Summer 2009

A School Leadership Perspective on Cultural Competencies and Self-Regulation in a Government-Funded Preschool Setting

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A SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE ON CULTURAL COMPETENCIES AND SELF-REGULATION IN A GOVERNMENT-FUNDED PRESCHOOL SETTING

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
August 2009

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ABSTRACT
A SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE ON CULTURAL COMPETENCIES AND SELF-REGULATION IN A GOVERNMENT-FUNDED PRESCHOOL SETTING

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At four years of age, young children in government-funded preschool programs are suspended or expelled from school more frequently than their school-aged counterparts. These students comprise a largely minority enrollment that does not reflect the demographic of the teachers and administrators implementing the preschool program. The purpose of this case study research was to investigate the trend of behavior-related expulsions in a government-funded preschool program and to examine the impact of culture on this phenomenon. The study examined the lack of cultural responsiveness as a potential barrier to student success. Research literature provides common strategies to address the dual concepts of self-regulation and cultural competence. The findings of this study suggest that preschool administrators perceive similar linkages to solve the dilemmas of cultural dissonance and underdeveloped self-regulation of preschoolers in the classroom. However, the observed classes revealed few culturally competent practices to foster the self-regulatory skills needed to reduce preschool failure. This research indicates that awareness-building is required for school administrators to advance leadership toward a more culturally competent schooling environment.

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. Victor Hellman
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This dissertation is dedicated to the young children who will comprise a more diversified, collaborative demographic than the current adult populace. It is also dedicated to the teachers and administrators who will equip these novice learners with the cognitive and social prerequisites to ensure lifelong success.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many individuals supported this research effort. With heartfelt gratitude I express appreciation to the administrators, teachers, and students who allowed me to join their educational settings for lengthy observations and subsequent dialogue related to this study. I am also indebted to the members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Karen Crum, Dr. Victor Hellman, and Dr. Steve Myran, who guided my efforts to explore the challenging concept of culture. Gratefully, I recognize my lifelong friend, Dr. Robert Manning, whose generous offers of support sustained me as I pursued this endeavor. Further, my colleagues and supervisors were extraordinarily patient and supportive in allowing the completion of this work. Finally, I acknowledge my husband, Thomas James, Sr., and sons, Thomas James, Jr., and Anthony L. James, for their enthusiastic encouragement throughout the duration of this research project.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, there has been a movement to enroll children in school before they reach the compulsory school attendance age of five. This formal educational experience for students four years of age and younger has been designated as preschool. As recently as 1997, only twenty-six states had established preschool programs in the United States. By 1998, sixty-eight percent of the nation's four-year-old children attended preschool (Rosenthal, Rathbun, & West, 2005). From 1971 to the year 2000 there was a twenty-one percent increase in preschool attendance. During the 2000-2001 school year, fifty-two percent of parents sent their three and four year old children to preschool (Barnett, Hustedt, Hawkinson, & Brown, 2006). With the growing number of students attending school during their early years, and the emergence of universal pre-kindergarten, the term preschool is fast becoming a misnomer.

Similar to trends throughout the country and around the globe, the number of preschool programs in Southeastern United States, including Virginia, has increased significantly. In 2006, eleven percent of Virginia's four-year-old children were enrolled in government-funded preschool programs, up from six percent in 2002 (Barnett et al., 2006).

Initially, preschool programs provided convenient child care for working mothers. The programs became more popular as parents and educators gained a rising awareness of the importance of school readiness (Barnett, 1995; Campbell & Ramey, 1991;

Clifford, Barbarin, Chang, Early, Howes, Burchinal, & Pianta, 2005; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1998). The more recent increase in preschool participation is due in part to the publicized benefits of early intervention programs. Teachers have determined that one third of entering kindergartners lack the readiness skills for kindergarten. Standardized tests given as early as the kindergarten year show significant differences in students' skill acquisition. It is likely that these early discrepancies are caused by the diversity of children's experiences within their various social classes (Carnegie Task Force, 1994; Lamb-Parker, Hagen, Robinson, & Rhee, 2003; Ramey & Ramey, 2004; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

A vast amount of research has been conducted to determine the impact of preschool programs in improving student achievement and general readiness for formal schooling. Studies have been overwhelmingly positive about the short-term effects of early learning opportunities, and research is emerging in support of long-term benefits as well (Burgess, Lundgren, Lloyd, & Pianta, 2001; Clifford, Barbarin, Chang, Early, Howes, Burchinal, & Pianta, 2005; Peckham, 2007; and Ramey & Ramey, 2004).

The preschool program chosen for this study is intended to be an early intervention for students with risk factors identified as barriers to success in the educational setting. This government-funded program is a part of the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI). Enacted in 1995 as part of the Omnibus Education Act, the costly VPI project is the focus of considerable public scrutiny (Virginia Department of Education, 2004).

The importance and value of preschool institutions is grounded in the philosophical posture of equal opportunity for all citizens. Preschool programs that serve

primarily minority and poverty students can be venues to address cultural barriers to success. One of those barriers, lack of self-regulation, appears to be prevalent in government-funded preschool programs. With increasing frequency, student behavior is reported to be uncontrolled and disruptive. At four years of age students are suspended or expelled from preschool programs for behavioral deficiencies (Bodrova & Leong, 2005).

Study findings are inconsistent regarding the relationship of self-regulation among young children to minority status or poverty (Bodrova & Leong, 2005; Diener, & Kim, 2004; Lamb-Parker et al., 2003; Liebermann, Giesbrecht, & Müller, 2007; Lutz, Fantuzzo, & McDermott, 2002; Pittman & Boswell, 2007; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Government-funded preschool programs serve students with multiple risk factors for failure. The growing rate of incidences related to inadequate self-regulation among these preschoolers raises questions about teacher response to behavioral episodes and their capacity to connect with the children and their families. Teachers may experience a cultural disconnect as they attempt to address the needs of students with whom they have few common background endeavors.

A review of the literature identified studies and research findings that illuminate culturally competent practices in the preschool environment and the influence of such practices on the preschool teachers' behavioral expectations for their young students. For subsequent research, methods were identified to address the following research question: How do school leaders perceive the impact of cultural competencies in addressing self-regulation among preschool students? References to studies on the emerging importance of preschool education, the impact of culture in school settings and behavioral issues related to these phenomena are included. The literature review investigates cultural

responsiveness as a potential barrier to student success. Based on the findings of this comprehensive literature exploration, a focused ensuing study can provide information about the effectiveness of implemented projects, including validation of effective practices and suggestions for improvement.

To conduct an intensive study of the influence of culture on perceptions about self-regulation among preschoolers, case study research was employed. Case study evaluation requires a focused collection of information, systematic inquiry, and analysis. Results from case study research can identify organizational strengths, address weaknesses, and inform decisions regarding specific program activities. A case study can illuminate certain aspects of an institutional endeavor. Building upon input from decision-makers and potential information users, the case study process provides insight into the roles of individuals and practices and their impact on organizational endeavors (Crossley & Villiamy, 1984; Soy, 1997; Tellis, 1997; Yin, 1984; Yin, 2003).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the research was to investigate the trend of behavior-related expulsions in the selected preschool program and to examine the impact of culture on this phenomenon. Leadership responses to the integrated issues of self-regulation and cultural competency were explored. The study examined cultural responsiveness as a potential barrier to student success. The research provides information about the importance of cultural competence among preschool teachers including validation of effective practices and suggestions for improvement.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the research findings is manifested in their application for the revision and enhancement of instructional practices endorsed by designated preschool leaders. Specifically, the case study documents the need for cultural responsiveness in the program's implementation. Moreover, research literature has not addressed the demographic contrasts between students and their teachers and leaders in state-supported preschools and their impact on program outcomes. This research adds to the body of knowledge on culture, self-regulation, and preschool programs. Furthermore, the findings give direction to educational leaders seeking to provide an unbiased schooling environment for all teachers and learners.

Definitions

For this research study, *preschool* refers to the learning environment of children before kindergarten age. According to Funk and Wagnalls' Standard Encyclopedic Dictionary (1975), preschool is descriptive of, intended for, or "designating a child past infancy but under school age." In this thesis, the programs emphasized are those designated for student participants who, based on their ages, would begin kindergarten in about a year. Thus, the terms preschool and prekindergarten are used synonymously in this document and in the research literature. *State-funded preschool programs* are those that are financed with public funds, usually requiring that student participants meet specific criteria. Other guidelines, such as the length of the school day and the administration of annual assessments, must be accepted by participating institutions. A "local match" of funds from the city or county is often required as well.

Preschools funded through the Virginia Preschool Initiative, such as the program selected for this study, serve students who are four years of age with family characteristics that have been identified as barriers to school success. Criteria for student participation, or *risk factors*, refer to the income level, educational background, and other aspects of home and family that could prevent student success in the school environment. Homelessness and English as a second language, for example, are also common risk factors.

Culture refers to the practices and interactions of groups in familiar environments. The concept of culture extends beyond language, foods, and dress to include beliefs, gender and generational roles, and group behavioral patterns. Hepburn (2004) provides a more comprehensive definition of culture:

> An integrated pattern of human behavior which includes thought, communication, languages, beliefs, values, practices, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting, role, relationships and expected behaviors of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group and the ability to transmit this pattern to succeeding generations. (p. 10)

Cultural responsiveness is the ability to accept and relate to cultures outside of ones own. Often used synonymously with cultural awareness, cultural responsiveness extends beyond awareness to purposeful and positive reaction to cultural diversity (Gay, 2002). *Cultural competence* refers to the capability and willingness to implement structures that promote success for all members of a diverse organization or environment (Hepburn, 2004).

Self-regulation is defined as an internal process of adjusting behaviors in response to varied situations. Self-regulation is a complex concept that includes conscientious, or effortful, control and motivation (Eiden, Edwards, & Leonard, 2007; Leibermann, Giesbrecht, & Müller, 2007). Included in the larger context of self-regulation are the physiological and psychological phenomena known as emotion regulation and executive function (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Moreover, renowned researchers define self-regulatory learning in terms of motivation, self efficacy, and entity and incremental theory (Molden & Dweck, 2006; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997; Zimmerman, 1998; Cleary & Zimmerman, 2004; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; and Pintrich, Roeser, & De Groot, 1994).

Delimitations

The findings from this evaluation will be limited in application to a preschool program that is supported through the Virginia Preschool Initiative in southeastern Virginia. The preschool participants are 304 students, nineteen teachers, and nineteen teacher assistants. Additionally, the initiative is administered by a program director, three zone coordinators, and four quasi-administrative family involvement specialists. The enrolled children are residents of the selected school division and as such are solely representative of that locality. There are five principals and five assistant principals at the school sites that house the preschool programs. Together, these individuals comprise the case unit that will be studied in depth.

The demographic makeup of the study participants provides an appropriate case relative to the theoretical focus for the evaluation. The Virginia Preschool Initiative is designed to foster school readiness for learning communities across the state that

manifest the risk factors identified in this study. Administrators of other preschool programs serving similar populations may consider the results in addressing the needs of their students, teachers, and families.

Limitations

The relatively small population of students in the study, and their defining characteristics, limit the generalizability of the study findings to other preschool settings. The preschoolers involved are enrolled in the program for one year. To focus on the cohort of four-year-old participants, findings are based on data gathered over a relatively short period of time. Therefore, the short duration of the research study will not reflect extended developmental growth or other phenomena that would require long-term research.

Finally, researcher bias may result from the existing ties between the school division and the program operators. However, findings were shared with research participants and impartial colleagues periodically to ensure that information was depicted accurately and fairly.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. The ensuing chapters will present a comprehensive review of the research literature in chapter II, a description of the methodology in chapter III, an analysis of the results in chapter IV, and a report of the findings and recommendations in chapter V. References and appendices are provided as well.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Preschool is an established institution in the United States. Early learning programs provide critical readiness skills for students with risk factors for school failure. Studies have been conducted to determine the effectiveness of preschool revealing that early intervention is beneficial for selected populations (Campbell & Ramey,1991; Niles, Reynolds, & Roe-Sepowitz, 2008). The preschool environment often consists of teachers and students with widely differing cultural backgrounds. Ethnic minorities, for example, are taught by teachers of European decent (Middleton, 2002). Individuals who were raised in middle-class or affluent homes are assigned to instruct children of poverty. Outside of the classroom, the teachers and students may have little in common. Despite vastly differing personal experiences between teachers and their young learners, educators with cultural proficiency skills can foster success for their students (Gay, 2002; Meyer & Rhoades, 2006; and Phillips & Cromwell, 1994).

In the regular school setting, students with identified risk factors are recipients of disciplinary actions and referred for special education more often than their affluent counterparts (Townsend, 2000). This troubling phenomenon may be manifested in preschool as well; studies indicate that very young children are suspended, expelled, or restricted in attendance from their learning institutions (Bodrova & Leong, 2005). The development of self-regulation skills can be critical for preschoolers seeking academic and social accomplishment (Bodrova & Leong, 2005; McClelland, Connor, Jewkes, Cameron, Farris, & Morrison, 2007).

The growth and popularity of preschool programs have prompted many studies targeting the early learning environment. Research on the short-term effects of preschool focuses on student outcomes and the quality and structural characteristics of this instructional venue (Barnett, 1995; Peckham, 2007; Clifford, et al., 2005). Longitudinal studies are available and ongoing, including the well-known High-Scope Perry Preschool research on participants of Head Start and the heralded Abecedarian Project conducted in North Carolina (Barrett, 1995; Campbell & Ramey, 1991; Ramey & Ramey, 2004). Although numerous large-scale studies have been conducted, methodical inquiry to ascertain the impact of culture in certain preschool programs, and implications for student self-regulation, could provide greater depth and breadth of information for the benefit of local and widespread communities.

Using the case study approach, researchers can explore a specific phenomenon and its impact on a "program, event, process, institution, or social group" (Leedy, 1997). A review of research literature reveals the common characteristics of state-supported programs, the proficiencies required for success with a culturally diverse environment, the need for self-regulatory competencies among preschool children, and research methodology that explores the impact of culture in the preschool setting. Case studies can disclose the extent to which cultural barriers are addressed in state-funded preschool environments.

The National Movement Toward Preschool

Institutional early learning opportunities grew out of the desire to provide positive social experiences for young children and evolved into the need for quality child care (Barnett & Yarosz, 2007). Prior to the growth of kindergarten programs throughout the

country, most children were nurtured at home by non-working mothers until they entered first grade. By the early 1970's most states required public schools to offer pre-first grade learning opportunities (Kaurez, 2005). As women joined the workforce in increasing numbers, the demand for center-based programs grew exponentially in the United States, to include 69% of all four year old children by 1999 (Barnett & Yarosz, 2007; Diener & Kim, 2003). An astounding 80% of the nation's four year olds attend some type of preschool. According to the National Institute for Early Education Research, an estimated 973,178 children participate in state-funded prekindergarten programs (Barnett, Epstein, Friedman. Boyd, & Hustedt, 2008).

More recently, with politics as a catalyst, the preschool movement was catapulted into nationwide prominence (Clifford et al., 2005; Gormley, 2005). President Bill Clinton, then governor of Arkansas, identified preschool education as a major focus area during the Governors' Education Reform Summit of 1989. From that gathering, the Governor's Goals 2000 were established. Goal #1 states: "Readiness for School." All children will start school ready to learn" (National Educational Goals Panel, 2004). The panel identified five dimensions of readiness:

- Physical well-being and motor development (good health, nutrition, and physical capabilities),
- Social and emotional development (a healthy sense of trust, self, and competence as well as the ability to cooperate, regulation emotions, and get along with others),
- Approaches to learning (curiosity, persistence, and problem solving),

- Language development (receptive and expressive communication skills), and
- Cognition and general knowledge. (Hepburn, 2004, p. 6)

Accordingly, the need for preschool education has become the rallying cry of many groups and state elected officials. This is due in large part to the changing role of prekindergarten programs, shifting from an emphasis on child care to a focus on early education. Although there is on-going debate about the developmental implications of an academic environment for young learners, preschool has come to be viewed as an early intervention to increase chances for student success in later schooling experiences (Black, 2003; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1998). This view has become more widespread in the current political climate of accountability for the nation's educational leaders.

Accountability Movement

National assessments reveal an achievement gap between students with low socio-economic status and those in more affluent families. This lag in academic progress begins well before students enroll in kindergarten (Kaurez, 2005; Lewis, 2005; Waldron-Soler, Martella, Marchand-Martella, & Tso, 2002).

Expectations for student learning success have increased at all levels, including kindergarten through twelfth grade and into post-secondary education (Ramey & Ramey, 2004). At the early childhood level, where kindergarten was formerly designed primarily to promote social development, the curriculum has been redirected toward academics (Niles, et al., 2008). Many teachers and some parents are opposed to this emphasis on early content learning for young children, supporting play and exploration activities over formal teacher-directed instruction. For example, Magnuson, Ruhm, and Waldfogel

(2004) found that, although preschool programs increase students' reading and writing skills, they also show an increase behavior problems and reduced self-control. There is no agreement about the extent to which children should focus on literacy acquisition (Burgess et al., 2001). However, numerous analyses and government reports indicate that the standard curriculum of most public preschool programs include academic instruction (Barnett, et al., 2008; Magnuson, et al., 2004; U. S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2003).

Many children lack the developmental skills needed for early learning and literacy. Their delays may be due to language skill deficits, including the acquisition of phonological awareness (Center & Freeman, 1997; Poe, Burchinal, & Roberts, 2004; Shaughnessy & Sanger, 2005). The result has been a resistance to accountability for early childhood standards. However, supporters of early education argue that accountability is needed in preschool programs. Although the threatening aspect of monitored institutions, such as education, needs to be eliminated, school leaders must take responsibility for ensuring the implementation of high quality early learning programs (Lamb-Parker et al., 2003; Ramey & Ramey, 2004).

Administrative leaders accepting the responsibility for ensuring student success should be aware of research indicating that children who are unprepared to learn at the onset of their schooling become inattentive, disruptive, or withdrawn. They are least likely to complete high school and most likely to engage in criminal behaviors later in life. Alarmingly, a child with several risk factors who does not attend a quality preschool program is likely to start kindergarten two or more years behind their peers from low-risk environments (Ramey & Ramey, 2004). When students are exposed to a variety of pre-

academic experiences and coached in behavioral expectations by caregivers during their early years, their chances for later success in school are enhanced (Schonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

Longitudinal Studies

Numerous research investigations support the long-term effectiveness of early childhood education (Barnett, 1995; Scheweinhart & Weinkart, 1998). Both the Abecedarian Project and the Infant Health and Development Project suggest positive treatment effects on the "home environment and maternal behavior" of participating families (Ramey & Ramey, 2004, p. 484). The school-age performance of participants also suggests that the Abecedarian Project has lasting effects on achievement. Treatment group participants continued to score higher than control group members on standardized assessments for reading and mathematics. Retention rates and placement in special education programs were significantly lower for students in the treatment group. Additionally, as adults, seventy percent of the treatment group in the Abecedarian Project had skilled jobs, compared with forty percent of control group members (Campbell & Ramey, 1991).

The benefits of early intervention are espoused frequently, but some studies deny such advantages (Black, 2003). Young participants of affluence have not shown the same gains as students in need. The benefits of early schooling are not evident among children who have the advantage of stimulating home environments that provide readiness support that is missing in poverty households. Yet, studies reveal no negative impacts on children that participate in preschool education (Ramey & Ramey, 2004).

There has been strong governmental reaction to these and other studies indicating powerful and positive outcomes for strong preschool programs. Consequentially, officials have embraced the phenomenon of preschool. At local, state, and national levels, elected representatives have endorsed the value of the preschool experience for disenfranchised populations.

Emergence of Government-Funded Preschool Programs

In 1995, the state of Georgia established the nation's first universal pre-kindergarten program. New York followed Georgia's lead in 1997, and Oklahoma was not far behind in 1998. Governor Zell Miller spearheaded the development of a state lottery system to fund his educational package that included scholarships for higher education and early childhood education. Other key elected officials included New York's Speaker Sheldon Silver and Governor George Pataki (who later vetoed the education bill), Representative Joe Eddins from Oklahoma, and Senator Lloyd Jackson of West Virginia (Gormley, 2005).

