level. An example of why participants used this technique was described by Participant 8: “For the most part, for the first probably 5 or 6 minutes after I redirect their attention, I’ve got everybody’s attention and they are sitting there like that. It usually gets everybody, unless I have one child, and sometimes I do, who’s just a wiggle worm—they don’t make 5 minutes—but, for the most part, everybody, it brings them to attention.” Participant 26 explained, “At the end, they sit up and answer, so I know they’re listening and getting the story—what they needed to get out of it.” The participants felt that the techniques used for redirection got the results they sought, such as Participant 13: “You get their attention, and they tend to follow through to see exactly what you’re doing. It gets them interested in what you’re doing.” “When I call their name and they pay attention to me,” said Participant 7. There was a general consensus that children are responsive to redirection and it helps them focus on the teacher and the teacher-directed activity.

Some participants explained that they used the technique to avoid additional problems that occur when children are not focused. For instance, Participant 1 said, “… because sometimes when the children, they don’t have the supervision like this group right now, they want to do differently. I try to always redirect, even if I doing another activity like I was doing right now, I try to redirect to, you know, to do what’s supposed to do. That way they not fighting or upset or having a bad time. They working and having fun.”

However, there were some participants who were more frustrated by the fact that the children required constant redirection. Participant 23 was one such individual. She said, “They look, they pay attention, and they’ll get off track. You know, I just have to constantly get their attention.” Other participants alluded to the fact that they engaged in this technique often to avoid losing the children’s attention and thus valuable teaching time. “Yeah, so that’s very important, try to, you know, redirect, you know, somebody, cause it’s not paying attention because of talking, so I try to redirect and then keep going to what we’re talking about. That way, I lose no teaching time or the other children [‘s attention],” remarked Participant 11. There is a real perceived need by practitioners to gain and keep children’s attention on the activity of the teacher themselves. From the comments that were reviewed, it seems that this promotes involvement, classroom control, and instructional momentum.

Specific Feedback

Specific feedback when performing a behavioral expectation was defined in this research model as the act of providing descriptive language to individuals about the appropriate behavior in which they are/were engaged (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995). Subjective words like *good* or *great* do not need to be present; however, vocal inflection and positive facial and body expressions are required to affirm the appropriate behavior. An example would be a teacher who saw a child putting blocks away neatly during clean-up time. She said, “You put those blocks in the basket and then put them in the correct space on the shelf!” While making eye contact with the child, she smiled. This clearly

stated what behavior the child engaged in and reinforced that it was the acceptable way to behave through the vocal inflection and the reaffirming smile.

Many of the participants in this study engaged in the use of this technique to reinforce children's appropriate behaviors. When observing themselves on the videotape when they were engaged in the use of specific feedback, they labeled it as "specific praise," "verbal praise," or "feedback." Participant 4 defined the use of specific praise in this way: "Using a model, and telling him what he's doing that's right."

Many of the participants described the use of specific feedback as telling the children what they did was right. They used specific feedback not only to let the child know what they did that was appropriate, but also to demonstrate for others the behavioral expectation. Thus, not only was the child reinforced for his/her appropriate behavior, but also the behavior and its reinforcement became a model to promote behavioral expectation compliance in other children in the class. Participant 10 described its use in this way: "Well, I know ---- had my attention by raising his hand, so he's going by what I have taught them, and when I'm ready or when I'm telling them to do something, to be prepared, to show that you're prepared you raise your hand. So by him raising his hand, I notice him, and the kids know, 'Hey, let me raise my hand too, because if she noticed him, she'll notice me also.'" In this scenario, the teacher acknowledged the child who raised his hand by saying, "----, you are raising your hand; tell me what the Bee-Bee Bird is doing." By doing it in this way, she believed that not only would that child continue to engage in the behavior of raising his hand to be called on, but also the other children in the classroom would conform to the desired expectation for behavior in

the large group. Participant 3 described using specific feedback in a similar way: "Sometimes, I say, 'Okay, show me who's ready? I'm lookin' for who's ready?' and they'll start scurrying around and doing it [crossing their legs criss-cross], so then I know who's ready. I'll pick the ones that are sitting the right way. The ones that are taking their time to sit the right way, they usually line up last. When they're doing it right is when I call on them and say, 'You're sitting criss-cross.'" Here again, the participant recognized those engaged in the appropriate behavior first and used them as a model that was intended to encourage compliance across the children's behaviors.

This use of specific feedback on a model child to get all children to comply with behavioral expectations was a predominant feature in the use of this technique. Participant 27 used it in the following manner: "[I said,] 'Sit nice and quiet to see who goes first.' I was waiting for them to criss-cross their legs and sit quiet. Then I said, '----, you're sitting nice and quiet, so you can go first.' … Mm-hm. You know, it's a goal. Like if we're playing the game or if we're gonna play a game on the carpet, where everybody wants to go first. Everybody's saying, 'Me. Me. I go first.' So what I do is whoever's sitting on their letter, they're sitting nice and quietly, criss-crossed, I'll pick the one that's sitting the quietest, and then they can go first. And I'll say, '----, you are sitting nicely. You are ready; you go first.'"

Other participants talked about using specific feedback to get the child to repeat the behavior again. Participant 17 said this: "Well, my goal is for the kids to pay attention, and I feel that if you reinforce the good behavior, then they're more apt to want to get that again. And I think if you give them—if you give them the attention for doing

something good, and then I also sometimes ignore them when they're being bad because I know that kids want attention. So I always make sure that I point out the things that they're doing well so they do them things again." This line of thinking was a norm when describing the use of this technique. Participant 30 summarized well what most participants said: "Because he did what I asked him, you know, what I asked him to do. So, I told him he did it and gave him a high five, then he will probably remember to do it again, cause he felt, you know, good."

To promote behavioral expectation compliance through the use of specific feedback, childcare professionals in this study cited using this technique: "In different groups—actually, in different centers, I'll go around from table to table to see what they're working on. Then I'll give them the feedback on what they're doing, even if it's an art center. We'll be working on a project, and then after they completed the task, we'll go over what we've done and what the outcome was, and then we'll give them the feedback. This keeps them focused and doing what is expected" (Participant 19). The participants also said that they "give verbal praise after that child completed the task." Another participant summarized with this: "As we go outside in line, or as we do other activities together. Whatever it may be, even going to the restroom. You know, if you're standing straight and tall and you're ready, I tell them and follow that technique. That way, I let them know what I like." Childcare professionals in this study believed it was the use of this technique throughout the day—catching children in the act of complying with behavioral expectations—that kept children behaving as expected.

Participants explained that the reason they used this technique was that (a) children know what they did that was good and will repeat it, and (b) when they use a "model" child, this child's example defines for the other children in the class the teacher's expectation. Participant 6 said this of using specific feedback: "Children, anybody, anybody loves to hear the positive, they're, it's, sometimes they get so happy and sometimes they'll share it with the classroom or mommies and daddies who'll pick them up and they'll say, 'I shared today, I had a great day, or I was kind today.' When you brighten somebody's day like that, just those little words of telling someone what they did that was so great makes them want to do it again and again." Here, Participant 6 explains that she uses the technique to let students know in a specific way that what they did should make them feel proud. This helps the child remember it and repeat it at another time and perhaps in another environment. Participant 3 shared this about why she used this technique: "Because he felt good about what he did, he sat down and got to work again on another picture…. I think they feel good because they'll continue working." She clearly, not unlike many of the participants, believed that when a child feels good about what they have done and they know what they did that was "good," they will repeat it.

Teachers spoke similarly about why using specific feedback to acknowledge a "model" student had a positive impact on the other children in the classroom. "[Telling a child what he did that was right] they [the other children] looked at him. They were like, 'Wow, what did he do?' Then that also it made him feel good because he was doing the correct thing. And they wanted to do the same thing," said Participant 30. Participant 21

talked about what happened when she formally modeled for children. “I think that they tend to understand what you’re modeling for them. Because I said, ‘You’re sitting nicely,’ they understand that that’s what I’m looking for, them to actually sit nicely. If it was just ‘good job,’ then they wouldn’t really understand I’m doing okay. It would just be in general. It could be anything that they’re doing.” She believed that the modeling explicitly defined for children the behavioral expectations. This was why most participants used this technique of specific feedback—to promote recurrence of the preferred behavior by acknowledging it and providing an example.

Participant 15 simply summarized in this way: “ It’s easier to explain to the children what they did so that they can understand, and know so if it happens again then they’ll be able to realize themselves and know what they should do again. You know, if I just tell them, ‘Don’t do that,’ then they’re not gonna understand why or feel good. It’s when I catch them doing what they should do and tell them, ‘Hey, you did it’ that they repeat it.”

Rule Statement

Rule statement can be defined in this way: Rule statement is the stating of a specific behavioral expectation or rule when an individual is not engaged in appropriate behaviors (Reichele & Walker, 1993). The following is an example: A teacher sees a child strike another child. The teacher says, “Our hands are for helping, not hurting. That is what we do in this classroom.” Most childcare professionals in this study labeled such interventions as “rules.” Participant 9 discussed alternative labels: “you can call them rules, or you can just say instructions or concerns that you may have.” However, almost

all participants referred to this method as “stating,” “giving,” or “reminding them of the rules.”

Most participants in this study talked about using the technique in the way that Participant 10 stated: “I’m telling her the rule so she can know what she did that was wrong and help her to know not to do it again. That’s all—just reminding—and so she knows now and later.” This was mostly how the technique was used; children broke the rules, and teachers stated what they did that was wrong and what the rule is in the classroom. They did this both to remind children of the expected behavior and to get them to comply with the behavioral expectation. Participant 5 said this about her use of rule statement: “Remind ---- that in order to speak in our classroom, since there’s so many children, he needs to raise his hand so that we can hear him.” In this case, Participant 5 was using it to remind the child of the expected behavior. Participant 16 said this: “I also explained to her to use her words, and to hug her instead of hurting her—that is our rule.” Here, Participant 16 is seeking to remind the child of the expectation and reorient her to appropriate behaviors. Participant 20 talked about the rule established for children to clean up the center they were playing in prior to moving to a new area to play. “I say it again, definitely to promote cleanliness. They know before you can go to another center, my class definitely knows to clean up/put up, and then you may go to another center. You’re welcome to be free to go around, but as long as you clean up after yourself. I say it [the rule] whenever I need to remind them and get them doing what we expect, and that is to clean up.” Here, the teacher, like most of the participants, used rule statement during an episode when a child had not complied with the established rule in order to get the student to reorient behavior.

Childcare professionals in this study used the technique of rule statement at the following times: “Daily, just like we did today, we review the rules. So they are familiar with the behaviors and the rules in the classroom.” “Before we go out, before we engage in any centers, or before we use the bathroom or before lunch. Before any type of transition in the classroom.” “We try to do it at least, all the time. If we’re going to the next situation or the next group activity, then that lets them know, well, okay, like what we were talking about when you go to the sand table, make sure that all the sand stays inside the table.” “Every time they forget.” This clearly shows a pattern that teachers use it whenever needed. Most participants described doing it as a daily ritual in circle time (though this was observed once in the 30 observations), whenever the children needed to transition as a way of orienting them to the expectations of the next task, and whenever children forgot or did not comply with a previously established rule.

Childcare professionals used this technique of rule statement because “It helps for them [the children] to know what to do” (Participant 23). Participant 2 confirmed, “they need to know what’s acceptable, what’s not acceptable. You need some type of guidelines throughout the day, and this helps my children know what they need to do in my class.” “You want to reinforce what is expected,” concurred Participant 12 about why she used this strategy. Participant 22 summed it up by saying, “[when I say the rules], they know to go and do that. That’s what I like about it because I didn’t have to pull like I’m pulling teeth. They know to do it, but they need reminding most of the time.”

Interactive Modeling

While behavioral expectation compliance techniques were used more often than social skill building methods to guide children's social and behavioral development, interactive modeling was the dominant strategy used in social skill building. Interactive modeling is defined as a naturally occurring experience or conversation that involves teachers and children sharing in an event, activity, or conversation that models and promotes engagement with appropriate cultural mores (Dunlop & Fox, 1999). For example, during an art activity, the teacher might say, "May I have the scissors?" A child hands the teacher the scissors. The teacher responds, "Thank you for handing those to me; now I can use them to finish my picture." Teachers used this strategy for social skill building with the greatest frequency because this strategy occurs in day-to-day living with individuals. Greetings, departures, requests, and social interactions are all opportunities in which a teacher could use this strategy to model for children culturally acceptable mores.

While this strategy was used often, childcare professionals rarely saw it as an opportunity to model in context appropriate behaviors that they expected children to replicate. Typically, they described this method in the following terms: "Well, we're talking" or "I'm talking to them," and with statements like these: "You know, like kids, they interact together and with you. You know, they just want to be around someone." Childcare professionals thought of these events/episodes in terms of building relationships and just day-to-day living; rarely did they articulate this method's use as an opportunity to model prosocial behavior.

Participants described the use of this technique like this: “[To] let her know that I notice she’s here today, and you know, because usually the ones that are quiet, we tend to leave them out. I’ll talk about something I know that they wanna talk about. That’ll get them to open up a little more and to be willing to join the rest of the group, which will make them more—it’ll put them at ease,” said Participant 14. Participant 10 described it in a similar way: “Trying to get him involved with us. He was trying to play with us, so what I did was invite him because he was by himself. I knew he wanted some kids to be with him and be friends with him. So all the kids was over there in one spot, so I invited him over to see if he wanted to come over, to make him feel comfortable, you know, to be a part of the group also. So yeah, that’s what I did.” Here, the participants are using the technique to bring isolated children into the class’s interaction, to help the child by creating opportunities for that child to interact with the teacher and class.

