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# TURNOVER AMONG CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER DIRECTORS IN MILITARY OVERSEAS SETTINGS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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## Acknowledgements

*Each time a person stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, they send forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, these ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance. - Robert F. Kennedy*

Like many doctoral students my journey has proven to be a long and challenging one, in my case certainly longer than most. In Dec 2012, after an already long path to prepare for my doctoral defense that included three changes of major professors, completing oral/written comprehensive exams twice, and the complete reconstruction of my committee- I was finally ready to defend. It was that same month that the Department of the Army announced an immediate investigation into its hiring procedures at Army Child Development Centers (CDC) nationwide after a serious incident at one of our child development centers. As a senior Army staffer responsible for the command's child protection and background check screening program I was caught in a whirlwind of political events and professional challenges that took over my life and pulled me away from my anticipated defense date that year.

It was during that most stressful and trying year that I came to understand the power of sheer willpower and persistence in overcoming what often seemed insurmountable obstacles. During these challenging times, I was humbled by the opportunity to work for leaders committed to do the right thing in the face of adversity that started "ripples of hope" that would sustain me during this very difficult 5 year period with the belief that good things would come from all the chaos and there was light at the end of this very long tunnel- albeit a small glimmer of light.

I would never have been able to finish my dissertation had it not been for the many supporters who served as "pathways" in achieving this goal. I want to start with

my chair Dr. Chan Hellman who agreed to serve as my chair having never met me and in spite of knowing how far along I was in my writing. From the beginning he was a cheerleader, supporter, and facilitator but most importantly believed “we” could finish. His belief inspired me to believe it could happen and would happen. The fact, that like me he was a child advocate established a connection between us from the beginning. When he shared his research interests on hope theory it resonated with me as truly it was hope that kept me going during some of the most discouraging times.

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## Abstract

Turnover among child care staff has reached significant proportions with one third of all child care workers leaving their jobs each year, (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2004). Leadership turnover in child care programs has also surfaced as a problem which affects the quality of child care and has serious implications for children. From a phenomenological approach, this study explored child care director turnover and provides some preliminary data on how center director experience Army child care programs as adult work environments distinct from learning environments for children. Data were gathered, using source triangulation, from current child-development center directors, former child-development center directors, and child-development services coordinators.

The study was conducted in American military child care centers in Germany. The first series of interviews included three child-development services coordinators, five current directors, and three former directors. The second round of interviews were conducted 12 years later at the same installations and included two current directors and one Child/Youth Services Coordinator. Study participants were asked background questions about their experience, education and training; their reasons for entering the field; their working conditions and job satisfaction/dissatisfaction; and their intentions to remain in or leave their job. This phenomenological study was exploratory in nature and was meant to generate rather than to test hypotheses. By focusing on the everyday experiences of Army CDC directors and discussing these experiences in the directors' own words, this study provided new insight into how child care directors experience their work and reflect on the issue of center director turnover.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Each year approximately one third all child care workers leave their jobs in the United States (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2004). At the beginning of this study, turnover in child care settings was linked to inadequate compensation and low pay. In 1998, one study reported that "Over 70% of this predominantly female workforce earns an income below poverty level" (Whitebook, Phillips, & Howes, 1998, p. 6). Nevertheless there have been increases in funding for child care programs with most of the additional funding increasing the availability of child care (Barnett, 2003). Despite the increased funding for programs there has been little impact on the improving staff compensation and the resulting problem of staff turnover.

At the time of this study many studies continued focus on the problem of direct child care staff turnover. However, a new dimension of the child care staffing problem was surfacing. Exacerbating the problem of teacher turnover, the field was experiencing the emerging problem in the continuity of leadership of child care programs.

The turnover of child-development center directors is of special concern since research suggested a link between the early-childhood center directors and program quality (Bloom, 1996a, 1996b; Bloom & Scheerer, 1992; Bloom, 1992; Decker & Decker, 1984; Greenman & Fuqua, 1984; Peters & Kostelnik, 1981; Whitebook et al., 1997, Lower, J. K. & Cassidy, D. J., 2007).

Morever there was ample literature correlates quality programs with positive outcomes for children (Berrueta-Clement, Schweinhart, Barnett, Epstein, Weikart, 1984; Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, Bryant, & Clifford, 2000; Campbell, Lamb, &

Hwang, 2000; Hayes, Palmer & Zaslow, 1990, Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2001; National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Child Health & Human Development, Center for Research for Mothers & Children; 2000; Shonkoff, J. P., & Phillips, D. A. (Eds.), 2000; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004); NICHD Early Child Care Research Network. 2005). The problem of child-development center director turnover must first be viewed against the background of the national child care problem.

## Background

**Demographic and sociological changes.** The entry of increasing numbers of mothers in the workforce since the 1960s has resulted in an unprecedented demand for out of home child care services. In 1950 18% of mothers with children under 18 were in the labor force. By 2005, the number of mothers in the labor force had risen to 70.5%, (US Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2006) and by 2013 it remained at that same level (US Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013).

More specific to the current study, the number of working mothers with very young children has also increased substantially. In 1975, only two of every five (approximately 39%) mothers with children under age 6 held a paid job. By 2005, 62.6% of mothers with children under age 6 were in the labor force. Further increasing the demand for child care, was the rise in single parent families which doubled between 1970 and 1990, (Carnegie Corporation: Center for Economic and Policy Research, 1994). Between 1990 and present the number increased another 10% with approximately 25% of children under 18 live in single-parent families (Carnegie, 1994) holding about the same in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).

**Availability of child care and problem of turnover.** There is a large gap between the supply and demand for child care. 75% of women and 57% of men surveyed found it difficult to find child care (Galinsky, 1986). These shortages were largely a result of the difficulty that existed in attracting and retaining staff. For military families, 71% of spouses of enlisted personnel with a child under the age of five reported a problem with obtaining child care (DOD 1997b) with shortfalls in meeting the demand reported more than a decade later (Floyd & Phillips, 2013).

Results from the National Child Care Staffing Study (Whitebook et al., 1998) indicated a staff turnover rate of 31% in center-based settings. This high rate of staff turnover in child care centers was among the country's top 10 job categories with the highest turnover rate and was four times higher than the 7% turnover rate for elementary school teachers (Whitebook & Bellm, 1999). Of the 820 job classifications tracked by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, only 22 had an average pay lower than that of child care workers. Short order cooks, parking lot attendants and maids are some of the job categories whose average earnings fall within 5% compared to child care workers (Center for the Child Care Workforce, (2005). Fast food businesses were one of the few employers that report higher levels of annual turnover than child care centers, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2002).