The move towards increased preschool opportunities was also fueled by a "grassroots mobilization" strategy. In Florida and Massachusetts, for example, politicians and early childhood advocates encouraged media attention to enlist public support. To promote early education, campaigns were launched by local coalitions, child care providers, teachers, business leaders, and even faith-based organizations (Gormley, 2005).

In recognition of the research-supported advantages of preschool education, growing numbers of state education agencies began to apportion funding for early childhood programs. The funding allocations increased from 200 million in 1998 to

nearly two billion in 1999. By 2000 state-supported preschool was provided in thirty-four states and the District of Columbia (Bryant, 2002), and one year later in 2001, forty-three states offered government funded preschool programs (Clifford et al., 2005). It is predicted that, "eventually, public school will begin for most children at age three or four" (p. 141). But the background and experiences of four-year-olds today are very different from their counterparts of past decades.

For preschoolers with certain ethnic or minority backgrounds, the preschool opportunities abound. Numerous studies have been conducted to identify the unique attributes of preschools specifically designed for students with identified risk factors for school failure.

The Clifford study (2005) focused on numerous aspects of state-funded preschool. This comprehensive research was designed to examine hundreds of public early learning programs to identify their common characteristics and structural features. The study revealed that African American and Latino children are more than twice as likely to be eligible for government-funded preschool as their teachers. For students with limited English proficiency, enrollment increased by 105%. These differences are due to the poverty factor that affects minority groups more significantly than the predominant population (Clifford et al, 2005; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

Program Participants. Publicly supported preschool frequently targets specific populations of students. Numerous studies have shown that some children benefit more than others from early educational intervention. Most student participants received some form of out-of-home-care before attending the government-funded program for four-year olds. Nationally, on average, fifty-three percent of the children are in families living at or

below the federal poverty guidelines. The majority of the participants are boys with 54.3% male preschoolers and 45.7% female. Sixteen percent of the students are limited English proficient, and six percent have Individualized Education Programs (Clifford et al., 2005).

Additional research acknowledges the emphasis on risk factors by supporters of public preschool. Seventy-nine percent of state-supported early childhood education programs focus on students at risk. Frequently identified risk factors include low socioeconomic status of the family, limited parental education, low birth weight, parental substance abuse, and limited English proficiency (Bryant, Clifford, Saluja, Pianta, Early, Barbarin, Howes, & Burchinal, 2002).

An achievement gap exists between majority and minority students (Henfield, Moore, & Wood, 2008). Since students at risk of school failure are targeted for the publically funded programs, the numbers of eligible African American and Latino students exceed their percentages in the general population. Research data reveals that the racial breakdown of student participants is 42.8% White, 23.2% African American, 21.3% Latino; 3.7% Asian/Pacific Islanders, .5% Native American, and 8.5% mixed or other. Particularly for White, African American, and Latino participants, these data are in contrast to the general population: 73.9% White, 12.2 African American, 14.8% Latino, 4.4% Asian/Pacific Islanders, .8% Native American, and 8.3% mixed or other (U. S. Census Bureau, 2006).

Teacher Quality. Numerous studies reveal that requirements for preschool teachers vary widely across early childhood settings. In programs that focus on social development and care, staff members often meet only minimal educational requirements

such as a high school diploma or a Child Development Associates (CDA) degree. Early learning programs with more robust academic objectives are more likely to employ faculty with Bachelor's degrees. These differences are reflected in the salaries of preschool teachers which range widely from $11,500 to $87, 546 per year (Clifford et al., 2005; Smith, 1992).

Another research finding is the tendency for teachers in public school pre-kindergarten to be better educated than teachers in programs that are not located on school grounds. In the study by Clifford and others (2005) eighty-one percent of the teachers in public school settings held Bachelor's degrees compared with fifty-seven percent of teachers in off-campus sites. The study also suggested that teacher with more education are less authoritarian, using more encouraging teaching approaches.

A noteworthy finding is that more capable students, those with higher expressive and receptive vocabulary at the onset of the preschool program, are more likely to be assigned to qualified teachers. Ultimately, the poorest preschoolers are more likely than their more affluent counterparts to be taught by less qualified staff (Clifford et al., 2005). Thus, the study concludes that "...the children most in need of high quality early childhood experiences are being taught by the less qualified teachers" (p. 139).

The demographic of the preschool teaching force is not as diverse as the student population. As noted previously, the racial breakdown of preschool participants is 42.8% White, 23.2% African American, and 21.3% Latino. In the study by Clifford and others (2005), the preschool teachers were 62% White, 16.6% African American, and 9.7% Latino. Teachers with Bachelor's degrees are more likely to be White (Clifford et al., 2005; U/S. Census Bureau, 2006).

Table 1

Population of Racial and Ethnic Groups

Race/Ethnicity	General Population	State-Funded Preschool Population	Teachers of State-Funded Preschool Population
White	73.9%	42.8%	62%
African American	12.2%	23.2%	16.6%
Latino	14.8%*	21.3%	9.7%
Other	7.24%	12.7%	11.7%

*The Latino population represents various races, causing an overlap of group census.

Location. Public financing of preschool is evident in the number programs located at school sites. Estimates suggest that in 1998 nearly a million preschoolers were taught in public school facilities (Bryant et al., 2002). In the more recent study by Clifford and others (2005), forty-seven percent of the preschool programs researched across four states were physically located in schools. Across the country, seven states limit preschool sites to public schools.

Research addresses the impact of location on program features. However, close proximity of preschool classrooms to public schools has not been found to be related to program structure, participants, or students' assessment results (Clifford et al., 2005).

Bryant and others (2002) refute this finding, suggesting that the location for administrative personnel and resources may play a critical role in the success of a preschool program. Administrative facilities with ready access to social and civic services can coordinate services for preschoolers and their families. Such services may address

participants' physical and emotional health, employment, housing, and other human needs.

Program Duration. Preschool programs vary significantly in the length of the school day and their duration for the instructional year. Daily hours range from 2.5 to ten hours per day, with the majority of programs lasting four hours or less each day. Seven southern states, including Virginia, offer full day (six hour) programs. About half of the programs follow the school calendar with services five days per week lasting for nine-to-ten months (Bryant et al, 2002; Clifford et al., 2005). The length of the preschool day has been found to be related to curricular choices, family income, and race. Other effects of full- and half-day programs have not been determined (Clifford et al., 2005).

Parental Involvement. Government funded preschool programs typically require parents or guardians to be active partners in the learning experiences of young children. These partnerships go beyond periodic parent-teacher conferences to mandatory attendance at workshops and home visitations. Preschool staff members often include family involvement specialists. In the study by Clifford and others (2005), 38.4% of the public preschool programs had on-site case workers.

The requirement for parent involvement is significant in families with the risk factors that determined their eligibility for the preschool programs. Sometimes judged as dysfunctional, the adults in these families may have experienced difficulty in schools themselves. In a study of preschool programs in several large states, eighteen percent of the preschoolers' mothers had not earned high school diplomas (Clifford et al., 2005).

Preschool Characteristics Found in Multiple Studies

Student achievement. The Abecedarian study of one hundred eleven preschoolers from very low-income families reveals significant positive effects on twenty-nine achievement scores. The research also suggests that the project resulted in the prevention of intellectual disabilities and addressed significant achievement gaps that mirror the Black-White achievement gap in American education (Ramey & Ramey, 2004).

Curriculum. The instructional curriculum for preschool education has been influenced by developmental psychology since the 1960's. The developmentally appropriate curriculum for early learners should include both imaginative play and structured, focused teaching activities (Smith, 1992).

The High/Scope curriculum is used in thirty-eight percent of the government funded preschool programs studied by Clifford and others (2005). The second most frequently adopted instructional guide is the Creative Curriculum used in nineteen percent of the preschool classrooms. Although researchers note the importance of careful selection and implementation of curricula for learners at risk of school failure, four percent of the preschools reported that no specific curriculum has been employed. Moreover, numerous studies have failed to indicate that one particular curriculum is more effective than another (Bryant et al., 2002).

Effectiveness. Some preschool programs are perceived as highly effective providing more powerful intervention for needy students than they can receive in later years (Farkas & Beron, 2001). However, preschool institutions often lack quality control, educational requirements for teachers and providers, and competitive salaries. In one study, only fifteen percent of the nation's child care centers were judged as good or

excellent. At more than thirty percent of the preschool sites, students had no individual interaction with the teacher (Eric, 2000). Therefore, many students leave preschool and childcare centers unprepared for the rigor of today's kindergarten.

Family Literacy. Phonological representations from students' homes may not match their learning codes of Standard English. Second language learners are also disadvantaged by the absence of Standard English in the home environment (Dorr, 1999). Farkas and Beron (2001) identified elements of the middle class language environment that support school success. "Middle class parents often question their children, engage them in extensive discussions, and in general teach the vocabulary, grammar, and thought processes necessary to succeed in school" (p. 8). This finding is confirmed in Hart and Risley's (1992) study in which families were classified by socio-economic status. In their research on parent-child interaction, analyses of participants' communication revealed that the children of welfare parents received far more corrective verbalizations from their mothers, and fewer encouraging, positive utterances, than children of the working class participants. Additionally, the results indicated that the welfare *parents* use a more limited vocabulary with their children than did the *children* of professionals during parent-child conversations.

Shortly after students report to class at the onset of the school year, teachers are able to recognize the impact of family and child care circumstances on students' readiness to learn (Old Dominion University, 2005; Shaughnessy & Sanger, 2005). Research findings determined that the home environment, including nurturing routines, and a supportive emotional climate, had greater impact on language development than book sharing experiences at school. But for many children, family and child care

experiences take the place of parent-supported early learning activities at home. In such cases, the responsibility of preparing students for school has been relinquished to the preschool service industry.

The Impact of Culture. Cultural differences between students and their teachers can impact success in the school environment. The manner in which individuals interact varies significantly among ethnic and cultural groups. Hawaiian children "...are accustomed to learning in the context of peer interaction." In contrast, independent learning experiences were most productive for Navajo children (Phillips and Cromwell, 1994, p. 5). The African American "communal communication style" is often significantly different from that of European American females (Gay, 2002, p. 111). Such variety can be challenging in a classroom that is receptive to only the dominant style of interaction. Therefore, teachers can enhance the diverse school environment by using small group instruction, assigning cooperative learning activities, adjusting pause time, cuing to increase student participation, and encouraging intercultural interactions (Gay, 2002; Meyer & Rhoades, 2006; Phillips & Cromwell, 1994).

Leadership. Similar to the teaching force, administrators have a need for cultural awareness. Leaders must engage teachers in conversations about culture and provide opportunities for reflective problem solving. Professional development is required to assist leaders in becoming culturally responsive. Diversity training for administrators will influence decisions about curriculum, grouping and tracking practices, disciplinary actions, and every other aspect of school leadership (Growe et al., 2002). National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) Leadership Standard 7.4 requires school leaders to "promote multicultural awareness, gender sensitivity, and racial

and ethnic appreciation" (p. 205). Experiences to develop cultural proficiency for perspective administrators should be included in university graduate programs.

Similar expectations are established for school leaders. Culture and diversity are addressed within the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards that have been widely accepted in educational institutions at all levels. Specifically, ISLLC Standard 2 requires school administrators to promote student learning and staff professional growth by incorporating numerous performance indicators. Key indicators related to culture and diversity are: "Diversity is considered in developing learning experiences," "All individuals are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect," and "Barriers to student learning are identified, clarified, and addressed" (Cunningham, 2007, p. 44).

Further, ISLLC Standard 4 identifies the school administrator as an educational leader who "[collaborates] with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs...." The related performance indicator, "Diversity is recognized and valued" is a clear expectation for school leaders to embrace cultural differences in the learning environment (p. 45).

Educational leaders will determine the extent to which preschool programs will be used to address achievement and societal concerns. They will decide whether to offer programs, who should participate, and how to fund early learning initiatives. The leadership will develop goals and guide the selection of instructional models for implementation (Clifford et al., 2005).

The Changing Preschool Population

The population of the American classroom is evolving. In 2000, the Census Bureau reported that racial and ethnically diverse groups in the United States increased from about one-fourth to one-third of the total population. By 2030 it is predicted that these groups will represent two-fifths of the nation's population (Hepburn, 2004).

This trend is even more pronounced among children. The 2000 census revealed that 64 percent of the nation's children were white, 15 percent were African American, 4 percent were Asian Pacific Islander, and 1 percent were American Indian/Alaska Native (Hepburn, 2004). This large minority representation reflects the rapid growth of racial and ethnic groups among youth throughout the country. Only 22 percent of student subgroup populations were cultural minorities in 1972. The percentage of non-White students increased to 29 percent in 1989 and 36 percent by 1996. The minority representation continued to show steady increases in 2000, 2003, and 2007, with demographers reporting 37 percent, 42 percent, and 43 percent of racial and ethnic minority children respectively (Bell & Thomas, 2007; Growe, Schmersahl, Perry, & Henry, 2002; Lim & A'Ole-Boune, 2005; Marbley et al., 2007; Meyer & Rhoades, 2006; and Villegas & Lucas, 2007). This trend is expected to continue well into the future with a prediction that "by 2020 minorities will comprise about half of the children in the nation's public schools..." (Meyer & Rhoades, 2006) and 58 percent by 2050 (Marbley et al., 2007).

Harold Hodgkinson (2002) reports that, in the United States, "the younger the population, the greater the diversity" (p. 5). The preschool population reflects this reality, especially in government-funded programs. In this nation, forty-three percent of children

under the age of five are non-White (Lim & A'Ole-Boune, 2005). Preschool and primary grade classes reflect these demographic shifts: "over 44 percent of all [English language learners (ELL)] are enrolled in Pre-K through Grade 3, with a decreasing number of ELL students in succeeding grades (Hepburn, 2004).

More sobering are the statistics related to class and affluence, revealing that increasing percentages of young children live in poverty (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). More than one quarter of all children in the United States live below the poverty line. Another ten percent are on the threshold of poverty. Twenty-seven percent of children live with single-parents (Lim & A'Ole-Boune, 2005; Riehl, 2000).

The current growth in minority population is greatest among Latinos. Large numbers of newcomers to the country lack English language proficiency and often have cultural and educational backgrounds that are dissimilar to traditional American norms and practices. These data are not reflective of the teaching workforce of which, in major cities, 68 percent or more are Anglo-American (Lim & A'Ole-Boune, 2005; Phillips & Crowell, 1994; Townsend, 2000). Despite the changing demographics of the nation's population, including the growing number of students with risk factors that could impede school success and the increasing economic divide, schools are expected to ensure academic achievement for all. However, many teachers and administrators, including preschool educators, lack efficacy for success with some of their students (Riehl, 2000).

Growing concerns about student participants. Early childhood teachers have expressed concerns about the changing conduct of their student populations. Children are reported to exhibit more aggressive behaviors and less self-control. Increasingly, psychologists are acknowledging that changes in children's home activities are impacting

their cognitive and emotional development (Spiegel, 2008). The video-gaming environments of youngsters, with its lack of creative, engaging human interaction, fail to provide the elements needed to help children develop a critical cognitive skill called executive function. Executive function includes that the ability to self-regulate, providing children with control of their emotions and behavior. Self-regulators can resist impulses and exert self-control and discipline.

Children who are attentive and capable of self-management are better able to learn. But early educators suggest that children's capacity for self-regulation has diminished. Many preschoolers do not engage in make-believe and play activities as children did in past decades. More structured play, or limited play, inhibits the development of self-regulation (Spiegel, 2008).

The school culture that focuses on academics may be inhibiting the learning opportunities that promote school success. Researchers hold that effortful control, an aspect of self-regulation, must be acquired by young learners to ensure success in the school environment (Diener & Kim, 2004; Liebermann, Giesbrecht, & Müller, 2007; Liew, Eisenberg & Reisir, 2004; Spiegel, 2000). Effortful control permits "the willful shifting and focusing of attention as well as for the voluntary inhibition of actuation of behavior" (Liew, et al., 2004).

Self-Regulation in the Preschool Setting

With the increased emphasis on early learning programs to promote long-term educational success, young children are placed in settings that require a specified set of classroom behaviors. The youngsters must adhere to the invisible rules of school culture. These include expectations for social interaction with peers, compliance with teachers'

directives, and decisions to engage in prescribed activities. When students lack self-discipline in the school environment, they are likely to encounter learning problems and social isolation (Eiden, et al., 2007; Liebermann, et al., 2007; Lutz, Fantuzzo, & McDermott, 2002; Spiegel, 2007).

Defining self-regulation

Self-regulation is a psychological term used to explain the combination of "emotions, motivation, cognition, social interactions, and physical behavior" that determine individual actions (Liebermann, et al., 2007, p. 511). During a child's earliest years, self-regulation refers to mastering the tasks required for physical and emotional adaptation to the world. As infants mature into toddlers and preschoolers, self-regulation is manifested in reactions to changing events in the environment including control of arousal, emotions, and attention (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Lamb-Parker and others (2003) define self-regulation as the "recognition and acceptance of norms, particularly the do's and don'ts" (p. 36).

Self-regulatory learning has been studied by key scholars for decades. Schunk and Zimmerman (1997) define self-regulation as "processes that activate and sustain cognitions, behaviors, and affects, and that are oriented toward goal attainment" (p. 195). Academic self-regulation has been defined as well to include processes for "planning and managing time; attending to and concentrating on instruction; organizing, rehearsing, and coding information strategically; establishing a productive work environment; and using social resources effectively" (p. 195). In another treatise on self-regulation, Cleary and Zimmernan (2004) relate the concept to "self-generated thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are planned and cyclically adapted based on performance feedback to attain self-set

goals" (p. 338). Thus, self regulated individuals are noted to be users of self-regulation process, task strategies, and self-motivational beliefs. According to Zimmerman (1998) the three cyclical phases are forethought, performance control, and self-reflection.

During early studies on goal orientation Dweck and Leggett (1988) found patterns of behavior to be related to goal orientation. Accordingly, performance goal oriented individuals desire to be judged favorably and thus are easily discouraged by failure and the threat of negative impressions of their abilities. Learning goal oriented people seek new skills, opportunities, and challenges. They are persistent when faced with difficult tasks and find satisfaction in exerting effort to achieve. Based on subsequent research, Molden & Dweck (2006) further develop the concept of goal orientation referring to lay theories used by individuals in assessing their social world. Entity theory refers to the perception that personal attributes are fixed. The view that characteristics and competencies can change represents an incremental theory.

Pintrich, Roeser, and DeGroot (1994) relate self-regulation to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The researchers identify value, expectancy, and affect as motivation components. They conducted a study to ascertain the relationships between the motivational beliefs of adolescents, the classroom environment, adolescents' personal characteristics, and self-regulated learning. High levels of intrinsic value and self-efficacy were correlated with high levels of self-regulation. The findings also suggest a reciprocal relationship between motivation and self-regulation. These motivational postures are comparable to Dweck and Leggett's (1988) incremental and entity theories.

Much of the early research on self-regulation focused on the behavioral phenomenon in school-aged children, upper elementary and beyond. More recent

research on very young children found similar relationships between affect, empathy for others, and goal orientation.

Self-regulation amongst preschoolers

For very young children, survival in a social context requires the development of skills to control emotions, behaviors, and attention. With support from parents and caregivers, children develop these skills gradually over time. In fact, emotional competence in preschool is found to be related to the modeling and training of significant adults (Lamb-Parker et al., 2003). Emotional development includes the ability to identify personal feelings and to empathize with the feelings of others. It also includes the management of strong emotions. Emotional regulation (ER) is often used to refer to the emotional domain of self-regulation (Eiden, et al., 2007; Liebermann, et al., 2007; Liew, et al., 2004; McClelland, Connor, Jewkes, Cameron, Farris, & Morrison, 2007). Preschoolers who have acquired emotional regulation can interpret such feelings as pride, shame, and embarrassment, and can anticipate such feelings in others (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2003). Related research on theory of mind (ToM) refers to the social domain of self-regulation in which children are capable of inferring the thoughts, beliefs, and feelings of peers and significant adults. Children who have acquired such inference skills are able to predict the ways that others will respond to their actions ((Eiden, et al., 2007; Liebermann, et al., 2007; Liew, et al., 2004; McClellan, et at., 2007; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2003).

A manifestation of the cognitive domain of self-regulation is also referred to as executive functioning (EF). These processing skills are needed for "purposeful, goal-directed activity." Also included in executive functioning are controls for "sequencing

behavior, flexibility, response inhibition, planning, and organization of behavior" (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2003, p. 116).