Participant 12 said this of her use of this method: “Well, I was trying to talk about the match game, but they started talking about things that they do at home and what do they like doing at home with their parents and who has a dog and what’s their dog’s name. I’m trying to interact with them and keep them on a low level until I get out the cards. It lets me get to know them and what’s going on [in the children’s lives]. Here, Participant 12 gives a solid description of how many of the participants used this technique of interactive modeling. The participants typically used it in their day-to-day classroom living to get to know the children and to pass time while keeping the children engaged.

Some participants did make a connection between their actions and what children may later do. For instance, Participant 22 said this: “Sometimes I’ll say, ‘Well, thank you, ----. Thank you, ----.’ Then they’ll hear me telling them thank you so they’ll say thank you, too.” Participant 3 said this: “When we’re just talking, I’m listening to them, you know, when they’re talking to me. That’s a great chance to show them how to act.” Participant 5 said this: “They react in a positive way with me, you know? They smile, they say ‘good morning, how are you?’ They do what I do with them.” These comments indicate that participants understood that children tend to emulate what adults do, but when participants explained why they engaged in the method of interactive modeling, they referred to the promotion of interaction and building relationships.

Participants used the technique of interactive modeling at the following times: “Every moment.” “All the time, especially outside. Outside a lot because, you know, you might have one that wants to hog the whole ball. Then we’ll say, ‘Hey, let’s play kickball together,’ or ‘Let’s do an activity together. Let’s bring the ball together.’ It works when we all want to do something together; especially, they love when the teacher wants to take time to do something with them.” “Oh, all the time. When I get ready to do something, when I get ready to play a game with them or I get ready to read them a book or whatever, I always have to talk to them, because they always come with something and asking questions so I always have to answer the questions and ask them what do they like doing, different things I have to ask them, so I’m always interacting with them, always talking to them, always showing them how to care about people.” These comments reinforce that teachers engage in this with such regularity that they see it as a part of what they do as people and less as a technique for promoting prosocial behavior.

Participants engaged in this method because they believed relationships with the children were important. It was believed by these practitioners that their relationships promoted security, calm, confidence, and sustained interaction. Participant 7 said this of the use of interactive modeling: “I’m not leaving nobody out during the whole day. Letting them know it’s okay to come and see we have safe fun at school and we have friends.” Participant 24 said, “Because I like them to feel welcome, really welcome and have that contact with them.” Participant 21 reiterated the importance of relationships and contact with students: “They grow, they can feel more secure with the teacher because when they, you know, it’s back and forth, we both can learn. I can learn and I can teach and I learn something too; they learn from me, and they learn from me cause sometimes I experience something from something different that I don’t know and I learn from these children. Back-and-forth relationship that builds self-esteems and relationships.”

This relationship building had perceived benefits from the participants’ viewpoint as well. “I started noticing if you talk to them and interact with them, the more they’ll get your attention and you’ll get theirs, “ said Participant 29. Participant 9 said, “It helps keep them calm. It helps keep them in one spot until it’s time for them to do the next activity you have planned, instead of them just running wild and me having to go and chase them and get them back. Talking to them helps a lot of them know that people are important.” Participants found it to be a useful technique for getting and maintaining children’s focus while promoting relationship building and sustained interaction.

Support in Problem Solving

Support in problem solving was a dominant strategy in social skill building. It is defined in this study as the act of an expert (adult and/or peer) guiding the process of problem solving when an individual is in the midst of a problem or dilemma with a peer or adult (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995). The expert is not involved in the immediate problem. An example is this: A child wants to use scissors another child is using. He tries to take them from the child who is using them, and the two begin pulling on the scissors and yelling. The teacher places her hand over the scissors and the two children's hands and says, "What's wrong?" The children take turns explaining what happened. Then the teacher asks the child who tried to take the scissors if there was another way to get the scissors. They talk for a bit and the child decides that he could ask to borrow the scissors. The teacher continues to support the children as they decide how to take turns with the scissors.

Childcare professionals typically described their support as "helping children work it out," as stated by Participant 8. Many participants referred to it as "working it out"; others referred to it as "providing or helping children make choices," such as Participant 19. "Well, the first one was giving her the choices. Well, I give everybody the choices. It helps them just to be, you know. Not, if I choose this for them I'll be makin' the choice for them. They should make their own choices about how to solve their problems. They just need guidance to know their options [in solving a problem]." Many participants thought that it was important to provide the options for solving the problem but ultimately to allow children to make the choice.

There were some variations in the way the participants used the technique; they either (a) stood back and let the children solve most of the problem, interjecting only when necessary, or (b) actively participated in the discussion to help guide the children by providing acceptable choices they could make.

An example of allowing children to solve the problem on their own with limited teacher mediation support was described by Participant 26: “Well, they’re trying to talk through sharing one paintbrush between the two of them, and apparently, between the three of them, you’re, yeah, between the three of them, and initially it was unsuccessful, and I heard this girl tell her how she felt about it, ‘That hurts my feelings.’ And, that is something that we talk about all the time in our classroom is feelings. So that was great. Initially ---- was not wanting to [share], and I was waiting the whole time. I was sitting there until it [the problem] was brought to me by ----, and at that point, you know, I asked, ‘Was there a way to solve this problem?’ and then the first girl said, ‘They can borrow it till I need it.’ Then they followed through by each taking a turn.” This is a clearly stated example of allowing children to work through a dilemma without the teacher establishing the terms for resolution. Participant 4 described a similar use of this technique: “I kind of stand back until I feel that either they ask me for help or to see what can I do, or if it becomes where they’re hurting one another, of course I intercept, but I don’t really think I get in the middle unless it—that they’re not resolving it unless it’s physical. I am just there giving each person a turn and guiding it.”

Practitioners who supported children during the problem-solving process did so to assist children in staying focused during the process. Participant 13 described the use of

her technique in this way: “I prompt them with questions and make sure each kid gets a turn to say what they’re thinking. So, it keeps them focused on solving it [the problem]. They don’t get frustrated either and end up with more fightin’.” Participant 25 talked about this process of supported problem solving in this way: “I give, ask them questions to get the children thinking about things themselves. Instead of giving them the answers they need all the time, [I] try to ask them questions and get them to think for themselves as they work out the problem. They just need a little help.” These participants, like others who used support in problem solving as a strategy in the resolution process, believed that by questioning and guiding children actively through the process, the children who were involved were better able to focus and complete the problem-solving process. This method of using support in problem solving was summarized by Participant 28: “I have some children in the classroom who will not do conflict resolution; they would rather, you know, fight about it or just walk away from it before they would fix it. I let them choose, but I offer them help first to get them to start thinking that compromise is a part of all this. I give each one [child] a turn, and I make sure they only talk about what happened, not whose fault it is. They get hung up on that. Sometimes, if I just start helping them work it out, they solve it before they realize what I’ve done [helped them solve the problem].”

The participants who use the strategy of support in problem solving said they used it “All the time” and “Every time there is a problem, which is all the time with little ones.” Participants who used this strategy believed it was an essential part of their role as early educators. As Participant 7 stated simply, “Every child needs to see that every

choice has a choice and that leads to a choice and the choice that has the leastest amount of fighting is the best choice."

Participants who used this strategy did so for its perceived benefit to children, which for many was to promote less frustration and more independence. Participant 11 said this: "They feel less frustrated and can concentrate on the task (of problem solving). They are also less likely to throw something or hit someone because the help lets them manage the problem and move on." This same reasons surface through a review of Participant 28's dialogue: "My observing kids over the years, working with them, just seeing, children get frustrated very easy. First of all, they don't have the verbal ability to let them [the other children] know what's going on with them, so the only way they have it is through action. That's where the problems start, and if I can just keep them going [through the problem-solving process], then he feels better about what he's doing because he's able to see a way out. And then, when he gets back in the same situation that he couldn't figure out before and he gets through it [the problem], that's a big self-esteem booster." This desire to remove frustration was a motivator for teachers to engage in the use of this technique. In addition, independence—the ability to problem solve without help from a teacher—was equally important. Teachers wanted their students to be able to solve a conflict without the teacher being the impetus for resolution. This may have been motivated by the fact that teachers of 4-year-olds typically have children in their classes who will go to kindergarten the following year. They want them to be able to do for themselves when the classes are larger. Participant 19 discussed why she used this technique: "I am big on resolution, conflict resolution with kids, peace, having a peace table; I firmly believe in not giving [children] their words; I believe in providing them the

necessary tools to be able to resolve a conflict. I use this throughout the whole day, all the time, and I think it works wonderfully if you sit back and allow them to have their own dialogue instead of me giving it to them; they will do it on their own later when the teacher isn't around." This sentiment was reflected in Participant 25's explanation: "Having them sit together and talk, if there's an issue I want them to solve their problems themselves. A lot of these kids just know fighting and the biggest wins. I want them to see that solutions make friends and solving a problem makes you smarter. This way, they will be ready [to solve the problem] when an adult's not around." This emphasis on children being able to solve problems without an adult was important to participants; they knew that adults are not constantly available to assist children, and they wanted children to be able to solve their problems so they could avoid further frustration and could gain control of difficult situations. Participant 13 summarized her concern this way: "Just to make you, you know, a stronger child and not be frustrated with the situation [problem], it's making; if you can't tell them what to do, I mean you aren't there, they gots to know how to get through it, without getting mad and giving up. They need to smooth everything out; they got to make the choice."

Secondary Strategies

Secondary strategies were strategies such as role playing, visual strategy usage, formalized modeling, command in the negative, teacher-imposed consequence, and proximity. These secondary strategies were used but were used in smaller amounts or inconsistently. As these strategies were not preferred methods among practitioners, the researcher had some textual data from the interviews related to these strategies. However,

based on observational knowledge and the occurrence of some interview information related to these strategies, interesting patterns among participants' responses related to the secondary strategies are reported. The following discussion will focus on two strategies: (a) visual strategy usage: picture vs. gesture and (b) formalized modeling in behavioral expectation compliance vs. social skill building. Context will be set forth at the start of each discussion, to be followed by participants' interview texts.

Visual Strategy Usage: Printed vs. Gesture

Visual strategy usage is the use of printed pictures, symbols, or gesture to promote cognitive cueing of a behavioral or procedural reaction (Reichele & Wacker, 1993). Participants who used visual strategies used gesture more often than printed pictures or symbols. When asked about their visual strategy use in the form of gesture, participants said these types of things: "Physical signals, signs. That's what I use. As far as quieting [the children] down, just putting a finger over your mouth. Also, rearranging some of the children so they can better hear and see so they won't have any discrepancies during the story. I show them, they do it. It's fast." (Participant 6). "I will put my hand up, and if they see my hand up, they'll know that it means, 'Okay, we have to sit quietly.' So you'll see someone else hand goes up. They're sitting quietly. It's easy to get them back [focused] that way" (Participant 12). Clearly, these participants used this to guide children's behavioral expectation compliance. They also seemed to use it because it is quick and easy. Participant 17 said this: "Then as far as when I'm singing, I don't like to just stop my song, so I point and then they know. Because he looked right at me. He came and sat right down where I pointed to, so it's like a lot of times I do have to use

hand gestures. Because if I'm in the middle of singing or reading, so many of them are interested or they're into it, so if I'm stopping it's kind of like, you know, losing their interest." This suggests that these teachers may have used gesture over picture because they had the tools they needed right with them (i.e., their hands), the children seemed to respond in the desired way, and they were able to maintain instructional momentum by using what was readily available. Participant 21 concurred. She said, "If I'm doing just a [physical] signal, it's maybe when I'm just reading, so I don't want to interrupt the story, so I would do just a [physical] signal so that maybe he could see it without me having to stop the story and tell him."

When asked about the use of printed pictures and symbols, respondents said these things. "No, not really. Well, we have books that deal with emotions and stuff. I'll point to different pictures in the book while I'm reading. I might ask them, 'What is this child doing in this picture?' or something like that. But as far as separate cue cards, I don't use those," said Participant 17. "To get them sitting. If I do that, touch my knees, they do it. But when I show, I have a picture with two kids sitting down that I can show this picture if she's not cooperate, if she do it okay, sit, hands in your lap, and if she does, it's fine, if not, I encourage with this picture how this kid look like. Then they do automatically; they just automatically; they stop what they doing, and they sit down. The picture always work," responded Participant 2. Neither participant used printed pictures or symbols as a primary strategy; however, Participant 2 used it to reinforce behavioral expectations and had consistent success when it was used.

Participant 27 used printed pictures during her circle time to promote behavioral expectation compliance. In the video snippet/vignette she saw of herself, she is showing the picture of a child sitting criss-cross, raising his hand, to two who are sitting on their knees calling out answers. She said this about the use of this technique: “Well, as I showed the picture, they really got into it, you know, and sat and raised their hands.” Participant 12 was also observed using pictures to guide children’s social skill building. This was her description of the lesson: “We’ve been talking about how we feel, and we’re talking about things that we do that make us feel happy, and what I wanted to do was take it another step further and bring in pictures out of a magazine that represented the same feelings but in a different aspect. So, we were looking at different pictures of different expressions and letting the children identify which expressions they saw. So, we had a mixture of different types of people, different types of expressions. To talk about type of feelings we—and we just talked about that. When I use visuals like these pictures, they learn to express themselves, and they learn from other children what kind of things makes them angry, happy, frustrated, and to be able to communicate and talk to each other and feel comfortable about sharing their feelings. It makes them more empathetic.” This participant regularly used visuals and felt that the effort was secondary to the outcomes. When asked why she used printed visuals, she said, “It takes a bit more time to get all this ready, but it helps me get my messages across.”