Much of the literature on child care turnover has focused on teaching or direct care staff. Though the problem of director turnover has received little consideration, some preliminary studies that begin to address the issue of director turnover are now available. In 1996, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has released data gathered over a 10-year period from hundreds of early-

childhood programs that completed the NAEYC accreditation process. The data gathered suggested that staff stability—both direct care staff and leadership—as a critical component of quality child care (Bredekamp &Willer, 1996).

A 1997 study looked at accreditation as a strategy for improving child care quality (Whitebook et al., 1997). The study found that highly trained teaching staff were more likely to leave their jobs if they earned lower wages than average, worked in programs with less stability of experienced and educated teaching staff to include the program director

The Center for Child Care Workforce released a study in 2001 that investigated staff turnover in high-quality child care centers. This longitudinal study addressed the stability of teaching and administrative staff in relation to program quality. A finding of the study was that center director turnover was high and contributed to teaching staff instability. Compensation coupled with turnover of teaching staff appeared to contribute to directors' departures from programs and the profession. This research stands as one of the first longitudinal studies of center directors. The conclusion of the 2001 study was that "Turnover Begets Turnover" (i.e., the turnover of center directors) impacts the stability of teaching staff, and likewise the instability of high turnover of teaching staff contributes to center director turnover. Whitebook (2003) found that over one third of directors interviewed within four years left position. While the professional and demographic characteristics of those who left and stayed at their centers were similar, directors were more likely to leave if they earned lower wages. Moreover, of the center directors who left their program, only half continued to work in child care.

**Military child care and problem of turnover.** Military child care is the largest employer-sponsored child care program in the United States and provided care for and estimated 176,000 children ranging in age from four weeks through 12 years (Moini, Zellman, & Gates: Rand NY: Families and Work Institute; 2006). The United States Army alone provided care for 65,000 children worldwide (US Army CFSC, 2000). Over the past 2 decades, military programs have improved staff compensation to some extent as compared to the civilian sector, nonetheless, the military is still plagued with challenges in both recruiting and retaining staff (Campbell et al., 2000).

The Department of Defense recognizes that the availability of high quality child care as both a readiness and retention issue (DOD Social Compact, 2004). The availability of quality child care is especially critical now as the Department of Defense works to provide additional family support and services for military families impacted by stressors associated with increased war time missions. The military child care system was lauded by the White House as a "model for the nation" and recognized by both scholars and national organizations for its systemic approach to increasing the quality, affordability, and availability of child care for military service members (Campbell, Appelebaum, & Martin, 2000; Devita, & Montilla, 2003; Gates et al., 2006; National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies [NACCRRA], 2007). Nonetheless, the military faces some of the same challenges as the nation as a whole in ensuring access to quality, affordable child care and still struggles to meet the current child care demand (Moini, J., Zellman, G., & Gates S., 2006).

The Army's commitment to child care was expressed by the highest leaders within the Department of Army. General Dennis Reimer, former Chief of Staff of the Army wrote:

> Today's Army is committed to quality child-development services for our families. In fact, childcare is a readiness issue for Army personnel. Soldiers need to know and be assured that their children are in good hands so they can accomplish the mission- the mission of being ready to defend their country. (DOD, 1997a, p. iii)

Family support for military families is a top priority for the Department of Defense, especially for those families directly impacted by support for the Global War on Terrorism and facing the hardships and stresses of extended deployments. According to a report of the House Armed Services Committee (H.R. Report No. 101-121) child care is closely linked to readiness and the retention of our forces. A summary of the report reads:

> Child care is an important readiness and retention issue for military families: readiness because single parents and dual service couples must have access to affordable and quality child care if they are to perform their jobs…; retention because family dissatisfaction with military life —and particularly the inability of many spouses to establish or obtain suitable employment —is a primary reason trained military personnel leave the service (H.R. Report No. 101-121).

The Army found that providing child-development services impacted mission readiness and retention of a stable, high tech workforce. With this type of commitment to child care, the problem of turnover raised serious implications for Army leadership as

they strived to meet availability goals (Floyd & Phillips, 2013; (Campbell, Appelebaum, & Martin, 2000).

Action was taken to increase staff compensation in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the implementation of the Military Child Care Act of 1989, substantially reduced turnover of direct care/teaching staff from a high of 300% to approximately 40% (DOD, 1997a) and by 2014 was reported at 27% (Whitebook, Phillips, & Howes, 2014). Though marked improvements in the quality, availability and affordability of military child care have been achieved over the past 30 years, the recruitment and retention of staff remains a challenge (Campbell, et al., 2000).

A study sponsored by the Military Family Research Institute when asked to look at the link between turnover and compensation in military programs. They called for the need to look beyond compensation as reasons for turnover in military programs (Schwarz et al., 2003). Findings from the study noted that professional development opportunities, educational training, career ladders allowed staff to gain positions of more responsibility resulting in enhanced morale, increased job/professional commitment and reduced turnover (Schwarz, et al., 2003).

One of the study's conclusions was that the turnover cycle is hard to control and is circular where: "low wages lead to turnover in qualified employees, turnover of colleagues to job stress for remaining employees, job stress leads to lower satisfaction, the hiring of lower-qualified employees further decreases job satisfaction, low job satisfaction leads to turnover in the remaining qualified employees" (Schwarz, et al., 2003, p. 32). The study also noted that in addition to direct care staff turnover, the turnover of Army child development center leaders was a concern.

The problem of leadership turnover in military child care began to surface in the early 1990's. The most dramatic report was in the area of Army Child Development Services (CDS) coordinator turnover. Coordinators are the chief administrators of the military installation's child-care program. Most coordinators were teachers by profession and came to the CDS coordinator position after first working as a child-development center director. In 1991, 10% reported that they had been in the coordinator position for less than 1 year; by 1993 that number had increased to 27% (Department of the Army, 1995).

In early 90's concerns regarding the retention and recruitment of Army CDC Directors led to initiatives to increase director compensation. Army CDC Directors were upgraded from GS-7, GS-8, GS-9 positions to GS-9, GS-10, and GS-11 positions (based on size of center/ enrollment). The average grade in was a GS-8 (Salary range: $44,335- $57,631 adjusted to the 2016 pay scale) with the average CDC Director in graded as a GS-9 ($48,968-$63,634 adjusted to the 2016 pay scale). Though an improvement, the pay and grade level for Army CDC Directors was not commensurate with those for Department of Defense school teachers whose positions were GS-11/12 (Salary range: $59,246- $92,316 adjusted to the 2016 pay scale) with administrator pay grades at the GS-13 level ($84,443- $109,781 adjusted to the 2016 pay scale), though the educational requirements and specialized experience for the positions were essentially the same.