Effortful control is another self-regulatory related concept, used to describe the voluntary adherence to behavioral norms and expectations (Eiden, et al., 2007; Liebermann, et al., 2007; Liew, et al., 2004; McClellan, et al., 2007). Research literature also refers to behavior regulation which includes skills related to "paying attention, following instructions, and inhibiting inappropriate actions" (McClelland, et al., 2007).

Behaviors indicating the under-development of self-regulation are common among young children. Assessing the self-regulation of youngsters, researchers have determined that at least ten percent of preschoolers show signs of behavioral dysfunction. Some studies suggest that more children, as many as thirty-seven percent of preschoolers, display a lack of self-conduct and effortful control. These children appear to be at greater risk of poor academic performance during later schooling experiences (Lutz, et al., 2002; McClelland et al., 2007).

Self-Regulation and Culture

Pioneer researchers on self-regulation acknowledge patterns in human behavior that suggest a strong relationship of goal orientation with world views regarding the traits of individuals and groups. Dweck and Leggett (1988) found that entity theorists, those who consider their abilities to be unalterable, are more likely to judge the attributes of others. They are prone to prejudices and stereotypes. In contrast, incremental theorists, people who regard intelligence to be malleable, focus on situations impacting the behaviors exhibited by those around them. They are more willing to pursue opportunities to assist their peers in improving their situations, thus supporting needed behavioral

changes. These findings suggest that goal orientation influences not only self-perceptions, but perceptions of others as well. In the school setting, this supposition implies that students may be judged by teachers, administrators, or other children, based on preconceived expectations regarding their cognitive and behavioral capabilities.

Cleary and Zimmerman (2004) find that, even in school programs designed to enhance self-regulated learning, "student differences across cognitive, motivational, and cultural domains ...may limit the efficacy of the intervention program" and that their teachers "must take into account the characteristics of individual students as well as their specific weaknesses" (p. 547). Other experts on self-regulation in children of diversity acknowledge the difficulties students face in the educational setting. Liebermann and others (2007) consider self-regulation to be "the single most important predictor of resilience in at-risk children..." (p. 511). Children from stressful homes can struggle to achieve in the school environment (Lamb-Parker et al., 2003; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

Culture, self-regulation, and classroom discipline

Student misconduct can have a significant impact in the classroom. Lamb-Parker and others (2003) state, "The capacity to emotionally self-regulate ... has implications for the child's ability to appropriately manage the often emotionally provocative and stressful challenges that take place within the school environment, both inside the classroom and in terms of the social dynamics that are taking place with other children" (p. 41). Disruptive children can limit productive learning experiences for themselves and their classmates. Therefore, teachers attempt to minimize problem behaviors by enforcing rules though disciplinary action, including removal of non-compliant students from the classroom setting. Studies on suspension and expulsion of students reveal an alarming

trend toward harsher consequences for minorities and impoverished populations (Townsend, 2000). According to Bodrova and Leong (2005), more than ever children are being expelled from preschools and kindergarten. "The expulsion rate for preschoolers is 15 times higher than the expulsion rate for older students" (p. 56).

The trend toward harsher punitive consequences for preschoolers was manifested in state and national studies. Gilliam's (2005) research on preschool students in Connecticut revealed that students in prekindergarten programs were expelled more than three times more often than students in the nation's kindergarten through twelfth grades reporting such data. Expulsion rates for the young children were exceeded in only three of forty states. A subsequent study yielded more alarming results. Preschool students in Massachusetts were expelled thirteen times as often as students in kindergarten through twelfth grade across the nation. Larger class sizes, more three-year-old children, a higher Latino population, and job stress were found to predict the likelihood of expulsion (Gillian & Shabar, 2006).

Often, the standards used to judge student behaviors are related to cultural norms. Some researchers contend that children with risk factors, such as low-income households, are more likely to have behavioral difficulties (Lutz, et al., 2002). Studies reveal that boys tend to display dysfunctional behavior more frequently than girls (Liew, et al., 2004). However, few studies have focused on the cultural impact of effortful control in the school setting.

Misguided beliefs about student self-regulation have resulted in the use of ineffective practices intended to promote cooperation and compliance in the classroom. Several myths identified by Bodrova and Leong (2005) include notions that: 1) with time

and growth, students will overcome their immaturity, the primary cause of inappropriate classroom behaviors; 2) children are simply suffering from Attention Deficit Disorder and can be cured with medication; 3) the aggressive tendencies of children cannot be changed; 4) self-regulation develops when all classroom activities are teacher-directed; and 5) children who lack self-regulation are from families that do not use appropriate parenting skills.

Self-regulation can be taught. Teaching experiences focusing on self-regulation may be as crucial as instruction in basic academics. Success in supporting student acquisition of self-regulatory skills is enhanced when students are provided with modeling and practice opportunities (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007). As with other cognitive learning, students acquire self-regulatory skills in stages. Visual aids can assist children in using patience, making choices, and engaging appropriately in social behavior. Eventually, students increase their self-regulation through pretend and real-life interactions with their teachers and peers (Bodrova & Leong, 2005; McClelland, et al., 2007).

Schunk and Zimmerman (2004) contend that "environments need to accommodate to differences in students' self-regulation skills" (p. 21). Further, they state "by linking self-regulatory strategies with instruction and allowing students to practice self-regulation skills, teachers provide an integrated instructional package that will benefit students and may generalize beyond the instructional setting" (p. 22). Small-group instruction and differentiation may help in accomplishing this task. Other effective strategies include providing multiple peer models and modeling opportunities, and encouraging feedback. In a related research presentation, Schunk and Zimmerman (2005)

recommend a naturalistic model for supporting student acquisition of self-regulation, reflecting the experiences of children before they enter school.

Results from a study by Pintrich and others (1994) suggest that students are more likely to be motivated to achieve and perceive the learning to be valuable if they have choices of assignment, the class interests them, and they have exposure to cooperative learning experiences. In addition to teaching strategies, Cleary and Zimmerman (2006) indicate that assessment to analyze student self-regulatory behaviors could assist teachers in identifying ways to enhance student achievement.

Educators need culturally relevant measures for evaluating and addressing student behavior. Most of the data on children's self-regulation are derived from studies of middle-class, White families (Lamb-Parker et al., 2003). Although most cultures emphasize the need for regulatory behavior to foster safety, many varied expectations are designated for other aspects of compliance.

For the regular school setting, scholars encourage care in interpreting the actions of students. Curriculum content and implementation need to be evaluated for cultural conflicts, and antagonistic disciplinary actions should be avoided (Gay, 2002; Lutz, et al., 2002; Jones, 2006; Ogbu, 1992; Phillips & Cromwell, 1994; Townsend, 2000, and Villegas & Lucas, 2002). However, few research articles offer similar recommendations for the preschool classroom.

Theoretical Framework

Cultural responsiveness is an emerging theory in research literature on state-funded educational endeavors. Studies reveal that cultural differences exist between the teachers and administrators of the preschool initiatives and the families they serve (for

example Gay, 2002; Lim & A'Ole Boune, 2005; Meyer & Rhoades, 2006; Phillips & Cromwell, 1994; Villegas & Lucas, 2007). Awareness building and training can address dissimilarities in lifestyles and experiences to produce culturally responsive preschool settings.

Cultural Responsiveness

Cultural connections. The cultural differences between students and teachers are significant (Clifford et al, 2005; Duke & Ming, 2007). Gay (2002) contends that teachers require knowledge about "the linguistic structures of various ethnic communication styles...cultural nuances...intonation, gestures, and body movements" (p. 111). Educators who learn about students' cultural backgrounds can recognize the impact of their experiences in the school setting. Therefore, teachers need to understand the factors that divide societal groups by race, ethnicity, social class, and gender (Jones, 2006; Ogbu, 1992; Nuri-Robins, Lindsey, Terrell, & Lindsey, 2007; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Recognizing the need to address the growing diversity in America's schools, educators have been searching for instructional strategies that are effective in all classrooms. Although many teaching techniques promote learning success in most settings, educators acknowledge that certain experiences work best for specific groups. Ruby Payne, for example, developed a profile on students of poverty to promote an understanding of their needs and priorities (Payne, 1998).

The literature is saturated with suggestions for cultural awareness building with both pre-service and experienced teachers. Educators are encouraged to examine life stories of others by reading journals, books, and essays (Jones, 2006; Marbley et al., 2007; Meyer & Rhoades, 2006; O'Hara, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Villegas &

Lucas, 2007). Structured group discussions and role playing scenarios are also beneficial (Jones, 2006; Lim & A'Ole-Boune, 2005; Marbley et al., 2007; Middleton, 2002). Reportedly, the most effective awareness-building activities involve immersion experiences within the community. Educators can take part in home visits and family interviews, attend church and neighborhood gatherings, and interact with individuals while traversing the community on the public transit system (Jones, 2006; Lim & A'Ole-Boune, 2005; Marbley et al., 2007; Meyer & Rhoades, 2006).

Professional journals are showered with recommendations for awareness-building experiences for teachers. When educators learn about their students' lives, they increase their socio-cultural consciousness and gain affirming views about diversity (Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2007).

Promising practices. Effective instructional practices can advance changes that enhance opportunities for each child to be successful in the school setting. Studies indicate that "instructional activities that are based on children's experiences and real-life events and that ask students to apply their knowledge can foster both motivation and cognitive engagement" (Pintrich, et al., 1994, p. 158). A culture-friendly curriculum increases opportunities for equal participation of all students (Gay, 2002; Meyer & Rhoades, 2006, Phillips & Crowell, 1994). Educational institutions have adopted and implemented a variety of actions to promote positive and effective learning experiences for all students.

Five elements of culturally responsive teaching were identified by Gay (2002): "developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity, including ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum, demonstrating caring and building learning

communities, communicating with ethnically diverse students, and responding to ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction" (p. 106). Frequently cited promising practices for diverse classrooms include the use of various cultural learning styles, cooperative interaction, and the implementation of culturally relevant curricula.

To accommodate students' learning styles, teachers must understand how learners construct knowledge. Learning styles focus on individual processing of learning rather than intellectual potential. Pupils benefit from student-centered learning experiences. Information about students' lives can be used to build on what students know (accessing prior knowledge) and develop new understandings. Additionally, students need multiple ways to demonstrate their achievement. In sum, teachers who differentiate learning experiences based on students' learning profiles will foster success in diverse classrooms (Gay, 2002; McAllister & Irving, 2002; Meyer & Rhoades, 2006; Morrier et al., 2007; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

The mere replacement of resources and perfunctory use of differentiated strategies will not create a more productive environment for multicultural learners unless teachers see value in efforts to understand and embrace diversity. Nor can middle class teachers from racial minorities assume that they understand the learning styles of their lower class counterparts. Teachers from all ethnicities can benefit from well-designed training in culturally responsive pedagogy (Duke & Ming, 2007; McAllister & Irving, 2002; Sleeter, 2001). For effectiveness, such training should not be limited to the identification of differences or the formulation of compassionate emotions. McAllister and Irving (2002) found that "empathy is a necessary, but not a sufficient, requirement for becoming a culturally responsive teacher" (p. 434).

Curricular considerations include adaptations of content for culturally diverse learners. A strong multicultural curricular framework allows students to develop self-awareness and an appreciation for a pluralistic society (McAllister & Irving, 2002; Meyers & Rhoades, 2006; Phillips & Cromwell, 1994). Curriculum resources should be representative of various ethnic groups, but free of stereotypes. Careful selection of multicultural literature, textbooks, and supplementary materials should include checks for tokenism, inaccuracy, and loaded words. Additional considerations are roles of females and minorities, sundry hero representation, potential effects on student self-image, author's background, and copyright dates (Bigelow, 1994; Meyer & Rhoades, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2007). The school and classroom environment should reflect a multitude of social groups with appropriate images and symbols on bulletin boards, newsletters, exhibits, and multi-media displays. Parents and community members are sources for curriculum-related information and serve as role models for learners (Gay, 2002; Growe et al, 2002; Meyer & Rhoades, 2006; Phillips & Cromwell, 1994; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2007).

Professional development can assist teachers in modifying the curriculum to promote cultural awareness and understanding among students (McAllister & Irving, 2002; Meyer & Rhoades, 2006; Phillips & Cromwell, 1994). In one study, 62% of teachers trained in culturally responsive teaching shifted their curriculum to provide more relevant instruction for their students (McAllister & Irving, 2002).

Inhibiting practices. Schooling practices can hinder the progress of preschool students from certain socio-cultural groups. A lack of sensitivity to students' varied approaches to learning can limit student progress and produce achievement gaps (Phillips

& Crowell, 1994). If educators decline to recognize the unique characteristics of their students, they are not likely to match instructional experiences to their pupils' learning profiles. Teachers may inadvertently select materials that reflect bias toward certain ethnicities, focus on the contributions of only one group, or fail to assist students in making personal connections by fragmenting, rather than integrating, course content (Gay, 2002; Meyer & Rhoades, 2006; McAllister & Irving, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2007). According to Gay (2002), the absence of culturally responsive actions could result in "intellectually silenc[ing]" non-majority students (p. 111).

Nuri-Robins and others (2007) present a cultural proficiency continuum that depicts behaviors that can promote or hinder the movement from cultural destructiveness to cultural proficiency. Reactive behaviors are considered to be ineffective or harmful. These include a focus on non-minorities as problems, toleration or exclusion, the view of diversity as problematic, cultural dissonance, and the expectation for assimilation of minority cultures into the mainstream traditions. In contrast, the proactive behaviors include a focus on inclusionary practices, facilitating conflict, adaptation of participants, policies, and practices to the reality of a changing organizational demographic.

Leadership. With increasing frequency, school leaders are challenged to address the frustrations of teachers who lack efficacy for success with a diverse student population. Both teachers and leaders are disappointed when students and their parents appear to withdraw from or disrupt the traditional school environment (Dukes & Ming, 2007). Educational leaders who have developed socio-cultural consciousness are more likely to promote multicultural awareness among teachers. But awareness alone is not

enough to foster improved pedagogy leading to more effective learning experiences for all. A knowledge base for culturally responsive teaching includes the acquisition of detailed facts about cultures for use in making school stimulating, relevant, and representative of the student population (Gay, 2002).

School administrators must be deliberate and resolute in building cultural competence in the educational environment. Both staff and students may resist frivolous activities with no real significance or lasting impact. Instead, a well-planned process implemented over time can produce positive results throughout the school community (Dukes & Ming, 2007).

Steps toward cultural competence begin at the awareness and acknowledgement levels and continue through tolerance, acceptance, proficiency, and ultimately, cultural competence. For school leaders, and "inside-out" approach is recommended to promote movement toward competence by individuals and groups (Nuri-Robins et al., 2007, p. 17).

Dukes and Ming (2007) provide components of a process that administrators can adopt to promote and maintain cultural competence in schools. First, administrators must examine all aspects of the school setting and critique all endeavors as they relate to the organizational goal of cultural competence. This includes an acute awareness of the teaching and learning process as influenced by the potentially clashing cultures of teachers and students. Using this knowledge, principals and other school leaders can begin to develop incremental actions to embrace diversity. Direct actions include awareness-building workshops for teachers and strategic assignment of staff to utilize their strongest competencies toward the establishment of a culturally effective learning

community. The administrator should also identify and involve specialist and school community partners who are representative of the diversity within their student population.

Beyond the school-wide focus, the school leader must work with teachers individually to guide them toward culturally receptive beliefs and philosophies. It is unlikely that educators who resent diversity will be able to provide culturally responsive pedagogy. Guiding principles to promote such practices include the understanding that "the dignity of individuals is not guaranteed unless the dignity of the cultures is affirmed and preserved," and that "multicultural affirmation enriches everyone and enhances the capacity of all" (Nuri-Robins et al., 2007, p. 19).

Growe and others (2002) note that educational administrators can acquire various stages of multicultural development including awareness, acceptance, and affirmation. In the awareness stage, administrators become conscious about race and culture, impacting beliefs about the general culture. When administrators are able to identify the origins of their own views about ethnicity and race and are able to be impartial about other cultures, they have progressed to the acceptance stage. With additional experiences, educational leaders can reach the level of affirmation. Most beneficial to students of diversity, administrators at this stage can use their awareness and understanding to foster collaborative efforts between members of various cultures.

The emerging role of culture in the preschool setting establishes a theoretical framework for a research evaluation. In state-funded preschools, where student selection is based on risk factors related to culture, the teaching staff reflects the less diverse general population. The Virginia Preschool Initiative application states that "it is

preferred that teaching staff have credentials, certification and/or post-secondary course work in early childhood education." However, no specific training is required for working with at-risk populations (Virginia Department of Education, 2004).

The theoretical model below depicts the influence of culture on teachers' perceptions about preschoolers' acquisition of self-regulation. Preschool leaders need to monitor teachers' responsiveness to diversity among their students and their families. The preschool teachers' level of cultural competence may be directly related to their views on the behavioral inclinations of their students.

The establishment of a theoretical model is instrumental in designing and implementing research of organizations and programs. Models can establish boundaries for a focused case study. Such research can provide a practical approach for assessing selected components of an initiative and the effectiveness of its outcomes.

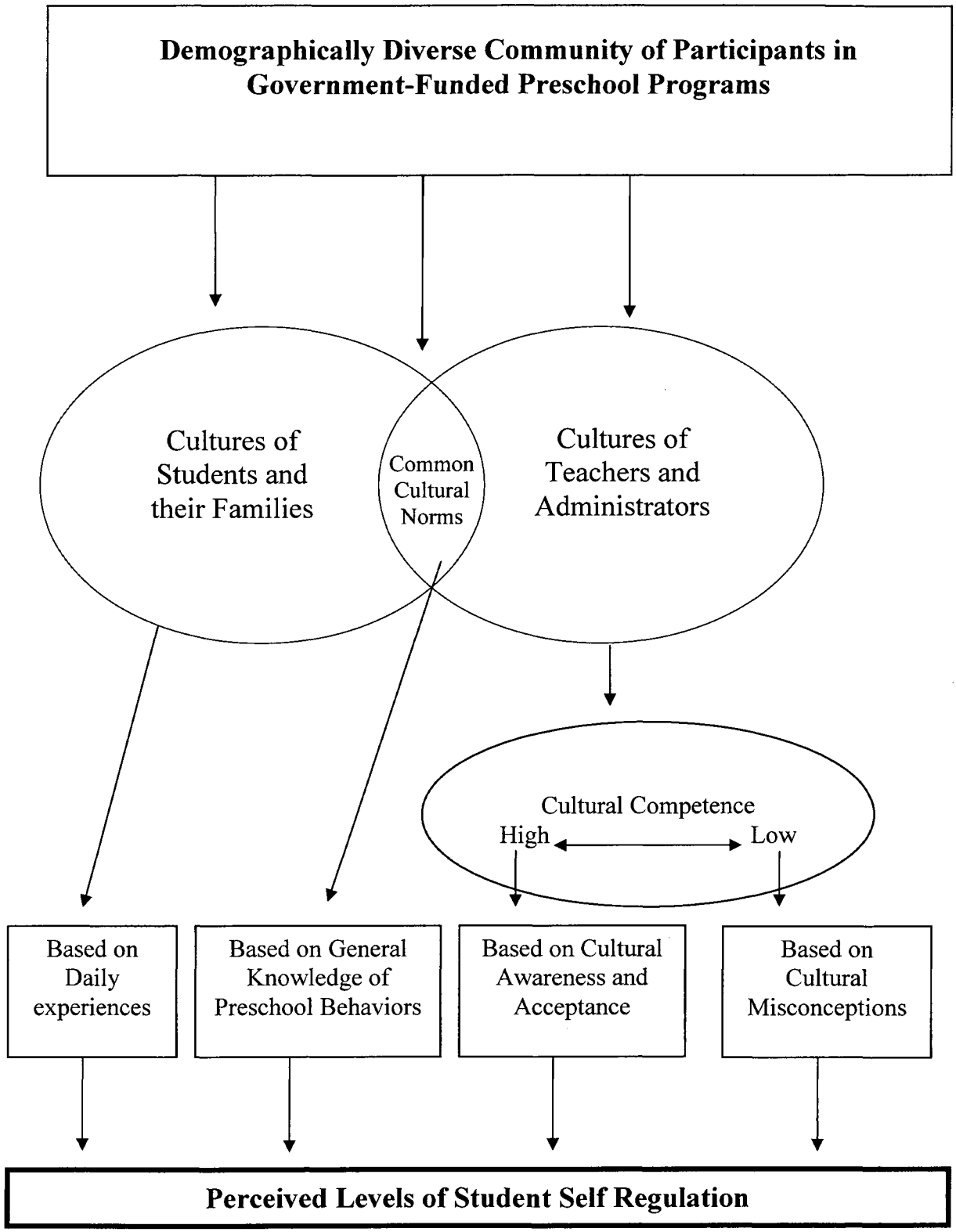

Figure 1. Perceptions of self-regulation among preschool students

Case Study Research

Presently, there are a myriad of government-funded interventions to foster student achievement, many of which are outgrowths of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Examples include *Comprehensive School Reform*, *Reading First*, *School* Choice, and the major focus for this treatise, the *Virginia Preschool Initiative*. Case study research can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of specific components and goals of these initiatives that are so broad in scope.

