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Mariel Stadick
Caring for the Caregivers: The
Relationship between Perceived
Organizational Support and Teacher-
Child Interactions in Head Start
Classrooms

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine whether there is a correlation between Head Start preschool teachers' perceived agency support and the quality of their interactions with children in their programs. This study utilized a mixed methods design with both observational and self-report measures to examine the correlation between two measures as administered in Head Start preschools programs: The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS). A national sample of 69 Head Start preschool teachers responded to a modified version of the SPOS that included demographic items and agreed to release their CLASS scores. Teachers were also invited to share open-ended responses about support in their agency, which were qualitatively coded to examine underlying themes. A negative correlation was found between teacher pay and the CLASS dimension Negative Climate (as pay increased, Negative Climate decreased). Correlations were also found between several CLASS dimensions and several items on the SPOS with most correlations in an expected direction. In line with literature from early childhood attachment, organizational psychology, psychodynamic perspectives, and education research, both pay and perceptions of organizational support were shown to affect preschool teachers' capacity to, in turn, provide support to children. This is particularly a social justice issue in Head Start preschools due to their dedication to serving low-income families and children with disabilities, as well as the high rate of adverse childhood experiences (ACES) in Head Start children and Head Start teachers, which increases risk of later mental and physical health challenges.

**CARING FOR THE CAREGIVERS: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED
ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT AND TEACHER-CHILD INTERACTIONS IN HEAD
START CLASSROOMS**

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

Maribel Stadick

Smith College School for Social Work
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063

2016

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine whether there is a correlation between Head Start preschool teachers' perceived agency support and the quality of their interactions with children in their programs. In recent years early childhood education has garnered strong interest among researchers and policymakers; it has been the subject of major policy briefs (e.g., Yoshikawa et al., 2013), research efforts (e.g., Campbell et al., 2014; Puma et al., 2010), and a repeated theme in President Barack Obama's state of the union addresses, including the announcement in 2014 to devote over one billion dollars to early childhood education (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2014). Often the funds that develop from a commitment to early education are devoted to program implementation and evaluation, yet while the importance of developing efficacious interventions should not be underestimated, the success of these services relies to a great degree on the capacity of the organization to deliver them. Social work researcher and practitioner Steven F. Hick echoes the findings of common factors researchers when he reflects on his "gradual realization that it was relationship and not technique that underlies all successful interventions, be it in an individual, group, or community setting" (Hick & Bien, 2008, p. x).

In this evidenced-based era, proving the efficacy of various interventions is a focal point of early childhood research, and not without great benefit, but it is sometimes to the detriment of the recognition that the product of human services delivery depends on the humans who deliver

it as much as, if not more than, the curricular and other such aspects of the services themselves. Anecdotally, I have witnessed in my own practice the lauded implementation of evidenced-based therapeutic interventions and psychosocial curricula, only to find that staff were left untrained—at times literally just handed a manual—or more subtly, that the organizational culture was one in which despite following intervention protocol, the quality of relationships between service providers and clients was poor or even traumatic. This research is important to the field of clinical practice because those who work with children’s psychosocial needs whether as teachers, therapists, or those who work intersectionally in sites such as therapeutic preschools, have their own psychosocial needs to be met by the organizational system in which they do this important work—and which may impact their capacity to do this work most effectively.

This is particularly a social justice issue in Head Start programs, who serve at-risk communities with low socioeconomic status (90% of children in Head Start are below the poverty line) and who are mandated to reserve at least ten percent of their enrollment for children with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). Children in the U.S. are the largest group to live in poverty, and children of color, who made up 57% of Head Start enrollees in 2014 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014), are disproportionately low-income (Jiang, Ekono, & Skinner, 2016). It is notable that 47% of Head Start staff are people of color (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014), and the average salary for those with a bachelor degree in 2014 was \$29,876.04 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2015), and even less without the degree.

Not only do staff often face financial struggles not far removed from the families they serve, but they are also often ‘wounded healers,’ a term that has been adopted to embrace the

reality that many who are drawn to serve others have trauma backgrounds. A study on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) (Felitti et al., 1998), a significant tool for understanding how childhood trauma relates to later health, mental health, and other outcomes, found that nearly one quarter of Head Start teachers report three or more adverse events (Whitaker, Dearth-Wesley, Gooze, Becker, Gallagher, & McEwen, 2014). The authors cite research by Kluff et al. (2000) which found that “these unhealthy biologic and behavioral responses to childhood adversity can be reactivated in adults during the course of their work providing human services to children experiencing trauma” (as cited in Whitaker et al., 2014 p. 147). Indeed, one study found that at 3 and 4 years old, 40% of Head Start children had experienced 3 or more ACES (Blodgett, 2014). Another study found that women working in Head Start have poorer mental and physical health than those in the general U.S. population with similar characteristics (Whitaker, Becker, Herman, & Gooze, 2013). The authors determined that “in Head Start and Early Head Start...staff are the necessary link between program content and children’s outcomes...More investments may be required to support the health and well-being of those adults to whom the public entrusts children’s development and learning outside the home” (Whitaker et al., 2013).

How then is the quality of interactions between preschool teachers and children moderated by the organizational culture that preschool teachers inhabit? What agency-level factors aid—or inhibit—caregivers in being able to provide the cognitive, behavioral, and socio-emotional nutrients children need? This study suggests there may be a correlation between teachers’ perceptions of organizational support and the quality of their interactions with children.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Research and policy too quickly target service providers themselves as the locus of failures in the educational and human services fields. Policy efforts such as No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top use high stakes testing to determine teachers' worth, rather than examine deeply embedded flaws of the U.S. educational system. Media coverage of the tragic deaths of children in foster care focus on the incompetence of caseworkers rather than the often abysmal agency conditions, unmanageable caseloads, and systemic issues in the foster care system. As Jimenez, Pasztor, Chambers, and Fujii (2014) observe, under U.S. individualist ideology "social problems are instinctively viewed as the result of individual action or failure to act" (p. 95). While a larger critique of the social services culture regarding early childhood services is beyond the scope of this study, I seek to move beyond the pernicious trend of blaming care providers in lieu of critiquing systemic inequalities.

That is not to say that the micro interactions between caregivers and children are not vitally important. In terms of understanding the actual lived experience of children, they are some of the richest sources of information. Attachment research and attachment-based interventions are among the few relationally-based approaches to be widely considered evidence-based. In fact, Circle of Security, a widely implemented and evidenced-based attachment-based intervention, was strongly supported in its early phases by Spokane Head Start and a grant from

the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services University-Head Start Partnership Grant. As developments in neuropsychological testing have bolstered recognition of the effects of parental attachment in the earliest years of life on longitudinal psychological and behavioral outcomes (Cassidy & Shaver, 2010; Cozolino, 2006; Karr-Morse & Wiley, 2014; Dozier, Stovall-McClough, & Albus 2008; Schore & Schore, 2008), it has become increasingly clear that secondary caregiver relationships, which provide essential social support to families and children, can also be understood through the attachment lens. According to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, 64% of three to five year olds in the U.S. are enrolled in pre-primary programs outside of the home, with 67.9% of four year olds in full-day programs (Snyder & Dillow, 2013). Research on teacher-child attachment has accordingly captured the significance of secondary caregivers with whom a majority of preschool age children spend most of their weekdays.