Additional strategies used by the Army to attract center directors included special recruiting trips to national early-childhood conferences like NAEYC specifically seeking qualified applicants to fill the increasing number of open positions. The Office

of Personnel Management (OPM) recognized CDC director positions as specialized and "hard to fill" and had granted a special hiring authority to accept external applications on an "open continuous" basis. One service also developed a professional intern program in order to attract qualified college graduates into leadership positions (DOD, 1997a). In addition, at the start of this study a policy change was made across Department of the Army Europe that exempted the CDC director position from the policy limiting overseas service to 5 years.

**Need for Study**

Whitebook (2001) found that there were notable differences between child care teachers, assistant teachers, and center directors when looking at the reasons for turnover and suggested the importance of distinguishing among specific child care center positions when predicting job turnover (Whitebook, et al., 2001). A 2003 study on child care staffing by the Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University (MFRI, 2003), called for the need to address both direct care and director turnover in military child-development centers. Bloom (1992), in looking at the role of the Directors in program quality, noted that very little research exists on this group of child care professionals. This study employed a phenomenological methodology to understand the lived experience of child-development center directors as a distinct group. By focusing on the everyday experiences of these directors and discussing these experiences in the directors' own words, this study would provide new insight into how child care directors experience their work.

This study was also distinct in that it looked at child-development center directors working in military centers in overseas settings. Due to unique circumstances

in overseas military life i.e., rotational personnel policies, hiring preferences for military spouses, regular moves of personnel, shortages of alternatives to military child care, and the unique and stressful nature of the military mission, the problem of turnover in child-development programs was even more significant.

This study provides new insights into child care as an adult work environment. The need to explore child settings as adult work environments and the relationship to turnover had been expressed in several studies to include research by Manlove (1993); Whitebook et al., (1982); Phillips, Howes, Whitebook (1991); Rutman (1996); Schwarz et al., (2003); and Lower, J. K. & Cassidy, D. J. (2007); Talan, T. N., Bloom, P. J., & Kelton, R. E. (2014).

This study had implications beyond military child care and could shed new light on the problem of turnover of CDC Directors in child care programs across the nation. Research now suggests that the turnover of child care staff, whether direct care or management had negative consequences on both the availability and the quality of child care.

From a workforce perspective, corporations have recognized that in order to recruit and retain a workforce, child care availability and quality concerns for working parents must be addressed. Parents who were not worried about their child care arrangements are more productive. Galinsky (1986) noted, among 16 different measures of employee work behavior, all three studies found that their managers believed their company's child care program improved recruitment, retention, morale, and public image. Low absenteeism and low turnover as a result of employer sponsored child care were among the top five benefits in two of the studies (p. 3).

The availability of child care as a workforce issue gained increasing corporate interest. A growing body of research accumulated suggesting a link between directors and program quality and outcomes for children (Bloom & Scheerer, 1992; Decker & Decker, 1984; Greenman & Fuqua, 1984; Peters & Kostelnik, 1981). Though this link might be indirect, it is nonetheless significant if the problem of turnover results in negative consequences for children's development.

Finally, this research provided insights for policy-makers to use when shaping future policies and practices. The effects of these policies would have far reaching implications for the thousands of American children who "grow up" in these child care programs.

**Statement of the Problem**

The primary purpose of this study was to gain insight into the problem of turnover among Army child-development center directors working outside the continental United States (OCONUS) military centers. Researchers have only begun to look at CDC directors as a distinct group. Due to the gap in information about child-development center directors, the research questions that guided this study were purposely broad. The overarching research question that guided this study is: "How do Army CDC Directors working OCONUS make sense of and interpret the nature of their work environment and the issue/problem of center director turnover?" The following sub-questions were asked.

Question 1: How do Army CDC directors working OCONUS describe the nature of their work environment?

Question 2: What are the factors within the work environment that influence Army CDC Directors decisions to leave or stay in their position?

Question 3: What are some of the factors outside the work setting (i.e., personal, family, etc.) that influence Directors decisions to leave or stay in their position?

**Definition of Terms**

*Burnout* is defined as a state of emotional exhaustion, detachment from or depersonalization toward those being served (e.g. children and families) and a lack of sense of personal accomplishment about one's work (Maslach & Jackson, 1986).

*Child-development center (CDC) director* is the administrator of center-based child care program serving children under age 6 years with the capacity for 30-300 children.

*Child-development services (CDS) coordinator* is the administrator of the military installation's child care system. The CDS Coordinator is responsible for child care service delivery which typically includes center-based child care, family child care, and surge care optional programs.

*Child/Youth Services (CYS) coordinator* is the administrator of the military installation's child and youth system. The CYS Coordinator is responsible for child care service delivery which typically includes center-based child care, youth services, family child care, surge care and optional programs.

*HQ USAREUR* acronym stands for Headquarters United States Army Europe. At the start of the study, HQ USAREUR was responsible for oversight of all Department of Army child care programs in Europe.

*Installation Management Command –Europe (IMCOM-E)* at the end of the study, IMCOM-E was responsible for oversight of all Department of Army child care/youth programs in Europe.

*Job commitment* is defined as the degree which individuals are absorbed by their job (Brooke, Russell & Price, 1988).

*OCONUS stands* for "outside the continental United States", and for the purpose of this study will be limited to overseas settings in Germany.

*Organizational commitment* is defined by Mowday, Steers, Porter (1979) as "(1) strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values; (2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and (3) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization" (p. 226).

*Quality child care* dimensions of good quality child care are, group size, staff, child ratio appropriate for age of children, warm interaction between staff and children, and a developmental curriculum (Bredekamp, 1996)

*Separation rates* measure the percentage of workers (directors) who leave an occupation during a year (Whitebook, 1990).

*Turnover* measures the number of directors who voluntarily leave a program during a year.

**Assumptions**

1. All responses to the personal interviews and demographic questionnaires reflected the honest perceptions of the participants.

2. Qualitative methods were more adaptable to dealing with multiple realities and the interacting influences which affect decision making and are responsive to values

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This view holds that "reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6).

**Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of the problem of staff turnover in child care programs across the nation. The need for research on child care directors as a distinct group was discussed. The purpose and research questions that guided this study were delineated. The assumptions for this study were also outlined.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature on quality child care, turnover, and child outcomes, and the CDC director's role in quality, turnover, and child care as an adult work environment.

Chapter 3 describes the research methods used to answer the questions posed by this study. Next, chapter 4 includes a profile the participants in the study and present findings and analysis of the data. Finally, chapter 5 contains a discussion of the findings, conclusions, implications and recommendations as a result of the data analyses.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature and includes the child-development center (CDC) director's role in providing quality early-childhood programs, turnover theory, and child care as an adult work environment. The research and other literature were identified by completing a computer search of EBSCO data bases available through the library of University of Oklahoma, Comprehensive Dissertation Indexes, the Education Index, and First Search. Additional articles and studies were found through the references reported in articles and papers located through these indexes. The literature search covered the period of 1998 to 2014.