It is still unclear why visual strategy usage is primarily gesture. It seems to be related to ease and availability. Visual strategy usage requires some level of immediate accessibility. Printed symbols/pictures must be prepared in advance and be placed in a location that permits easy and fast retrieval. Gesture, unlike printed media, is always

accessible, making it an obvious choice when choosing a strategy to guide behavioral expectation compliance. As systematic instruction around social skills was rarely done by participants, visual strategy usage that requires either gesture of printed media has yet to be explored.

Formalized Modeling: Behavioral Expectation Compliance vs. Social Skill Building

Formalized modeling is a contrived scenario in which an expert (adult or peer) reacts to an event, situation, or stimulus in a way that promotes appropriate cultural mores. It is shown with the expectation that the observer will use a similar technique in a future event. It becomes an example of preferred behavior and typically implies a positive outcome from engagement in the behavior (Dunlap & Fox, 1999). Participants in this study readily used it to promote behavioral expectation compliance; however, they rarely used it to teach social skills.

This is how participants described using this technique for behavioral expectation compliance. “I tell them ‘crisscross applesauce, hands in their lap.’ I’ll sit like that. I’ll put my legs that way, and I’ll put my finger to my mouth, and then they just copy me,” said Participant 8. “I did an example of me first. I sat crisscrossed. I say, ‘Look, I’m gonna go first because I’m sitting nice and quiet.’ So then everybody jumped up and they was like, ‘I’m sitting nice and quiet, too.’ I say, ‘No. You’re yelling at me. You’re telling me that you are, but I hear you.’ So then they’re like, ‘Um, um, um.’ Then they sit crisscross so I did an example of me first,” said Participant 18. Both of these participants shared that they if they modeled and showed explicitly what the expectation was for behavior, children would do exactly what was asked.

Participant 18 elaborated on her use of formalized modeling to guide behavioral expectation compliance: “Just basically to reiterate what we’re doing and to model the behavior to them, to show them what we’re doing. Modeling is a big part of discipline, I think. Because when they see positive behavior, they tend to pick up on that, and then they also reinforce it to the other peers. It’s so weird with kids; they seem to listen more to other kids. So if they see the teacher doing it, they do it, and then their peers do it; they all tend to follow suit.” Here, she summarizes that participants do this because children do what is explicitly shown.

Participant 2 was one of the few participants who used formalized modeling to teach social skills. She described using it in the same way as participants who used it to guide behavioral expectation compliance. “We’re teaching them about feelings through the song, and expressing their selves through the song. We are actually acting out the feeing and what to do. I use actual feelings. Instead of the actual words of the song (‘If you’re happy and you know it/If you’re frustrated and you know it’), we use the actual feelings that the children experience throughout the day.… To express themselves, to better express themselves when they’re angry or when they’re sad, or whatever the feeling is. To know what is a good way to express and a not so good way to show your feelings.” Here, she is using the method of formalized modeling to explicitly describe some socially acceptable way to display one’s emotions.

Participants seemed to be primed to begin using formalized modeling for social skill building. They readily employed formalized modeling to achieve behavioral expectations; however, they rarely used it to promote children’s use of prosocial skills.

They made the correlation that formal models promote replication of behavioral skills but had not made the connection that appropriate social skills could be emulated if modeled for children in a systematic way.

Learning the technique

How childcare professionals learn the techniques in which they engage is of interest, as it can guide the discussion, direction, and implementation of professional development programs. Participants in this study stated four clear sources of their knowledge of early childhood practices: (a) classroom experience, (b) their families and the experience of being a parent, (c) common sense, and 4) training. The quotes are simply clustered in this section and stand alone to create a participant dialogue.

Classroom Experience

Almost all participants stated that at least one (if not both) of the techniques they were interviewed about came from experiential learning while teaching in an early childhood classroom. Their explanations for where they learned their techniques follow:

"I learned it through experience."

"I've been doing it for quite some time, so it would be hard to say. Just really a lot of hands-on, working with children and just seizing every opportunity because there's so many. Let's see. Oh goodness. That's a good one. See, it's really hard, because you, over the years, you, you do a lot of things without really recalling where you, where you seize things from. I guess it really came from being in the classroom."

"By being a teacher, because I've been in this business 21 years, and so new things come about and new techniques, and new ways that you can do things. And you think to yourself, 'Maybe if I try this, this'll work.' You know what I'm saying? Just try new things on them [the children] and seeing that it works."

"I've been in childcare for so long. From each center that I've ever worked at, I always gather something and take it with me."

"Throughout my years in the field, and from actually observing other teachers. That was more from watching other teachers. Although I went to class, I think this was more from model behavior from my peers."

"Well, actually, like going from different schools [daycares], I've seen different things, so when I came here, I saw them using it, so I was like, 'Okay. That's fine.' I thought, you know, when you go from one place to another, you would think that they probably don't do something else that you did in another one, so I saw it, and then I started doing it."

"I really just picked it up because I used to work in daycare; that's all I did ever, was daycare."

"I mean, being here, as part of teaching and working with children."

Parents and Family

Participants also gave relevant voice to their experience as parents and family members.

Here is what they said about learning from their experiential engagement with their families.

"Probably my mom."

"A lot of stuff just comes naturally from being a mom."

"Actually, these are the only kids that I work with, and the ones at home, and I do that for my 8-year-old because he acts like that."

"Through the training and my experience too and my experience, from my mom, from my dad, from my family—they talked a lot to me, and I learned from them a lot."

"And I learned it with my own kids, dealing with them, I've worked in childcare now, here for 10 years."

"And you know, some of it's really common sense. You know, you've got to use your mother skills, and then you know your teacher skills and stuff. It's really—it's a lot of basic knowledge, like I say."

Common Sense

Participants often referred to the "it just makes sense" factor when describing how they knew to do certain techniques at certain times or when they responded to questions about where and how they learned certain techniques. There was an element of "common sense" that entered into their choices to use certain techniques. Here are some participants' responses.

"I just thought of it."

“But some of it’s just what I already know kind of thing.”

“ Well, it’s kinda like common sense. What else would you do?”

“It just makes sense to tell him what I want him to do. How else would he know?”

“It just comes to you. What you need to do right then.”

Trainings/Classes

The last thing participants referred when describing how they learned a technique was trainings or classes. However, most of the comments about trainings and classes imply that childcare professionals knew or used the technique prior to engagement in the training/classes and that the classes/training only verified their use of the technique. Their comments follow:

“ They’d [trainers] talk about it, and they let us know, ‘Well, you should try this with the kids. The kids are like this, and they’re like that.’ So as they were telling us, I just started trying it more. I always did it with them before, but not as often as I should, so when they started telling me they’ll like it, I started doing it more, and I find that they [the trainers] were right.”

“Well, I learned that also by going to school, and I be reading the books and stuff, and it just helps me to teach the children to be more, you know, open minded basically.”

“You’re taught a lot in workshops, in classrooms, but until you get into that one-on-one situation with the children, you can’t—some stuff is book knowledge, but it can’t be applied until you’re actually in that situation.”

"Well, I think I did it a little bit before [the training], just not really knowing about it. But I was more conscious of it after the training and then tried to incorporate it more into my teaching."

"Through the CDA class and through my years of experience working with children."

"Miss ----, our curriculum lady, and she comes out and she teaches us new things to do. Whatever it is she learns to do, she'll come out and she'll teach us the new things to do and what we could try with the kids and different things. She talks to us about them, and we have this little thing we do, when we have the class. She actually showed me how to do it. We got together first and made, you know, a plan. Then we taught together, and it [the new technique] worked. Now I do it all the time."

"I've taught for 25 years, and now I teach adults who are in the childcare field who want to be teachers. So, I'm able to share what I find with them, and actually I do get techniques from them and I get ideas from them, which is very helpful."

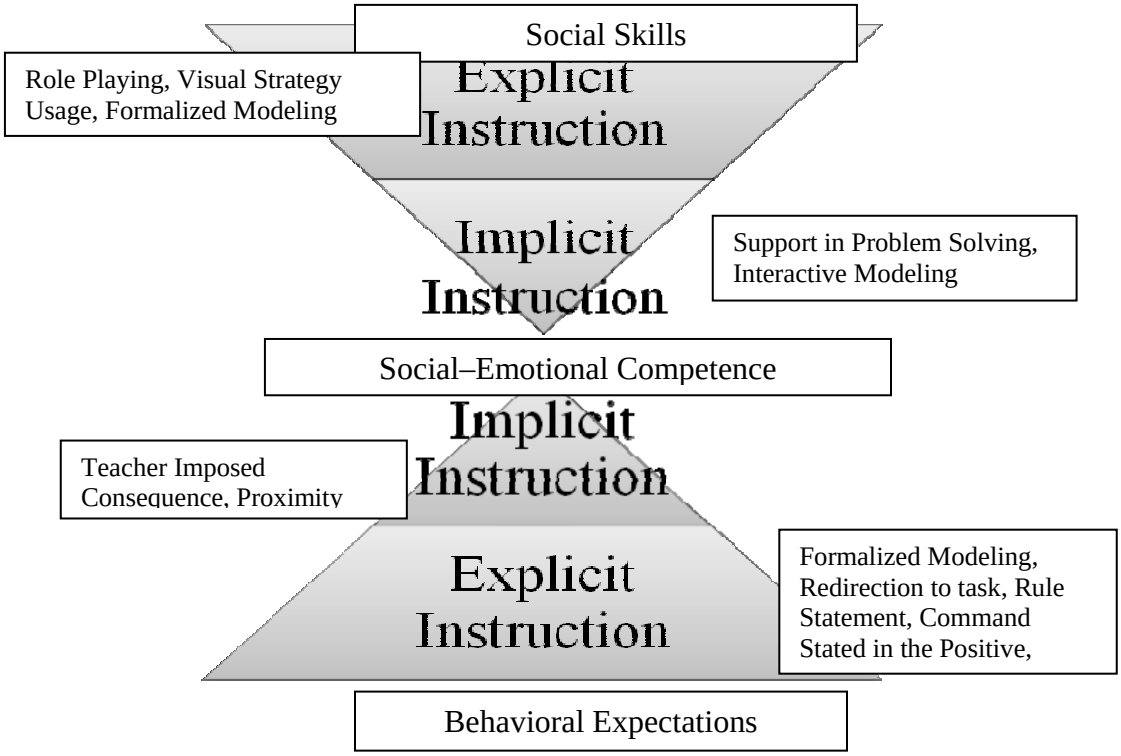
It can be summarized from a review of the textual data provided by the participants of this study that childcare professionals learn their methods and strategies for guiding children's social and behavioral development from the experience they have as teachers in early education. Additionally, participants relied on instinct gained from having been a child, a parent, and/or a family member, and they used this experiential knowledge to guide their practice in the classroom. Childcare professionals engage in

ongoing professional development and often use these trainings to verify that their strategy usage is appropriate and relevant in the context in which they apply it.

Summary of Findings

In review, the research surrounding the promotion of social–emotional competence for young children suggests that children require both explicit and implicit teaching in both behavioral expectation compliance and social skill building (Odom, McConnell, & McEvoy, 1992; Serna, Neilson, Lambros, & Forness, 2000). For children to intrinsically understand and apply prosocial skills, they must experience these models in both formal and informal settings, or contrived and natural situations (Dodge & Colker, 1996). This balance of instructional methods promotes transference of prosocial skills across environmental and situational contexts (Denham & Burton, 1996). A graphic representation of this model is provided in Figure 3.

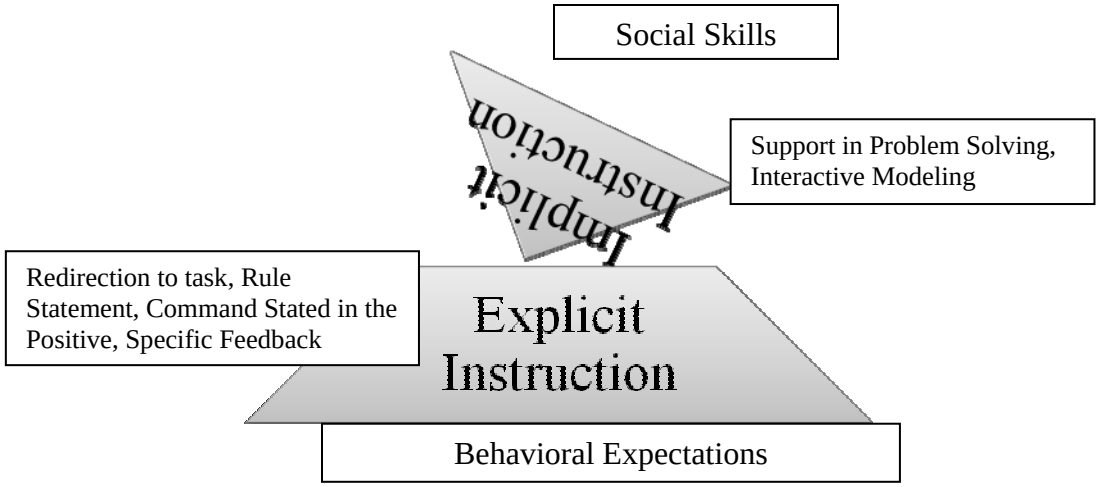
Figure 3. Promotion of Social and Emotional Competence



Two themes emerged when reviewing the findings of this study. The first is that the early childhood practitioners were explicitly teaching behavioral expectations because they felt that children were responsive to the instructional method and it was easy to administer at any time and any place. The second is that these same childcare professionals, by in large, were using implicit methods to teach social skills. Again, childcare professionals expressed that this "back-and-forth interaction" between themselves and the children was effective for building relationships and consistently remarked that they did it most of the time and in various environments to keep children engaged. It required no preparation and could benefit both the teacher and the child. Thus, the balanced use of implicit and explicit methods suggested in the previous model

(Figure 3) was not being practiced by the childcare professionals. The childcare professionals in this study were, for the most part, operating with a model that was largely dominated by explicit instruction in behavioral expectations and secondarily utilizing implicit methods to build social skills. The model in practice looks like Figure 4.