A robust study by O'Connor and McCartney (2007) indicated that teacher-child attachment is indeed a significant moderating variable in the relationship between child-parent attachment and various child outcomes. Using a hierarchical multiple regression model to measure various aspects of the child's ecological system through a biopsychosocial lens, the authors conducted a longitudinal study from preschool through third grade. The researchers used data from the nationwide NICHD Study of Early Childcare and Youth Development, which recruited 1,364 mothers and their children. The study used conditional random sampling to ensure diverse participant characteristics in areas such as education, economic level, and ethnicity. Due to the longitudinal design, researchers were able to determine whether child-teacher relationships were stable, declining, or inclining over time. By examining structure coefficients, O'Connor and McCartney determined that teacher-child relationship in third grade

was a greater predictor of achievement than insecure maternal attachment. As the authors summarize, “The significant effect of quality of teacher–child relationships, controlling for powerful child and family influences, demonstrates that children’s relationships with teachers are additional sources of variability in children’s achievement” (p. 362). Although the effect was moderate, this study suggests that teacher–child relationship is a protective factor for children with insecure maternal attachment.

While this research is significant for all children and care providers, children with disabilities and in families with low socioeconomic status navigate additional sociocultural barriers and may be especially affected by these relationships. Howes and Ritchie (1999) describe how environmental stressors such as poverty, parental psychopathology, and substance use affect the way young children differentially adapt to the classroom/daycare environment and how secondary caregivers differentially relate to children based on their relative adaptation: “These difficult life circumstances are often associated with children who withdraw from or aggress towards adults and other children...These behavior patterns are challenging to teachers who may have little experience with children who do not easily adapt to classroom activities and routines” (p. 251). While Howes and Ritchie’s assertion is useful for recognizing that children who are multiply at-risk may have more difficulties in the classroom than those who face fewer institutional and societal barriers, their unidirectional focus (that teachers have trouble with these children *because* they are difficult) sorely lacks for a relational and systemic perspective; as Bloom proposes in the Sanctuary Model, the organizational (and relational) culture of learning and healing spaces is a significant factor in the behavior that manifests in these environments: “As an organizational culture intervention, it is designed to facilitate the development of structures, processes, and behaviors on the part of staff, clients and the community-as-a-whole

that can counteract the biological, affective, cognitive, social, and existential wounds suffered by the victims of traumatic experience and extended exposure to adversity” (Bloom, 2016). The success of the sanctuary model indicates how organizational support may mediate educational and social service relationships so that children who might otherwise be pathologized or labeled as “difficult” are understood to be a reflection of systems that must be supported by the relational and organizational ingredients within those systems. For these reasons, teachers’ responsive capacities when working with children who face multiple risks, which may be facilitated or inhibited by the organizational culture, may be especially protective as a moderating factor in attachment (O’Connor & McCartney, 2007). Conversely, they may be especially risk-related if they are ill-equipped to provide children with an environment and relationship that is sensitive to the effects of trauma.

Yet the skills required to foster healthy attachments with children are highly devalued in U.S. society (Elliot, 2007; Pelo, 2008). We pay early childhood providers less than higher grade teachers—half that of kindergarten teachers as well as less than janitors, secretaries, and other non-degreed positions (Barnett, 2003), contributing to the view of their work as unskilled labor. This is likely related in part to early childcare as a feminized field, as well as patriarchal cultural attitudes that view childcare as intuitive “women’s work,” granting it less social capital (England, Budig, & Folbre, 2002; Pelo, 2008;). These predominant cultural misconceptions are in direct contrast to the robust research indicating that the quality of attachment experiences during infancy and childhood are crucial in longitudinal psychological and behavioral outcomes (Karr-Morse & Wiley, 2014).

As the emphasis on an ecological model of child attachment (O’Connor & McCartney, 2007) suggests, teachers, too, are in need of institutional supports to interact with children in

ways that have been shown to increase the likelihood of secure attachment (Jurie, 2011; Riley, 2011). There is a significant body of research suggesting that both agency-level structural factors (such as pay, ratio, turnover) and process variables (such as relational and interactional dynamics) correlate to better outcomes for children in early childhood environments (Phillipsen, Burchinal, Howes, & Cryer, 1997; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 1996; Riley, 2011). While comparing the strength of the effects of structural and process variables has been an ongoing area of exploration in early childhood classroom quality, this study acknowledges that structural factors such as wage and ratio intersect with relational factors such as subjective feelings of being valued and supported. This perspective draws on research from organizational psychology finding that employees perceive both structural and relational variables as indicators of agency support and that these perceptions have a significant effect on performance (e.g. Eisenberger et al., 1986).

So what are these relational needs that teachers desire consciously or unconsciously to have met by their organization and its leaders? The body of work on how employees look to organizations to meet psychosocial needs suggests the utility of a psychodynamic perspective to consider the transactional, intersubjective field of the workplace. Psychodynamic research on the workplace has pointed out the existence of transference, countertransference, and unconscious dynamics in organizational relationships (Diamond & Allcorn, 2003; Arnaud 2012). As Arnaud (2012) proposes, one of the primary contributions of psychoanalysis to organizational studies is its capacity to account for unconscious processes as “one of the dimensions most resistant to scientific investigation” (p. 1122). Arnaud argues that as organizations are composed of actors who are subjective beings engaged in “concrete performances,” these unconscious processes undoubtedly affect performance and are “expressed through problems such as inappropriate

behaviour or repetitive failures” (p. 1122-1123). On a more positive note, it can also be said, then, that these unconscious processes can be expressed through supportive behavior, commitment to the work, and repeated successes. While this paper does not seek to reproduce the individualist tendency to reframe structural issues as merely intrapersonal phenomena, it does seek to acknowledge the intersubjective nature of organizations in which structural and psychological variables are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing.

Others have noted the utility of attachment theory and internal working models to understanding workplace dynamics (Popper & Mayseless 2003; Riley 2011). Part of what is so compelling about the psychodynamic notion of internal working models is its simple but powerful conceptualization of how we carry forward into future relationships the relationships we have experienced. As Riley (2011) observes, “teachers tend to teach the way they were taught,” and their styles of interaction with children may be “passed down from one generation of teachers to the next.” (p. 40) This phenomenon has been recognized in other helping professions; it is widely acknowledged that therapeutic techniques and attitudes are “passed down” from one generation of therapists to the next through the supervisory relationship. Riley (2011) suggests that this intergenerational perspective implies more than a mere transfer of skills in a professional apprenticeship; he posits that *attitudes* and *styles of relating* are also passed down in a process analogous to the intergenerational transmission of attachment styles. Riley thus argues that in the educational sphere it is not only of interest that students use teachers as a secure base, but also how educational leaders may serve as a secure base for the teachers whom they mentor. This process is proposed to occur largely due to Bowlby’s concept of the internal working model—the way in which our previous relational experiences shape our expectations and attitudes about future relational experiences. Thus, “to slightly twist the words

of Bowlby when he wrote about helping parents as the most efficient way to support children, it can be equally argued that the best way to help students is to meet the needs of their teachers so that they, in turn, can meet their students' needs" (Riley, 2011, 44).

The psychodynamic perspective that interpersonal actions of an employee are partially shaped by the internalization of the organizational attitude toward them is embraced—albeit in a different language—by a larger group of organizational researchers who demonstrate similar findings. As Eisenberger (2016) notes, perceived organizational support (POS) takes as a premise that “if managers are concerned with their employees’ commitment to the organization, employees are focused on the organization’s commitment to them” (para. 2). Rhoades & Eisenberger (2002) also observe that Organizational Support Theory holds that “POS meets need for emotional support, affiliation, esteem, and approval (p. 711). While this paper makes use of psychodynamic and attachment language to explain inter- and intrapersonal phenomena, its premises draw from a diverse body of organizational, developmental, and educational literature.