### Quality, Turnover, and Child Outcomes

In evaluating early-childhood programs, the National Academy of Early Childhood (NAECP), the accrediting arm of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), published standards for quality programs based upon a review of existing research and input from child development experts (Hayes et al., 1990; Whitebook, 1997). Generally agreed upon dimensions of program quality included; (1) health and safety requirements, (2) responsive and warm interaction between staff, children, and families; (3) developmentally appropriate curriculum, (4) limited group size, (5) age appropriate caregiver child ratios, and (5) providers and administrators trained in child development or a related field (Bredekamp, 1996; Kontos & Riessen, 1987; Whitebook, 1997).

Research has shown these standards to contribute to positive outcomes for children (Burchinal et al., 2000; Campbell et al., 2000; Hayes et al., 1990; Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2001; National Institute of Child Health & Human Development Center for Research for Mothers & Children, 2000). In a longitudinal study of children

continually enrolled in child care between the ages of 1.5- 3.5 years old researchers found that positive early childhood experiences lead to gains in children's social competence (Campbell et al., 2000). Peisner-Feinberg and Burchinal (1997) found positive gains in cognitive and social- emotional development for children in quality child care setting especially for those children identified as "high risk."

Likewise, research has also shown a relationship between high quality programs and staff stability (Cummings, 1986; Howes, Hamilton, & Phillipsen,1998; Kontos & Fiene, 1987). Howes et al., (1998) described the importance of teacher-child relationship quality to children's social development. The stability of care is one dimension of quality programs which has been identified as having an association with children's development in child care (Cummings, 1980; Howes, 1988; Phillips et al., 1991). Cummings (1980) found that children attending child care programs prefer consistency in caregiving staff.

Additional studies showed that children fared better in all areas of development (i.e., social, emotional, and cognitive) when their child care settings had low staff turnover and administrative stability, and higher levels of staff compensation (Galinsky, et al., 1994; Kontos, et al., 1994; Cost, Quality, & Outcomes Team, 1995; Whitebook et al., 1989).

In findings from the National Child Care Staffing Study (NCCSS) study Whitebook et al., (1990) found that children attending lower quality centers with more staff turnover were less competent in language and social skills. Thus, just quality standards have can have positive outcomes for children, turnover among child care staff can contribute to negative consequences for child

development. In the National Association for the Education of Young Children accreditation criteria, one of 10 quality criterion is the stability of the program administration. Copple and Bredekamp (1990) of the NAEYC write, "The quality of the early-childhood experience for children is affected by the efficiency and stability of the program administration" (Copple, C., Bredekamp, S., 1990, p.46).

**The Director's Role in Quality**

The research on child care staff turnover is dominated with concerns over the turnover of direct care/teaching staff while there is a gap in our understanding of the impact of turnover among center directors. Nevertheless, studies suggest that the stability of leadership in early-childhood education programs contributes to program quality. Some evidence suggests that the director establishes or at least significantly contributes to the organizational climate essential for a quality program (Klinkner, J.M, Riley, D., & Roach, M. A., 2005; Decker & Decker, 1984; Greenman & Fuqua, 1984; Jorde-Bloom, 1988; Peters & Kostelnik, 1981). Bloom and Sheerer (1992) noted that the director, "shapes the work environment for the teaching staff who in turn provide the critical link to children" (p. 580). A study by Stremmel, Powell, and Benson (1993) supports this relationship and suggests that the director in his/her leadership role establishes the standards and expectations for the staff to follow in their day to day behaviors. Klinker, et al., (2005) noted the relationship between staff satisfaction and increased retention when working in a program with a good organizational climate.

A study conducted by Phillips, Scarr, and McCartney (1987) suggests the overall quality of the center was highly associated with the director's experience. In another study, Kontos and Fiene (1987) found that attending children attending

programs with more experienced child care directors performed better on measures of language and social skills.

In addition to experience, a director's formal education was also found to have a relationship with program quality. Jorde-Bloom's (1989) study involving 103 directors of child care programs found that a director's level of formal education was predictive of program quality as measured by the Early Childhood Classroom Observation Scale. This study supported findings by Bredekamp (1989), who found "the most salient predictor of overall program quality is a director with a strong educational background in early-childhood education/child development, and at least one college degree (bachelor's or master's)" (p.1).

Bloom (1997) assessed the effects of early-childhood director training on improving program quality. The study found that after participating in 16-month leadership course, both directors and their staff indicated directors demonstrated increased competency resulting in improvements in the overall positive organizational climate of the center. "The leadership training not only improved the participants' own self –efficacy and perceptions of themselves as leaders, it also results in demonstrated improvements in the quality of their centers" (Bloom, 1997, p. 17).

In a 1997 report looking at the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation as a strategy for improving program quality released by the National Center for the Early Childhood Workforce, authors suggested that the NAEYC accreditation criteria had some structural shortcomings and needed to focus more on staffing issues to include the stability of both direct care and program leadership. As a result, the 2005 NAEYC quality standards placed a more significant

emphasis on staff stability and staff qualifications. "We also wanted to explore the background of the person with program oversight, given the emerging relationship between center quality and director performance (Bloom, 1996b; Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995) (NCECW 1997, p.19). Increasingly, the literature suggests the significant role center directors play in creating and sustaining high quality child care programs (Bloom, 1996a, 1996b; Cost, Quality and Child Outcome Study Team, 1995; Whitebook, et al., 1997).

**Turnover Theory**

Researcher have explored factors believed to underlie turnover among child caregivers/teachers (Berk, 1985; Bollin, 1993; Fleischner, 1985; Hildebrand & Seefeldt, 1986; Lawrence, et al., 1989; Kontos & Riessen, 1993; Bollin, 1993; Ross, 1984; Stremmel, 1991 in Deery-Schmitt & Todd, 1995; Kontos, et al., 1994).

Deery-Schmitt and Todd's (1995) work on family child care provider turnover draws from stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and organizational turnover theories (Hom, Caranikas-Walker, Prussia & Griffeth 1992). Porter & Steers (1973) wrote, "The final component of the turnover model is based on organizational turnover research that focuses primarily on the relationship between job attitudes and turnover.

Early approaches correlated job attitudes most often job satisfaction with actual turnover rates" (Steers, 1973, p. 123). Later models have suggested that withdrawal cognitions serve as intermediaries between attitudes and turnover (Dalessio, Silverman, & Schuck, 1986; Mobley, Horner & Hollingsworth, 1978; Hom, Griffeth & Sellaro, 1984). Deery-Schmitt and Todd (1995) explained that "these withdrawal cognitions

include thinking about quitting one's job, intending to search for a new job, intending to quit one's job" (p. 136).