Figure 4. Childcare Professionals' Practice in Promotion of SEC

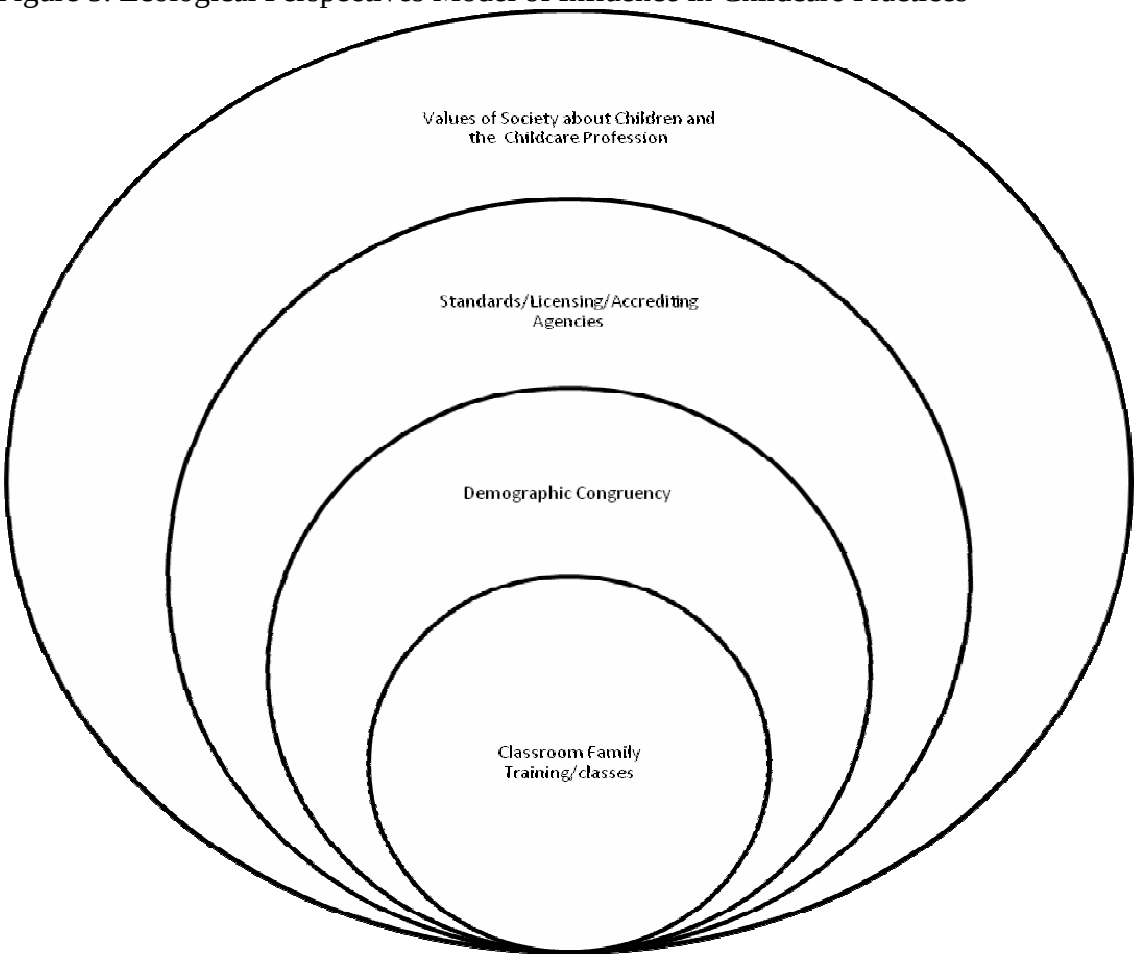


It can be suggested that childcare professionals in this study were operating with an imbalance of methods when promoting children's acquisition and use of prosocial skills. They heavily relied on explicit methods in behavioral compliance and used modestly implicit instruction to promote social skills. This seemed to be a result of immediacy, as suggested by the participants. Techniques that required access or use of materials such as props in role playing, formalized modeling, and printed/symbol usage seemed to impede practitioners' usage of these types of strategies. It could be suggested from this evidence that child outcomes could be enhanced if a more balanced approach were used (as suggested by the research literature model previously displayed). Thus, it could be said that childcare professionals would benefit from training around the use of a balanced

approach. Therefore, it is relevant to review the findings of this study in which participants describe how they learned the techniques they used.

By in large, participants cited learning their pedagogical methods for guiding children's social and behavioral development from their experiences as teachers and in the process of teaching. Next, they gave relevance to their experience as mothers, daughters, and family members, having learned many of their techniques in the process of living personal lives with and as children. The participants seemed to rely on their "common sense" to make judgments about how to react and interact with children to guide the children's prosocial skills. Last, they referenced classes and trainings as a source for learning techniques, or mostly to verify that the techniques they were utilizing were effective. Therefore, a model can be suggested from the practitioners' dialogue. The framework utilizes Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspectives model with four phases of influence on the individual: (a) microsystem—immediate environment, (b) mesosystem—connections between immediate environments, (c) exosystem—external environmental settings that only indirectly affect the individual, and (d) macrosystem—the larger cultural context (Bronfrenbrenner, 1979). For childcare professionals, the greatest influence was their classroom, their families and the training they received (microsystem), their cultural experience and identity were the connection between the immediate environments (mesosystem), standards, licensing, and accrediting agencies indirectly affected their practice (exosystem), and the values of society about children and child care became the larger cultural contexts. Figure 5 gives a graphic representation of this model.

Figure 5. Ecological Perspectives Model of Influence in Childcare Practices



It can be suggested from this model that to assist childcare professionals with the implementation of a balanced appraoch to building social–emotional competence in young children, teachers need to receive training and assistance with implementation strategies in the the most influential environment, the classroom. Chapter Five will further expand on the models gained through review of the findings and will relate the findings to current research as well as implications for future research and pratice

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Purpose of the Study

The intent of this inquiry was to identify the pedagogical methods used by childcare professionals to guide 4-year-old children's social and behavioral development. In an attempt to identify and understand the use of these methods, the researcher gathered observational data during teacher-initiated instruction such as large- and small-group times, then interviewed childcare professionals about the methods they chose to guide children's behavioral expectation compliance and social skill development. As previously stated, three questions guided this inquiry. The three questions follow:

1. What pedagogical techniques do childcare professionals in a large urban county in the southeastern United States use when guiding 4-year-old children's social and behavioral development during teacher-initiated activities, such as large- and small-group instruction?

2. What is the association between the types of pedagogical techniques selected by childcare professionals in a large urban county in the southeastern United States to guide children's social and behavioral development and the type of teacher-initiated activity (such as large and small group) in which they engage?

3. Why do childcare professionals in a large urban county in the southeastern United States choose particular social skill building and behavioral reinforcement techniques to guide 4-year-old children's social and behavioral development during teacher-initiated activities such as large- and small-group instruction?

In short, the questions sought to learn what childcare professionals do, and why they do so, when guiding children's social and behavioral development. Since the results of the study were discussed in the previous chapter, it is relevant to provide a reflective response to the research findings in light of current professional knowledge and literature. This reflection will then lead to a discussion of the limitations of this study and possible implications for future research and practice.

Response to the Research Findings

Questions 1 and 2 sought to document the pedagogical practices that childcare professionals used to guide children's social and behavioral development. What was discovered through a review of frequency tallies on the Social and Behavioral Development Observational Instrument for Teacher Practice (sbDOITp) was that childcare professionals in this study relied on techniques that (a) focused on behavioral expectation compliance and (b) explicitly taught the behavior in which the teacher wished the child to engage.

Early childhood practitioners in this study spent the greatest amount of time on teaching children explicitly what to do in teacher-directed instructional times. The

participants relied on methods such as command stated in the positive, redirection to task, specific feedback, and rule statement to identify for children acceptable behaviors in which the children might engage. By using these methods, practitioners relied on techniques that told children exactly what to do (command stated in the positive), regained their attention by giving them a specific challenge or task (redirection to task), told them exactly what they did that was favored by the teacher (specific feedback), and told them exactly what the expectation for behavior was (rule statement).

As research in the practices of early childhood professionals is sparse in the area of social and emotional competence, there is little literature to verify that these findings are in line with what has previously been observed or recorded. However, research in the area of children's social–emotional competence upon entering school indicates that children lack early experiences that support the acquisition of prosocial skills. This would add to support to the models presented in Chapter Four. Figure 3on page 138 "Promotion of Social and Emotional Competence," indicates that for children to gain prosocial skills and thus achieve social and emotional competence, they must be provided with explicit and implicit instruction in both social skills and behavioral expectation compliance. As displayed in Figure 4 on page 139 "Childcare Professionals' Practice in Promotion of SEC," childcare professionals in this study were using only explicit measures to teach behavioral expectations and limited implicit techniques to teach social skills. This imbalance of pedagogical method usage may be a significant contributing factor to children's limited social and emotional competence upon entering school. Thus, this identified imbalance in pedagogical method usage may be a way to verify that the gap in young children's social readiness upon school entry, very likely could be related to these

early experiences where social skills are presented an elusive manner. This imbalance is only problematic in that children who enter school without these social skills are rarely able to navigate the social constructs of school and thus are often met with disappointment, frustration, and failure (Yoshikawa, 1995). To further examine the "Childcare Professionals' Practice in Promotion of SEC" model, the findings from question 3 require review.

Question 3, which sought to discover why practitioners chose certain techniques to guide children's social and behavioral development, illuminated that participants chose specific techniques because those techniques told children exactly what they wanted them to do (or what they did that was correct). Practitioners felt that this aided children in complying and in repeating these behaviors when requested at a later time. This idea of explicit instruction has been verified in the professional literature to be effective in maintaining children's compliance with behavioral expectations (Lawry, Danko, & Strain, 1999). Children are better able to comply with expectations when they are clear on the demands and the context in which those behaviors are required (Dodge & Colker, 1996). The explicit examples, guidelines, and feedback used in the techniques of command stated in the positive, redirection to task, specific feedback, and rule statement identify standards for participation in communal learning settings (Ostrosky, Jung, Hemmeter, & Thomas, 2003).

Childcare professionals in this study used techniques in a way that showed a high level of comprehensive understanding about how to promote children's compliance with behavioral objectives. This was evidenced by the significant usage and dominance in

frequency counts reviewed in questions 1 and 2 for behavioral expectation compliance. Childcare professionals used the aforementioned techniques in isolation and interactively with each other. For example, a teacher noticed, during large group, that a child was not listening or participating and was tapping the child next to him. She did the following. She asked, “Matthew, what song would you like to sing?” (redirection to task). Matthew stopped, looked at the teacher, paused, and chose *Five Little Monkeys*. The teacher, keeping eye contact, said, “Sit on your bottom and look this way” (command stated in the positive). Matthew sat on his bottom, and the teacher said, “You are sitting criss-cross. You are ready to sing the song you picked” (specific feedback). This ability to string together multiple pedagogical methods to get a desired effect is an effective practice (Murdick & Petch-Hogan, 1996; Ostrosky, Jung, Hemmeter, & Thomas, 2003). This requires practitioners to have specific pedagogical content knowledge about how to guide behavioral development and compliance (Ratcliff, 2001). This is in accordance with the findings of this study that children, in large part, complied with requests by teachers and teachers often used multiple techniques to obtain a desired behavior. Additionally, question 3 illuminated that explicit instruction around behavioral expectations was used by the participants because they believed it was effective and it was easily administered anywhere and anytime. Without the use of explicit instruction in various settings and situations around behavioral expectations, children struggle in school to make sense of the social mores and requirements of that system (Webster-Stratton, 1999).

This ability and knowledge of explicatory methods to guide children’s behavioral development during the observations appeared to be a strength. However, children’s social skill development was rarely addressed. Social skill building received the lowest

frequencies across both methods (social skill building and behavioral expectation compliance) and both instructional times (small and large group). The social skill building techniques that were used the most, interactive modeling and support in problem solving, both rely on the implicit instruction of social skills. That is, interactive modeling is the naturally occurring experience or conversation that takes place when a teacher and child share in an event, activity, or conversation that models and promotes engagement with appropriate cultural mores. It happens throughout the day and across environments. However, it requires the child to extricate the social skill being modeled, then make the distinction about its use in other environments, and finally transfer that knowledge to a future situation for use.