This study thus aimed to expand the investigative framework of the relationship between structural and process variables in early childhood settings to assess whether teachers’ perceptions of organizational support correlate to the quality of the interactions between teachers and children in Head Start preschools.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether there are statistically significant links between Head Start preschool teachers' perception of support by their agencies and the quality of their interactions with the children with whom they work. This study utilized a mixed methods design with both observational and self-report measures to examine the correlation between two measures as administered in Head Start programs: The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008), and the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS) (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986), as well as an open-ended write-in question to allow for respondents' actual words reflecting their lived experiences to be included in the findings. A quasi-experimental design was selected because it is unethical and unfeasible to conduct a truly experimental design in which some children receive lower quality interactions from teachers, or in which teachers receive less organizational support.

Participants

The sample was drawn from the population of Head Start preschool teachers nationwide who have received a CLASS score from a certified CLASS observer. This sample was population was chosen because Head Start uses the CLASS in their own internal professional development, which allowed the researcher to access scores. This was an important criterion as feasibility would not have permitted the researcher to obtain CLASS scores independently due to financial and time constraints. Those excluded from the study are Head Start preschool teachers

who have not received a CLASS score, individuals employed by Head Start preschools who are not considered teachers (such as occupational therapists or substitutes), as they are less likely to be secondary attachments figures and may not be as affected by agency culture due to their part-time status; and interns, volunteers, and other unpaid/temporary individuals in the classroom, since they have a different relationship with the agency in areas such as compensation, supervision, and training. Ultimately 78 participants completed the survey and after 9 participants were excluded due to various errors in data collection, 69 participants were included in the final study. These participants represented 38 sites from 8 states nationwide. This study was reviewed and approved by the Smith College School for Social Work's Human Subjects Review Committee. (See Appendix A for a copy of the Smith College SSW Approval letter.)

Feasibility

Due to the multi-layered leadership in Head Start, this sample was deemed feasible due to the pre-recruitment efforts to contact personnel at the Office of Head Start and the National Head Start Association to liaise about feasibility and to ensure that personnel were aware of the study. Subsequently, emails were sent to Directors of each State Head Start Association to gauge interest and support, and a screening survey was sent to a selection of Directors directly inquiring about the feasibility of the proposed study protocol. Due to the effort to reach out to every state's Head Start programs, a strong attempt was made to represent a diverse group of participants within the Head Start program. However, due to the use of email as the mode of recruitment as well as the online survey, the sample may be limited by participants' computer literacy as well as by agency time and resources. Several programs indicated that while they would like to participate, they had to decline due to limited time.

Sampling Design

This study uses a purposive, convenience, non-probability sample. This sampling design was used to target Head Start preschool teachers who have received CLASS scores nationwide. The primary limitation of the non-probability sample is limited generalizability (there may be differences between volunteers and non-volunteers); however, a strong effort was made to reach as many programs as possible by contacting Head Start Associations in every state. The first level of sampling occurred when an introductory letter was sent to the Directors of each state's Head Start Association requesting that they promote the study to their Directors by sending them an initial email explaining the study and requesting permission to access the CLASS scores of all teachers (requesting access to CLASS scores of all teachers will protect individual teachers' confidentiality regarding the Directors' knowledge about their participation). This email also requested that the CLASS scores be de-identified by using the teachers' initials rather than full names. Program Directors who responded to these study introduction emails were then provided with a letter to teachers containing the survey link. The desired minimum sample size was 50 participants; however, 69 participants were ultimately recruited.

Procedure

Once participation agreement was reached with program Directors, they distributed the SPOS to teachers via Survey Monkey, a secure online survey administrator. Teachers consented to the study through the online survey prior to proceeding to the survey questions. Once at least one teacher from an agency submitted a completed SPOS via Survey Monkey, I contacted the Director to request the CLASS scores of all teachers at their program (requesting access to CLASS scores of all teachers was done in order to protect confidentiality regarding the Directors' knowledge about their participation). I also requested that the CLASS scores be de-

identified by using the teachers' initials rather than full names to maintain confidentiality. In the survey, teachers provided their initials and a unique agency identification number I provided to them through the initial letter. This allowed for survey responses to be matched to CLASS scores, while maintaining confidentiality.

Measures

The Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS) (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986) is a questionnaire that identifies employees' perceptions of the ways and extent to which they do or do not feel supported by the agency on both structural and relational factors. It is a 36-item measure using a 7-point Likert scale. The SPOS was used to measure Head Start teachers' perception of organizational support because it is a well-validated measure of employee perceptions of organizational support and has been used in over 700 studies to date (Eisenberger, 2016). Dr. Eisenberger makes the SPOS available for free on his website (See Eisenberger, 2016 for link). The survey sent to teachers also included additional demographic questions regarding pay, child to teacher ratio, and consultation, as well as a write-in question to collect exploratory qualitative data about teachers' confidential perceptions of support or stress that may not be captured by the SPOS.

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008) is a widely-used standardized measure of classroom quality adopted by the Federal Office of Head Start (OHS) that includes 3 domains (Emotional Support, Behavioral Support, and Instructional Support) and 9 dimensions (Positive Climate, Negative Climate, Teacher Sensitivity, Regard for Student Perspectives, Behavior Management, Productivity, Instructional Learning Formats, Concept Development, Quality of Feedback, and Language Modeling) related to type and quality of provider-child interactions using a 7-point Likert scale. To become CLASS

certified, individuals must participate in a nine-hour training, followed by the CLASS Reliability Test, on which they must reach 80% reliability within one code of the master code. Note that the original Head Start data collection does not require IRB approval because it was collected for professional development, not research, however, participants' CLASS scores were completely de-identified when accessed for the current research and all Head Start teachers who undertook the survey, as noted in Procedure, individually consented to participate in the study. Following the widespread use of CLASS by OHS at the agency level, the majority of programs have had an internal employee certified to conduct CLASS observations of teachers within their program as part of their professional development, or hire a contractor (K. Grimm-Thomas, 11 September, 2015; E. Dropkin, 18 September 2015, personal communication; E. Hoffman, 23 September, 2015). A phone call was made to the research department of Teachstone, the CLASS distributor, to ensure that it was acceptable to use CLASS scores as secondary data in this study.

Data Analysis

The overarching question guiding the data analysis was whether Head Start preschool teachers' CLASS scores are predicted by their perceptions of the support they receive from their programs. Pearson correlations were run to determine whether there was an overall association between the CLASS scales and SPOS. Pearson correlations were also run to determine whether there were correlations between the specific domains and dimensions of the CLASS and the demographic data (salary, ratio, e.g.) as well as whether there were correlations between the domains and dimensions of the CLASS and individual questions on the SPOS. The qualitative data gathered from the survey write-in question were thematically analyzed to provide illustrative examples and perspectives.

CHAPTER VI

Findings

This study found that while overall CLASS and SPOS scores were not correlated, there was a negative correlation ($r = -.45$, $p = .01$) between the Negative Climate dimension of the CLASS and hourly pay. As pay increased, there were fewer observed instances of negative interactions in the classroom. Negative Climate was also negatively correlated with six SPOS items in an expected direction; that is, when teachers felt unsupported their Negative Climate scores were higher, and vice versa. Nevertheless, this study found that overall Head Start programs have high-quality teacher-child interactions, with no scores lower than moderate range, and many in the high range. In addition to validating the overall quality of Head Start classrooms, these high scores strengthen the magnitude of the correlations found; in classrooms in which incidences of low scores are rare, it is unlikely to find significant correlations.

Hypothesis 1: Correlation Between Overall CLASS and SPOS Scores

No significant correlation was found between overall SPOS and CLASS scores.