The case study is a research design that supports an intense focus on limited components of an organization or issue. Case studies provide in depth analyses for use in gaining comprehensive knowledge about concerns and circumstances.

According to Yin (1984), the qualitative case study is an "empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life content...in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (p. 23).

Research methods for case studies include the collection of data through field observations, surveys, interviews, and/or document review. Individuals conducting the study discern patterns and trends that reveal the significance of phenomena or events. Conclusions are drawn from the data to answer questions, support or refute hypotheses or clarify relations.

The case study research process can examine issues related to culture and self-regulation, identifying root causes for concerns and providing depth of understanding. Rigorous case study methodology can confirm or dispel suppositions regarding early learning for disenfranchised youth. Moreover, findings from case study analyses can

enhance the broader body of research literature with specific, illustrative insights into human behavior and visionary leadership.

Summary of Chapter II.

In the research literature, state-funded preschool programs are portrayed as widely varying organizations designed to foster school readiness for three- or four-year-old children. Although some states offer universal preschool education, most of the public early childhood opportunities are available to students who meet specific criteria. Usually, risk factors, including low income, are included in the criteria for participation.

Students enrolled in state-funded programs often reflect a diverse demographic with a higher percentage of minorities than the general population. They represent a population with numerous risk factors that could serve as barriers to academic success. These four-year-olds are more likely to live in poverty, in single parent homes, or with grandparents as guardians. Yet, they must develop coping skills and resilience in order to meet the demands of the educational environment. Self-regulation is crucial for all children, including those enrolled in the preschool initiative. However, the teaching force is usually less diverse with background experiences that differ widely from the children they serve. The demographic extremes represented by the preschoolers and their educators may cause a relational breakdown between the groups that impact the effectiveness of early learning initiatives.

The case study could illuminate their understanding of the students and families they serve, and promote the recognition and development of self-regulation within the student population. Culturally responsive pedagogy could bridge communication gaps

between teachers and the families participating in preschool programs. Appropriate curricula, resources, and training are recommended to achieve this goal.

Case study research can be utilized to determine the extent to which culturally responsive practices are used in local preschool programs. Theory-based case study evaluation is a mechanism for identifying culturally connected goals delineating methods to reach them.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

A focused research process is required in order to determine the quality and impact of the preschool experience described in this proposal. The selected methodology must focus on aspects of the program that address its intended goals. Results of the research should provide direction and clarification for enhancing the implementation of the initiative. Case study research can fulfill such research obligations.

The case study methodology has been used to for studies in sociology and education. Oft criticized as lacking in scientific rigor, the legitimacy of case study research has been affirmed by numerous investigators in the field. Other academics encourage serious exploration of the potential for case study methodology to address research assumptions and conclusions (Crossley & Vulliamy, 1984; Tellis, 1997). The case study research design emerged in the 1930s, and began to gain acceptance in the 1940s and 1950s. More recently, researchers have refined the case study design to promote construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability (Tellis, 1997).

Type of Research and Design

The case study approach is suitable "when a holistic, in depth investigation is needed" (Tellis, 1997, p. 1). Soy (1997) encourages its use in acquiring understanding of a complex issue or to strengthen prior knowledge. Stages for case study methodology include the design of the study, conducting the study, analyzing the evidence, and developing conclusions, recommendations, and implications (Tellis, 1997).

In his book, Case Study Research Design and Methods (2009), Robert K. Yin describes case study as a preferred research method when "[a] 'how' or 'why' question is asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control" p. 13. Dr. Yin cites four concerns about case study research: 1) lack of rigor or systematic process, 2) perception that case studies provide little basis for generalization, 3) the required extended periods of time required for case study research, and the need for massive data collection that is difficult to analyze, and 4) the allegation that case study research does not address or confirm causal relationships. These concerns are largely dispelled by Yin who notes that the goal in conducting a case study is to "expand and generalize theories" (p. 15).

Soy (1997) shares six steps suggested by noted researchers Robert E. Stake, Helen Simons, and Robert K. Yin:

- Determine and define the research questions
- Select the cases and determine data gathering and analysis techniques
- Prepare to collect the data
- Collect data in the field
- Evaluate and analyze the data
- Prepare the report (p. 1)

In a variation of the recommended stages for case study development, Yin (2003) includes proposition statements, clarity in the identification of the unit of analysis, and logistical linkages of the data to the propositions. Additionally, Yin calls for the use of specified criteria for interpreting findings. The researcher must be able to explain and justify the selected criteria (Mertens, 2005).

The case study research method described more recently by Yin (2009) requires specific steps that involve the actions of designing, preparing, collecting, sharing, and analyzing. The research method focuses on a specific phenomenon within an identified context, but without clear boundaries. The designing phase results in the identification of logistical and logical links between data collection and the research question. The unit of study, or case, upon which the study is designed should be the individual, group, organization, or program addressed by the study question. The method incorporates multiple data sources which, when collected and analyzed through triangulation, can provide a basis for drawing conclusions. The design should predetermine steps to take in analyzing the data and interpreting the findings.

Yin (2009) notes that theory development is crucial in case study research. A theory can support the creation of a logical design, determine appropriate data for collection, and the provide direction for ensuing analysis. A comparison of the results with a theory and its propositions, and with rival theories, will provide a basis for analytic generalization of the findings.

Specific types of case studies are exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive. Exploratory cases may lay the groundwork for broader research studies. Causal links may be established through explanatory studies, and descriptive cases are built upon theoretical framework (Tellis, 1997).

As with experimental research, tests of construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability are appropriately applied to case study research. These tests can be addressed through the uses of such practices as the identification of clearly

defined concepts, construction of a study protocol, data patterning, and an exploration of rival explanations.

The case study research is defined through the establishment of research questions. These broad, oft times open-ended questions can assist investigators in maintaining a focus on the goals and objectives of the study. The study design consists of a logical plan to progress from the identification of research questions to a set of conclusive findings about the case (Yin, 2009). Selected cases, data collection techniques, and analysis strategies should be aligned with the designated research questions.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006), case study research examines a bounded system with limitations established by the researcher. With such a limited focus, the case study can "promote better understanding of a practice or issue (p. 333). The careful selection of cases, or units of analysis, is vital. The case(s) should uniquely represent the research issue with enough significance to add depth to the topic (Anaf, Drummond, & Sheppard, 2007; Soy, 1997). Yet, the case(s) should be comparable to other populations, settings, or events (Crossley & Vulliamy, 1984).

Based on Yin (2009), the characteristics of all case studies can be classified into four basic types: holistic single-case, embedded single-case, holistic multiple-case, and embedded multiple-case designs. The single-case types are selected when its analytical unit represents a critical case. Such cases can include required criteria for testing an identified theory. Also, a singular unit for analysis may be justified when cases are extreme, unique, typical, revelatory, or longitudinal. Multiple-case studies, sometimes considered to be more robust research, are used to allow the comparison between cases

through replication. Multiple-case research is also used if more funding, time, or investigators are available. Robust case study research requires the selective collection and systematic analysis of evidence. Yin (2009) presents three principles to follow when collecting evidence for case study research. These are 1) to use multiple sources of evidence, allowing for triangulation, 2) to create a case study database, ensuring organization and replication, and 3) to maintain a chain of evidence in order to link findings back to the research questions. Six sources of evidence are discussed as well. They include documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts.

The analysis of collected data is "one of the least developed and most difficult aspects of doing case studies" (Yin, 2009, p. 127). The analysis must be rigorous and analytical, developed around the established research goal. Multiple analyses may involve one or more of four strategies. These include relying on theoretical prepositions, developing a case description, using both quantitative and qualitative data, and examining rival explanations. The strategies involve the techniques of pattern matching, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic models, and cross-case synthesis.

A comprehensive description of the case in narrative form is a large part of the final report for a case study. The report also provides an analysis of collected data. Finally, the researcher's interpretation of the data is presented as findings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

Issues related to culture are frequently addressed through case study methodology (Crossley & Vulliamy, 1984). Commonly grounded in theories on race and ethics, the case study can illuminate the dilemmas of subgroups within a population. Yin (1994)

suggests that case study investigations should be based on general analytic strategy. Such strategies can build a foundation for a new theory or documentation to strengthen an existing one (Anaf et al., 2007; Crossley & Vulliamy, 1984); and Tellis, 1997). Tellis (1997) states, "In general, the analysis will rely on the theoretical propositions that led to the case study" (p. 12).

A case study evaluation was conducted focusing on an application of the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) in southeastern Virginia. The VPI is a government-funded program supporting preschool education for students with identified risks for school failure. Student participants are likely to represent disenfranchised populations such as low-income households and single-parent families. However, with certification requirements in place, the administrative and teaching staffs in each preschool center are more representative of the locality's professional population. The variance in personal experiences may result in cultural dissonance between the preschool providers and the families they serve. These differences may be more pronounced when students do not successfully adhere to the overt and covert rules of the school environment. Therefore, the acquisition of self-regulation is crucial for young children even in a preschool setting. If there is a cultural disconnect within the preschool environment, the students are particularly vulnerable to inappropriate interventions and overly zealous disciplinary actions. Case study research can identify factors that influence teachers' reactions to an apparent lack of self-regulation among preschool students.

SenGupta, Hopson, and Thompson-Robinson (2004) expound on the need for cultural competence in evaluation research. They contend that worldviews and experiences impact the behaviors and values exhibited by program participants and the

perspectives of evaluators. Awareness of these influences is crucial for minimizing researcher bias that could impact the validity of evaluation findings. This issue is especially critical for a study that is expressly concerned with cultural proficiency as an operational necessity. Thus, "...it is critical for the culturally competent evaluator to practice constant self-examination of values, assumptions, and cultural contexts" (p. 13).

Case study research requires the identification of carefully selected research questions and objectives (Yin, 2009). The researcher must focus on contemporary events to determine the reasons for existing circumstances. Case study inquiry also "benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis" (p. 18). Therefore, research question and objectives were selected to address the issues that emerged in the review of the literature regarding cultural awareness, cultural competencies, and student self-regulation The questions are also directly related to the stated goals of the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) and the selected division's contracted providers for its preschool program.

The major goal of the VPI is for students to be provided with the appropriate preparation for a successful kindergarten experience. To reach this goal, funds are allocated for the development of programs for at risk four-year-old children that include quality preschool education, health services, social services, parental involvement, and transportation (Virginia Department of Education, 2004).

The goals and objectives for the selected preschool program are delineated below.

- To enable children to experience intellectual growth and educational stimulation, by aiding them in:
    - Developing a positive attitude toward learning

  - Sharpening sensory awareness by learning about the environment: observing, listening, touching, tasting, and smelling
  - Expressing themselves verbally; communicating with others; increasing speaking, listening, and reading vocabulary; developing auditory discrimination
  - Developing concepts and understanding of the world through discovery, exploration, and problem solving
- To help children to become emotionally secure, by aiding them in:
  - Building a positive self-concept; valuing themselves as unique individuals
  - Becoming independent and self-reliant
  - Developing trust in others
  - Expressing emotions in positive ways
  - Experiencing success and persisting when challenged
- To help children become socially well adjusted, by aiding them in:
  - Building positive relationships with other children and adults
  - Understanding and accepting differences among individuals
  - Developing the values of caring, faith, honesty, respect, and responsibility
  - Learning to be part of a classroom community
- To enable each child to acquire physical well being, by aiding them in:
  - Developing muscular control and coordination
  - Establishing desirable health habits
  - Becoming aware of safety issues
  - Experiencing a program that combines active and quiet activities

- To enable each child to develop and express their individuality through creativity, by aiding them in:
    - Participating in open-ended activities
    - Understanding the unlimited nature of creativity in self and others
    - Using play as a means of creating and learning
- To enable each child to function safely in his/her world, by aiding them in:
    - Knowing his/her phone number
    - Knowing his/her address
    - Handling self properly on the bus
    - Crossing the street safely
    - Practicing safe play on the playground
    - Understanding and following emergency drills safely (Early Adventures Handbook, 2005)

Research Questions

- How do school leaders perceive the impact of cultural competencies in addressing self-regulation among preschool students?
    - Are there qualitative relationships between themes of cultural competence and themes of self-regulation?
    - What are the principals' levels of awareness of cultural competency and self-regulation in the preschool classroom?

Population

The study included administrators assigned to school sites that have been designated for the division's preschool program. The entire program consists of nineteen

preschool classes distributed over five locations throughout the school division. Each class has approximately sixteen students totaling 304 preschoolers. The selection of students for the preschool program is determined by assessed risk factors. These factors are designated in the application for the Virginia Preschool Initiative:

1. The child lives in poverty.
2. The child is homeless.
3. The child's parents or guardians are school dropouts, have limited education, or are chronically ill.
4. The child's family is under stress as evidenced by poverty, episodes of violence, crime, underemployment, unemployment, homelessness, incarceration, and or family instability.
5. The child has health or developmental problems including, but not limited to, developmental delay, low birth weight, and/or substance abuse.
6. The child has limited English proficiency.

Each of the nineteen teachers in the preschool enterprise has a four-year degree or higher. They attend required training sessions annually. Administrators for the program include a director and two coordinators who are responsible for division-wide supervision of the preschool program. Four family involvement specialists provide additional support through home visits, telephone contacts, and workshops. All of these positions were established though an agency contracted by the local school division to administer the Virginia Preschool Initiative. Public school officials provide general fiscal and administrative guidance for the program.

For this research effort, qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed to identify practices and processes through which theoretical foundations may emerge. Thus, a formative evaluation approach was employed during this study.

Methods

At the onset of the research project, a letter explaining the study was distributed to the principals of host campuses for the Virginia Preschool Initiative programs and its teachers, and coordinators. The letter included assurances of confidentiality for all participants.

Classroom observations were scheduled at each of the preschool sites. One administrator accompanied the researcher during each classroom evaluation. A total of five principals and four assistant principals observed class activities with the administrator for a total of nine preschool observations. Administrative participants were asked to take notes as they observed, but they were not told to look for any specific issues or concerns. The principals and assistant principals were informed that they would need to refer to their notes during the post observation interviews.

Instrumentation

Using an observation protocol, the instructional activities were carefully scrutinized by the researcher to identify instances in which cultural competence was manifested in interactions between teachers and students as skills to foster self-regulation were addressed. Notes included descriptions of the classroom environment and evidence of sensitivity to the diversity and demeanor of the student participants. The protocol listed promising practices from the research on self-regulation and cultural competence. According to Dweck and Leggett (1988), children's self-regulatory practices are defined

by goal orientations. Children who are performance goal oriented select challenges that will lead to success and praise, and avoid activities that could result in failure and negative judgments. Learning goal oriented children embrace challenges, seek opportunities to learn, and keep trying despite failures. They seek novel experiences will avoid tasks that they perceive to be useless or boring. Therefore, teachers promote a learning goal orientation to self-regulation by: 1) building robust, trusting relationships through positive interactions, 2) affirming students' cultural identifies through the presentation of relevant content and the use of instructional resources that reflect cultural diversity, 3) scaffolding student learning to counter fears of failure, 4) providing students with choices, and 5) presenting measured challenges.

Teachers and administrators were asked to complete surveys regarding their prior educational and administrative experiences. Items to determine demographic characteristics of program participants were included as well.

An interview protocol was established as well to guide the discussions with administrators following the classroom observations. The observation-interview method provided a context for the discussions and allowed for the corroboration of evidence. Using this process, the interview was not the sole source for current, salient data to use for analysis of the case (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2008). The observation protocol, surveys, and interview protocol are included in the appendix.

Two or three classes from each of the five sites were selected through purposeful sampling based on the following:

- Classes in which one or more students were identified with self-regulatory concerns

- Well-controlled classes taught by with teachers who utilize effective classroom management strategies
- Classes led by teachers whose race or ethnicity are not the same as the majority of students they teach

Program documents and artifacts were also data sources included in the study. Examples include class rules of conduct, staff development agenda, and expulsion records.

Data Collection Procedures

As noted above, classroom observations were conducted with selected classes based on purposeful sampling (Creswell, 1998). Interviews with principals of host schools were conducted. Along with the compilation of data through the use of observations and interviews, programmatic documents were reviewed to identify emerging evidence that the preschool teachers and administrators possess or lack cultural awareness and competence. The documents included teachers' observation and discipline notes on selected students, written communication between teachers and parents, student action plans, referral forms, and formal suspension or withdrawal notices.

Student observation notes taken by teachers were key documents to review. The notes described the actions of students after the occurrence of an incident. Records of disciplinary actions provided another important data source. The action plans, suspension notices, and expulsion (withdrawal) letters were produced by teachers, parents, and administrators during the school year for a sampling of students experiencing difficulty in the preschool setting. Coding of information from these documents reflected categories of behaviors resulting in disciplinary actions and the resulting consequences. When

available, records of communication between the preschool teachers and administrators and the parents of disciplined students were reviewed and coded as well.

Observations lasted at least thirty minutes. After the observation(s) at the first site, the protocol was reviewed to determine whether the identified categories provided data to adequately address the research questions. An audiotape was secured for each administrator interview.

Data Analysis

Survey data collected through questionnaires were analyzed using simple descriptive research methods to determine the level of cultural disconnect that is likely to exist between the student participants and the program providers. Specifically, the background experiences and racial or ethnic backgrounds of teachers and administrators were compiled and compared with those of the student population they served.

As classroom observations were conducted at selected program sites, teacher responses to the behaviors of students were noted. Student behaviors were scrutinized for probable possession or lack of self-regulation. Teacher reactions were analyzed for cultural responsiveness and the ways those reactions were associated with student self-regulation.

The classroom environment was examined for culturally inclusive displays and resources. Posters and other visual objects, such as mobiles, signs, and charts were scanned for evidence of cultural influence. Curriculum related materials were studied for culturally diverse content. Evidence of cultural influence in student work displays were noted as well.

The analysis of the documents collected for review included the coding of content to identify the practices used by teachers and administrators to address self-regulatory issues. This information was coded into categories related to cultural awareness and competence.

Crucial components of the data collection procedures were the recording, transcription, and coding of the post observation interviews. The comments from principals and assistant principals were chunked into data bits and studied to identify patterns, topics, and themes. Codes were identified for emerging themes, and subcodes were assigned for related but less prevalent ideas. These data were sorted, reviewed, and adjusted to discern findings related to the research questions.

Interrater Reliability

The data coding process was discussed with a graduate student who then reviewed the interview responses and recoded the data independently. The codes and categories developed by the rater were compared with agreement on 245 of the coded bits and a resulting reliability rating 84.8%. The differences were discussed during two meetings. Consensus was reached on an additional 26 of the coded bits resulting in agreement on a total of 271 themes and achieving a rating of 93.8%. With the acceptable rating further analyses of the data were conducted.

Summary of Chapter III

Case studies provide sound, systematic research for the purpose of informing decision-makers and participants about the quality and effectiveness of their programs. The process requires evaluator skills in guiding the appropriate stakeholders to define their priorities and perspectives to reveal facts and suppositions (Yin, 2008).