Techniques that use immediate feedback during an event, such as modeling as a participant, role playing/modeling in isolation prior to or following a new social event, and using visual cues as reminders, help children socially mark newly learned social skills for later retrieval. As stated earlier in the literature review, the social interaction process provides social marking (Doise & Mugny, 1984), which is used to determine for the learner the contextual relevance of a newly acquired skill or concept and how to best recall and use it in the future. Every child goes through this individual invention process but then relies on the social verification action (Forman & Kraker, 1985) to commit learning to relevant knowledge for retrieval and usage (Siegler, 2005). The transference of prosocial skills across environmental contexts is enhanced when both implicit and explicit methods are used.

The same is true of support in problem solving. This technique is typically used when two or more children are involved in a conflict or problem. The teacher works with the children or monitors the children's efforts to resolve the conflict. This method, like interactive modeling, requires the child to extrapolate the systematic method used to resolve conflict and then transfer that method, strategically, to the next situation. While both methods (support in problem solving and interactive modeling) have context and social marking (Doise & Mugny, 1984) to support retrieval and usage (Siegler, 2005), they lack the explicit instruction that is critical to supporting social skill development and application (Odom, McConnell, & McEvoy, 1992; Serna, Neilson, Lambros, & Forness, 2000). That is why a balance of methods suggested in Figure 3 on page 138 "Promotion of Social and Emotional Competence," generally shows greater outcomes for children with relation to social and emotional competence.

Furthermore, when participants were asked about their use of interactive modeling, they spoke mostly of these events/episodes in terms of building relationships and just day-to-day living; rarely did they articulate this method's use in terms of opportunities to model prosocial behavior. Nor did they extricate their practice and label it strategically. Rather, it is/remains embedded practice, not strategic, and therefore less likely to be deployed strategically in a novel situation or teachable moment. The same is true of support in problem solving; the childcare professionals in this study used it because there was a perceived benefit to children—to promote less frustration and more independence. Again, practitioners did not see the link between their support and future engagement in prosocial behaviors. They seemed to lack the philosophical framework or

epistemological belief system that prosocial skills are not always innate and instinctual but often must be taught systematically.

The idea of children needing explicit instruction in how to act and interact with others seems counterintuitive. Media and adults readily romanticize childhood as a time when children are happy and carefree (Winn, 1993). Teachers struggle on three fronts 1) the internalized compulsive care model, 2) the relational teaching model, and 2) the teacher verse parent role. Each of these complex factors contributes to female childcare professionals' identity and thus effect their epistemological views, pedagogical philosophy, and classroom practice.

The compulsive care model is the quintessential the image of the female as primary caregiver to children and family (Michael, 1999). Childcare professionals are often women, mothers, and breadwinners (Peisner-Feinburg, et al., 2000). Teachers of young children often struggle to balance their knowledge of how to promote young children's growth and autonomy with internal images of the eternal mother and comforter (Auerbach, 1988). Professionally, women in childcare know that children must face some difficulties and challenges in order to learn new and more efficient ways of coping with life situations. However, these same professionals are overwhelmed with maternal images in the media and in their community that suggest all children should be happy all the time. Women in early education have to seek balance to this dichotomy in their work and in their home (Michael, 1999; Auerbach, 1988). Since, children are humans and prone to varying dispositions and temperaments, not all children (or people) can be happy all the time. The compulsive care model very likely encourages childcare professionals to shy

away from natural teaching opportunities when children become frustrated. Early childhood teachers may be more likely to pacify a child by making a situation easier or completely removing the challenge to reach the ideal image of eternal comforting caregiver.

The relational teaching model supports the compulsive caregiver image. Relational teaching suggests that teachers can promote greater student outcomes by developing relationships with children (Fang, 1996; Brownlee, 2004). While it is possible, and some findings suggest, that relationships enhance child outcomes. There has been little specification in this research to explain how to strategize these relational factors to support pedagogical methods. Thus, teachers often believe and practice relational building, but are unsure how this can be used to enhance specific outcomes (Baxter Magolda, 1996). Much like in this study, childcare professionals valued relationships with the children they taught and believed both they and the children benefitted from the relational building, but they were not sure how that correlated to social and behavioral expectations, nor cognitive outcomes.

The last factor, teacher verse parent role, is one of the most debated discussions of our times. Specifically, most of the discussions center around behavior in and out of the classroom. Teachers become frustrated with parents, as parents become frustrated with educators. Since there are often cultural, economic, and experiential differences among people views on the same behavioral issue a child is facing takes many views and can have numerous responses (Singham, 2005). Since most teachers are often parents they expect parents to handle the situation in a manner similar to their style as a teacher or a

parent(Schwartz, 1999). Teachers and parents need opportunities to address concerns in a systematic objective manner. Such an example may be using observation, simple data collection measures, and interview of parent and teacher to determine the function of a challenging behavior then agreeing on the replacement skills that meet the demands of both classroom and home. Then that skill must be taught in both the school and the home. As the NICHD Early Childhood Research Network (2006) shares, parents influence is more significant than educators. However, that influence shifts as children spend more years in school and extended care. Since both parent and teacher have impact on the way the child shapes his/her understanding of how to act and react in various environment the debate would be better reshaped if it asked in what ways can parents, teachers, and communities work together to promote positive prosocial outcomes (Webster-Stratton, et al.,2001). Teacher verse parent role stems from "it's not my responsibility" mentality. The fact is, if it is not any ones responsibility to teach, than how can the child learn?

A social skill is the ability to interact, react, and respond to various environmental and social situations in a way that is considered culturally acceptable by the societal majority (Berk, 2002). The use of the word *skill* implies an ability usually learned through training. However, social interaction (the ability to interact in social situations) is considered by most lay persons an innate ability that is present in social beings (e.g., human beings). While most adults acquire their interaction methods from observing and interacting with others, children require systematic learning of social mores through explication by teachers, parents, or peers (Odom, McConnell, & McEvoy, 1992). Figure 3 on page 138 "Promotion of Social and Emotional Competence," is a model of this.

With this said, children who enter school with the social skills necessary to be successful in school have most often had some engagement in social skill building through explicit instruction. Social skill building involves (a) an adult or a peer engaging in interactive modeling as an actual participant in the social context, (b) formalized modeling of a future or previous social experience, (c) role playing of a future or previous social experience, and (d) visual strategy usage (Serna, Neilson, Lambros, & Forness, 2000). Teachers' use of these specific strategies has proven to result in statistically significant growth in the area of social competence (Barnett, 1995).

What is most interesting is that teachers readily engaged in the explicit instruction of behavioral expectations, but did not do so for social skill building. In fact, the lowest frequencies or observed events/episodes were in the area of social skill building, specifically role playing, visual strategy usage, and formalized modeling. These techniques are required in combination with informal methods such as interactive modeling and support in problem solving to teach social skills systematically (Fox et al., 2003). It seems as though the childcare professionals in this study were relying on reactive methods for social skill building and proactive methods for promoting behavioral expectation compliance. Additionally, when the participants spoke about their method choice for behavioral expectation compliance, they suggested that children don't know what to do unless they teach them, but they did not make the connection that children may not know what to do regarding prosocial responses if they are not taught. This was exemplified in the "Childcare Professionals' Practice in Promotion of SEC" model presented in Figure 4 on page 139. There is an imbalance in the methods used to promote social–emotional competence in many early childhood classrooms.

In summary, childcare professionals readily and proficiently engage in explicit instruction around behavioral expectations. However, they rarely systematically instruct children on social skills. Childcare professionals seem to rely on the implicit nature of day-to-day interactions to embed appropriate social interactions and reactions. Without the systematic teaching of social skills, children will be ill prepared for the demands of future communal educational environments and the rigors of daily discourse and interaction between peers and adults (Wester–Stratton, 1990; Hyson, 2004; Fox et al., 2003; Denham & Burton, 1996).

Limitations

Identified limitations to this study were the following: (a) the researcher's role as the primary investigator could have limited the validity of the qualitative measures of the study through preconceived biases from previous work with childcare providers, and (b) observational data were collected during large- and small-group times in the morning only. A discussion of these limitations follows.

In response to limitation 1, the researcher was aware during synthesis of the qualitative data that biases could be introduced. Every effort was made to report the expressed views of childcare professionals in their voices and allow that to paint the textual picture of their practices. The data were again reviewed by an expert in qualitative research and social–emotional development theory for young children. It was concluded that, to the best of the researcher's ability, the results reflect childcare professionals' understanding of their practices.

In response to the second limitation, during the visits to childcare centers, it was noted that teachers rarely had both a large and a small group in the afternoon. However, they typically had either a large or a small group. Therefore, the data collected could be enhanced by observing large or small groups in the afternoons.

In response to limitation 3, the researcher was aware that the Hawthorne effect may be introduced unconsciously by the participant. Therefore, the researcher sought to develop a professional, yet casual repoire and manner with participant. Additionally, the researcher was familiar with other support programs in the are that often observe in the childcare facilities for the purpose of assisting teachers. The researcher suggested to the participant to think of the observation like those, and act as if the researcher was not present and "Do what you do best, teach". During the data collection process, participants rarely acknowledged the observer and followed their normal schedules. Thus, it was concluded that the Hawthorne effect had little impact on the observational data gathered (Jones, 1992).

Implications for Future Research and Practice

The implications for future research should include additional research endeavors that examine childcare professionals' practices in the areas of social and behavioral instruction. This is just one study in one urban region of the southeastern United States that examines these practices. What is needed is a more comprehensive evaluation of more childcare professionals in regions where prerequisites for employment vary. A larger, more exhaustive study would add richness to the data by providing multiple contexts in which children are in care, with various childcare practitioners, who have

multiple work and educational experiences. This multiple-lens view could begin to identify teachers' strengths and needs and help support technical assistance models that lead to advancement in skills and nonreplication of educational information with which practitioners are already familiar.

As stated earlier, to date, the research in the area of social–emotional competence has focused on child-based interventions and outcomes. The findings cite effective approaches to assisting children in the area of social and emotional development involving the promotion of appropriate social skills, explicit instruction of behavioral expectations, and support for emotional literacy and awareness (Wester–Stratton, 1990; Hyson, 2004; Fox et al., 2003; Denham & Burton, 1996). These recommended practices require teacher knowledge and skill, content knowledge in the area of social–emotional development, and skills in using pedagogical techniques that support acquisition of the aforementioned areas. Educational researchers and specialists cannot support the advancement of teacher practice in the area of social–emotional competence until they are clear on the methods and behaviors childcare professionals currently employ.

Therefore, implications for practice can be derived from a review of these data that can guide support of childcare professionals in the areas of promoting children's social and emotional competence. These data illuminate that childcare professionals seamlessly and proficiently guide children's behavior to align with their expectations. What is also evident is that childcare professionals need more training and assistance in how to promote social skills through the use of explicit methodologies, as evidenced by the model presented in Chapter Four, Childcare Professionals' Practice in Promotion of

SEC, presented in Figure 4 on page 139. This model shows that there is an imbalance of pedagogical methods used to support children's social and emotional competence. The methods least used include role playing, visual strategy usage, and formalized modeling; these are the explicit means to support social skill acquisition.

What can also be gathered from these data is the need for another method with which to provide support and technical assistance to childcare professionals. The model presented in Chapter Four, the ecological perspectives model of influence in childcare practices, shows that almost all of the participants stated that they learned the techniques that they used while in the process of teaching or from being a parent. Rarely was a training or class the primary source for their knowledge. In fact, many alluded to the fact that the classes/trainings only verified for them that the techniques they were using were appropriate. However, it did have influence on their immediate practice. This suggests that current methods for relaying information to practitioners may be only marginally effective and that perhaps a more effective model would be to provide support, mentorship, and training in the process of teaching, as classroom experiences had the greatest impact on childcare professionals' practice and knowledge of techniques.

One such model that provides support while in the process of teaching is reflective coaching. Reflective coaching provides cohesive curricular support model that provides collaborative support in planning, teaching, and reflection. Reflective coaching is a process that is believed to transform learning because it supplies technical support while the practitioner is in the act of implementing or teaching (Joyce & Showers, 1982, 2002). This reflective coaching can promote transference of learning, which occurs when

new learning enhances prior understanding. This is similar to Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories of scaffolding knowledge. Transfer of learning typically occurs when coaching is interwoven with content trainings (Joyce & Showers, 1982, 2002). This would align with the ecological perspective presented in Chapter Four. The classroom environment had the greatest impact on teachers' practice; thus, coaching in this environment, correlated with content training in the exosystem sphere, could produce transference and sustained usage.

While transfer of learning is an outcome of coaching, it is the transfer of implementation that is the ultimate goal (Showers, 1982). Teachers who receive training followed by coaching typically practiced new skills more frequently and with greater accuracy than practitioners who received training alone. In fact, it was reported by Joyce and Showers (2002) that 95% of teachers who participated in a study to determine the effects of coaching on transference of learning were better able to apply the new pedagogical techniques learned with greater skill. Six months following this study, teachers who had been coached showed greater retention in skills and knowledge than did their uncoached peers.

Reflective coaching has implications for practice with relation to how childcare professionals self-report learning the techniques they use in their classrooms. If explicit methods for teaching social skills were taught in conjunction with reflective coaching support in the classroom, childcare practitioners might show increased frequencies of social skill building method usage.