Job dissatisfactions was proposed as having a relationship with intention to leave which then preceded turnover (Mobley, et al., 1978). Additional research supports that there is a link (albeit weak) between job dissatisfaction and turnover rates (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Mobley, Griffeth, Hand & Meglino, 1979). Hellman (1997) in a study of federal workers found a consistently negative relationship between job satisfaction and intention to leave that was moderated by age, tenure, and tenure with the employing organization.

It is also suggested that this intention to leave may be affected by certain attitudes, such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment as well as variables like the presence of alternative work (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979; Stremmel, 1991).

Some studies suggest a relationship between burnout, high turnover rates and poor morale on the job in a variety of human services occupations (Pines & Aronson; 1988; Maslach & Pines, 1977; Whitebook et al., 1982). Other studies suggest that working conditions and work environment are predictive of job satisfaction and burnout (Cherniss, 1980; Jayartne & Chess, 1983; Maslach, 1982). Emotional exhaustion was viewed as a dimension of burnout stemming from prolonged occupational stress (Maslach, 1982; Matteson & Ivanevich, 1987). A goal of this study was to explore the interrelationship between personal and organizational factors that contribute to emotional exhaustion among child care staff.

Phillips et al., (1991) suggested using caution in any broad application of existing literature to those working in child care. They point out that much of this turnover literature is based on industrial, managerial and white-collar workers rather than the context of child care workers. Even the early literature on burnout, while inclusive of human service professionals, draws primarily from workers in child protective and residential child welfare facilities (Cherniss, 1980; Jayaratne & Chess, 1983; Maslach, 1982).

Low pay, lack of benefits and stressful working conditions have frequently been cited as reasons reported by child care workers for their high turnover rate (Jorde-Bloom, 1987; Kontos & Stremmel, 1988; Whitebook et al., 1982). These extrinsic job elements in some contexts may play a larger role with turnover than do intrinsic factors associated with meaningfulness and challenge of child care many of which are sources of job satisfaction (Beck, 1985; Jorde-Bloom, 1988; Kontos & Stremmel, 1988; Lindsay & Lindsay, 1987).

While some studies have addressed turnover of caregivers and teachers in child care settings (Whitebook et al., 1982; Berk, 1985; Jorde-Bloom, 1987; 1988; Lindsay and Lindsay; 1987; Stremmel, 1991), a relatively small number of studies have been done which include child care directors (Jorde-Bloom, (1988); Strober, et al., (1990); Phillips et al., ( 1991); Manlove, (1993); Stremmel, Benson, Powell (1993); Hayden, (1997), Whitebook et al., (2001), and Whitebook (2003). These studies now serve as a starting point in building a conceptual framework of the turnover process for CDC directors.

Jorde-Bloom (1988) study examined both personal and organizational issues influencing job satisfaction and organizational commitment in early-childhood work environments. She found that sources of frustration and satisfaction emerged in five main areas: co-worker relationships, supervisor relationships, the nature of the work itself, pay and opportunities for promotion, and work conditions in general. A key finding of this study was the high level of professional commitment expressed by participants with 83% indicating that they would make the same career choice. Another significant finding was the extent of the overlap between the sources of frustration and satisfaction for participants. The study also looked at the differences between those holding different positions (i.e., child care director, versus teacher) and found that program administrators scored higher in satisfaction and commitment than did teachers and program assistants. These differences were statistically significant in the area of "the nature of the work itself and "overall commitment to the center." Jorde-Bloom called for the need for more research on the effects of different roles and suggested that the "degree of control an employee has many have a moderating effect on the negative aspects of job dissatisfaction" (p.120).

Stremmel and Benson (1993) looked at child care directors in addition to teachers and teacher assistants. When examining the relationships between emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction, and communication among staff working in a child care center environment. They found a correlation between job commitment and turnover. The study found that satisfaction with working conditions and the work itself were related to lower emotional exhaustion among child care directors, teachers, and assistant teachers. Opportunities for staff communication via staff meetings influenced

satisfaction with working conditions and work itself and this mitigated emotional exhaustion. They also found that lower job satisfaction with the work itself and working conditions predicted burnout in teachers and assistant teachers but not program directors. The study noted that there is variability between in the staff working at different levels and in different roles within an organization experience their work and called for additional research on the whether these differences were attributed to the roles or differences in background characteristics.

Hayden (1997) looked at the role of child care center directors in Australia and served to gather baseline data regarding their level of satisfaction and sources of frustration in their work environments. Hayden noted while Australian directors tended to be better compensated than their counterparts in the United States salaries did not seem to be a major motivator for directors in this study. However, because turnover was still significant, Hayden (1996, 1997) suggested that researchers look beyond the issues of low pay and low status or what Herzberg (1987) called "hygiene factors" for reasons for staff dissatisfaction and turnover in child care work environments. The study noted that center director plays a critical role in creating an organizational climate that is supportive and relates to staff satisfaction and the quality of care provided. The study found noteworthy the fact that directors as a whole are committed professionals working long hours within stressful environments for relatively low pay and low status and called for more research about the characteristics and the role of the director.

A 1990 (Strober et al., 1990) study looked at child care centers as workplaces and explored factors impacting child care staff satisfaction inclusive of child care teachers, assistant teachers, and directors. Five elements of the work environment

emerged as related to staff satisfaction to include pay and benefits, adequacy of staffing, leadership style of director, professional development opportunities, and relationships with children and families. The study illustrated specific policies that child care programs involved in the study implemented to enhance job satisfaction.

Phillips et al., (1991) study called for the need to look at child care as an adult work environment in an effort to identify predictors of job satisfaction and turnover. While the study found staff wages to be the most important negative predictor of staff turnover and most positive predictor of quality care provided to children, the researchers also noted the importance of a supportive work environment and also called for the need for additional research on how the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of child care work interact to impact the quality of care and staff turnover. The study served to highlight that importance of viewing child care settings as adult work environments and exploring the quality of work life for the adult caregiving staff is a critical component of quality programs. This study found that nearly 45% of the study participants expressed that it was “very or somewhat likely” that they would leave their current position, even while indicating high levels of career commitment, in fact, 6 months after the study 37% of these employees left their positions with 2/3 of those leaving the child care profession altogether. Philips suggested that this is indicative of that dichotomy many child care workers experience where they are satisfied with the intrinsic nature of their work but dissatisfied with the more extrinsic aspects of compensation, benefits, and social status.

Manlove’s (1993) study looked at variables associated with staff burnout, turnover and retention and also called for need to look at child care settings as adult

work environments. She cited prior research that established a link between staff turnover and quality care for children (Cummings, 1986; 1990; Kontos & Fiene; 1987). Burnout has also been linked to high turnover rates and poor morale (Pines & Aranson, 1988; Pines & Maslach, 1978; Whitebook et al., 1982). Manlove's study attempted to determine if there was a link between burnout and program quality. The researchers' contention was that burnout can impact program quality in two ways. When staff leave, continuity of care for children and essential element of quality care is negatively impacted. Likewise, if staff who are burnt out stay then care will be less than optimal.