Hypothesis 2: Correlation Between Individual Items on CLASS and SPOS Scales

11 of the individual items on the SPOS demonstrated correlations with one or more of five CLASS dimensions (See Table 1). Notably, Negative Climate had the highest number of correlating items ($n=6$), and only Negative Climate consistently correlated in an expected direction based on the hypothesis that greater perceived support correlates with higher quality

teacher-student interactions. In contrast, three of the seven results for the other four dimensions correlated in unexpected directions according to the hypothesis, with two out of three indicating that teachers engaged in quality interactions even when they felt unsupported on the SPOS item.

Table 1

SPOS and CLASS Significant Correlations

	SPOS 1	SPOS 2	SPOS 4	SPOS 9	SPOS 10	SPOS 16	SPOS 21	SPOS 25	SPOS 32	SPOS 33	SPOS 35
	My program values my contribution to its well-being.	If my program could hire someone to replace me at a lower salary it would do so.	My program strongly considers my goals and values.	My program really cares about my well-being.	My program is willing to extend itself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability.	My program provides me little opportunity to move up the ranks.	My program cares about my general satisfaction at work.	My program cares about my opinions.	My program is unconcerned about paying me what I deserve.	My program wishes to give me the best possible job for which I am qualified	My program tries to make my job as interesting as possible.
NC	r= -.307 p= .010	r= .240 p= .047	r= -.260 p= .028	r= -.287 p= .017	r= -.241 p= .046	-- --	r= -.253 p= .036	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --
RSP	-- --	-- --	r= .271 p= .024	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --	r= .265 P= .028	-- --
BM	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --	r= .279 p= .020	-- --	r= -.256 p= .034
CD	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --	r= .242 p= .045	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --
LM	r= .272 p= .024	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --	r= .290 p= .016	-- --	-- --	-- --

CLASS Dimensions: NC=Negative Climate, RSP=Regard for Student Perspectives, BM=Behavior Management, CD=Concept Development, LM=Language Modeling. Only results at or above the 95% level of confidence are reported.

Summary of Findings – Table 1

- There was a negative correlation between NC and SPOS 1. The more that teachers agreed that their programs value their contributions to the programs' well-being, the less negative the climate in the classroom.
- There was a positive correlation between NC and SPOS 2. The more that teachers agreed that their programs would replace them with someone at a lower salary if they could, the more negatively the climate in the classroom was rated.
- There was a negative correlation between NC and SPOS 4. The more teachers felt that their programs cared about their goals and values, the less negative was the climate in the classroom rating.
- There was a negative correlation between NC and SPOS 9. The more teachers felt that their programs cared about their well-being, the less negative the classroom climate.
- There was a negative correlation between NC and SPOS 10. The more teachers felt that their programs were willing to extend themselves in order to help the teachers perform their job to the best of their ability, the less negative was the classroom climate rating.
- There was a negative correlation between NC and SPOS 21. The more that teachers felt that their programs cared about their general satisfaction at work, the less negative was the classroom climate rating.
- There was a positive correlation between RSP and SPOS 4. The more teachers felt that their programs cared about their goals and values, the more positively the regard for student perspectives was rated.

- There was a positive correlation between RSP and SPOS 33. The more teachers felt that their programs wish to give them the best possible job for which they are qualified, the more positively the regard for student perspectives was rated.
- There was a positive correlation between BM and SPOS 26. The more teachers felt that their programs are unconcerned about paying them what they deserve. the more positively the behavior management was rated.
- There was a negative correlation between BM and SPOS 35. The more teachers felt that their programs try to make their job as interesting as possible, the more negatively the behavior management in the classroom was rated.
- There was a positive correlation between CD and SPOS 16. The more teachers felt that their programs provide them little opportunity to move up the ranks, the more positively the concept development in the classroom was rated.
- There was a positive correlation between LM and SPOS 1. The more that teachers felt that their programs value their contributions to the programs' well-being, the more positively the language modeling in the classroom was rated.
- There was a positive correlation between LM and SPOS 25. The more that teachers felt that their programs care about their opinions, the more positively the language modeling in the classroom was rated.

Hypothesis 3: Correlation Between Individual Items on CLASS and Demographic Data

While there were no significant correlations found between CLASS and classroom ratio, amount of professional development, or supervision, there was a negative correlation ($r = -.449$, $p = .013$) between the CLASS dimension of Negative Climate and hourly pay. Lower pay was associated with a more Negative Climate. A sub-sample of the overall sample ($N=30$) was used to calculate

Pearson’s correlations with pay due to a data collection error which resulted in some participants reporting salary rather than hourly wage.

Overall CLASS Scores

Although no hypotheses were made about the outcome of CLASS scores in this study, it is of note that the Head Start Pre-K classroom surveyed on average scored very well, as indicated by the table below.

Table 2

CLASS Dimensions/Domains: Mean, Median, Range, Score Range

		Mean	Median	Range	Score Range
PC	6.5	7	4 to 7		High
NC	1.1	1	1 to 2.5		Low
TS	6.1	6	2.75 to 7		High
RSP	6	6	3.25 to 7		High
BM	6	6	2.33 to 7		High
P	6.1	6.5	4 to 7		High
ILF	5.6	5.5	2.67-7		Medium-High
CD	4.3	4	1.33-7		Medium
QF	4.9	5	1.67-7		Medium-High
LM	4.9	5	2 to 7		Medium-High
ES	6.4	6.5	4.2 to 7		High
CO	5.9	6	3 to 7		High
IS	4.7	5	1.9 to 6.8		Medium-High

CLASS Dimensions: PC=Positive Climate, NC=Negative Climate, TS=Teacher Sensitivity, RSP=Regard for Student Perspectives, BM=Behavior Management, P=Productivity, ILF=Instructional Learning Formats, CD=Concept Development, QF=Quality of Feedback, LM=Language Modeling, CLASS Domains: ES=Emotional Support, CO=Classroom Organization, IS=Instructional Support

Qualitative Results

Twenty of the respondents (29%) opted to provide additional thoughts in an open-ended write-in question, which asked “Do you have any additional thoughts you would like to share about support in your program?” Findings from the qualitative data—respondents’ own thoughts on agency support—demonstrate a range of responses.

Many teachers reported positive feelings about their job (N=5, 25%) with comments such as “I enjoy my job and the opportunities I have to work with the children and their families...,” as well as a sense that their program is supportive (N=10, 50%): “The managers and head of this program are amazing! They do anything possible to help with any upcoming issues. I love working in my Head Start!” Several teachers noted that their program was able to be supportive even within larger organizational obstacles (N=4, 20%), such as mandated assessments and limited funding. One teacher commented “I’m impressed with the concept of support that pervades the program, even with limited funding.”

As expected, teachers who reported feeling unsupported spoke about both structural issues (such as policies and compensation) and socioemotional issues (such as feeling unheard or disrespected). As one teacher commented, “a lot of the teachers including myself feel very unappreciated and our thoughts and ideas are not listened to.” Another said “There is no support! Management does NOT communicate with us at all. Nobody ever gives positive feedback either.” Many teachers singled out compensation (N=9, 45%) as the main structural issue: “My wages are making it hard for me to stay at this job even with a degree. I am a single mom and need better wages especially after 20 years.”

Of particular interest to this study, some teachers themselves observed a connection between perceived support from Head Start and their ability to best provide for the children they work with. Some felt this support enabled them to better support children and families.

The support I have through this Head Start program has given the knowledge and abilities to help, support, and aid the families in various ways

Others felt that a lack of support inhibited their ability to provide adequate care for the children they work with.

I know that the morale in our program is low at this point in time, but this really made me realize just how low I feel about it in the scheme of things. Our program has grown fast in a short time and I as a teacher see that we are losing quality care in order to gain the quantity in our program.