Conclusion

In summation, this study sought to identify the types of pedagogical methods childcare professionals used to guide children's social and behavioral development and why they chose such methods during teacher-directed instructional times. The results indicate that childcare professionals use explicit methods to guide children's behavioral expectation compliance and socially embedded strategies to promote social skill acquisition. This creates difficulties because children are receiving imbalanced instruction in social skill and behavioral expectation compliance, which may affect acquisition of social and emotional milestones. Additionally, childcare professionals report instinctually learning their methods on their own as a part of being a teacher and/or a parent. This gives relevance to the implication of reflective coaching coupled with content training as means to promote explicit social skill instruction.

The results of this study are intriguing because they offer a glimpse into the proficiency of childcare professionals' skills and understandings. They also provide some relevance to the reported findings that children are arriving in school without the social skills to promote sustained academic success (Pesiner-Feinberg, Burchinal, Clifford, Culkin, Howes, Kagan, Yazejian, Blyer, Rustici, & Zelazo, 2000). Childcare professionals seem to be primed for systematic instruction around the promotion of social skills. They are cognizant of explicit techniques to guide behavioral expectation compliance but seem to have limited transference of these skills to explicit instruction in social skill acquisition.

Thus, childcare professionals and the systems that support them must reevaluate the important role of explicit social skill instruction to promote children's acquisition of these skills. When children possess the necessary social skills, they often have enhanced and sustained academic success. Early childhood researchers and specialists will know when they have adequately supported the childcare professional—when children arrive in schools with the prosocial behaviors required to engage in the rigors of communal education.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Social and Behavioral Development Observational Instrument for Teacher Practice

	Role Playing	Visual Strategy Usage	Form-alized Modeling	Support in Problem Solving	Inter-active Model-ing	Formal-ized Model-ing	Redire ction to Task	Rule State-ment	Comma nd Stated in Positive	Com-mand Stated in Neg	Visual Strategy Usage	Teacher-Imposed Conse-quence	Specific Feed-back	Prox-imity
Teacher-Directed Activities	**Date of Observation:** **Time of Observation:** **Number of Children:** **Number of Teachers:** **Rate how typical this day was for the children: 5 4 3 2 1** **Rate how typical this day was for you, as a teacher: 5 4 3 2 1**													
Large Group														
Small Group														
Totals														

Social Skill Building: the systematic and intentional teaching of skills that enhance an individual's ability to interact, react, and respond to various environmental and social situations in a way that is considered culturally acceptable by the societal majority.

a) **Role playing**: the engagement with a realistic scenario as an actor, for the purpose of practicing reactions and responses to previous and/or future life experiences.
b) **Visual strategy usage**: the use of printed pictures or symbols and use of gestures that promote cognitive cueing of a socially acceptable reaction/interaction.
c) **Formalized modeling**: a contrived scenario in which an expert (adult or peer) reacts to an event, situation, or stimulus in a way that promotes appropriate cultural mores. It is used as an example of preferred behavior and typically implies a positive outcome from engagement in the behavior.
d) **Support in problem solving**: the act of an expert (adult and/or peer) guiding the process of problem solving when an individual is in the midst of a problem or dilemma with a peer or adult. The expert is not involved in the immediate problem.
e) **Interactive modeling**: a naturally occurring experience or conversation that involves teachers and children sharing in an event, activity, or conversation that models and promotes engagement with appropriate cultural mores.

Behavioral Expectation Reinforcement: the consistent practice of aligning an individual's behaviors with the cultural environment's anticipated behaviors and appropriate reactions to varying and specific stimuli.

a) **Redirection to task**: the prompting of an individual to return to the acceptable or preferred behavior or activity. This can be done through verbal, physical, or auditory prompts.
b) **Rule statement**: the stating of a specific behavioral expectation or rule when an individual is not engaged in appropriate behaviors.
c) **Command stated in the positive**: a declarative statement that is stated so that the desired expectation is expressed (e.g., "foot on the floor" when a child is going to kick something, "gentle touches" when a child is hitting a teacher's arm for attention).
d) **Command stated in the negative**: a declarative statement that is stated so that the inappropriate behavior is asked to stop (e.g., "don't kick" when a child is going to kick something, "stop hitting me" when a child is hitting a teacher's arm for attention).
e) **Visual strategy usage**: the use of printed pictures or symbols and use of gestures to promote cognitive cueing of a behavioral or procedural reaction.
f) **Teacher-imposed consequence**: a reprimand is given that involves an individual's free choice being taken away temporarily because the individual engaged in inappropriate behaviors (e.g., a child is sent to "time out" because he threw blocks in the classroom and they hit another child).
g) **Specific feedback when performing behavioral expectation**: the act of providing descriptive language to individuals about the appropriate behavior in which they are/were engaged. Subjective words like *good* or *great* do not need to be present; however, vocal inflection and positive facial and body expressions are required to affirm the approved behavior (e.g., "You put those blocks in the basket and then put them in the correct space on the shelf!" Teacher is at child's eye level, making eye contact, and smiling).
h) **Formalized modeling**: a contrived scenario in which an expert (adult or peer) reacts to an event, situation, or stimulus in a way that promotes appropriate cultural mores. It is used as an example of preferred behavior and typically implies a positive outcome from engagement in the behavior.
i) **Proximity**: the act of positioning a child or oneself closely. The teacher positions himself/herself within easy reach or eyesight of a child with the intent of maintaining behavioral expectations. The teacher may also position the child within his/her easy reach and eyesight (e.g., During circle time, Jeremiah was rolling around on the floor. The teacher asked Jeremiah to sit next to her while she finished reading the book.).

Appendix B: Semistructured Interview Format

Video vignettes/snippets will precede questions related to this interview form. Following the viewing of each video vignette/snippet, childcare professionals consenting to the interview will engage in the following interview. This interview format is semistructured to guide the researcher's inquiry; however, when relevant and appropriate, the researcher and participant may deviate from the prescribed text to gain richer conversational dialogues and thus a more thorough understanding of the interviewee's perspective and intention when engaging in practice related to social skill building and behavioral expectation reinforcement.

Description of observed practice:

I am going to replay this video snippet; as we watch it again without sound, describe what is happening.

These are prompts to get a rich textual description of the scenario from the practitioner's viewpoint, both as an experience and as a reviewer of the visual content (video)

What are you doing?

What are you doing in this moment?

What is happening now?

What are the children doing?

What are the children doing in this moment?

What is happening now?

What is the class doing?

What is the class doing in this moment?

What is happening now?

What is your assistant doing?

What is he/she doing in this moment?

What is happening now?

Why chosen method(s) is used:

You describe yourself as doing … why are you doing this … at this moment?

What made you choose this technique for this incident/child?

Background of method for practitioner:

Where did you learn … ?

How did you learn this technique?

Did you discover this technique … As a teacher? As a parent? As a relative?

When technique is used:

Do you use … often?

When do you use it?

How often do you use it?

In what situations do you use it?

With whom do you use it?

Outcomes of technique usage:

What happens when you use … ?

Describe what happens when you use it in … with ….

How satisfied are you with this technique … ?

On a scale of 1-5, how satisfied are you?

Repeat process with next video/vignette snippet(s).

When process is finished, express gratitude and thanks to the participant. Collect materials and exit with minimal disturbance.

Appendix C: Video Vignette/Snippet Selection Criteria

Video snippets/vignettes will be chosen when they relate to a pedagogical technique used to guide children's social and behavioral development and fall into a predetermined category (social skill building and/or behavioral reinforcement techniques) and demonstrate an identified methodology under the aforementioned categories, such as the following:

Social Skill Building: the systematic and intentional teaching of skills that enhance an individual's ability to interact, react, and respond to various environmental and social situations in a way that is considered culturally acceptable by the societal majority

a) **Role playing**: the engagement with a realistic scenario as an actor for the purpose of practicing reactions and responses to previous and/or future life experiences.
b) **Visual strategy usage**: the use of printed pictures or symbols to promote cognitive cueing of a behavioral or procedural reaction.
c) **Formalized modeling**: a contrived scenario in which an expert (adult or peer) reacts to an event, situation, or stimulus in a way that promotes appropriate cultural mores. It is used as an example of preferred behavior and typically implies a positive outcome from engagement in the behavior.
d) **Support in problem solving**: the act of an expert (adult and/or peer) guiding the process of problem solving when an individual is in the midst of a problem or dilemma with a peer or adult. The expert is not involved in the immediate problem.
e) **Interactive modeling as participant**: a naturally occurring experience or conversation that involves teachers and children sharing in an event, activity, or conversation that models and promotes engagement with appropriate cultural mores.

Behavioral Expectation Reinforcement: the consistent practice of aligning individual's behaviors with the cultural environment's anticipated behaviors and appropriate reactions to varying and specific stimuli.

a) **Redirection to task**: the prompting of an individual to return to the acceptable or preferred behavior or activity. This can be done through verbal, physical, or auditory prompts.
b) **Rule statement**: the stating of a specific behavioral expectation or rule when an individual is not engaged in appropriate behaviors.
c) **Command stated in the positive**: a declarative statement that is stated so that the desired expectation is expressed (e.g., "foot on the floor" when a child is going to kick something, "gentle touches" when a child is hitting a teacher's arm for attention).

d) **Command stated in the negative**: a declarative statement that is stated so that the inappropriate behavior is asked to stop (e.g., “don’t kick” when a child is going to kick something, “stop hitting me” when a child is hitting a teacher’s arm for attention).
e) **Visual strategy usage**: the use of printed pictures or symbols to promote cognitive cueing of a behavioral or procedural reaction.
f) **Teacher-imposed consequence**: a reprimand is given that involves an individual’s free choice being taken away temporarily because the individual engaged in inappropriate behaviors (e.g., a child is sent to “time out” because he threw blocks in the classroom and they hit another child).
g) **Specific feedback when performing behavioral expectation**: the act of providing descriptive language to individuals about the appropriate behavior in which they are/were engaged. Subjective words like *good* or *great* do not need to be present; however, vocal inflection and positive facial and body expressions are required to affirm the approved behavior (e.g., “You put those blocks in the basket and then put them in the correct space on the shelf!” Teacher is at child’s eye level, making eye contact, and smiling).
h) **Formalized modeling**: a contrived scenario in which an expert (adult or peer) reacts to an event, situation, or stimulus in a way that promotes appropriate cultural mores. It is used as an example of preferred behavior and typically implies a positive outcome from engagement in the behavior.
i) **Proximity**: the act of positioning a child or oneself closely. The teacher positions himself/herself within easy reach or eyesight of a child with the intent of maintaining behavioral expectations. The teacher may also position the child within his/her easy reach and eyesight.

A minimum of two video vignettes/snippets will be chosen. One vignette/snippet should represent the predominant method used in large-group instruction, and one should represent the predominant method used in small-group instruction. The predominant method can be determined by a review of the frequency totals from the Social and Behavioral Development Observational Instrument for Teacher Practice (sbDOITp).

The video portions that relate to teacher-initiated activities such as large- and small-group instruction will be reviewed to identify a clearly recorded example (a visually distinct, audio-captured clearly, and longer length episode showing a beginning, middle, and end to the pedagogical techniques being used) of the predominant methods identified. These video snippets/vignettes will be downloaded into the researcher’s laptop to assist with easy retrieval and replay during the interview.

Appendix D: Study Timeline

I. Formative Study
    a. Observation of classrooms
    b. Identifications of methods
    c. Development of sbDOITp
        i. Verification of Content Validity

II. Pilot Study
    a. Distribute participant invitations (for pilot and dissertation study)
    b. Identify participant sites (for pilot and dissertation study)
    c. IRB approval
    d. Contact and schedule observation of sites
        i. Consent
    e. Observation and interview of participants
        i. Lunch order, book basket, training hour
    f. Analysis of procedure

III. Dissertation Study
    a. Contact and schedule observation of sites
        i. Consent
    b. Observation and interview of participants
        i. Lunch order, book basket, training hour
        ii. Check of observer reliability on sbDOITp
        iii. Transcription of interviews
            1. Verification of transcription accuracy
            2. Complete any blanks left by transcriptionist from review of audio data
    c. Analysis of data
        i. Quantitative analysis
        ii. Qualitative analysis
    d. Report findings

Appendix E: Formative Study

The purpose of the formative research study was exploratory: to identify and label the pedagogical behaviors childcare professionals use in their classrooms to guide children's social skill development and adherence to behavioral expectations. The researcher intended to document and to describe childcare professionals' actions and practices with relation to guiding children's social and behavioral development during large- and small-group instruction.

Participants

Five prekindergarten classrooms were selectively sampled by the researcher, based on the researcher's professional knowledge and contact with some of the childcare programs in the county in which the research would take place. From those in which the researcher had professional knowledge and contact, five were identified to represent the multiple geographic (north, south, east, west, and central city) and sociocultural (urban, suburban, and rural) dynamics, as well as the economic variation (the majority of children served are living in poverty—less than $20,650 for a household of four, serving children who are not deemed at risk based on economic factors—families making greater than $20,650 for a family of four) of the large county in which the study would take place. The geographic areas were identified by a county map and school district demographic data. By dividing the selection locations into five geographic, sociocultural, and socioeconomic regions, the researcher anticipated that the childcare professional participants would represent the diverse mixture of ages, races, and educational levels that are present in large urban southeastern communities. As a method of random

selection of childcare facilities in the proposed regions was used in the dissertation study, it was appropriate to use these regions as criteria for selection in the formative study.