The prescribed activities provided an abundance of data for use in a comprehensive analysis of cultural and self-regulatory concerns. Nearly one hundred pages of transcribed interviews and numerous documents allowed for the case to be examined from several angles. The administrators' spoken beliefs, the findings from school communication artifacts, and the documented actions of the school staff and administration provided an array of evidence for in-depth analyses. The study offers a unique perspective into the beliefs of administrators regarding these crucial aspects of the preschool experience.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Introduction

For success in the school environment, young children are expected to be self-disciplined and responsive to the adults in authority. Students that acquire self-regulation, or internal effortful control, are better prepared to adapt to the rigors of the school environment (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Lamb-Parker et al., 2003; Molden & Dweck, 2006; Pintrich et al., 1994). Preschool teachers attempt to promote school readiness among their students through direct instruction and corrective actions (Bodrova & Leong, 2005; Gilliam, 2005). Students acquire the ability to monitor and control their actions at varying ages and rates. Progress toward the attainment of self-regulation is affected by family members and other significant individuals in children's lives. Behavioral characteristics are also shaped by cultural influences. Therefore, students report to preschool possessing various developmental stages of self-regulation (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2004; Lamb-Parker et al., 2003; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

According to Townsend (2000), more frequent and harsher disciplinary actions are experienced by children who are African American or Hispanic, or who live in poverty, compared with non-minority or affluent students. Children in government-funded preschools are often selected to enroll in the programs because of factors that are counter to the mainstream culture (Bryant et al., 2002; Clifford et al., 2005). These children may experience difficulty adjusting to institutional norms (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2004). Preschool teachers and administrators may require a greater awareness of cultural factors related to student responses in the school setting. As noted

in previous chapters, cultural differences could impede educators' attempts to effect positive changes in the behaviors of some students (Phillips & Cromwell, 1994). An apparent consequence of this phenomenon is that preschool students are suspended or expelled from school at alarming rates (Bodrova & Leong, 2005; Gillian, 2005; Gillian & Shabar, 2006; Townsend, 2000).

Case study research was selected to reveal evidence of cultural dissonance in the preschool setting and to ascertain its impact on school practices that address self-regulation among preschool students. Moreover, data were collected to reveal the perspectives of administrators regarding culture and self-regulation in the preschool setting.

Research Questions

Research questions were identified to examine cultural awareness, cultural competencies, and student self-regulation as they were manifested in the preschool program. The research questions are related to the major objective of the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI), to provide students with the appropriate preparation for a successful kindergarten experience (Virginia Department of Education, 2004).

- How do school leaders perceive the impact of cultural competencies in addressing self-regulation among preschool students?
    - Are there qualitative relationships between themes of cultural competence and themes of self-regulation?
    - What are the principals' levels of awareness of cultural competency and self-regulation in the preschool classroom?

Procedure for Analyses

Site Selection

An application of the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) was selected for the case study evaluation. The populations of the locality, the school personnel, and the selected students represent the varied intergenerational populace of the nation. The U.S. Census reveals that 74.1% of the nation's adults are Caucasian, 12.4% African American, 14.7% Hispanic, and 7.2% have other heritages. The national and racial origins of American preschoolers represent a more diverse group, with 42.8% Caucasian, 23.2% African American, 21.3% Hispanic, and 12.7% of additional races and ethnicities.

The collected data reveals similar demographic characteristics for the research case with more adults of European descent and a much more diverse mix of young students. Several of the preschool participants have experienced behavioral difficulties in the school environment. This study was designed to focus on the self-regulatory concerns of the VPI program and administrators' beliefs about the impact of culture in addressing those concerns.

Data Collection

Observations and interviews were conducted at various VPI sites in a southeastern Virginia school district. Program documents and artifacts were collected for analysis as well. The preschool program director assisted in selecting nine classes from the five school locations. Based on the researcher's request, the program director identified classes with various characteristics to allow for the inclusion of a full range of teaching styles and practices within the preschool program:

- Classes in which one or more students were identified with self-regulatory concerns
- Well-controlled classes taught by with teachers who utilize effective classroom management strategies
- Classes led by teachers whose race or ethnicity are not the same as the majority of students they teach

To obtain demographic information on the preschool teachers and the administrators at the schools sites, surveys were administered. Basic profiles were obtained for eighteen of the nineteen preschool teachers reflecting eleven Caucasian teachers (61%), six African American teachers (33%), and one Hispanic teacher (1). Eleven of the teachers had earned a Bachelor of Science degree, five possessed Bachelor of Arts degrees, and three of the teachers held Masters degrees. All of the teachers were female. The teachers' ages ranged from 22 to 60 years old with a mean age of 41.44. Years of teaching experience with the VPI program ranged from one to nine years with an average of 3.94 years of experience. Nine of the eighteen teachers reported additional teaching experience ranging from two years to 33 years with an average of 9.94 years of total educational experience.

The demographic of the preschool students in the researched program does not mirror that of the locality of the government-funded initiative. Data from school records reveal that 19.4% of the 345 VPI students are Caucasian, 72.2% are African American, 5.5% are Hispanic, and 2.9% represent other ethnicities. In the Southeastern city where the children reside, sixty percent of the population is Caucasian, thirty percent are

African American, five percent Hispanic, and two percent from other racial or ethnic groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007).

The national, local, and preschool demographics are displayed in Table 2. Minority groups comprise a much larger portion of the preschool student population than the population of adults in the United States, the city in southeastern Virginia, or the adult participants in the preschool study.

Table 2

Demographic Comparisons

Race/ ethnicity	U. S. Adults	State-Funded Preschoolers	Locality in Southeastern Virginia	Adults in Selected VPI Program	Students in Selected VPI Program
Caucasian	74.1%	42.8%	64.3%	61.1%	19.4%
Afr. American	12.4%	23.2%	29.7%	33.3%	72.2%
Hispanic/ Latino	14.7%	21.3%	2.8%	5.5%	5.5%
Other	7.2%	12.7%	3.5%	0	2.9%

All of the students in the program turned four years old on or before September 30, 2008. Their profiles include one or more of the following risk factors:

1. The child lives in poverty.
2. The child is homeless.
3. The child's parents or guardians are school dropouts, have limited education, or are chronically ill.

4. The child's family is under stress as evidenced by poverty, episodes of violence, crime, underemployment, unemployment, homelessness, incarceration, and or family instability.
5. The child has health or developmental problems including, but not limited to, developmental delay, low birth weight, and/or substance abuse.
6. The child has limited English proficiency.

As noted, documents and artifacts were provided at the preschool site. Collected documents included teachers' observation and discipline notes on selected students, written communication between teachers and parents, student action plans, referral forms, and formal suspension or withdrawal notices. Personnel from the preschool program removed names and other identifying information from all documents. Artifacts provided were staff development agenda, staff calendars, parent newsletters, and sample forms used to gather student information from parents.

Data from Documents and Artifacts

Collection and Review

Communications between school staff and parents can reveal the priorities of an organization and the established rapport with the institution and its stakeholders. Therefore, written communication and records of student conduct were collected for analysis. Behavioral documentation was provided for the researcher for three students who appeared to lack self-regulatory control during the school year. These students were eventually withdrawn permanently from the preschool program. The forms describing their behaviors and the adult responses were scrutinized for content related to the research questions. This information was extracted as data bits and coded into the

following categories: *Inappropriate Student Behavior, Teacher Responses to Inappropriate Behavior, Parent Responses to Inappropriate Behavior, and Administrative Responses to Inappropriate Student Behavior.*

The documented behaviors of the three disruptive students are shown in Table 3. The inappropriate behaviors are shown along with the frequencies in which they were exhibited by each student.

Table 3

Student Behavior

Student Behavior	Student #1	Student #2	Student #3
111 Hitting/punching	9	5	3
112 Biting/spitting	3		
113 Kicking	2		2
114 Pushing	2	3	
115 Pinching	5		1
116 Pulling hair/clothing	2		
117 Scratching	2		
118 Intentionally stepping on hand/foot	2	1	
119 Spitting	2		
120 Tantrum	2		1
130 Screaming/yelling	2		
140 Throwing	1	2	1
151 Refusal to participate			
152 Refusal to follow directions	9	4	2

Table 3 continued.

Student Behavior	Student #1	Student #2	Student #3
153 Refusal to cease inappropriate behavior	6	4	
160 Rough play		3	
170 Running from teacher/class	3	1	1
180 Falling on purpose	1	1	
191 Inappropriate gestures	1		
192 Climbing	1		
193 Rocking/jerking	1		
194 Destroying property	2	2	
195 Verbal threat	1	1	
TOTAL	59	27	12

The three students were not together in the same class; they were assigned to three different teachers. The teachers used many of the same responses to address the students' misconduct. Parent notification was the most common consequence. Teachers also used positive reinforcement, redirections, verbal reprimands, and exclusion from class activities often. These responses are shown with their frequencies in Table 4

Table 4

Teacher Responses to Inappropriate Student Behavior

Teacher Responses to Inappropriate Behavior	Student #1	Student #2	Student #3
211 Pictorial schedule	1	2	1
212 Positive reinforcement	4	3	3
213 Inclusive strategies		1	
214 Timer		1	
215 Individualized instruction		2	
220 Redirect/request for compliance	4	2	2
230 Verbal reprimand	4		
240 Time out			
250 Exclusion from activity	4		
260 Letter to parent	1	10	
270 Behavior contract		1	
280 Request for parent-teacher conference	1		
291 Referral to administrator			
292 Referral for evaluation	1	1	
TOTAL	20	23	6

Parents were often notified when their children were noncompliant at school. Frequently, parents were asked to submit a written reply listing the consequences that would be imposed at home. In addition, planned parent actions were solicited during parent-teacher conferences. These responses and their frequencies are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Parent Responses to Inappropriate Student Behavior

Parent Responses to Inappropriate Behavior	Student #1	Student #2	Student #3
310 Time out			
320 Reduced playtime		1	
330 Withdrawal of privileges	3		2
340 Talk with child	3		5
350 Early bedtime	4	1	1
360 Behavior contract	2		
371 Punishment	1		
372 Sit-down meals at home		1	
373 Read to child	1	1	
374 Establish routine		1	
375 Encourage self-expression			1
376 Quality time with child		2	
381 Parent-teacher conference	3	1	
382 Use of school resources	2		
383 Attend parent workshop		1	
384 Volunteer/observe at school		1	
391 Angry letter			1
392 Withdraw child from school			1
TOTAL	19	2	7

When the students continued to engage in disruptive behaviors, or when the conduct posed safety concerns, administrators were asked to intervene. The available data on the administrative responses to the behaviors of the three students are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Administrators' Actions in Response to Inappropriate Student Behavior

Admin. Responses to Inappropriate Behavior	Student #1	Student #2	Student #3
410 Parent-teacher conference			
420 Suspension	1		
430 Reduced school day		1	
440 Involuntary withdrawal from program	1		
TOTAL	2	1	0

Responses to Misbehavior

The data were further analyzed to determine if specific behaviors elicited specific responses from teachers and parents. Some letters and referrals described the problem behaviors and provided the teachers' follow-up actions. When this information was provided, the codes representing the actions were matched, sorted, and surveyed to identify behavior patterns. Also, the data were presented in chronological order to determine if the consequences for inappropriate conduct became more aggressive for repeated offences. Additionally, the data were studied to ascertain whether the severity of the misbehaviors determined the types of corrective actions taken.

The documents for student #1 provided many more follow-up actions that could be matched with specific misbehaviors. The coded data representing the students' behaviors and the resulting teacher and parent actions are shown in the tables below.

Table 7 displays the teacher responses, and parent responses to the specific behaviors of student 1. For this student, most teacher and parent responses to student noncompliance were limited to a few repeated actions. Redirections were used most frequently and applied for a variety of misbehaviors. The student was also often excluded from activities. For most incidents of hitting or other physical aggression toward peers, positive reinforcement and verbal reprimands were used. The documents held evidence of only one teacher request for a parent teacher conference. The actions represented by the response codes are listed following Table 7.

Table 7

Student 1 Behaviors and Responses of Teachers and Parents

Student Actions	Teacher Response(s)			Parent Response(s)			
111 hitting	230						
111 hitting	291						
111 hitting	212	220	250	330	350		
112 biting	230						
112 biting	291						
114 pushing	220						
115 pinching	212	220	250	330	371	381	382
115 pinching	230						
115 pinching	212	220	250	340	350		

Table 7 continued.

Student Actions	Teacher Response(s)	Parent Response(s)
120 tantrum	230	
130 screaming	250	
130 screaming	250	
152 ref. foll.dir.	220	
152 ref. foll.dir.	220	
153 ref. cease	420	
153 ref. cease	250	
192 climbing	220	
194 destroying	260	

Response Codes:

212 positive reinforcement	250 exclusion	291 referral	350 early bed	382 use ed.
220 redirect	260 letter to parent	330 privileges	371 punishment	resources
230 reprimand	280 PT conference	340 talk	381 parent-teacher conf.	

The teacher working with student 2 used letters to the parent as the primary response for all misconduct. The subsequent parent responses for the specific behaviors were not readily discernable in the documents provided for review. Although redirections and a few other responses were used, the reactions did not appear to reflect the severity or frequency of the student's behavior. This information is shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Student 2 Behaviors and Responses of Teachers

Student Actions	Teacher Response(s)
111 hitting	260 letter to parent
111 hitting	260 letter to parent
114 pushing	260 letter to parent
140 throwing	260 letter to parent
140 throwing	291 referral to admin.
152 refusal to follow dir.	260 letter to parent
152 refusal to follow dir.	220 redirect
153 refusal to cease act	260 letter to parent
153 refusal to cease act	260 letter to parent
160 rough play	260 letter to parent
160 rough play	260 letter to parent
180 falling on purpose	260 letter to parent
194 destroying property	212 positive. reinforc. 215 indiv. Instr. 220 redirect
194 destroying property	260 letter to parent

Although there were numerous documents available to examine for student 3, most did not include parent or teacher responses that could be aligned with specific student behaviors. Table 9 displays the three incidents of misconduct for which response actions were listed. The parent's reaction to a misconduct notification was critical of the adults in charge. Referring to a dilemma on the school bus, the parent wrote:

The bus driver Bus #___ mentioned that my son took off his seatbelt while the bus was in motion. This puts my son in immediate danger. 1. Why was there no bus assistant on this date? She also mentions that she told him not to take of his seatbelt until he is told to do so. 2. Why didn't the bus driver stop the bus and buckle up the seatbelt for him? He's only four years old.

Table 9

Student 3 Behaviors and Responses of Teachers and Parents

Student Actions	Teacher Response(s)	Parent Response(s)
111 hitting	220 redirect	
140 throwing	212 positive reinforcement	
152 refusal to follow directions		391 send angry letter

Collective Results

Hitting was a common manifestation of noncompliance for all three students. The available documents revealed teachers' common usage of verbal redirections, exclusions, and reprimands most frequently to address the problems. For physical contact incidences overall, written communication to parents was the standard response. The data indicates that few efforts were made by teachers to provide instruction promoting the development of self-regulation. There was no evidence of cultural responsiveness in the teachers' reactions to student misconduct.

Parents offered a greater variety of actions to address the behaviors of their children. Among their responses were changes in the home routine (e.g. earlier bedtime,

dinner together, etc.), punitive consequences (e.g. reduction in playtime, withdrawal of privileges) and more adult attention (e.g. quality time; reading together).

Review of artifacts

Several artifacts were collected for content review. Copies were provided of the preschool program's staff development agenda, parent newsletters, a checklist for parents, and a disciplinary action notification form.

Staff development. The extensive staff development agenda listed twenty in-service sessions totaling 50 hours of mandatory training. Two of the offerings targeted behavioral concerns and the identified risk factors of the preschool students: 1) Dealing with an at risk population and 2) Guiding Behavior and Discipline. The title of the first workshop suggests that the preschool teachers were given an opportunity to develop cultural awareness related to the student population. Each workshop was four hours in length comprising 16% of the time scheduled for staff training. Additional training information was available on similar topics including the following video and audio tapes:

- Transforming the Difficult Child (video)
- Helping the Hard to Handle Child in Preschool and Childcare (audio)
- How to Deal with Difficult People (audio)
- Succeeding with the Difficult Young Child (Preschool – Second Grade) (audio)

A sampling of fifteen newsletters from various preschool sites contained numerous requests for parent involvement. Parents of the student participants are required to attend workshops and/or volunteer at school for a minimum of ten hours. The

invitations for parental involvement were not always stated in positive ways. One newsletter published the following statement:

> "You have until Friday April 3rd to complete your parent hours for the school year. Please review the notice that was sent home instructing you on how many hours you have received and how many hours you still need to complete. Non-completion of the hours could result in your child being removed from the program."

Another notice focused on student behavior:

"We reserve the right to terminate your child's attendance in our program for such as, BUT NOT RESTRICTED TO; disruptive behavioral problems, emotional problems, or learning disabilities that we are not equipped to handle or that are a safety risk to themselves or to the other children in attendance. If these problems pose a safety hazard to your child, or others, we will have no other recourse than to dismiss your child from the programs. We will contact you at the onset of any problems that we feel are not typical 4-year-old behavior.

One newsletter article suggested ways for single-parent families to spend quality time together. One other item highlighted the importance of community, inviting individuals to "come in and share with us." Generally, the newsletters were not used to support the cultural identities of the VPI families.

A parent checklist is sent to each home to solicit information about the individual students. Items are checked to indicate the extent to which a student can engage in conversations, exhibit a range of interests, has an active imagination, and displays other cognitive attributes. Parents are also asked to tell the sorts of books that their children like

to read. The checklist does not invite more detailed information about the youngsters. For example, although a parent can indicate that a child has a range of interests, they are not asked to provide any specific topics.

The final artifact examined for the case study was the disciplinary notice form. The "Notice of Actions Taken" is used to notify parents when a student has been engaged in one or more incidents that resulted in suspension from school or the school bus. The form is also used if a student is sent home immediately following a serious disciplinary episode. Listed on the notification are the behaviors that result in student exclusion from the school setting:

- Fighting (hitting, kicking, punching)
- Opposition to authority/lack of self control
- Indecent language
- Immoral conduct
- Persistent disruption to class
- Persistent disobedience
- Bullying
- Disrespectfulness
- Theft/destruction of property
- Other _____

The content of these artifacts were considered in conjunction with other analyzed data. The items portray the priorities of the preschool providers and the manner in which program expectations are communicated.

Data from Observations and Interviews

Principals and assistant principals completed surveys to provide the number of years they served as administrators, their educational backgrounds, gender, age, and ethnicity. Among the administrators there were four Educational Specialist degrees, two Doctorates in Education, two Masters degrees, and one recipient of a Certificate of Advanced Studies. The mean age for administrators was 47.44 years with a range of 38 to 59 years. Administrative experience ranged from five to fifteen with an average of 13.55 years in administration. There were two Caucasian males and two African American males. Of the five females, three were African American and two were Caucasian.

The participating school administrators met briefly with the researcher prior to each observation experience for discussions about the data collection procedures. Principals and assistant principals observed teacher and student activities in the classroom for at least thirty minutes before returning to the school office for interviews. Specific questions were posed during the interview sessions to solicit discussion about the classroom activities and any observations related to the research questions. An audio tape recording was made during each interview. Recorded interviews were transcribed over the next several weeks by the researcher. Transcribed statements were read and reread to identify emerging themes of preschool instructional practices related to self-regulation, and cultural diversity.

Observation notes taken by the researcher were referenced during the interview analysis to confirm the context of statements established as data bits. The notes also provided additional data on the ethnic diversity of the student body and the cultural inclusiveness of the classroom environment. By conducting observations prior to the

interview sessions, administrators were provided with specific circumstances as points of reference during the interview sessions. This process strengthened the research methodology by creating a second data source from which to draw evidence (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2008).

Established themes were assigned four digit codes reflecting eight major categories and their respective sub-categories for a total of 289 data bits. These topics and corresponding details are listed with their code assignments in the ensuing tables.

The noted classroom occurrences were compiled from the recounting of observed events by principals and assistant principals. Using their observation notes, they described the activities that occurred from the beginning to the end of the observation period. The administrators noted the direct instructional activities, center time assignments, and transition. Student and teacher interactions were discussed. Many comments were shared about the actions of students as they engaged in an assortment of activities and exhibited numerous behaviors. Teachers' responses to their behaviors were noted as well. These data bits were later used to provide examples supporting overarching themes of student behaviors and teacher behaviors. Table 10 displays these coded events.