The researchers suggested that staff burnout was affected by both characteristics of the individual as well as the work setting. The study found that higher levels of organizational commitment were associated with less emotional exhaustion and increased personal accomplishment. In addition, individual personality characteristics (neuroticism), work role conflict and work role ambiguity were associated with higher levels of burnout.

In 2001, the Center for Child Care Workforce released the most definitive study of turnover among child care staff to date. This longitudinal study looked at the turnover process in high-quality child care centers in California over a 6-year period. The study included teachers, assistant teachers, and directors and explored the characteristics of the staff that stay, leave and enter centers over time.

The study suggested a turnover cycle where turnover results in more turnover. The researchers posit that the cycle starts with low wages leading to turnover of qualified employees. The resulting turnover of staff leads to increased job stress for the employees remaining which leads to lower job satisfaction. The hiring of lower

qualified staff as replacements further decreases job satisfaction, which feeds the cycle resulting in turnover among the remaining qualified employees.

The study highlighted the increasing upward trend in the turnover of center directors and constitutes the first longitudinal study of director turnover. Researchers found that while better compensated than their teacher counterparts, child care directors still are not well paid and that this contributes to turnover.

The data also suggested that the high rate of turnover among teaching staff negatively impacts director's job satisfaction.

Other findings of the study were that instability and turnover among directors was linked to higher teacher turnover. Data also suggested that teacher behavior was influenced by the stability of the director, and that in programs that experienced director turnover teachers were rated as harsher in their interactions with children thus impacting program quality.

The most alarming finding of the study is the high percentage both teacher and directors who after leaving their program left the child care profession altogether. This study found that only 50% of teachers and directors who left their programs remained in child care. This has implications for the overall staffing requirements for child care programs, as this ongoing cycle of turnover has resulted in staffing shortages for an occupation where demand continues to rise. In fact, more than half of the programs in the study indicated that they were unsuccessful in replacing all the staff they lost.

A follow on report based on data collected Center for Child care Workforce staffing was released in 2002. This longitudinal study differentiated between various types of turnover (i.e., job turnover, position turnover, and occupational turnover) and

specifically focused on job and occupational turnover. This study highlighted the high levels of instability among child care staff and found that over half of child care center teaching staff and a third of directors interviewed in 1996 had left their centers by 2000. Fifty percent of those teachers/directors who left their positions also left child care as a profession (Burton, A., Whitebook, M. Burton, A., Whitebook, M., Young, M., Bellm, D., Wayne, C., Brandon, R. N., & ... (2002).

Though director turnover was lower than teacher turnover, the high rates were alarming. Researchers suggested that center director turnover may be more impactful on staff morale and overall program operations due to the central leadership role directors assume. Another key finding was that centers that had a higher rate of director turnover also had a higher rate of teacher turnover which underscores the pervasive instability among all positions within the center-based workforce.

**Child Care Settings as Adult Work Environments**

Child care as an adult work environment still needs to be explored as a research area. Some studies suggest that poor morale which precedes turnover in child care settings may not be attributed exclusively to low pay and status but also to organizational climate (Whitebook et al., 1989). Factors impacting organizational climate include: co-worker collegiality, supervisor support, decision making structure, professional growth opportunities, goal consensus, communication and general working conditions (Schwarz et al., 2003).

Information on how child care staff (directors, teachers, etc.) experience their work is limited. Even more limited are studies that include the perceptions of these work environments from the perspective of center directors. In fact, few of the studies

above included center directors: Whitebook et al., (1982); Bloom and Sheerer (1992); and Stremmel, Benson, and Powell (1993). Research in various organizational settings, including child care centers, has demonstrated variability in ways individuals at different levels of the organizational hierarchy perceive organizational practices and working conditions (Jorde-Bloom, 1988; Moos, 1976; Seashore, Lawler, Mirvis & Cammann, 1983). Thus, one must use caution in applying research that included only direct care/teaching staff to the experiences of those in leadership positions within the same type of work setting (i.e., a child care center).

More recent research (Porter, 2012) looks at environmental and personal characteristics, such as lack of support from administrators and coworkers, and motivation as reasons child care staff may leave the job. A study by Russell (2010) indicated that when teachers perceived their directors as a more skilled administrator (scheduling, enforcing policies/standards) were less likely to leave their position. Torquati (2007) tested a model that looked at education, motivation, compensation, workplace supports, links to quality and intention to stay in the profession and found that only motivations for child care work predicted intention to stay in the profession.

A 2007 study explored the relationship between child care program administration, organizational climate, and global quality using the Program Administration Scale (PAS) developed by Talan & Bloom (Lower, J. K. & Cassidy, D. J., 2007). Both program administration and organizational climate were found to be positively correlated with quality.

## Summary

The review of the literature consisted of examination of the research on quality child care and child outcomes and discussed stability of care as one dimension of quality programs. This research showed that there were positive outcomes for children when their child care settings had low staff turnover and administrative stability. Research that suggested a link between the director and quality child care was also discussed. Turnover theory was examined and the generalizability of this research to the field of child care staff was questioned. Finally, the need for additional research into the area of child care settings as adult work environments was discussed. This new research area may provide insight into how CDC directors experience their work and might suggest links between turnover and the nature of child care leadership.

## Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the rationale for the methodology and the procedures utilized in the study to answer four research questions. The overarching research question that guided this study is: "How do Army CDC Directors working outside the continental United States (OCONUS) make sense of and interpret the nature of their work environment and the issue/problem of center director turnover?" The following sub-questions were asked.

Question 1: How do Army CDC directors working OCONUS describe the nature of their work environment?

Question 2: What are the factors within the work environment that influence Army CDC Directors decisions to leave or stay in their position?

Question 3: What are some of the factors outside the work setting (i.e., personal, family, etc.) that influence Directors decisions to leave or stay in their position?

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section is the research rationale and approach and includes a description of the underlying assumptions on which the qualitative methodology (Moustakas, 1994; Tesch, 1990; Merriam, 1998) used in this study is based. The second section describes the selection of the participants (i.e., the directors, former directors, and coordinators) and the setting where the research was conducted. The third section includes information about the development and the purpose of the instruments used for data collection. Discussion of how the reliability and validity were established is included in this section.

The fourth section identifies the procedures used to collect the data. This section includes the steps taken to contact the interviewee/questionnaire participants and

a step by step procedure for conducting the interviews and for administering the questionnaire. The last section describes the process used to analyze the data collected to answer the research questions. This last section is followed by a chapter summary.