Procedure

Five prekindergarten classrooms, containing children 4 years of age or older, were observed 2 times during teacher-initiated activities, such as large- and small-group instruction, for the full length of the activity. Large-group activities included circle time (time when children sing songs, engage in movement activities, or teacher-directed instruction such as letter identification, vocabulary enhancement, etc.) and read aloud (time when the teacher reads a story to children, sometimes engaging them with questions about the text). Small-group activities were also observed and included children sitting in small groups at tables engaged in a teacher-prepared and directed activity such as writing, cutting, painting, sculpting, and worksheets.

During these activities, childcare professionals were observed by the researcher and anecdotal notes were taken. The notes documented and described the type of activity, such as large- or small-group instruction, and objective observational data surrounding and describing the actions/behaviors of the childcare professional. Based on these notes, the researcher later analyzed the data by looking for reoccurring actions and behaviors that were used to guide children's social skill development of behavioral expectation compliance. These behaviors were then labeled to summarize the type of pedagogical technique used.

Instruments. Notes were written in a free-form format. The notes only documented and described the type of activity, such as large- or small-group instruction, and objective observational data surrounding and describing the actions/behaviors of the childcare professional. The researcher was the only observer, so the structure of the note taking remained consistent but suffered from no diversity of perspective.

Analysis

Documentation was reviewed, and reoccurring themes related to the teacher's behaviors and actions were identified. The actions and behaviors were color coded by type using various markers/highlighters to determine the repetition and number of the various strategies used. These behaviors and actions were identified and labeled as types of pedagogical strategies and given pedagogically associated names that correlated to the observed action and behavior. These labels were reviewed a second time to determine if the category of technique usage correlated with common definitions in the field of early childhood and literature related to social and emotional competence.

Though the researcher was familiar with some methodologies that may be used, the researcher was open to occurrences that had not been indicated in the review of literature. The intent of this exploratory inquiry was to identify all types of strategies being used by childcare professionals. As the research is sparse in the area of childcare providers' practices, it is possible that the research reviewed does not capture, in entirety, methods utilized by childcare professionals working in the field.

Findings

During the observation nine methods were observed and documented.

In supporting social skill building techniques used included:

a) Interactive modeling as participant: a naturally occurring experience or conversation that involves teachers and children sharing in an event, activity, or conversation that models and promotes engagement with appropriate cultural mores. (e.g. During an art activity, the teacher says, “May I have the scissors”. A child hands the teacher the scissors. The teacher responds, “Thank you for handing those to me, now I can use them to finish my picture.”)

b) Visual strategy usage: the use of printed pictures or symbols and use of gestures that promote cognitive cueing of a socially acceptable reaction and/or interaction. (e.g. children are working at the table with puzzles. A child wants a new puzzle and stares at a peer's puzzle the teacher shows the child a picture of a child trading a toy with another child. The child holds out the old puzzle to the other child and the children trade)

c) Support in problem solving an encountered problem with peers: the act of an expert (adult and/or peer) guiding the process of problem solving when an individual is in the midst of a problem or dilemma with a peer or adult. The expert is not involved in the immediate problem (e.g., Two children are arguing over a truck. The teacher observes and then approaches the two

children. She has the children explain the problem, generate possible solutions, and then settle on a choice.).

In reinforcing behavioral expectations for children, childcare professionals used the following:

a) Redirection to task: the prompting of an individual to return to the acceptable or preferred behavior or activity. This can be done through verbal, physical, or auditory prompts (e.g., “What are you doing?”; Pointing to the scissors or holding scissors in front of the child’s line of vision; “Show me how to put the blocks away.”).

b) Rule statement: the stating of a specific behavioral expectation or rule when an individual is not engaged in appropriate behaviors (e.g., “During circle time, we raise our hand when we want to speak.”).

c) Command stated in the positive: a declarative statement that is stated so that the desired expectation is expressed (e.g., “foot on the floor” when a child is going to kick something, “gentle touches” when a child is hitting a teacher’s arm for attention).

d) Command stated in the negative: a declarative statement that is stated so that the inappropriate behavior is asked to stop (e.g., “don’t kick” when a child is going to kick something, “stop hitting me” when a child is hitting a teacher’s arm for attention).

d) Visual strategy usage: the use of printed pictures or symbols and use of gestures that promote cognitive cueing of a behavioral or procedural reaction (e.g., The teacher points to the child's picture on the carpet to remind the child to sit criss-cross on the carpet.).

e) Teacher-imposed consequence: a reprimand is given that involves an individual's free choice being taken away temporarily because the individual engaged in inappropriate behaviors (e.g., a child is sent to "time out" because he threw blocks in the classroom and they hit another child).

f) Specific feedback when performing behavioral expectation: the act of providing descriptive language to individuals about the appropriate behavior in which they are/were engaged. Subjective words like *good* or *great* do not need to be present; however, vocal inflection and positive facial and body expressions are required to affirm the approved behavior (e.g., "You put those blocks in the basket and then put them in the correct space on the shelf!" Teacher is at child's eye level, making eye contact, and smiling).

g) Proximity: the act of positioning a child or oneself closely. The teacher positions himself/herself within easy reach or eyesight of a child with the intent of maintaining behavioral expectations. The teacher may also position the child within his/her easy reach and eyesight (e.g., During circle time, Jeremiah was rolling around on the floor. The teacher asked Jeremiah to sit next to her while she finished reading the book.

Appendix F: Pilot Study

The purpose of the pilot study was to (a) assess observer reliability and test the procedural use of the observational instrument developed from the information gathered in the formative research, (b) test the procedural use of the observational tool and digital video recording device, (c) verify the video vignette/snippet selection criteria clarity, (d) validate the credibility and dependability of the semistructured individual interview format, and (e) test the procedural use of the digital audiorecording device that was used during the interview process. This portion of the study sought to replicate procedures, on a smaller scale, of the dissertation study.

Participants

Five prekindergarten classrooms were selectively sampled, based on geographic location in the county in which the proposed study took place. Of the 30 childcare facilities willing to participate in the dissertation study, 12 were identified as having two or more prekindergarten classes serving children 4 years of age or older. From those sites identified with two or more prekindergarten classrooms, five were identified to represent the five differing geographic areas (north, south, east, west, and central city), sociocultural (urban, suburban, and rural) dynamics, and economic variation (the majority of children served are living in poverty—less than $20,650 for a household of four, serving children who are not deemed at risk based on economic factors—families making greater than $20,650 for a family of four) of the county in which the study took place. The geographic areas were identified by a county map and school district demographic data. Given that the selection locations were divided into geographic,

sociocultural, and socioeconomic regions, the childcare professional participants of the dissertation study should represent the diverse mixture of ages, races, and educational levels that are present in large urban southeastern communities. The five sites identified for this pilot study were used later in the larger scale dissertation study. However, the classrooms and teachers for that study were different because there were two or more prekindergarten classes to observe in each of those sites.

Instruments

During this study, one observational instrument and one observational tool were used. The observational instrument included a tally sheet that captured the types and frequencies of pedagogical techniques used by childcare professionals to guide 4-year-old children's social and behavioral development during large- and small-group instruction. The observational tool was a digital video camera. The video camera served two purposes: (a) to capture observational vignettes/snippets to be used during the interview following the observation and (b) to assist the researcher with observer reliability by providing an opportunity for three research assistants to check the accuracy of the documentation gathered during the observation. These aforementioned instruments and tools are described in depth in the following sections.

The observational instrument, the Social and Behavioral Development Observational Instrument for Teacher Practice (sbDOITp), was developed by this researcher from the findings listed in the formative research study. From that study, 10 pedagogical methods were observed in the guiding of children's social and behavioral development. These behaviors included (a) interactive modeling as participant, (b)

support in problem solving, (c) redirection to task, (d) rule statement, (e) command stated in the positive, (f) command stated in the negative, (g) visual strategy usage, (h) teacher-imposed consequence, (i) specific feedback when performing a behavioral expectation, and (j) proximity. These methods were used either to guide children's development of social skills such as making friends, social vocabulary usage, giving compliments, helping a peer in need, etc., or to support children's compliance with behavioral expectations such as following directions, listening to adults and peers, walking in a line or group, sitting appropriately at tables, etc. Specifically, the pedagogical techniques were divided between the two categories as follows:

In supporting social skill building, techniques used included:

a) Interactive modeling as participant

b) Visual strategy usage

c) Support in problem solving an encountered problem with peers

In reinforcing behavioral expectations for children, childcare professionals used

a) Redirection to task

b) Rule statement

c) Command stated in the positive

d) Command stated in the negative

e) Visual strategy usage

f) Teacher-imposed consequence

g) Specific feedback when performing behavioral expectation

h) Proximity

(Descriptions and examples of these techniques were provided in the previous section of the formative study; to avoid repetition, they are not restated in this portion of the text.)

Of the 10 methods identified and observed, all 10 had been identified as pedagogical practices used or recommended in early childhood classrooms for the purpose of guiding children's social and behavioral development. However, while 10 of the pedagogical techniques reviewed in the literature were observed during the observational periods, the research literature indicated that there are three suggested practices that may exist in highly skilled childcare centers. These techniques and strategies include (a) formalized modeling and (b) role playing when supporting social skill development and (c) formalized modeling when promoting behavioral expectation compliance. Though none of these methods were present in the formative research study, the researcher added them to the list under the two categories of social skill development and behavioral expectation reinforcement in order to provide for an observational event in which the use of these strategies might occur in a larger and more diverse sample used in the dissertation study.

The Social and Behavioral Development Observational Instrument for Teacher Practice (sbDOITp, provided in Appendix A) utilizes a simplistic format of a table divided horizontally into the two main teacher-initiated activities—large and small

group—while the vertical columns denote the type of pedagogical methodology category (social skill building or behavioral expectation reinforcement) and the specific techniques that may have been used in that category. For example, social skill building pedagogical techniques include (a) interactive modeling as participant, (b) role playing, (c) formalized modeling, (d) visual strategy usage, and (e) support in problem solving. In the category of behavioral expectation reinforcement, techniques include (a) redirection to task, (b) rule statement, (c) command stated in the positive, (d) command stated in the negative, (e) visual strategy usage, (f) teacher-imposed consequence, (g) specific feedback when performing behavioral expectation, (h) formalized modeling, and (i) proximity. Definitions are provided on the back of the second page of the observational tool (refer to Appendix A). At the conclusion of the observation, two Likert scale items were given to the teachers. The items asked teachers to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the highest, 1 being the lowest) to rate (a) how typical this day was for the children and (b) how typical this day was for the teacher. Additionally, the observational tool has an area designated for recording the times of observed small- and large-group instruction, as well as teacher-to-child ratio information. This information provided contextual information during the analysis of the dissertation study.

The categories and specific strategies for the development of this tool were identified during the formative research study and a prior review of literature on pedagogical methods and practices that can either support or hinder social–emotional competence and child outcomes. As child outcome research is rich and these methods have been studied with relation to child outcomes, this was a relevant source for identifying practice components. The predominant literature came from the Center for

Evidence Based Practice and the primary researchers and partners Fox, Dunlop, Hemmeter, Joseph, and Strain (2003).

To examine the content validity of the sbDOITp, C. H. Lawshe's method (Lawshe, 1975; Pennington, 2003) was used. This method uses experts in a given field to evaluate and judge the essential nature of listed items or criteria. Lawshe proposed that each rating judge respond to each of the measurable items on a scale or test by answering the question, "Is this item essential/useful but not essential/not necessary to the performance of the construct?" If more than half of the judging panelists indicate that an item is essential, that item has at least some content validity. To determine a greater level of content validity, a larger number of panelists need to agree that an item is essential. The following formula, the content validity ratio (CVR) formula, was used to determine the content validity of each item listed on the sbDOITp.

$$CVR = (n_e - N/2) / (N/2)$$

n_e = number of panelists indicating essential, N = total number of panelists

Eight panelists were sought as experts in the field of early childhood teacher pedagogical practice and young children's social and emotional competence. The eight panelists included three curriculum specialists and three intervention specialists/diagnostic evaluators from the early childhood learning programs in the school district in which the research took place. Additionally, one administrative resource teacher and one supervisor for the Exceptional Early Learning Programs in the school district in which the research was being conducted were added to the panel. All panelists

had advanced degrees in early childhood education or special education with an emphasis in early childhood. All panelists had been teachers in preschool or elementary classrooms and taught children age 4 or older and served as consultants for private childcare facilities serving children between birth and age 5 or in early exceptional educational classrooms in the school district serving children 3 to 5 years of age.

The panelists were provided the observation instrument and the definitions that define the observable behaviors (Appendix A). These panelists were provided with the question, "Is this item essential/useful but not essential/not necessary to the performance of the construct?" and asked to respond on the individual items listed on the tool itself with a *yes* or *no* in the corresponding column. The panelists responded, and the sbDOITp was collected. The CVR results for each item on the sbDOITp follow.

Table 10. Social skill building pedagogical techniques: Content Validity Ratio

Interactive Modeling as Participant	1.0
Role Playing	1.0
Formalized Modeling	1.0
Visual Strategy	1.0
Usage Support in Problem Solving an Encountered Problem	1.0

Table 11. Behavioral expectation reinforcement techniques: Content Validity Ratio

Redirection to Task	1.0
Rule Statement	.75
Command Stated in the Positive	1.0
Command Stated in the negative	.75
Visual Strategy Usage	1.0
Teacher-Imposed Consequence	.50
Specific Feedback When Performing Behavioral Expectation	1.0
Formalized Modeling	1.0
Proximity	1.0

The content validity ratio requires that with eight panelists, a minimum value of .75 is required to ensure the individual item's content validity. All items met this requirement with the exception of teacher-imposed consequence. Upon review of the formative research observations, the researcher decided to include this item because it was used at least once in four out of the five classrooms observed. At times, this method of behavioral expectation compliance was used more than once and appeared to be the preferred method of behavioral expectation reinforcement.