Table 10

Noted Classroom Occurrences

1000 Noted Classroom Occurrences	
1100	Observed student disengagement
1110	Physical contact with another student (hitting, spitting, biting, pushing)
1120	Conflicts with classmates
1130	Disruptive (noisy, excessive movement)
1140	Withdrawn
1200	Focus on literacy
1300	Center activities
1310	Appropriate
1311	Variety
1312	Independent student work
1313	Limited number of students allowed
1314	Group activities
1320	Inappropriate
1321	Disorganized
1322	Noisy
1323	Rough play
1400	Movement / music
1500	Routines
1600	Calendar activities
1700	Transitions
1710	Appropriate
1720	Inappropriate
1721	Lengthy
1722	Disorganized
1723	Noisy
1800	Physical environment
1810	Appropriate
1811	Furnishings
1812	Charts
1813	Student work displayed
1814	Print rich
1820	Inappropriate
1821	Arrangement prevents clear view of all students
1822	Pictures with no words
1900	On schedule

School administrators were asked to describe the instructional needs in a preschool classroom. Their responses encompass the listing of general preschool needs displayed in Table 11 below.

Table 11

General Preschool Needs

2000 General Preschool Needs
2100 Non-academic
2110 Social-emotional growth
2111 Interact with authority/bond with adults
2120 Familiarize with school setting
2121 Routine
2122 Kindergarten transition
2130 Exploration / play
2200 Academic
2210 Formal instruction
2220 Creativity
2230 Prevent special education
2240 Learning conversations
2250 Capable, receptive teachers
2300 Remove risk factors
2400 Deal with diversity
2500 Orderly classroom setting

The communication between teachers and students was frequently described by the administrative observers. Their verbalizations are categorized in table 12. These coded data bits were subsumed into a more comprehensive grouping on observed teaching behaviors.

Table12

Teacher-Student Interactions

3000 Teacher-Student Interactions		
3100	Appropriate	
	3110	Positive / praise/ nurturing / nonjudgmental / students feel appreciates, valued
	3120	Explanatory
	3130	Corrective
	3140	Sharing / instructional
3200	Inappropriate	
	3210	No instructional focus
	3220	Limited number of students addressed
	3230	Inappropriate behaviors not adequately addressed
	3240	Excessive teacher talk
	3250	More feedback needed
	3260	Need to address students individually
	3270	Lacking warmth

The fewest number of data bits referenced student interactions with other students. Principals and assistant principals noted that students were provided with few opportunities to converse with their peers. This observation was coded as noted in Table 13.

Table 13

Student-Student Interactions

4000 Student – Student Interactions	
4100	Appropriate
4110	Positive/ polite / accepting
4120	Conversational
4200	Inappropriate
4210	More opportunities needed
4220	Withdrawn, no interaction
4230	Choral

Administrators were not asked directly about teachers' responses to student misbehavior during the interview sessions. Such questions were intentionally omitted to avoid suggestive or leading inquiry that could invalidate the research results. Nevertheless, twenty-six unsolicited comments were offered regarding the methods used by the preschool teachers to address student behavior. The teacher comments were classified according to the appropriateness of the teachers' responses. The response was categorized as appropriate if students were provided with instructional guidance regarding conduct expectations. The comments were coded as inappropriate if they

included. The classified and sorted compilation of those comments is displayed in Table 14.

Table 14

Addressing Student Behavior

5000 Addressing Student Behavior	
5100	Appropriate
5200	Inappropriate

Much of the data on recommended administrative support was provided in response to an interview question on existing efforts to advance the preschool program. Specifically, administrative participants were asked how they support the preschool program currently, and how administrators could enhance the initiative with additional support. Overwhelmingly, the comments were related to classroom instruction, including teaching practices and the curricular focus. Next, they targeted the need to clarify expectations for the schooling environment from the daily schedule of activities to the basic developmental requirements of four-year-old children. Administrators also shared their own instructional priorities for the preschool program. Most frequently, the principals and assistant principals expressed the need for feedback regarding the instructional efforts of teachers. The topics and code assignments are listed in Table 15.

Table 15

Suggestions for Administrative Support

6000 Suggestions for Administrative Support	
6100	Feedback
6200	Use of Support Staff
6300	In-service workshops
6400	Modeling of instruction
6500	Training in classroom management / behavior modification
6600	Clarifying expectations
6700	Instructional priorities
6800	Family involvement
6900	Direct involvement with students
6910	Instructing
6920	Addressing behavior
6930	Whole school activities

Data on staff development was compiled primarily from responses to a direct interview question. However, administrators suggested training needs and topics often throughout the interview sessions. Therefore, the data shown in Table 16 were included in analyses for the overarching themes of recommended administrative support and strategies to address diversity.

Table 16

Staff Development Training Needs

7000 Staff Development Training Needs	
7100	Diversity / culture
7200	Classroom management / social-emotional behavior
7300	Instructional methodology
7400	Parent-teacher communications

About half of the observers mentioned student diversity before any direct questioning on cultural needs. Most often these comments referred to the students' socio-economic status. English language learners were referenced as well. Responding to a specific and final question on addressing diversity in the classroom, administrators proposed many of the actions that had been presented as positive or appropriate earlier in the interview session. The needs of a diverse student population as proposed by the research participants are included in Table 17. In addition to the training needs for teachers, behavior modification and academic instructional expertise were frequently noted.

Table 17

Needs of Diverse Student Population

8000 Needs of Diverse Student Population		
8100	Diversity training	
	8110	ESL training
	8120	Multicultural activities
	8130	Culture of poverty
8200	Behavior modification	
8300	Instructional support	
	8310	Differentiated instruction
	8320	Building prior knowledge
8400	Support from school personnel	
8500	Clear Expectations for school / classroom environment / climate	
	8510	Routines
	8520	Engaging all students
8600	Addressing social-emotional needs	
8700	Affirmations from teacher	
8800	Home – school connection	
8900	No special needs considered	

Interview Responses of Individual Administrators

Transcripts from the individual interviews were reviewed to identify responses related to the research questions. Specifically, the statements were examined for

references to student behavioral concerns or cultural competence. Problems identified through the literature review were not shared with administrators prior to the classroom observations or during the interview sessions. Therefore, any references to the study topics were based on the respondent's personal perspectives regarding the preschool initiative.

Interview statements were sorted based on the following descriptors:

- Concerns about student behavior (self-regulation) expressed
- Specific examples misbehavior cited
- Awareness of cultural differences inferred
- Cultural competencies suggested
- Cultural competencies were related to self-regulatory concerns

Although there was an array of responses, the results indicate that all of the administrators were concerned about self-regulation in the preschool setting. However, specific examples of non-compliance were observed by only six of the nine school administrators. Several observers remarked on the exceptional conduct of the preschoolers. It was also noted that several of the activities presented during the observation periods involved controlled, direct instruction. Additionally, students with the most severe behaviors had been withdrawn from the program.

The results of the text reviews are displayed in Table 18 indicating the frequency in which the components of the research problem were addressed by administrators.

Table 18

Interview Responses of Individual Administrators

	Concerns about student behavior (self-regulation) expressed	Specific examples of misbehavior cited	Awareness of cultural differences inferred	Cultural competencies suggested	Cultural competencies were related to self-regulatory concerns
Ms. A.	2	2	2	1	1
Mr. B.	1	4		3	2
Mrs. C.	2		1	2	1
Mr. D.	2		1	1	
Ms. E.	1	2		1	
Mr. F.	3	1	6	4	1
Mrs. G.	1	1	2	1	
Ms. H.	1				
Mr. I.	3	2	5	5	1
Totals	15	12	17	18	6

Collective Results from Compiled Data

The interview responses from the research participants reveal the perceptions of the each individual regarding preschool programs, student conduct, and related cultural considerations. However, a compilation of data from multiple responders that have been sorted and categorized can present a more comprehensive account of administrators' perspectives.

As previously noted, data gathered through observations and interviews with principals and assistant principals at the preschool sites were analyzed to determine administrators' impressions of the behaviors manifested by preschool students and their teachers. Although a total of eight overarching themes emerged from interview responses, some of the recurring concepts were re-categorized into combined data sets. Data compiled as *Noted Classroom Occurrences* and *Addressing Inappropriate Behavior* were combined with *Teacher-Student Interactions* and *Student-Student Interactions* to embody the emerging topics of *Observed Student Behaviors* and *Observed Teaching Behaviors*. As noted previously, *Staff Training Recommendations* could be classified aptly with *Suggestions for Administrative Support* and identified *Needs of a Diverse Student Population.* Thus, five basic themes emerged from the collected data: 1) observed student behaviors, 2) observed teaching behaviors, 3) perceived elements of a quality preschool program, 3) recommended administrative support activities, and 5) strategies to address cultural diversity.

Observed student behaviors

Students were observed in nine preschool classes. In five of the classes, students were engaged in direct instruction as they sat in designated spaces on the carpet facing the teacher. The remaining four classes were observed during center time as students selected projects or play options in various locations throughout the classroom. In both types of classroom experiences, student behaviors ranged from passive compliance to boisterous disengagement. Predictably, students involved in whole-group instructional activities were less prone to yell or make physical contact with other children. They were also less likely to interact verbally with classmates or adult leaders.

The majority of students in most classes exhibited appropriate self-control, cooperating with teachers and classmates. One administrator's comments on the observed conduct of students follows.

> Mrs. C.: Noticed that the students, especially when they were at their seats, were very good about coming over to each other and saying, "Can I have your red crayon?" And then someone might say, "Well I'm not finished with the black crayon." So it seems like they've done a lot of things with teaching them those kinds of social skills as well.

Several administrators shared positive impressions of the schooling environment established by preschool teachers implementing routine class activities. An assistant principal noted that the young children were attentive to staff members and to student leaders reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and sharing weather information. Youngsters were observed interacting cooperatively to build a castle. For some, conversational speech was considered to be excellent; students were heard using complete sentences when communicating with peers.

Over the course of the observations, several students exhibited inappropriate behaviors. Administrators witnessed students throwing toys, spitting, jumping, and hitting. For example, student misconduct was observed by one principal, Mrs. G., who watched the children sitting on the carpet "getting a little bit out of control again." Transition times presented challenges as well:

> Mrs. M.: When the children went to the carpet for the movement and music activity they were to stand on a shape and they were doing flips and hitting each other and jumping up and down ...pushing.

It is noteworthy that the observations were conducted during the final weeks of the school year, and students with the most severe behavioral concerns were no longer enrolled in the program. Five students were expelled from the government-funded preschool during the 2008-2009 school year. As noted from the analyses of parent-teacher conference notes and expulsion letters, non-compliance had been exhibited through frequent occurrences of physical contact between students and instances of opposition to authority.

The teachers' influence on student self-regulation was evident in the instructional experiences they provided. Their myriad of teaching styles and tolerances fostered attentiveness and willful control in some classrooms, but failed to encourage compliant behaviors in other settings.

Observed teaching behaviors

A variety of classroom management practices were used to provide an instructional environment to teach academic content, build social skills, and model school behaviors. Teachers' verbal interactions were frequently referenced by administrators to describe the primary means for controlling the classroom experiences. Based on the observers' descriptions, these verbalizations could be categorized as nurturing, corrective, or directive. The nurturing comments were viewed as effective in affirming appropriate actions and encouraging desired behaviors in the young children. Teachers praised students for responding correctly, following directions, and assisting their classmates. An administrator's portrayal of a teacher's nurturing verbalization is provided below.

> Mr. I.: One little kid was setting at that station and he was drawing a picture of his… his mom in her glasses and she… he would take it over to the

> teacher at the reading station and … he was proud to show his little picture of his mom and the, and the teacher gave him some good comments or good feedback. "Oh that's a… you know, that's…that was a nice picture of your mom and you know pr… you know… she was very proud of his… his artwork. And it made him feel valued and appreciated.

The usage of directive dialogue was also documented. Clear explanations and directions were provided consistently in the most organized class settings as students were told to listen, move, or respond. Directive verbalization was effective when it was used to clarify classroom expectations. For example, a principal commented that the teacher "questioned the students about the new jobs they had to make sure that they were paying attention to what she did." In contrast, the absence of explicit instructions resulted in poorly managed, occasionally chaotic, classroom experiences. In reference to another, less organized, classroom setting, the administrative observer remarked, "I would like to have seen a bit more guidance within some parameters."

Although directive verbalization was effective in managing activities and behavior, the teacher's tone could impact the tenor of the preschool environment. In some preschool classes, the directive verbalization was viewed as somewhat harsh.

> Ms. H.: As far as other critical academic skills, I mean there are some things that I think I would like to have seen as an administrator in terms of giving more feedback to students, giving more praise to students, and just making it a more welcoming environment as far as making, making sure that the students felt welcome and appreciated and feeling… that warm fuzzy feeling was missing.

Corrective verbalizations in response to student misconduct were noted as well. Administrators expressed satisfaction that preschool teachers were efficient in addressing problem behaviors. Mr. D. observed, "Anytime redirections were necessary they were… they were quick, they were positive, and they were non-judgmental." A number of preschool instructors took advantage of teaching opportunities to address unacceptable student behavior in very effective ways. An example was shared by one observer:

> Mr. I.: When there was a discipline issue they were calling the kids together and, you know, explaining to them the appropriate behavior and challenging them to go back in… into the environment they were, they just cam - - were called from and… and demonstrate the appropriate behavior.

This type of response was not the norm, however. Administrators observed several instances of inadequate reactions to inappropriate student actions.

> Mr. B.: I remember at one time she… the boys in the back at the blocks were wrestling. They had been wrestling for a little while. Then when she came over, she said, "Y'all guys aren't, we're not wrestling over here are we?" And they said, "No." And I remember one time for spitting she did not correct the student and said it wasn't nice to spit. "We shouldn't be spitting at all so you guys stop spitting."

School principals and assistant principals related accounts of effective verbalizations frequently, acknowledging the positive statements of teachers to affirm desired student actions. Sixteen of forty-five comments coded as teacher verbalizations were categorized as positive or nurturing. Twelve additional comments were directive or corrective providing neutral commands to students. Seventeen comments were coded to

reflect the administrator's perception of inappropriate or negative verbalizations by the preschool teachers. These include eight references to inadequate teacher responses to student misconduct.

Concerns were also expressed about the failure of several teachers to include a larger number of students in responsive discourse. An assistant principal's comment articulates the perceived dilemma:

> Mr. B.: I thought the teacher assistant kinda interacted with the kids more than the teacher did. A lot of kids went unnoticed.

School administrators also remarked that response opportunities were limited to one or two students in several class settings. A principal offered the following suggestion:

> Ms. A.: There would be a time where I call on a child, maybe use some name sticks to make sure not just one child gets the chance to reply and shine. But because the kids see that I'm using a name stick they know I'm gonna call on them. So one it gives them the where-with-all to get ready for the question and it makes them tune in. and second they know, you know for the kid that says, "Oh, I'm not even gonna try. I know who's gonna say it anyway." It let's them know that, guess what? It's important that I hear you.

Beyond the teachers' verbal interactions, other methods to address student noncompliance were also considered to be problematic. The placement of bookcases in one class blocked areas of the room from view. Administrators noted that some behaviors that warranted teacher responses were not addressed at all.

Mr. F..: She seemed to stay away from the housekeeping area and to stay away from where the block and all that was going on and that seemed to really be where her attention was needed. She tended to stay in the center of the room most of the time, and so I would like to see her flow around so that all the children were able to benefit.

Mr. F.: I felt that the teacher missed what were some opportunities, which were some of her key players that were the behavior culprits in the room. I don't know if she's just gotten used to it, but there were like two children in particular that I would have addressed in some sort of way and I think it would have kept the whole tone of the room better to do that.

In several settings, direct teaching activities were notably lengthy, eliciting suspicions from observers that teachers elected to extend whole-group lessons during observation visits in order to control student behavior. Most of these learning activities were focused on emergent literacy instruction. Interview responses regarding the academic content of the preschool program were favorable. Every administrative participant expressed approval of the apparent focus on beginning reading skills in the preschool program. They described the activities in detail:

Mrs. C.: They sang their songs, they worked with all of their calendar activities, and the whole calendar seemed to be related and integrated with literacy concepts and those early literacy, beginning literacy concepts. They discussed title and authors and illustrators and if they had to pick a card they told what day it was, they sang a song about what day of the week it was and identified the letters. Two examples follow.

Mrs. G.: But the… she began to… oh she even asked children, when she wrote the sentence again, she went to the board and wrote the sentence. And then she had them count the words. So I was very impressed with the language segment of this where she even counted the words. She asked them why she had… had a period at the end and they knew because she had finished a sentence.

Students are often provided access to language arts and other academic content through center activities. Four observations occurred during center-time in the preschool classes. Administrators' accounts of these times were generally uncomplimentary. They questioned the objectives of the various activities and expressed dissatisfaction with the supervision of the students engaged in the exercises:

Mr. B.: They were I believe in centers which weren't organized very well kinda all over the place. Some were wandering the room. I think the kids were pretty much a free-for-all and kinda ot organized when they were at a spot, the center, they should have been doing some kind of learning activity, I feel, instead of just throwing blocks and playing with blocks.

The observers actively sought to comprehend the center experiences. Some administrators spoke directly to students to elicit explanations about their activities.

Mr. F.: What I saw going on was a group lesson at a table on safety. And then they had centers going on. There were various centers, housekeeping, there was one that was working on fine motor skills where they were tracing. And then the one that we were sitting in they were working on basic shapes such as rectangles, the shape of a dog.... At first I thought it

was a free flow center, but the more I talked to the children they weren't exactly sure what they were doing but if you probed deep enough, then there was a purpose for how and what was going on.

Interview responses indicate that learning centers require strong classroom management skills. When appropriately implemented, they allow for student interactions and the opportunity for children to build social skills. Indeed, concerns were expressed about individual students who appeared to lack social skills. A few of the children were withdrawn from classroom activities and classmates, or interacted only with the adults in the preschool setting.

Ms. A.: I saw one young lady who was kinda on the carpet with her head down and she wasn't causing a disturbance... And there was another young lady during the music and movement time who had a tear in her eye in the corner just barely moving.

Administrators' positive impressions of observed peer interactions focused on times when students were engaged in whole group activities or other teacher-directed activities. One principal summarized the need for interactive opportunities to build self-directed learning skills.

Mrs. B: I would have liked to have seen those children leave the area and go out to the different activities that they were going to be participating in and how, because I saw the interaction between the teacher and student. And I noticed that they had everything prepared that they had planned for the children to do. But I also would have liked to see the breakdown of how they interact with each other in a classroom.

Few data bits would found to mention or imply actions to teach students how to engage in cooperative learning experiences with their peers. Thus, the social skill-building that is vital for student success was not perceived to be a major instructional focus during the periods of observation.

As noted by several administrators, students appeared to be accustomed to participating in certain activities regularly. Eleven comments referred to the preschool teachers' implementation of routines experiences.

> Mrs. C.: When the children came into the classroom they seemed to know exactly what to do. They came in, sat on their seat. The child who was the song leader was right up at the front getting ready so it's obvious that the routines are well established.

Examples of routine experiences described during interviews include calendar activities, choral recitations of letter names and sounds, counting, and oral reading of stories. Generally, administrators ascertained these daily exercises to be appropriate providing students with predictable activities. Music and movement activities were viewed as positive and fitting as well. Students were highly engaged during these exercises. Conversely, when oft practiced experiences ended to provide other instructional opportunities, transitions were not as well-executed. Comments were common about the length and disorganization of the transition periods.

> Mrs. G.: What I noticed more than probably anything was there was a problem when it was time to transition from one little thing to the other.

Although administrators sought improvements in the transition process, the overall classroom environment was considered to be appropriate. Furnishings were

viewed as age-appropriate. One principal found the classroom to be "print rich." The daily schedule was posted. Few comments were offered regarding ways that the classroom reflected the backgrounds and interests of the students themselves. Displays of student artwork were mentioned. Students' names were listed at various locations in the room and the children's photographs were displayed in some classes. However, scant evidence of cultural representation was observed in any of the preschool settings. As noted in the proceeding results, administrators were more focused on students' academic success.

Recommendations from Administrators

During the interview sessions, administrators were asked to respond to questions regarding general preschool needs, administrative support, staff training recommendations, and methods to address cultural diversity. Specifically, they were asked the following:

1. What are the instructional needs in a preschool classroom?
2. How can you support instruction in the preschool classroom?
3. Currently, how do you support your teachers' efforts?
4. What staff development efforts do you believe will be beneficial to the preschool instructors?
5. What kind of support is needed to assist the staff in meeting the diverse needs of the preschool population?