Summary of Most Significant Findings

- Negative Climate in Head Start preschool classrooms was negatively correlated to teacher pay. As pay increased, Negative Climate was lower.
- Negative Climate was also found to increase or decrease in an expected direction in correlation with several items on the SPOS rating teacher perceived organizational support. When teachers felt unsupported on these items, Negative Climate increased, and vice versa.
- The overall low Negative Climate in Head Start preschool classrooms is evidence for the sensitivity of this construct in relation to pay. That is, with such low overall Negative Climate scores it would not be expected to be able to find a robust correlation, yet it did yield such a correlation with pay.

- Counterintuitively, two CLASS dimensions that correlated with SPOS items (Behavior Management and Concept Development) did so in unexpected directions, with two demonstrating quality interactions despite feeling unsupported on an SPOS item, and one demonstrating lower quality interactions despite feeling support on an SPOS item. This may indicate that there are other protective and risk factors that have a moderating effect on these variables.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

While overall correlations between perceived organizational support and quality of teacher-child interaction were not observed in this study, the data did support a substantial body of previous research (Helburn, 1995; Phillips, Mekos, Scarr, McCartney, & Abbott-Shim, 2001; Phillipsen, Burchinal, Howes, & Cryer, 1997; Scarr, S., Eisenberg, M., & Deater-Deckard, K., 1994; Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1998; Whitebook, Phillips, & Howes, 2014) that has found pay to be a significant factor in teachers' interactions with children. Specifically, this study found that as hourly pay decreased, Negative Climate increased in the classroom. In the CLASS tool, Negative Climate is identified by the presence of specific negative behaviors, rather than the absence of an overall positive climate. Negative climate indicators are 1) negative affect (irritability, anger, harsh voice), 2) punitive control (yelling, threats, physical action/punishment), 3) teacher negativity (sarcasm, teasing, humiliation), and 4) child negativity (peer disputes, escalating frustration, escalation of negativity). It is important to note that while this finding was significant, the Head Start programs surveyed rated very well in Negative Climate over all (that is, they had low levels), with an average score of 1.1 and a maximum score of 2.5 on a 1-7 Likert scale. Therefore, despite the association between lower pay and higher Negative Climate, this study found that Head Start Pre-K classrooms have low Negative Climate. This most important finding for the study sample is a major compliment to Head Start's efforts, and needs to be replicated in future research.

A further implication of the overall low level of Negative Climate is that it suggests that the correlation between pay and Negative Climate is sensitive; one would not expect to find such a robust correlation when there is little variability in the data, yet in classrooms with low overall Negative Climate, pay is a strong enough factor to account for a statistically significant variation. Interestingly, Negative Climate was also correlated with several specific teacher perceptions of organizational support in an expected direction. That is, as Negative Climate increased, teachers were more likely to perceive their organization as unsupportive in several areas, such as the organization not valuing their contribution, the organization not caring about their goals and values, and feeling that the organization would replace them with someone at a lower salary if possible. Due to the correlation between Negative Climate and pay, as well as Negative Climate and several aspects of perceived organizational support, this study suggests that lack of support, whether socioemotional or financial, may introduce increased negativity into the classroom environment.

Recommendations for Future Research

In this study, Negative Climate was most strongly associated with pay, which has several potential implications and areas for further research. One area for further research is to understand how level of compensation affects preschool teachers' felt sense of being supported or valued by their organization. The qualitative data revealed that many teachers made this connection. For example, one teacher wrote "I feel that Head Start teachers are not thought of as "real" teachers, even though all of the teachers at our program have Bachelor's degrees in Education or related fields. This lack of respect is reflected in our salaries." Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) found increased pay *is* associated with higher POS among employees, but this research should be replicated specifically with early childhood teachers.

Based on the recognition that the SPOS may not capture some salient aspects of support that are specific to early childhood caregivers, the development of a perceived organizational support survey specifically designed for this population would be a strong addition to the body of literature on organizational psychology and early education. It is significant to note that teachers are consistently required to evaluate themselves and their performance within their organizations, and yet rarely are asked for their evaluations of their organization and its leaders and the responsiveness to their needs. The development of such an instrument would not only be a useful research tool, but both a symbolic and practical communication of support and respect to these professionals.

Another area for further research would be to understand how level of compensation affects preschool teachers' lives in terms of quality of living and access to adequate resources. One teacher wrote, "My wages are making it hard for me to stay at this job even with a degree. I am a single mom and need better wages especially after 20 years." Whitebook, Phillips, and Howes (2014), in particular, have contributed important data on teachers' living conditions, such as number of teachers who are on public assistance and stagnation in wage growth based on a large scale study in one state. Still, more detailed and generalizable research on this topic is needed, since there is still insufficient recognition that early childhood teachers often live in economically unstable positions.

While a mixed methods designs does allow for qualitative data to enrich quantitative findings, this study's qualitative data were limited due to the desire to limit demands on participating teachers' time. Further research should include studies that place more emphasis on centering teachers' narratives and understandings of their experience. Accordingly, a participatory action research (PAR) paradigm (Lewin, 1946) would not only center teachers'

voices, but allow them to be an integral part of the research process through iterative research practices. While I as author of this study have had experience working in a therapeutic preschool, and many other authors of early education research also have experience working in direct practice with children, PAR offers a particularly empowering model of bringing teachers *together as a coalition* with other interested parties. Empowerment arises not only from disrupting the researcher-subject paradigm, but also from the organizing work of early childhood teachers advocating together around a shared purpose.

Limitations

The primary limitation of correlational research is that it is quasi-experimental, and therefore cannot capture causal effects. However, the ethics of human subjects research ensure that participants cannot be compelled to enroll in a randomized controlled clinical trial; therefore, most human behavioral research is not controlled/experimental in design.

There were several limitations of the sample. Head Start is an exception among many preschools for its commitment to internal research and evaluation, collaboration with external research, implementation of forward thinking models such as mental health consultation and trauma-informed care, and government support. Unfortunately, many preschools lack these assets, and therefore Head Start may represent the “top end” of preschools in terms of CLASS scores and SPOS. This is also true of teacher wages, with Head Start offering the second highest hourly wages in a recent study of all preschool types (Whitebook, Phillips, & Howes, 2014). Since this study found that pay is a significant factor even among a sample that is relatively more well compensated, it would be important to examine teachers who must survive on even less. A more diverse sample of preschools, including those without such strong organizational supports and relatively high wages, may yield even more striking results. Since research has not been

conducted on SPOS in other preschools and national preschool averages for the CLASS do not exist, this data collection would also be an area for further research. For the purposes of this study, it was only feasible to include preschools that had already been observed and scored with the CLASS tool, and therefore Head Start was an ideal collaborator due to its mandated use of CLASS.

An additional limitation of this study is the varying level of affiliation CLASS observers had with the program they observed. While some Head Start programs hire an external trained CLASS observer, others opt to have one of their own employees trained to conduct the observations. Although the rigorous CLASS training meets the challenge of validity, it is possible that scores may be inflated by a social desirability response set on the part of the scorers, or some such motivational confound.

The SPOS was used due to its strong psychometric properties, its accessibility, and its applicability to any organizational workplace. However, a possible limitation of this breadth of applicability is that it may be less able to capture specific areas of concern of early childhood educators, which may reveal additional correlations or unexplored areas of needed support.