This study used phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994; Tesch, 1990) as the research method to study the issue of turnover among Army child-development center directors working in outside the continental United States (OCONUS) settings. Personal interviews were the primary method for data collection. A general survey was also administered to collect basic demographic and descriptive data from all child-development center directors working in Army centers within Europe.

**Research Rationale and Approach**

This study used a qualitative approach in order to capture a deeper and richer understanding of the research phenomenon from the perspective of the participants. Qualitative research seeks a holistic perspective or "essence" of the phenomenon under study. In contrast, quantitative or positivist research tends to reduce the study of phenomena to the least number of component parts (i.e., variables). The qualitative researcher strives to study a phenomenon in context and to understand how the synergy and interactions between the parts work to form a whole (Merriam, 1998).

Qualitative research is based on the philosophical assumption that "reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). The increased use of qualitative approaches emerged largely as a result of researchers concern that positivist perspectives fell short in capturing complex phenomena especially those involving humans and human interaction. Omry (1983) writes that the increased use of qualitative methodologies was largely because researchers view that

natural science methods failed to adequately describe human beings and their lived experiences. Qualitative researchers seek to understand how people make sense of their world and their experiences. Patton (1985) explains,

> [Qualitative research] is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of the setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting- and the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting…the analysis strives for a depth of understanding. (p.1)

There are a variety of traditions in qualitative inquiry. A phenomenological perspective guided this study. Phenomenology as a philosophy has been attributed to Edmund Husserl who focuses on the nature of knowledge, how we come to know the world, and the understanding of how one experiences a phenomena. Husserl's perspective was epistemological. Phenomenology, then is the study of our experience or how we experience (Smith, 2003). The phenomenological approach attempts to understand social phenomena such as "child-development center director turnover" from the subject's own perspective. Phenomenological researchers are interested in the way people experience their world (Tesch, 1990).

Moustakas (1994) wrote that phenomenology like other qualitative theories and methodologies share the following characteristics; in contrast to traditional positivistic, quantitative research theories. These commonalities include

- Recognizing the value qualitative designs and methodologies, studies of human experiences that are not approachable through quantitative approaches;
- Focusing on the wholes of the experience rather than solely on its objects of parts;
- Searching for meanings and essences of experience rather than measurements and explanations;
- Obtaining descriptions of experience through first person accounts in informal and formal conversations and interviews;
- Regarding the data experience as imperative in understanding human behavior and as evidence for scientific investigations;
- Formulating questions and problems that reflect the interest, involvement, and personal commitment of the researcher;
- Viewing experience and behavior as an integrated and inseparable relationship of subject and object and parts and whole. (p. 21)

Phenomenology at its core is the study of phenomena and how one experiences (Smith, 2003). Therefore, phenomenological researchers start with the experience of the phenomena and then try to glean the essential features or the "essence" of the experience.

**Role of the Researcher**

A key characteristic in qualitative research is the role of the researcher "as the primary instrument of data collection" (Merriam, 1998, p. 7). Instead of using a survey, computer analysis, or some other quantitative tool the data is mediated through the

researcher. Qualitative research by its nature is "interpretive." Patton (1990) wrote that "interpretation is essential to understanding of experience and the experience includes the interpretation" (p. 69).

The qualitative researcher acknowledges up front his or her biases, world view, paradigms and perspectives as the filter through which data is viewed, interpreted and analyzed. What distinguishes qualitative research from quantitative on this issue is the researcher's acknowledgement that that data is filtered this his/her lens. As Lecompte and Preissle (1993) noted, qualitative research "is distinguished partly by its admission of the subjective perception and biases of both participants and researcher into the research frame" (p. 92). Nonetheless, as Mertens (2003) suggested, all research is laden with values.

In relationship to this study, the researcher worked in the military child care settings as a child and youth administrator for more than 15 years. It is the researcher's belief that her experiences in this role and familiarity with the organizational culture enhanced her understanding and sensitivity to nature of the work and experiences of military child-development directors. Nonetheless, it is important for the researcher to establish credibility of the study by "…suspending as much as possible the researchers' meanings and interpretations and entering into the world of the unique individual who was interviewed" (Hycner, 1985, p. 281).

**Procedures Employed in Phenomenology**

Husserl is credited with being the founding father of the philosophy of phenomenology, he did not provide detailed instructions for researchers regarding specific methodological procedures. Thus, it was up to individual researchers to

translate his philosophy into concrete research procedures (Tesch, 1990). Moustakas (1994) is one of several researchers who delineates procedures for conducting research within this tradition.

Moustakas suggests several key steps in phenomenological research. The researcher develops research questions to explore the phenomena under study and collects data through personal interviews. Data analysis follows. The first step of analysis calls for researchers to transcribe the interviews and immerse themselves in the data in order to gain a closeness with the data and "a sense of the whole" (Tesch, 1990, p. 93).

The researcher then identifies statements from the interviews describing how the individuals experienced the phenomena and lists significant statements. The statements are compiled into lists with all statements relevant to the research questions asked delineated and assigned equal importance or value. The data is reduced by eliminating repetitive data or overlapping statements. The researcher then groups the statements into meaningful units using detailed description, verbatim examples from the participants. This process of data reduction is referred to as horizonalization. The statements are then tested to ascertain if they contain a "moment of the experience" that can be labeled (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121) and serves to better understand the phenomenon under study. These are viewed as "horizons of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121).

Following horizonalization, the researcher views the remaining statements and clusters statements that are common to many of the participants into themes (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher accomplishes this by going back and forth from the data and the emerging themes (Tesch, 1990). It is also during this step that the

researcher removes statements that are repetitive. Following these steps, the researcher is then prepared to write the data analysis using structural and textural descriptions. Textural descriptions tell what the participants experienced and structural descriptions describe how the phenomenon was experienced. The researcher follows this step by then developing a composite description of the essential meaning of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). The result of this process is the emergence of the "essence" of the phenomenon. Merriam (1998) explained that "(e)ssences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced" (p.15).

Thus, the end goal is for the phenomenological researcher is to leave the reader with a better understanding of the experience of the participants through a composite description of the phenomenon studied. Tesch (1990) wrote that the result of phenomenological analysis is a higher level synthesis and description of the fundamental structure of the phenomenon. This study sought to explore the lived experiences of Army child development center directors in or to develop "a understanding about the features of the phenomenon" of center director turnover (Creswell, 2013, p. 81).

The transcribed interviews were compiled into a single Microsoft Word document results and yielded more than 500 pages of data. I immersed myself in the data in order to gain insight and understanding of the lived experiences of the participants. This involved hours of reading and re-reading each interview and organizing the data into listings of statements relevant to the research questions with each statement being assigned equal importance or value. I then made notes regarding

themes that emerged and synthesized the groupings and eliminated repetitive or extraneous data.