The data reveal that there were numerous responses common to the four areas discussed. Table 19 lists the categorized responses to these interview questions. More descriptive details about the content of the responses are provided on the ensuing pages.

Table 19.

Recommendations from Administrators

General Preschool Needs	Suggestions for Administrative Support	Staff Training Needs	Needs of Diverse Student Population
Formal instruction	Feedback	Diversity	ESL training
Interact with authority	Use of support staff	Culture	Affirmations from teacher
Bond with adults	In-service workshops	Classroom management	Behavior modification
Routines to familiarize with school setting	Training in classroom management	Social-emotional behavior	Support from school personnel
Capable, receptive teachers	Addressing student behavior	Parent-teacher communication	Multicultural activities training
Orderly classroom setting	Training in behavior modification	Instructional technology	Addressing social-emotional needs
Social-emotional growth	Including in whole school activities		Differentiated instruction
Prevent special education	Instructional priorities		Engagement of all students
Creativity	Family involvement		Building prior knowledge
Kindergarten transition	Modeling of instruction		Home-school connections
Remove risk factors	Instructing students		Clear expectations
Deal with diversity	Clarifying expectations		Culture of poverty training
Exploration			Routines
Play			No special needs offered

*Suggestions made for more than one topic ** Suggestions related to self-regulation

Perceived purpose of preschool programs

During interview sessions, research participants detailed their expectations for effective preschool programs. Forty-six comments were related to the potential benefits and outcomes of preschool education. Most often kindergarten readiness was named as a desired outcome of preschool experiences. Principals and assistant principals described readiness to include familiarity with the school environment, knowledge of classroom behavioral expectations, and possession of prerequisite skills for literacy acquisition. Administrators expect preschool to provide opportunities for self-directed learning through exploration and play. However, the need for formal learning experiences was expressed much more frequently, including the prevention of student placement in special education programs.

> Ms. H.: I think what I observed was just you know, the singing, you know, that type of thing. So today was really more academic. And I was very actually very pleased to see the focus on academics. And bas - - obviously I can tell that's something that they have emphasized, that the teacher has emphasized all year long.

The teacher was acknowledged as a crucial component of an effective preschool program. Comments about teacher quality were offered repeatedly. The testimonial of Mr. D. exemplifies the zeal embodied in this widely held opinion:

> Mr. D.: When they go through the hiring process is that… is just relaying to the individual that's the perspective candidate is that is the enthusiasm has got to be there. The willingness to… it's not everybody's wheelhouse to do, to

> sing the song, and to use the… to use voice, tone, and inflection to set mood and things like that. It really has to be an engaging individual who has quite frankly a lot of stamina.

With less frequency, administrators expressed a view of preschool as an avenue to foster self-expression, address risk factors, and prepare all children for school, including youngsters with privileged backgrounds. The program participants acknowledged that their leadership positions create opportunities to maintain the focus of the preschool program on its intended purposes and to enhance its effectiveness.

Recommended administrative support actions

Staff training was suggested by every participating administrator as a means to support the efforts of preschool teachers and staff members. Reflecting their focus on formal academic learning, instructional methodology was the most frequently recommended training topic. Workshops on classroom management and poverty were also proposed repeatedly.

Another recurring theme was the need to clarify expectations and provide feedback to the preschool faculty and staff. The research participants acknowledged that their focus had not been on the earliest learners in their schools. Although they could express their beliefs about the objectives of the preschool initiative, most had not clarified their expectations with those who were managing the learning environment.

> Mr. F.: My communication is much less. So it's really a philosophy I think of people toward the program. We hear a lot when there's a problem but not a lot otherwise. And so that's what I think about that. It's a reactive approach, and I think it comes from the top down.

According to the administrators, greater involvement of resource personnel could enhance the preschool program. Specialists in the area of speech, for example, could support teachers' efforts. Modeling by teacher-leaders was also suggested. Additional proposals targeted opportunities to more fully access the instructional supplies and spaces of the entire school community, including the technology and media centers. A few participant responses indicated the need to improve the preschool curriculum, to more fully address student misbehavior, and to increase opportunities for parental involvement. These activities were cited as examples of existing support functions that are currently provided by the principals.

With the exceptions of training in ways to address poverty and providing more parental involvement experiences, few suggestions for administrative support reflected the need to address cultural differences. During the concluding moments of the interview sessions, principals and assistant principals were asked to recommend actions to alleviate the challenges associated with a diverse student population.

Identified ways to address diversity of student population

When administrators responded to direct questions about cultural diversity in the preschool classroom familiar themes were recounted. Five recommendations to address student diversity had been identified in response to other preschool needs: 1) provide resource support, 2) implement routines, 3) differentiate instruction, 4) provide praise/nurturing support, and 5) address academics.

Mrs. C.: First of all, for our population, that's why this is such a positive thing for me, the - - just the basic routines, this is the way you act in school. There is a time to sit and there is a time to get up and knowing how to ask for

things appropriately and obviously they've done a good job with that. I thought they had.

Research respondents also advanced the need to address cultural differences including the needs of English language learners. The following comment was made in reference to a student who had not assimilated into his classroom community.

Mr. I.: He was playing with those Legos by himself and put his pattern together, making his thing. So that kid... probably because of the language factor and ... and his self-esteem or whatever, he... he's... he's probably kinda slowly working his way into and the culture thing too, you know. I think his family just recently came to the United States from India or wherever, and so... so there's probably a whole lot that he's catching up on and stuff.

The student's experiences were dissimilar to those of a Hispanic student in another class. The teacher exposed the class to Spanish words and phrases allowing the student to assist by pronouncing the words for the class. As suggested by administrators, the teacher incorporated methods to promote student engagement. A principal emphasized the need for these strategies.

Ms. A.: But thinking about the other diverse needs, whether it relates to the social needs of the child, just having them kinda be more keen onto when they don't have them all with you. Sometimes when you have a good little group with you, that I call "The Amen Corner," you got them singing. Then, sometimes it's easy to forget the one that's one the... over there laying down and not replying at all.

Two additional recommendations are noted in research literature on cultural proficiency. Administrators suggested the need to build background knowledge and to set high expectations for students. In the words of an assistant principal, "...if you put down your expectations, how you think they're gonna act, model it, I think they can meet your expectations. So I think you have to have high expectations for all children."

Summary of Chapter 4

This study was intended to address a major research question and two related questions. Collected documents and artifacts revealed the types of self-regulatory behaviors that were lacking among students who were not successful in the government-funded preschool setting. The teachers' responses to disruptive behaviors were documented as well. Analyses of the interview data sets provided emerging themes of self-regulation, cultural differences, and culturally promising practices that address self-regulatory development.

Addressing the Research Questions

- How do school leaders perceive the impact of cultural competencies in addressing self-regulation among preschool students?

The document and artifact reviews indicate that administrators are not involved in issues related student self-regulation until severe incidents or oft repeated misconduct occurs. Administrative intervention may result in suspension or withdrawal from the preschool program. Five students were disenrolled from the VPI program during the 2008-2009 school year. The implementation of individualized instruction to address student behavior was noted in only two of the 59 teacher responses to student misbehavior.

During post observation interviews, administrators identified practices used by culturally competent educators that were documented in the research literature. These included:1) provide resource support, 2) implement routines, 3) differentiate instruction, 4) address cultural differences, 5) address the needs of English language learners, 6) incorporate methods to promote student engagement, 7) provide praise/nurturing support, 8) address academics, 9) set high expectations for students, and 10) build background knowledge.

The principals and assistant principals offered a total of 69 remarks about student behaviors related to self-regulatory expectations. Thirty-one data bits focused on culturally proficient practices to address student needs. Within those data there was an overlap of seventeen, or 20.5 percent, of the comments on student readiness behaviors that specifically addressed the needs of a diverse preschool population.

- Are there qualitative relationships between themes of cultural competence and themes of self-regulation?

The documents and artifacts provide a window into the practices and priorities of the preschool participants. Student misconduct solicited a limited variety of teacher responses. Parent letters, redirections, and exclusion were used most frequently with 27.2%, 25%, and 13.6% of the responses respectively. Positive reinforcement and verbal reprimands each were used 11.4% of the time. Parent-teacher conferences, referrals, and a parent response comprised the remaining 11.4% of the teachers' responses. The usage of inclusive strategies was documented one time in the available documents and there was one teacher-initiated parent-teacher conference.

Program artifacts revealed staff expectations for teacher training and the rapport established with parents. Workshops and tapes are available for teachers to become more knowledgeable of the needs of students with limited self-regulatory skills. The specific needs of students selected for the government-funded program are addressed as well. But the newsletter articles and parent checklists reflect only mainstream norms. Culturally responsive messages were notably absent from the written communication.

Although administrators identified common methods to address self-regulation and cultural diversity, only four of the nine administrators offered unsolicited comments about cultural diversity during the interview sessions. Yet the need to employ practices that recognize and support individual differences was discussed frequently.

In all, forty-one interview data bits included stated or inferred comments about the diversity of the preschool population. Of those remarks, eighteen specifically noted cultural competencies that would enhance the preschool environment. Six or 33% of the competencies were directed related to student compliance in the preschool environment.

- What are the principals' levels of awareness of cultural competency and self-regulation in the preschool classroom?

Analyses of the interview data reveal administrators' perceptions of the goals, strengths, and deficiencies of the government-funded preschool program. The data coding process was used to extrapolate themes of self-regulatory concerns, cultural awareness, and culturally responses practices that promote student self-regulation.

All nine administrators recognized the importance of self-regulatory skills to support student readiness for the formal school setting. Their concerns about student compliance in the VPI preschool setting were found in fifteen data sets. Six of the

administrators cited specific examples of observed behavioral issues in the classroom setting. Within eighteen post observation interview comments, eight of the nine administrators suggested actions to support cultural diversity among the preschoolers. An additional seventeen responses inferred administrators' awareness of the importance of cultural competence.

Chapter V

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The populace of the United States is representative of nationalities across the globe. The nation's diversity is becoming even more pronounced with an increasing representation of individuals with Hispanic and other ethnic heritages (Bell & Thomas, 2007; Hepburn, 2004; Hodgkinson, 2002; Marbley et al., 2007; Meyer & Rhoades, 2006; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). However, changing demographics have not necessarily led citizens to embrace the concept of cultural diversity (Riehl, 2000).

The increasing complexity of the American population is evident in the preschool classroom where children must learn to acculturate to the formal academic setting (Gay, 2002; Phillips & Cromwell, 1994; Spiegel, 2008). During these early stages of life, when a child is becoming familiar with the language and customs of family and community, a new set of expectations and practices are introduced, often by individuals who are prepared to accommodate only the dominant culture (Gay, 2002; Ogbu, 1992; Phillips & Cromwell, 1994; Townsend, 2000, and Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Simultaneously, children are developing behavioral traits that determine if they are able to cope in a multifaceted society (Diener & Kim, 2004; Libermann et al., 2007; Liew et al., 2004).

Designed to examine the impact of cultural affirmation and self-regulation among preschoolers, this treatise presents the perceptions of school administrators and the practices of educators in a government-funded preschool program. In this concluding chapter, the research problem and questions are revisited and the research methodology is reviewed. A summary of the findings is presented as well. In addition, applications of the

findings for educational endeavors and recommendations for further research are presented.

Statement of the Problem

Preschoolers in government-funded programs are often selected for participation because of risk factors in their families and communities (Bryant et al., 2002; Clifford et al., 2005). Family units with single parents, English as a second language, and low-income households are examples of the eligibility criteria used to identify student participants. These dynamics are not as common among teachers and administrators Hodgkinson, 2002). As middle class adults, educators are less likely to have experienced the challenges related to poverty, low educational achievement, or the incarceration of a family member (Clifford et al., 2005; Dorr, 1999; Farkas & Beron, 2001; Hart & Risley, 1992; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The selected students may report to school with behavioral traits that are not productive in the traditional classroom (Diener & Kim, 2004; Liebermann et al., 2007; Liew et al., 2004; Spiegel, 2008).

Although the preschool programs are designed to increase students' chances for success in the school setting, several of the youngsters fail to adjust to the rigors of the formal classroom. Preschool students are suspended or expelled at higher rates than school-aged children, including those attending middle and high school (Bodrova & Leong, 2005; Gilliam, 2005). Thus, problems associated with self-regulation are evident among the nation's youngest and most diverse population of citizens.

The purpose of the proposed research was to investigate the trend of behavior-related expulsions in the selected preschool program and to examine the impact of culture on this phenomenon. Leadership responses to the integrated issues of self-regulation and

cultural competency were explored. The study identified the lack of cultural responsiveness as a potential barrier to student success. The research findings can provide information about the effectiveness of implemented projects, including validation of constructive practices and suggestions for improvement.

A research evaluation was conducted to study this phenomenon. Research questions were established to guide the study:

- How do school leaders perceive the impact of cultural competencies in addressing self-regulation among preschool students?
    - Are there qualitative relationships between themes of cultural competence and themes of self-regulation?
    - What are the principals' levels of awareness of cultural competency and self-regulation in the preschool classroom?

Review of the Methodology

An application of the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) was selected for a case study to examine the relationship of cultural competency and efforts to build self-regulatory skills as perceived by school administrators. Observations and interviews were conducted at various VPI sites in a southeastern Virginia school district. The case study procedures involved observations and interviews with nine administrators at the preschool sites. Audiotapes of the interviews were transcribed, coded, and sorted to establish emerging themes.

Program documents and artifacts were collected for analysis as well. Teachers' observation and discipline notes on selected students, written communication between teachers and parents, student action plans, referral forms, and formal suspension or

withdrawal notices were compiled for research by the preschool director. Artifacts included staff development agenda, staff calendars, parent newsletters, and sample forms used to gather student information from parents. The data were scrutinized for content related to the research questions. Finally, surveys were used to collect demographic data on all participants.

Summary of the Results

Findings from the research data

Finding #1: More often than other groups, students in government-funded preschool programs may be delayed in developing the self-regulatory skills needed for success in the traditional school environment.

Confirmation of behavioral concerns. A critical case was selected for this research. The government-funded preschool program was chosen for the case study because of the risk factors used as criteria to select student participants. Survey results revealed the anticipated demographic differences between the students and service providers of the government-funded program. Four-fifths (80.6%) of the students were members of African American, Hispanic, or other minority groups. These data compare with 38.8% of their teachers representing minorities.

Although children develop at varying rates, students in a program specifically designed for a particular age group would be expected to acquire similar cognitive, social, and behavioral skill levels. However, students in the selected program exhibited less self-regulated learning than anticipated for their same-aged counterparts. It is not common for learning institutions with less than 350 pupils to experience five student expulsions (1.43 %) in one school year. Nationally, .21% (about 2 students per 1000) of

public school students were expelled from school in 2006. The expulsion rate in Virginia is even lower, at .09% or fewer than 1 in 1000 students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2008).

In the program documents and artifacts presented for review, there were several reports of inappropriate physical contact between students. Children were observed hitting, kicking, and biting others. There were also incidents of students refusing to follow directions or to cease inappropriate behaviors. These findings suggest that some of the students had not achieved the level of self-regulation that is needed for success in the preschool setting. Because the children were not inhibited in their actions and did not appear to infer the feelings of their peers or supervising adults, the youngsters had difficulty focusing on instruction. They appeared to lack learning goal orientation as described by Dweck and Leggett (1998).

Finding #2: Preschools targeting students with risk factors may require a more intense effort to promote self-regulation in the classroom setting.

Addressing the need for self regulation. Directors and coordinators in the VPI program were aware that some students had not developed effortful control. The artifacts showed that the preschool providers conducted staff training and established specific procedures to respond to students' behavioral needs. They provided information and assistance to preschool teachers attempting to address noncompliant behaviors. Training workshops for the preschool staff were planned and implemented. Parenting workshops were provided as well. In addition, procedures were established to respond to disruptive conduct by students.

Despite these efforts, teachers used reactive, rather than proactive activities to address students' self-regulatory needs. They used corrective verbal commands and restrictive actions in response to misbehavior as opposed to instructional strategies designed to prevent disruptive conduct. Parent letters, redirections, and exclusion were used most frequently with 27.2%, 25%, and 13.6% of the responses respectively. Positive reinforcement and verbal reprimands each were used 11.4% of the time. Parent-teacher conferences, referrals, and a written parent response comprised the remaining 11.4% of the responses to the inappropriate actions of preschool students.

Observations and document reviews showed that these actions were not effective in building effortful control in several students. For children exhibiting ongoing difficulties, action plans were developed and implemented. The plans included individualized strategies to foster success in the classroom environment. However, the plans provided the only evidence that the backgrounds and personal attributes of students were considered when teachers responded to behavioral concerns. Most of the teachers' reactions were confined to a limited number of options regardless of the severity or frequency of the students' actions.

The use of individualized instruction to address student behavior was found in only two of the 59 teacher responses to student misbehavior. No other culturally responsive practices, such as promotion of cooperative interaction or multi-cultural curricula, were noted in the documents and artifacts provided for review. The absence of such references suggests that culturally competent responses were not emphasized by the preschool coordinators.

In the VPI program, parent involvement was mandated. Parents of the student participants were required to attend workshops and/or volunteer at school for a minimum of ten hours. But opportunities to include parents in instructional or behavioral pursuits were limited unless a student had made inappropriate physical contact with another student. A parent checklist was sent to each home to solicit information about the individual students. The checklist did not invite more detailed information about the youngsters. These collective efforts did not prevent the suspension or expulsion of preschool students. Thus, the current practices have not been successful in helping the preschoolers to recognize and adhere to acceptable classroom norms.

Finding #3: Administrators are aware of and concerned about the lack of self-regulation among students in the government-funded program.

Awareness levels of administrators. Post-observation interviews revealed that administrators focus primarily on student conduct and instructional activities when they observe in a classroom setting. For the latter focus area, this finding is consistent with the priorities of most educational leaders in the current era of accountability (Ramey & Ramey, 2004). Beyond the emphasis on academic learning, administrators expressed concerns about classroom management and individual student conduct in the preschool setting. All nine administrators recognized the importance of self-control and emotional regulation to ensure student readiness for the formal school setting. Many of their descriptive comments were related to self-regulated learning as exhibited by the students' levels of attentiveness, responsiveness, compliance, and other classroom behavioral expectations. While ninety-two of the coded data bits were related to student learning and teaching strategies, a total of ninety-five of the categorized bits were related to student

conduct, teachers' reactions to student behavior, social skills, and classroom management.

Finding #4: Practices that support cultural diversity are perceived by school leaders to build regulatory learning among students.

Perceptions about self-regulation and cultural diversity. As noted, the principals and assistant principals were very attentive to the students' conduct during the observation periods. Six of the administrators cited specific examples of observed self-regulatory issues in the classroom setting. The research participants also indicated that the preschool program could be enhanced by addressing cultural diversity. Administrators suggested eighteen explicit actions to support cultural diversity among the preschool children. An additional seventeen responses inferred administrators' awareness of the importance of cultural competence. That is, statements were made about the characteristics of the students based on assumptions about their backgrounds or economic status.

Most importantly, administrators' interview comments established a theoretical integration of self-regulation and cultural competence. Several of their observations about student behavior resurfaced during later discussions about the needs of a culturally diverse student population. Expressed concerns about student compliance in the VPI preschool setting were found in fifteen data sets. In all, thirty-five interview data bits included stated or inferred comments about the diversity of the preschool population. Six of those data included content related to both the concept of self-regulation and the concept of cultural diversity. The following interview comment illustrates a response that addresses both issues.

> Differentiating your instruction for all the learners no matter what abilities, or what nationality, or anything and...um... even suggesting maybe Ruby Payne or something, some literature with children of poverty because most of those children have those, you know, have to be a certain criteria to be in there. So I think the teacher should be versed or read up at least to have to deal with those children and um even minority males out there 'cause that was the majority of the class was minority males and...um...I think maybe train the teacher because the way they were out they were just out of control...

These data provide the most significant indication that strategies supporting cultural diversity are also perceived by school administrators to enhance the development of self-regulation.

Discussion of the Results

Interpretation of the findings

This investigation was intended to illuminate the issues associated with a lack of self-regulation among preschool students. Children who lack emotional and effortful control often suffer severe consequences in the school setting. The case study results indicate that teachers, program coordinators, and participating administrators find the preschoolers' manifestations of misconduct to be troubling. Further, the current methods used to address the behavioral concerns are not effective for all students. Yet, the government-funded preschool programs were established to prevent schooling difficulties for the nation's neediest youngsters (Clifford et al., 2005).