Conclusions

Attachment research has shown that those who give care to children as a vocation—whether teachers, daycare workers, social workers and other mental health professionals, domestic workers, nannies, or home care aides—have one of the most important jobs in this world. Yet they are consistently devalued in U.S. society. The reasons for this devaluing are many, but include: 1) early childhood work is a feminized field and women’s contributions to the workplace are consistently underpaid and viewed as unskilled labor, 2) U.S. policies and ideology favor an ethos of individualism that views children, their needs and struggles, as

primarily the province and problem of the family, and do little, especially compared to other economically developed countries, to uphold children as a priority of the community, 3) this also results in those outside of the family who care for children being viewed as poor substitutes for family care rather than courageous and hardworking community leaders.

Attachment research increasingly demonstrates the transformative power of caregivers and secondary caregivers to help children develop emotional regulation, healthy internal working models of relationships, cognitive and speech development, and both intimacy and exploration skills, to just name a few. Yet we also know that caregivers approach the work with their own attachment and trauma histories and that the support they receive or do not receive from their own workplace communities can play a role in activating emotional regulation or dysregulation, healthy or unhealthy internal working models, and support or hindrance of intimacy and exploration skills.

While there is a significant amount of research on teacher-child relationships and on the relationship between agency supports/stressors and teacher retention, there is very little published research regarding the possible relationship between agency supports/stressors and the quality of interactions between teachers and preschoolers. This study implies that U.S. society tends to measure the behaviors and capacities of teachers, and indeed many other caregivers, as though they exist merely as qualities or deficits of the individual. However, teachers' behaviors and capacities do not exist in a vacuum; rather they are affected by the systems in which they are situated, and by both socioemotional-relational and structural factors of their organization.

This study makes a contribution to the literature on organizational psychology, education, and trauma-informed care by providing evidence that those who provide socioemotional support to children as a career are more enabled to do so when they too are receiving support from the

system in which they work. However, this study also found that in Head Start programs, teachers are incredibly resilient in all dimensions of teacher-child interactions explored in this study and in the face of organizational pressures, often providing children strong socioemotional and academic support. Still, this study supported the research that has shown that lower financial support is associated with increased negative teacher-child interactions and also found that feelings of lack of support are associated with increased Negative Climate as well.

The study's focus on Head Start is particularly relevant to the field of clinical social work because Head Start seeks to provide quality early childhood services to families who are low socioeconomic status and dedicate at least ten percent of their enrollment to children with disabilities—and Head Start teachers themselves are often low-income and food and housing insecure (Whitebook, Phillips, & Howe, 2014). It is also relevant to the field of clinical social work based on the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) (Felitti et al., 1998) research that has found a significant amount of trauma experiences in both Head Start students and teachers (Blodgett, 2014). The premise of this research—the need for a more relational and systemic model of preschool organizations—is in line with trauma-based models like Bloom's (2016) Sanctuary Model.

This study suggests that in previous research on the factors that affect teacher-child classroom interaction it has been problematic to separate “structural” and “process” factors, the former being the practicalities of pay, training, and teacher-child ratio, and the latter being the emotional, relational, and interactional factors. It may be that compensation not only improves the quality of life for teachers, many of whom barely earn a livable wage, but also increases perception of organizational support in a culture that minimizes the significance of early childhood work. Indeed, Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) found that greater opportunities for

pay and promotion were positively associated with higher POS. Economist Paul Krugman (2016) recently wrote in the New York Times:

Judged by what we actually do—or, more accurately, don't do—to help small children and their parents, America is unique among advanced countries in its utter indifference to the lives of its youngest citizens...Our public expenditure on child care and early education, as a share of income, is near the bottom in international rankings...In other words, if you judge us by what we do, not what we say, we place very little value on the lives of our children unless they happen to come from affluent families (paras. 3-5).

While Krugman addresses this low societal investment in children, particularly in those with low socioeconomic status, the authors of the National Childcare Staffing Study devastatingly remind us that the needs of early childhood teachers remain even further outside the public consciousness: “Our nation has implicitly adopted a child care policy which relies upon unseen subsidies provided by child care teachers through their low wages” (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1998, p. 3)

It is my hope as author of this study that it may be used to help advocate for increased resources to Head Start and other early childhood programs to respond to teachers' needs. As we increasingly recognize that preschools are hubs of not only instructional learning, but also socioemotional learning, and that teachers are not just educational figures, but secondary attachments as well, this study seeks to encourage further reflection on how preschool ecosystems must respond to the needs of *all* of their members. This study suggests the need for advocacy for preschool teachers to receive a livable wage that is both commensurate with their highly skilled labor and with the value we should place on the lives of children and those who support them.

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APPENDIX A

HSRC Approval Letter



School for Social Work
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950 F (413) 585-7994

November 17, 2015

Mariel Stadick

Dear Mariel,

You did a very nice job on your revisions. Your project is now approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Congratulations and our best wishes on your interesting study.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elaine Kersten'.

Elaine Kersten, Ed.D.
Co-Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Gael McCarthy, Research Advisor

APPENDIX B

B.1: Recruitment Communications: Email to state-level Head Start Association Executive Directors requesting that they send out a screening/eligibility survey

Dear Executive Director [Insert Name],

My name is Mariel Stadick, and I am pursuing my master's degree in social work from the Smith College School for Social Work. I have a strong interest in advocating for early childhood agencies and the teachers and other professionals such agencies employ. I am conducting a study on factors that support Head Start preschool teachers that may be associated with achieving better scores on the CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System), with the aim of contributing to research that advocates for strong support of Head Start. While I am not associated with the Office of Head Start or the National Head Start Association, both divisions are aware of this project and I have consulted with some of their staff. I am writing to ask if [Insert State] Head Start Association would be willing and able to help me publicize my study to directors, perhaps through a listserv, newsletter, or other means.

I am specifically recruiting only those Head Start programs that have trained CLASS observers on staff who have completed CLASS observations of at least some of the teachers in the program.

In the attached letter you will find a more detailed description of the study and what it asks of programs. If you think you may be able to help me reach out to directors, please let me know and I can answer any further questions you may have about the study.

I am thinking deeply about feasibility, and want to be respectful of programs' limited time and resources. In the attached letter you will also find a link to an eligibility survey that will help to determine how I might best partner with participating programs. ***For this reason, I would like to ask you if you would be willing to send the attached letter to program directors in your state.*** I can alternately access a database of director emails and contact them directly, but I think it would lend additional credibility for it to come through you, if you would be willing.

I believe this research may have the potential to benefit Head Start programs and Head Start teachers by focusing on the importance of adequate types and amounts of support for those who work hard to help young people develop and thrive.

I look forward to hearing from you, and thank you for all the hard work you do!

Mariel Stadick
Master's in Clinical Social Work (MSW) Student
Smith College School for Social Work

APPENDIX B

B.2: Recruitment Communications: Letter containing screening/eligibility survey attached to email to state-level Head Start Association Executive Directors requesting that they send out a screening/eligibility survey (See Appendix B.1)

Dear Director,

My name is Mariel Stadick, and I am pursuing my master's degree in social work from the Smith College School for Social Work. I have a strong interest in advocating for early childhood agencies and the teachers and other professionals such agencies employ. I am conducting a study on factors that support Head Start preschool teachers that may be associated with achieving better scores on the CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System), with the aim of contributing to research that advocates for strong support of Head Start. I am writing to ask if you would be interested in participating.

I am specifically recruiting only those Head Start programs that have trained CLASS observers on staff who have completed CLASS observations of at least some of the teachers in the program. Your participation would involve sharing with me your teachers' CLASS scores (I would only use the scores in my project after receiving their consent), as well as sending an email to program teachers with a link to complete an online survey about program support. It is important to note that your CLASS scores would be kept strictly confidential and never be made public with any identifiable information. This means that in my report, CLASS scores will only be reported in anonymous grouped data that cannot be linked to a specific teacher or program. All teacher responses will similarly be kept strictly confidential. If your Head Start program has a trained CLASS observer, please consider participating. I believe your involvement in this research may have the potential to benefit Head Start programs and Head Start teachers by focusing on the importance of adequate types and amounts of support for those who work hard to help young people develop and thrive.