The observational tool used to observe teachers' practice was recorded with the assistance of a digital video recorder. Throughout the duration of teacher-initiated activities such as large-group (approximately 15 minutes) and small-group (approximately 20 minutes) instruction, video documentation occurred while the researcher simultaneously recorded observational data on the Social and Behavioral Development Observational Instrument for Teacher Practice (sbDOITp). The video recording was later used for two purposes: (a) to capture observational video vignettes/snippets to be used during the interview following the observation (vignette/snippet choice is defined in the following text section) and (b) to assist the researcher with observer reliability on the sbDOITp by providing an opportunity for three research assistants to check the reliability of the researcher's documentation gathered during the observation.

During the observation, the researcher was the primary observer and recorder of data. Therefore, to avoid compromises in the data, the researcher employed the use of videorecorded observations to enhance observer reliability. While observing the childcare

professional, the researcher documented the frequency and type of pedagogical techniques used to support social and behavioral development during large- and small-group instruction. Following the observation, the researcher provided the video portions of small- and large-group instruction to one of three research assistants. The research assistant then reviewed the video content and independently recorded the frequency and type of pedagogical methodology used to support 4-year-old children's social and behavioral development. These data were then compared to those of the researcher.

In cases of discrepancies between the researcher and the research assistant, a different research assistant was asked to review the video content and independently record the frequency and type of pedagogical methodology used to support 4-year-old children's social and behavioral development. That information was then compared to the first two completed sbDOITp forms to determine where the inaccuracies occurred, and then corrections were made to support what the majority of independent observers recorded. Discrepancies did not occur during the pilot study; however, this procedure was used 4 times in the dissertation study.

Research assistants were trained over the course of two sessions. Each session was approximately 2 hours in length. The researcher and developer of the sbDOITp served as the primary trainer. The researcher/developer used video footage previously gathered from various childcare centers for the purposes of curricular coaching. As many of the prerecorded video vignettes/snippets concentrated on large- and small-group teacher-initiated instruction, the content was relevant to the intended use of the sbDOITp.

During the training, the researcher and the research assistants reviewed the definitions on the back side of the sbDOITp, and a discussion of observable behaviors followed. Then video vignettes/snippets provided by the previously recorded coaching video footage were observed, and the training group sought to identify the social skill building methods used, such as (a) interactive modeling as participant, (b) role playing, (c) formalized modeling, (d) visual strategy usage, (e) support in problem solving, as well as the behavioral expectation reinforcement techniques used, such as (a) redirection to task, (b) rule statement, (c) command stated in the positive, (d) command stated in the negative, (e) visual strategy usage, (f) teacher-imposed consequence, (g) specific feedback, (h) formalized modeling, and (i) proximity. Once training participants felt comfortable with identification of the aforementioned elements, the training participants attempted to use the observational instrument. The training participants engaged in observation of five prerecorded large-group times. Concurrence was met on five out of the five examples of large group.

During the second training session, video vignettes/snippets were provided of small-group times. Video footage was observed, and the training group sought to identify the social skill building methods and the behavioral expectation reinforcement techniques. Once training participants felt comfortable with identification of the aforementioned elements, the training participants attempted to use the observational instrument. The training participants engaged in observation of five prerecorded small-group times. Concurrence of observations was met in four out of the five examples of small group.

The Video Vignette/Snippet Selection Criteria (Appendix C) is a predetermined, established, and written criterion that outlines video vignette/snippet selection requirements for the stimulated recall observation portion of the semistructured interview. Video vignettes/snippets were chosen from the researcher's observational opportunities when watching the participants engaged in the instruction of a large-group (approximately 15 minutes) and a small-group activity (approximately 20 minutes). Classroom observational portions that did not relate to teacher-initiated activities were not considered for recording. Only small-group instruction and large-group instruction were considered for recording and review of stimulated recall observation opportunities during the semistructured interview.

Video snippets/vignettes were chosen when they related to a pedagogical technique used to guide children's social and behavioral development and that fell into a predetermined category (social skill building and/or behavioral reinforcement techniques) and demonstrated an identified methodology under the aforementioned categories, such as in the social skill building category: (a) interactive modeling as participant, (b) role playing, (c) visual strategy usage, (d) formalized modeling, (e) support in problem solving an encountered problem with peers, and, as in the category of behavioral expectation reinforcement technique, (a) redirection to task, (b) rule statement, (c) command stated in the positive, (d) command stated in the negative, (e) visual strategy usage, (f) teacher-imposed consequence, (g) specific feedback when performing behavioral expectation, (h) formalized modeling, and (i) proximity.

A minimum of two video vignettes/snippets were chosen. The researcher sought to align, through review of frequency totals on the sbDOITp, the snippets/vignettes with the childcare professional's most often demonstrated pedagogical methodology used to guide children's social and behavioral development. The video portions that related to teacher-initiated activities such as large- and small-group instruction were reviewed to identify a clearly recorded example. Stimulated recall video vignettes/snippets needed to be (a) visually distinct, (b) auditorally discrete, and (c) of sufficient length to show a complete episode with a beginning, middle, and end to the pedagogical technique being used. Time for each snippet did not to exceed 2 minutes. At least two vignettes/snippets were identified for each participant, one showing an example of their predominant method in large group, and one showing their predominant method in small group. Occasionally, an additional vignette/snippet was shown if the frequencies indicated an additional method was used with equally high levels of frequency.

The Semistructured Interview Protocol was developed to elicit reflective, textual rich responses that offer insight into the impetus behind implementation of chosen pedagogical techniques used by childcare professionals to guide children's social and behavioral development. The semistructured interview protocol was used in conjunction with video footage recorded during observational sessions. Specific portions of the video were chosen based on pre-established criteria (see criteria for video footage selection in section following and in Appendix C). The interviewer sought to have the childcare professional describe the footage selected and reflect on what happened prior to, during, and following the pedagogical technique used, and offered the childcare professional insight as to their choice of pedagogical technique. Including but not limited to the

content of the semistructured interview was (a) why the method was chosen, (b) where they learned that particular method, (c) when they typically used that method, (d) who they typically used that method with, and (e) what happens most often when using that method. The semistructured interview protocol was used as a guide for interviewing willing participants. The researcher deviated from the protocol, within professional boundaries, to elicit expansion of ideas or thoughts related to the reflection of pedagogical practice. The interview format is provided in Appendix B.

To validate the dependability and credibility of the questions and structure of the interview, following the pilot study, textual data were reviewed by the researcher and an expert in qualitative research and social–emotional developmental theory for young children to determine if the exploratory nature of answers sought in the research question were adequately exposed through the type of question and the use of the video vignette/snippet selection. It was concluded that the textual data gained from the pilot study interviews gained a richness of subject and reflected participants' understanding of the methods they used, the context of their use, and the outcomes of use.

The interview digital recording device was an MP3 digital recording device with 2GB of memory. The digital recording device was used to record the conversational interview. Because of its sleek design and powerful memory, this device was an appropriate choice for recording interview data because it was small enough to be unobtrusive and not distracting, and powerful enough to record lengthy conversational interviews. It was technologically consistent with the ability and need to store data on flash drives as well as exporting data to transcriptionists.

Procedure

As stated earlier, these procedures were intended to test the dissertation study procedure. Therefore, the procedures for the pilot study are written in a brief format in the body of this pilot study text. All methods for the pilot study were exactly replicated in the dissertation research procedures.

The Social and Behavioral Development Observational Instrument for Teacher Practice (Appendix A) was used to record quantifiable observational data during prearranged observational visits at childcare facilities. During the observational period, the researcher sought to observe social and behavioral guidance techniques used by childcare professionals in teacher-initiated activities such as large- and small-group instruction. The observation was recorded with the help of a digital video recording device. The entire large- and small-group observational period was recorded. Following the observational period, the researcher and a research assistant reviewed the sbDOITp and the video recording. A research assistant was used to confirm the accurate recording of data on the sbDOITp. The researcher reviewed the sbDOITp frequencies to identify the preferred pedagogical methods in guiding children's social and behavioral development. Once the preferred pedagogical methods were identified, two video vignettes/snippets were chosen as examples of the childcare professional's frequently used pedagogical technique. Following selection of video snippets/vignettes, willing participants of the study participated in a semistructured interview. The interview took place in the childcare facility in which the observation occurred. At the time of the interview, participants viewed preselected portions of the video observation (see

Appendix C for selection criteria) and participated in the semistructured interview (Appendix B). The interview was recorded on a digital recording device. All data were reviewed; the analysis follows.

Analysis

As stated earlier, the purpose of the pilot study was to (a) assess the reliability as well as test the procedural use of the observational instrument developed from the information gathered in the formative research, (b) test the procedural use of the observational tool or digital recording device, (c) verify the video vignette/snippet selection criteria clarity, (d) validate the credibility and dependability of the semistructured interview format, and (e) test the procedural use of the digital recording device that would be used during the interview process. This study sought to replicate the dissertation study on a smaller scale. Thus, the analysis follows in the aforementioned format.

To assess the reliability of the sbDOITp, the researcher employed three research assistants. One of the three research assistants also recorded observational data from videorecorded observations. That research assistant reviewed the video content and independently recorded the frequency and type of pedagogical methodology used to support 4-year-old children's social and behavioral development. These data were then compared to those of the researcher. In the case of discrepancies between the researcher and the research assistant, a different research assistant was asked to review the video content and independently record the frequency and type of pedagogical methodology used to support 4-year-old children's social and behavioral development. That

information was then compared to the first two sbDOITp forms (the researcher and the assisting research assistant) to determine where the inaccuracies occurred, and then corrections were made to support what the majority of independent observers recorded. As previously described, research assistants were trained by the observer and developer of the sbDOITp.

To test procedural use of the digital video recording device, the researcher used it to record observable classroom activities and interactions accurately and clearly, as well as all dialogue. This procedure was also tested during this pilot study to determine if the video documentation could be transferred to and edited on the researcher's laptop accurately to promote easy and timely delivery of video vignettes/snippets to participants during the interview process. This procedure was manageable and able to be replicated multiple times during the pilot. Therefore, the use of the digital recording device was regarded as an appropriate procedural method for the proposed study.

The Video Vignette/Snippet Selection Criteria's clarity was verified by the researcher's ability to make video vignette/snippet selections based on the criteria outlined in Appendix C. The vignettes/snippets yielded rich textual data from the semistructured interviews gathered during the pilot study. To validate the dependability and credibility of the questions and structure of the interview, the textual data gathered during the pilot study were reviewed by the researcher and an expert in qualitative research and social–emotional developmental theory for young children. The pilot study text was evaluated to determine if the exploratory nature of answers sought in the research question were adequately exposed through the type of question and the use of

the video vignette/snippet selection. It was concluded that the textual data gained from the semistructured interviews gained a richness of subject and reflected participants' understanding of the methods they used, the context of their use, and the outcomes of use. Therefore, the semistructured interview format was considered to be appropriate for use in the dissertation study.

To test the procedural use of the audiorecording device, the researcher and transcriptionist reviewed the recorded interviews for clarity. Additionally, the procedure was tested during the pilot study to determine if the audio documentation could be easily downloaded to the researcher's laptop accurately to promote easy and accurate retrieval, as well as easy transference through email to the transcriptionist. The procedure was manageable and able to be replicated multiple times during the pilot. The transcriptionist was able to understand the dialogue within 98% accuracy. The 2% of inaccuracy was denoted by blanks when a single word or phrase was not recognizable. The researcher verified accuracy by reviewing each transcribed document and listening to the recorded interview. Eighty percent of the time, the researcher was able to insert the missing words or phrases, many of which were related to professional educational jargon.

Findings

It was determined that the proposed dissertation procedures were manageable and easily implemented. Therefore, the dissertation study had no modifications from the pilot to the current study.

Appendix G: Demographic Info

Participant #: _____

Gender and Ethnicity Information

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ White
- ☐ Other

Educational Level (check the highest level completed)

- ☐ GED
- ☐ High School Diploma
- ☐ CDA
- ☐ Associate's Degree
- ☐ Bachelor's Degree
- ☐ Graduate Degree

Years of Experience in Early Childhood Education

- ☐ 1–5 years
- ☐ 6–10 years
- ☐ 11–15 years
- ☐ 16–20 years
- ☐ 21–30 years
- ☐ Greater than 30 years

Annual Household Income

- ☐ 0–15,000
- ☐ 15,000–30,000
- ☐ 30,000–45,000
- ☐ 45,000–60,000
- ☐ 60,000–75,000
- ☐ 75,000–90,000
- ☐ Greater than 90,000

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mary Elizabeth Harper received her Bachelor of Science Degree in Early Childhood Education in 1997 from the University of South Florida. She continued her education as she entered the teaching profession as a primary-grade teacher for the School District of Hillsborough County.

In 2001, Mary received her Master of Education degree in Early Childhood Curriculum and Instruction. During that same year, she accepted a position as a District Resource Teacher for the School Readiness Programs. She continues to support both certified and noncertified early childhood educators as a curriculum specialist while completing the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy in Elementary Education.

During this time, Mary has authored one publication, presented at numerous state and national conferences on the importance of promoting social–emotional competence in children, and worked on several federal, state, and local grants that focused on early intervention systems that promote school readiness for children deemed at risk.