The research questions established for the case study are revisited below. The commentary provides insight into administrators' perceptions about self-regulatory needs and culturally competent practices in the school setting.

- How do school leaders perceive the impact of cultural competencies in addressing self-regulation among preschool students?

Perceived goals of the government-funded preschool program. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (formerly the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001) has changed the tenor of education throughout the country. Like most administrators, the case study participants were attentive to the formal learning activities that would advance student achievement. Despite the emphasis on academic accomplishment, the case study research participants recognized the importance of self-regulation to foster success in the formal educational environment. Their comments described behavioral concerns about the preschoolers and the teaching practices designed to address them. The administrators were also aware that factors in the students' backgrounds could contribute to a gap in achievement that begins with early learning. Their concerns are validated in research studies (Kaurez, 2005; Lewis, 2005; Waldron-Soler et al, 2002).

Some of the study participants were opposed to a focus on academic instruction over efforts to build students' social and emotional skills (self-regulation) during the preschool experience. Self-directed learning though exploration and play was a greater priority for those school leaders. Others expressed the need for avenues to support self-expression. For these administrators, kindergarten readiness was not limited to academic achievement.

Administrators perceived both student self-regulation and cultural competence as crucial components of a preschool program for students with identified risk factors. From the comments of the principals and assistant principals, a relationship between cultural competency and self-regulatory learning could be inferred. But the administrative participants in the study did not link the concepts through direct statements. Their awareness of the relationship is implied through their selections of common solutions to address both cultural diversity and self-regulation. Additionally, the administrators observed that addressing misconduct in isolation did little to address the individual needs of disruptive or disengaged students. Several administrators remarked on the need for alternative strategies to encourage attentive behaviors. A principal's commentary provides evidence of this view:

> She [a student] was encouraged once to come on get into it. But no one stopped to find out at any point actually what was wrong. And even when she marched around the room there was the one tear and she was trying to get with it. I don't know. I didn't observe anyone trying to find out what was wrong.

With such statements, administrators revealed their beliefs about the influence of a child's total experience. Because culture is "an integrated pattern of human behavior," (Hepburn, 2004), it presents as a major factor in the development of self-regulation. Therefore, it was appropriate to consider how cultural competence and self-regulation are linked. Responses to the next question were intended to reveal relationships between the themes as addressed in research literature and by administrative participants in the case study evaluation.

- Are there qualitative relationships between themes of cultural competence and themes of self-regulation?

Qualitative relationship of self-regulation and cultural affirmation. Efforts to develop self-regulation in preschool students should include a proactive instructional process. When children are taught academic behaviors such as listening, avoiding distraction, and attending to tasks, they are more likely to experience academic success (Bodrova & Leong, 2005; McClelland, et al., 2007; Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007). Yet, the case study research findings did not indicate that preschool teachers implement instructional strategies to promote self-regulated learning behaviors and prevent noncompliance.

According to Schunk and Zimmerman (2007), teachers can advance self-regulatory skills through modeling and creating practice opportunities for students to engage in appropriate social behavior. Pretend and real-life interactions with teachers and peers also enhance effortful control and social emotional development (Bodrova & Leong, 2005; McClelland, et al., 2007). The principals and assistant principals suggested culturally competent activities that reflect such practices. They encouraged the use of behavior modification techniques, support for social and emotional health, and differentiated instruction.

The need to build self-regulation within a culturally responsive environment was further demonstrated through direct responses to questions about: 1) the needs or goals of a preschool program, 2) suggestions for administrative support, 3) recommended staff training topics, and 4) methods to address the needs of a diverse student population. The responses were categorized and analyzed for comparable content. There were notable

similarities in the suggestions made in response to the interview queries. Nineteen of the items identified to address preschool needs, administrative support, or staff training requirements were also identified to meet the needs of a diverse student population. With duplications removed, the responses that match the purported needs of a diverse student population are shown in Figure 2. As noted, several of these recommendations are directly related to practices that would enhance student self-regulation. It is also noteworthy that comments on a variety of topics were almost universally focused on behavioral issues that could be attributed to cultural diversity and self-regulation.

Clearly, administrators were able to discuss numerous support strategies to promote self-regulation through culturally promising practices. However, the content of their commentary was not evident in the observed activities or the reviewed documents. The final elucidating research question is focused on the awareness levels portrayed by school leaders.

Identified Program Needs That Were Later Suggested to Address Diversity

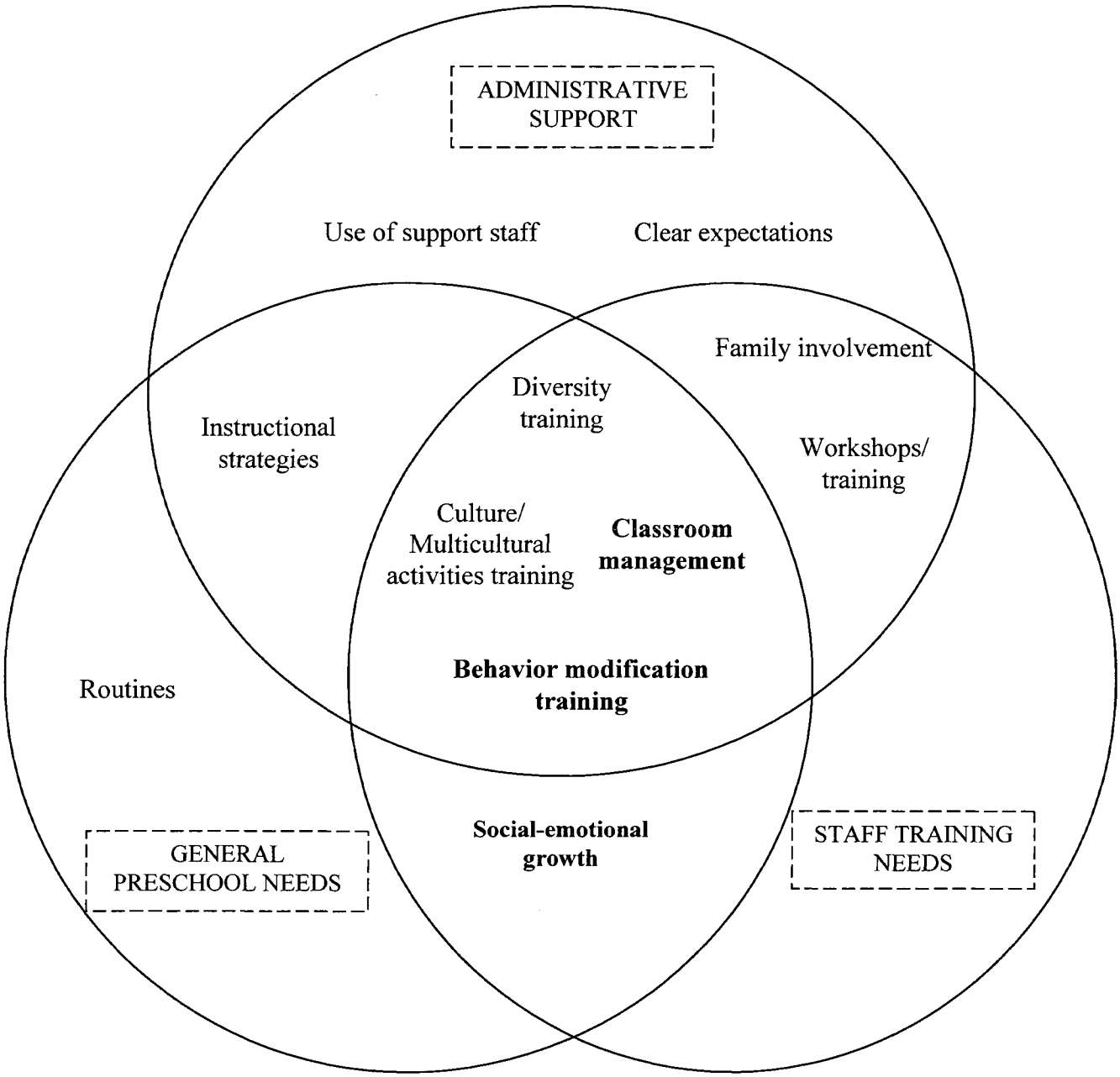

Figure 2: Overlapping recommendations of administrators. Recommendations in bold print are directly related to self-regulation.

- What are the principals' levels of awareness of cultural competency and self-regulation in the preschool classroom?

It has been noted that culturally proficient practices were not evident in the documents and artifacts that were reviewed for the case study. This could indicate a minimal awareness among preschool teachers of the need for culturally supportive practices. However, the program coordinators provided staff training designed to increase teachers' responsiveness to these issues. More training is needed. Although a significant portion of the staff development activities targeted student conduct and students from non-traditional homes, research participants repeatedly recommended additional training in classroom management and cultural diversity.

The school leaders also spoke frequently about the needs of the particular student population attending the government-funded preschool program. They recognized that the specially selected children need to acquire effortful control in order to avoid school failure. For example, a principal declared:

> And it was once again at the very end of the observation that one staff member said...reminded about raising hands because this is what's expected of you in kindergarten. So setting the tone of what is it to be a student. You come in, you've got a job to do if you want a better – you keep your spacing. You know how to line up and you do those things. That...because what that allows is for beginning instruction to occur. So that, as an elementary administrator, if those students can come through knowing what it is to be a student we're well on the road. Everything else is just gravy.

Promoting self-regulation through culturally competent practices. Five basic themes emerged from the collected data: 1) observed student behaviors, 2) observed teaching behaviors, 3) perceived elements of a quality preschool program, 3) recommended administrative support activities, and 5) strategies to address cultural diversity. Within these themes, administrators identified the characteristics of an effective preschool program for students with significant risk factors. The most compelling of the identified attributes is the need for a capable, compassionate teacher. Emotional competence in preschool is found to be related to the modeling and training of significant adults (Lamb-Parker et al., 2003). Teachers who are culturally competent can establish relationships with students to build socio-cultural consciousness (Villegas & Lucas, 2002) and to model ways to interpret the feelings of others (Eiden et al., 2007; Liebermann et al., 2007; Liew et al., 2004; and McClelland et al., 2007). Further, as noted by participating administrators and the research literature, teachers who differentiate instruction can foster success for all students (Gay, 2002; McAllister & Irving, 2002; Meyer & Rhoades, 2006; Morrier et al., 2007; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

These findings confirm that, among school leaders, there exists a general consciousness about the value of culturally promising practices in the promotion of student self-regulation. However, efforts are needed to create a heightened awareness among administrators that the integration of these concepts has the potential to accelerate student success in the educational environment.

Relationship of the current study to previous research

Increasing diversity in the United States. The government-funded preschool program selected for the case study presents a critical case example of the research

problem. The student and teacher demographics show that the backgrounds of the children are very different from that of the preschool faculty. This finding reflects the assertion of Harold Hodgkinson (2002) who indicated that the nation's population becomes more diverse with each generation. On a larger scale, the pronouncement appears to be accurate. For example, in the school division where the VPI program was implemented, there were ninety-nine Hispanic students in the kindergarten program during the 2007-2008 school year. The number of Hispanic students increased to 106 in 2008-2009, representing a 6.6% increase in the kindergarten enrollment for this ethnic group. This finding is significant in lieu of the fact that the number of kindergartners overall decreased during the same period, from 2,410 students in 2007 to 2394 students in 2008. With the increasing diversity of the student population, the need to build self-regulation using culturally affirming practices will become even more urgent.

Although several school leaders in the current study stressed the importance of literacy instruction, there is no agreement about the extent to which young preschool children should focus on literacy acquisition (Burgess et al., 2001). Some researchers suggest that students who are not afforded the opportunity to play and explore may have a limited capacity for developing self-regulation (Spiegel, 2008). According to Schunk and Zimmerman (2004), strategies to foster self-regulation are more likely to encourage the transfer of desired behaviors beyond the school environment when they are linked to other instructional activities. The case study participants' focus on academic learning for preschool students may be counterproductive to the development of self-regulatory skills.

Significance of the Findings

The findings of this case study research can address the needs of culturally diverse groups of preschool children with identified risk factors. Suggestions were identified through the lenses of school leaders who work with culturally diverse student populations on a daily basis. Most of the research on techniques to build self-regulation was conducted on middle class Caucasian families (Lamb-Parker, et al., 2003). However, the literature has provided a myriad of culturally proficient practices such as affirming students' identities by adjusting the curriculum, providing choices to address various interests and learning styles, and avoiding antagonistic disciplinary actions (Bodrova & Leong, 2005; McClelland, et al., 2007). Based on the perspectives of the research participants, such practices can be used also to build self-regulation among young learners.

Cultural dissonance in the schooling environment. For administrative leaders, the findings of this case study have increased significance when considering other research indicating that behavioral problems exhibited by young children may be directly related to their presence in a setting that is misaligned with their own cultural heritages (Gay, 2002; Meyer & Rhoades, 2006; Phillips & Crowell, 1994; Pintrich, et al., 1994). When the result for young students is suspension or expulsion, the children are abandoned by the very institutions that were established to ensure their success. But, culturally responsive practices provide inclusive, rather that exclusive practices that are responsive to ethnic diversity (Gay, 2002).

Another critical research finding is that students who misbehave may be attempting to leave the classroom setting because they are frustrated with the academic

experience. Research suggests that student behavior is impacted by school factors, including instructional delivery methods and the social context of the classroom setting (Thomas, Bierman, Thompson, & Powers, 2008). These findings should increase the resolve of all school leaders to require training in and implementation of culturally responsive practices in all school settings to enhance self-regulation among learners, and hence to promote universal success.

In sum, culture is as much an individual experience as it is a group phenomenon. When administrators are not attentive to cultural differences, they cannot assist teachers in addressing the circumstances that define each student.

Suggestions for Additional Research

The research literature and the research participants in this study recommended training in cultural awareness and culturally proficient practices for instructors and administrators. A study on the self-regulatory attainment of preschoolers after such training has been provided could confirm the influence of culturally competent practices in addressing student behaviors and school readiness.

The impact of cultural affirmation among school-aged students warrants study as well, especially in schools with high poverty or high minority enrollment. Finally, research on the roles of administrators in culturally competent school environments with low suspension and expulsion rates could further illuminate the impact of culturally affirming activities in the educational environment, providing school leaders with models for positive change.

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Appendix A

Sample Introductory Letter

Date

Dear Participant:

The Early Adventures Program has provided successful learning experiences for children and their families since 1998. The program is a partnership with the Chesapeake Public Schools and the YMCA of Hampton Roads as an implementation of the Virginia Preschool Initiative. A research project has been planned to focus on the manner in which self-regulatory skills are acquired by students.

The Early Adventures research study will include a review of specific documents and records, observations, interviews, and the use of demographic surveys. The confidentiality of all collected information will be protected by the researcher. No individual identifying information will be disclosed.

I will be pleased to address questions you may have about this research effort. You can contact me by calling 757.547.1165 or via email at jamesabr@cps.k12.va.us. I will follow-up with a telephone call to request that you take part in this project; your participation would be entirely voluntary. I look forward to working with you in the coming months.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Anita James

Appendix B

LETTER OF EXPLANATION

Date

Dear Preschool Educator:

Enclosed you will find a survey for the preschool teachers of the Early Adventures program. The survey is part of a study of the Virginia Preschool Initiative in our school division. By completing this survey, you will contribute information that will provide a collective overview of the background and experiences of the preschool staff.

Please respond to each item on the survey. Your responses will not be used for any individual evaluations. The information will be used solely to help answer questions about the Early Adventures program.

Please complete your survey and submit it to your site's Family Involvement Specialist in the enclosed envelope no later than April 30, 2009. If you have questions about the survey, or about the Early Adventures research project, you are invited to contact me at 757.547.1165 or via email at jamesabr@cps.k12.va.us. Thank you for your participation in this part of the research study.

Sincerely,

Anita B. James

Director of Elementary Curriculum and Instruction

Appendix C

Survey for Preschool Teachers

Name _____ Date _____

School Site / Room Number _____

Race or Ethnicity.... ❑ White ❑ African American ❑ Hispanic ❑ Other _____

Sex.....❑ Male ❑ Female Age.....

Education:

Highest Degree.....	
Major or Degree Area.....	
Recent Professional Development Experiences	_____ _____ _____

Teaching Experience:

Years with Early Adventures.....	
Other teaching experience: _____ Location / Grade or Subject	
Total years of teaching experience.....	

Thank you for completing this survey. Your involvement in this research effort is invaluable!

Appendix D

Survey for Preschool Administrators

Name _____ Date _____

School Site(s) _____

Race or Ethnicity.... ❑ White ❑ African American ❑ Hispanic ❑ Other _____

Sex.....❑ Male ❑ Female Age.....

Education:

Highest Degree.....	
Major or Degree Area.....	
Recent Professional Assignments	_____ _____ _____

Administrative Experience:

Years with School Division or Early Adventures.....	
Other administrative experience: _____ Location / Position	
Total years of administrative experience.....	

Thank you for completing this survey. Your involvement in this research effort is invaluable!

Sample Observation Protocol

Appendix E

School _____ Room Number _____

Date _____ Number of Students Present _____

Observation Time: Beginning _____ Ending _____

Teacher Assistant Present ❑

Overview: Description of Learning Activities _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Description of Learning Environment _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Observed Events and Interactions – make a check (✓) as often as the following are observed:

Teacher's Actions	Frequency of Occurrence	Critical Incidents
Positive, trust building interactions between individual students and the teacher		
Affirmation of a student's cultural identify through the use of culturally relevant curricula or resources		
Small group learning experiences		
Assignment of cooperative learning activities		
Encouragement to role play and make believe		
Choices provided for students		
Scaffolding of student learning to counter fears of failure		
Presentation of measured challenges		
Avoidance of antagonistic disciplinary actions		
Other _____		
Other _____		
Other _____		

Direction/Explanation from teacher _____

_____

Student response: _____

_____

Direction/Explanation from teacher _____

_____

Student response: _____

_____

Student Action: _____

_____

Teacher response: _____

_____

Student Action: _____

_____

Teacher response: _____

_____

Additional observations _____

_____

_____

Appendix F

Sample Post-Observation Interview Protocol

1. Describe the teacher-student interactions that you observed and your impressions regarding any particular event or circumstance that occurred during the observation period.

I am going to a few questions. Whenever possible, please frame your responses around a specific event or initiative. If not, that's okay, but connecting your responses to what you observed today or in the past would be helpful.

2. How do you support instruction in the preschool classroom?

3. How do you support your teachers' efforts?

4. What staff development efforts do you believe will be beneficial to the preschool instructors?

5. How do you support the staff to meet the diverse needs of the preschool population?

Appendix G

Revised Post-Observation Interview Protocol

1. Please take a moment to review your notes. Describe the teacher-student interactions that you observed and share your impressions regarding any particular event or circumstance that occurred during the observation period.

2. Were any critical issues evident related to preschool education?

I am going to a few questions. Whenever possible, please frame your responses around a specific event or initiative. If not, that's okay, but connecting your responses to what you observed today or in the past would be helpful.

3. What are the instructional needs in a preschool classroom?

4. How can you support instruction in the preschool classroom?

5. Currently, how do you support your teachers' efforts?

6. What staff development efforts do you believe will be beneficial to the preschool instructors?

7. What kind of support is needed to assist the staff in meeting the diverse needs of the preschool population?

VITA

Anita Brown James

Birth Date: July 21, 1955

Birthplace: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Education:

1993-1996	The College of William and Mary Williamsburg, Virginia Educational Specialist
1986-1989	Norfolk State University Norfolk, Virginia Master of Arts
1973-1977	Hampton Institute Hampton, Virginia Bachelor of Arts

Employment:

Chesapeake Public Schools:

1999-Present	Director of Elementary Curriculum and Instruction
1996-1999	Principal – Sparrow Road Intermediate School
1990-1996	Principal – Greenbrier Primary School
1989-1990	Assistant Principal – Greenbrier Elementary School
1983-1989	Teacher – Southeastern Elementary School

Educational Services:

1979-1983	Title I Teacher – Christ the King Elementary School

Loudoun County Public Schools:

1977-1979	Teacher – Guilford Elementary School