I want to be sure to be respectful of your limited time and resources and to not impose a burden on your program and teachers. Your answers to these questions will help me to understand how we may be able to best partner for this study, if you are interested in participation. To identify yourself to me, please fill out this quick initial screening form:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZQFTQTH>

or contact me at: [name][@smith.edu](mailto:[name]@smith.edu) or (###) ###-####

In total, programs selected to participate in research will be asked to: a) provide teachers' CLASS scores with consent from teachers b) teachers interested in participation and who have given consent to use of their CLASS scores will complete a 15-20 minute online survey about their thoughts and feelings about program support. Again, all gathered data will be kept confidential and secure, as per federal regulations.

As a thank you for participation, teachers will be entered into a drawing to win a \$100 Amazon gift card.

This research is undertaken in partial fulfillment of my graduation requirements for a master's degree in clinical social work from the Smith College School for Social Work. Per federal regulations regarding ethical treatment of research participants, this research will require oversight by the Smith College Human Subjects Review Committee.

Please feel free to respond to me with any questions. I look forward to hearing from you, and thank you for all the hard work you do!

Mariel Stadick
Master's in Clinical Social Work (MSW) Student
Smith College School for Social Work

APPENDIX B

B.3: Recruitment Communications: Email to Head Start directors requesting permission to access CLASS scores and publicize study

Subject: Requesting Research Participants – Head Start programs and teachers

Dear [Insert Head Start Director Name Here],

I am writing to you to follow up on my initial request for you to complete an eligibility survey regarding the possibility of your participation in the research study: Caring for the Caregivers: The Relationship between Perceived Organizational Support and Teacher-Child Interactions in Head Start Classrooms. If you did not receive my initial request, I have attached it to this email. I am contacting you now to begin recruitment for this study, because the protocol has been reviewed and approved by the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee (HSRC). As a reminder, this study looks at factors that support Head Start preschool teachers that may be associated with achieving better scores on the CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System). My aim is to learn about teachers' perceptions of program support and look at whether these factors are connected to high quality interactions with children.

I am specifically recruiting only those Head Start programs that have trained CLASS observers on staff who have completed CLASS observations of at least some of the teachers in the program. Your participation would involve sharing with me your teachers' CLASS scores (I would only use the scores in my project after receiving their consent), as well as sending an email to program teachers with a link to complete an online survey about program support. **It is important to note that your CLASS scores would be kept strictly confidential** and never be made public with any identifiable information. This means that in my report, CLASS scores will only be reported in anonymous grouped data that cannot be linked to a specific teacher or program. All teacher responses will similarly be kept strictly confidential.

If your Head Start program has a trained CLASS observer, please consider participating. I believe your involvement in this research may have the potential to benefit Head Start programs and Head Start teachers by focusing on the importance of adequate types and amounts of support for those who work hard to help young people develop and thrive.

In total, you will be asked to:

a) distribute the attached letter in an email to teachers which contains a link to a survey about their thoughts and feelings about program support (they will agree or decline to give consent to the release of their CLASS scores during the survey). Again, all gathered data will be kept confidential and secure, as per federal regulations.

b) provide me with the list of CLASS scores for teachers at your agency. I will ask you to anonymize these scores by sending them to me with teacher initials rather than full names (so that no one knows which teachers completed the survey to protect their confidentiality)

If you have any questions or concerns about this process or would like to speak me with further about the study, please do not hesitate to email me at [name]@smith.edu or call at

(###) ###-####. I would be happy to discuss it further and to fit this process to your agency's needs as long as confidentiality is maintained.

As a thank you for participation, teachers will be entered into a drawing to win a \$100 Amazon gift card.

This research is undertaken in partial fulfillment of my graduation requirements for a master's degree in clinical social work from the Smith College School for Social Work.

I look forward to hearing from you, and thank you for all the hard work you do!

Mariel Stadick
Master's in Clinical Social Work (MSW) Student
Smith College School for Social Work

APPENDIX B

B.4: Recruitment Communications: Email to Head Start directors to send to teachers requesting permission to use their CLASS scores in study and to invite them to take the Survey Monkey survey

Subject: Participate in research on teacher support and enter to win a \$100 Amazon gift card.

Dear Head Start Teacher,

My name is Mariel Stadick, and I am pursuing my master's degree in social work from the Smith College School for Social Work. I have a strong interest in advocating for early childhood agencies and the teachers and other professionals whom they employ. I am conducting a study on factors that support Head Start preschool teachers that may be associated with achieving better scores on the CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System). The study is called *Caring for the Caregivers: The Relationship between Perceived Organizational Support and Teacher-Child Interactions in Head Start Classrooms*. I am writing to ask if you would be interested in participating. My aim is to learn about teachers' perceptions of program supports and look at whether these factors help teachers, in turn, to best support their students. Your participation would involve allowing me to use your CLASS scores in my project (your scores and identity would be kept completely confidential), as well as completing an online survey about program supports. **Again, your identity, program, and CLASS scores would be kept strictly confidential** and never be made public with any identifiable information about you or your program. This means that in my report, CLASS scores will only be reported in anonymous grouped data that cannot be linked to a specific teacher or program. **All of your responses on the survey will similarly be kept strictly confidential.**

I believe your involvement in this research may have the potential to benefit Head Start programs and Head Start teachers by focusing on the importance of adequate types and amounts of support for those who work hard to help young people develop and thrive. As a thank you for participation, you will be entered into a drawing to win a \$100 Amazon gift card.

If you'd like to participate, go to the link below (it is expected to take 15-20 minutes to complete, depending on how much you would like to share). An electronic informed consent is included at the beginning of the survey to allow you to consent or decline to participate once you have read the full description of the study:

IMPORTANT NOTE: To protect your confidentiality you will be asked to provide the number assigned to your agency. Please write it down or have this letter on hand when you complete the survey.

Your agency's number is: [X]

[SurveyMonkey Link]

If you have questions or concerns, contact me at: [name]@smith.edu or (###) ###-###
This research is partial fulfillment of graduation requirements for my master's degree in clinical

social work from the Smith College School for Social Work. This study protocol has been reviewed and approved by the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee (HSRC.)

I look forward to hearing from you, and thank you for all the hard work you do!

Mariel Stadick
Master's in Clinical Social Work (MSW) Student
Smith College School for Social Work

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Letter (Embedded in SurveyMonkey)

This study protocol has been reviewed and approved by the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee (HSRC).

Introduction

- You are being asked to be in a research study of the relationship between teachers' feelings and thoughts about support in their agency and their interactions with children in the classroom.
- You were selected as a possible participant because you meet inclusion criteria and your state Head Start State Association and agency director have approved recruitment activities for this study.
- We ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of Study

- The purpose of the study is to learn about teachers' perceptions of program supports and look at whether these factors help teachers, in turn, to best support their students.
- This study is being conducted as a research requirement for my master's degree in social work.
- Ultimately, this research may be published or presented at professional conferences, and may be retained for use in future research, however all teacher and agency identities would be kept strictly confidential.

Description of the Study Procedures

- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things: 1) You will be asked to agree to let me use your CLASS scores in my research, 2) You will also be asked to complete an online survey of some of your thoughts and feelings about support you receive from your agency. This survey is expected to last about 15-20 minutes.

Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study

- The study has the following risks: While it is unlikely, it is possible that you may feel uncomfortable answering questions about your thoughts and feelings about program supports. To protect you, you will be reminded at the beginning of the survey that your participation is completely voluntary and you can be assured that published results will not identify you or your program. You have the right to stop the survey at any time.

Benefits of Being in the Study

- The benefit of participation is the opportunity to participate in a research effort aimed at finding what supports may be helpful for strengthening program supports for Head Start preschool teachers.
- The benefit to social work/society is demonstrating the significance of agency and policy-level support for early childhood teachers, a group that is typically undervalued and underfunded.

Confidentiality

- Your participation will be kept confidential. Identities of the Head Start preschools, classrooms, and teachers will be made confidential by removing identifying information and replacing it with your initials. In addition, records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. All electronic information will be coded and secured using a password protected file. I will not include any information in any report I may publish that would make it possible to identify you or your agency.
- All research materials including recordings, transcriptions, analyses and consent/assent documents will be stored in a secure location for three years according to federal regulations. In the event that materials are needed beyond this period, they will be kept secured until no longer needed, and then destroyed. All electronically stored data will be password protected during the storage period. Again, I will not include information in report I may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

Payments/gift

- You will receive the following payment/gift: You will be entered in a drawing to win a \$100 Amazon gift card (even if you withdraw from the study).

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study *at any time* up to March 1st, 2016 without affecting your relationship with the researchers of this study or Smith College. Your decision to refuse will not result in any loss of benefits (including access to services) to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely up to the point noted below. If you choose to withdraw, I will not use any of your information collected for this study. You must notify me of your decision to withdraw by email or phone by March 1st, 2016. After that date, your information will be part of the thesis, dissertation or final report.

Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns

- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, Mariel Stadick at [name]@[smith.edu](mailto:[name]@smith.edu) or by telephone at ###-###-####. If you would like a summary of the study results, one will be sent to you once the study is completed. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant, or if you have any problems as a result of your participation, you may contact the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Committee at (413) 585-7974.

Consent

If you wish to participate after reading this consent, please click on the line stating "I agree" and you will be entered into the survey question section. I encourage you to print a copy of the informed consent for your own records.

If you do not agree, simply exit the survey with my sincere thanks for your interest and for your willingness to consider participating

APPENDIX D

D.1: Measures: Modified Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS) (Embedded in SurveyMonkey)

Initials: _____ Assigned Agency #: _____

Demographic Data:

1. What is your hourly pay or salary?: _____
2. What is the teacher to child ratio in your classroom?: _____
3. Does your program provide you with professional development training?: Y/N
 -How much time per month or year (please indicate which) do you spend in training?:

4. Do you have supervision or consultation with your director, a mental health consultant, or other person whose job it is to support your work?: Y/N
 -What is this person’s title (director, early childhood specialist, etc.)? If there is more than one, please list them all: _____
 -How much time per month does this person or people spend providing you with consultation?: _____

Format for the 36-item Survey of Perceived Organizational Support

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Listed below and on the next several pages are statements that represent possible opinions that YOU may have about working at my program. Please indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement by filling in the circle on your answer sheet that best represents your point of view about my program. Please choose from the following answers:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

- *1. My program values my contribution to its well-being.
- *2. If my program could hire someone to replace me at a lower salary it would do so.
- *3. My program fails to appreciate any extra effort from me. (R)
- *4. My program strongly considers my goals and values.
5. My program would understand a long absence due to my illness.
- *6. My program would ignore any complaint from me. (R)
- *7. My program disregards my best interests when it makes decisions that affect me. (R)
- *8. Help is available from my program when I have a problem.
- *9. My program really cares about my well-being.

10. My program is willing to extend itself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability.
 11. My program would fail to understand my absence due to a personal problem. (R)
 12. If my program found a more efficient way to get my job done they would replace me. (R)
 13. My program would forgive an honest mistake on my part.
 14. It would take only a small decrease in my performance for my program to want to replace me. (R)
 15. My program feels there is little to be gained by employing me for the rest of my career. (R)
 16. My program provides me little opportunity to move up the ranks. (R)
 - *17. Even if I did the best job possible, my program would fail to notice. (R)
 18. My program would grant a reasonable request for a change in my working conditions.
 19. If I were laid off, my program would prefer to hire someone new rather than take me back. (R)
 - *20. My program is willing to help me when I need a special favor.
 - *21. My program cares about my general satisfaction at work.
 - *22. If given the opportunity, my program would take advantage of me. (R)
 - *23. My program shows very little concern for me. (R)
 24. If I decided to quit, my program would try to persuade me to stay.
 - *25. My program cares about my opinions.
 26. My program feels that hiring me was a definite mistake. (R)
 - *27. My program takes pride in my accomplishments at work.
 28. My program cares more about making a profit than about me. (R)
 29. My program would understand if I were unable to finish a task on time.
 30. If my program earned a greater profit, it would consider increasing my salary.
 31. My program feels that anyone could perform my job as well as I do. (R)
 32. My program is unconcerned about paying me what I deserve. (R)
 33. My program wishes to give me the best possible job for which I am qualified.
 34. If my job were eliminated, my program would prefer to lay me off rather than transfer me to a new job. (R)
 - *35. My program tries to make my job as interesting as possible.
 36. My supervisors are proud that I am a part of this organization.
- (R) indicates the item is reverse scored.
 * indicates the item was retained for the short version of the survey.

Note: “my program” is my own word choice. In the original format this is left black for customization.

Qualitative Write-in Question: Are there any other thoughts you would like to share about support for teachers in your Head Start program?

APPENDIX D

D.2: Measures: The CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) Tool

Note: The CLASS measure is proprietary and thus cannot be presented here in its entirety, however the following information explains the tool and its use in Head Start.

Use of Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) in Head Start

Source: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/sr/class>

What is CLASS® Pre-K and what does it measure?

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) is an observation instrument that assesses the quality of teacher-child interactions in center-based preschool classrooms. CLASS® includes three domains or categories of teacher-child interactions that support children's learning and development: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support. Within each domain are dimensions which capture more specific details about teachers' interactions with children.

Why is it important to assess the quality of teacher-child interactions?

The CLASS® dimensions are based on developmental theory and research suggesting that interactions between children and adults are the primary way of supporting children's development and learning, and that effective, engaging interactions and environments form the foundation for all learning in early childhood classrooms.

How is CLASS® scored and what do those scores mean?

CLASS® is scored by trained and certified observers using a specific protocol. Following their observations of teacher-child interactions, CLASS® observers rate each dimension on a 7-point scale, from low to high.

Scores of 1-2 mean the quality of teacher-child interactions is low. Classrooms in which there is poor management of behavior, teaching that is purely rote, or that lack interaction between teachers and children would receive low scores.

Scores of 3-5, the mid-range, are given when classrooms show a mix of effective interactions with periods when interactions are not effective or are absent.

Scores of 6-7 mean that effective teacher-child interactions are consistently observed throughout the observation period.

How does OHS use CLASS® for professional development?

Supporting local programs in their use of these tools is a cadre of Early Childhood Education (ECE) Specialists who are certified as CLASS® trainers and who work directly on-site with local programs. The ECE specialists are available to local programs to present CLASS® overviews or to train program staff to become CLASS® observers. These specialists also conduct joint observations with Education Managers and Mentor Coaches for the purpose of assessing the professional development needs of teaching staff related to teacher-child interactions and then tailor training and technical assistance to the specific needs of that program.

Additionally, some local programs use their own training dollars to supplement the training and technical assistance received from NCQTL and the ECE specialists.