**Study Setting and Selection of Participants**

This study was conducted at American military child-development centers in Germany. At the time of the study, there were 75 Army child care centers operating within Germany. These nonprofit centers operated under the auspices of the Department of the Army and were funded by a mix of appropriated funds and parent fees (approximately a 50/50 split).

Each center was authorized one director position. The center director position was funded with appropriated funds and based on the size of the center was rated between a GS-9 ($48,968-$63,634 per year) to a GS-11 ($59,246-77,019 per year) with the pay scale adjusted to the 2016 rates.

Each director was required to possess a minimum of a bachelor's degree with at least 24 hours in early childhood or elementary education. Directors supervised a staff of between 10 to 100 teachers, education technicians, program assistants, and support staff.

The center enrollment at each program ranged from 40 to 300 children between the ages of 6 weeks to 5 years. Centers were classified as small (40-80 children), medium (81-150 children) and large (151-300 children). The programs, in addition to being certified by the Department of Defense (equivalent to state licensure), were also accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

The primary sample for this study included all current directors and Child Development Services Coordinators working in Army child care programs within a 60-

mile radius from the Kaiserslautern Military Community. Five current directors and three Child Development Services (CDS) Coordinators participated in the in-depth interviews. In order to capture information and the perspective of directors leaving their positions, all directors leaving their positions between the months of July- September and working within a 60-mile radius of Kaiserslautern, Germany were interviewed. Three departing directors were interviewed. In addition, 70 center directors completed demographic questionnaires.

**Instrumentation**

The primary method for gathering data in this study was interviews. Three separate semi-structured interview schedules were developed for the purpose of this study: one for directors, one for former directors, and one for coordinators. These instruments included predetermined questions and allowed for the addition of probing questions to gather additional information or to clarify a response.

Berg (1995) writes that interviewing is:

> An effective method of collecting information for certain types of research questions and, as noted earlier in this chapter, for addressing certain types of assumptions. Particularly when investigators are interested in understanding the perceptions of the participants or learning how the participants come to attach certain meanings to phenomena or events. (p. 35)

Survey or interview construction followed guidelines outlined by Berg (1995). The first step called for specifying the objectives of the study. The second step involved the development of an outline that listed the broad categories relevant to the study. The categories used to guide the survey instrument were drawn from a review

of the literature presented in chapter 2. The resulting four categories are the nature of work or work environment, factors in the work environment influencing directors' decisions to leave or stay in their position, and factors outside the work environment influencing directors decision to leave or stay in their position. In addition, general demographic data were gathered.

Questions were developed related to each of the above listed categories. For example, under the demographic section questions included name, age, gender, marital status, number of children, education, professional affiliations, and work history. For the category on work environment, questions were asked about satisfactions/frustrations of the job, sources of support, relationship with supervisor, and relationship with staff. The last two categories asked about factors in and outside the work environment influencing directors' decisions to leave or stay in their position, intention to leave job, perceptions of alternate work, intention to remain in job, etc.

Survey construction involved the order or sequencing of the instruments. Demographic questions were included at the beginning of the interview instruments in order to gather some general demographic data and to establish rapport with the interviewees. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) suggest that collecting demographic data is "generally nonthreatening and allows the researcher to move from more simple and less obtrusive questions to one's that are more complex" (p. 174).

In addition to the sequencing of the survey instrument, consideration was given to insure that the language and phrasing of the survey questions were clear. Denzin (1970) suggested the following guidelines for interview question formulation:

> Questions should accurately convey meaning to the respondent; they should motivate him to become involved and to communicate clearly his attitudes and opinions; they should be clear enough so that the interviewer can easily convey the meaning to the respondent; they should be precise enough to exactly convey what is expected of the respondent….; any specific questions should have as the goal discerning of a response pattern that clearly fits the broad contents of the investigation…. (p. 129)

After the development of the interview questions, the interview instrument was pretested by sending the interview schedule to subject matter experts on the HQ USAREUR Child Development Services staff. These subject matter experts reviewed the survey questions for clarity, bias, and were also asked to recommend additions and deletions to the instruments.

After the subject matter review and modifications, the surveys were pretested on two CDC Directors, one Child Development Services Coordinator, and two former directors. Participants in the pretest were asked for their comments and recommendations for changes to questions for clarity and relevance. Final revisions were made based on feedback from the subject matter experts, pretest participants, and based on additional review of the literature related to this topic.

Though three separate instruments were developed for directors, former directors, and coordinators- the questions on all three were essentially the same with some slight modifications. For example, coordinators and former directors were asked to reflect on the satisfying and frustrating aspects of the job of center director while

current directors are asked the same question in present tense (i.e., “What are the frustrating/ satisfying aspects of your job”?).

**Procedures to Collect Data**

Permission to conduct this research was requested through Headquarters United States Army Europe Child Development Services (CDS) for the first round of interviews. Telephone contact was made with all the directors and coordinators working within child care programs within a 60 mile radius of Kaiserslautern. Of the eight child-development centers in the 60 mile radius all eight CDC directors agreed to be interviewed as did the three CDS Coordinators at those installations. Interviews lasted between 1 hour and 1 hour and 30 minutes and were tape-recorded.

The initial interviews with the current directors and CDS Coordinators were scheduled between the months of March-December and were conducted face to face. The three coordinators were asked to provide names of directors leaving their positions between the months of July- September of the same year. Three directors left or were in the process of leaving during this time period. Interviews with the two of the three leaving directors were conducted by phone and was one conducted face to face. It should be noted that just 1 year after the initial interviews only one of the original eight directors was still in position and within two years of the initial interviews all directors in the original group had turned over.

The second round of interviews was conducted in by phone. Permission was requested through Installation Management Command (IMCOM) European Region. Emails were sent to all directors and CYS Coordinators in the original three communities. Due to restructuring of the military in Europe, two of three installations

had merged and were in the process of closing and the third installation was significantly downsizing. Only five of the original eight CDCs were operational with two scheduled to close within the next year. Two of the five directors agreed to participate in the interviews. One of the two CYS Coordinators responded to the email requests to participate.

Pretesting of the instruments was conducted in the month of March. The actual interviews were scheduled between the months of March-December. Interviews lasted between 1 hour and 1 hour and 30 minutes and were tape-recorded. During the interview, the researcher took detailed notes with the concurrence of the interviewee. The tape recordings of the sessions were then transcribed. This study used in-depth interviews as the primary means for data collection. This study used a triangulated source approach and included interviews of directors, former directors and Child Development Services coordinators. Triangulation was used as a means of mutual confirmation of measures and trustworthiness of findings (Jick, 1983). Multiple perspectives were used to increase reliability and internal validity and decrease the possibility of bias. Internal validity and reliability were also addressed by attention to the instrument construction and the careful analysis of the data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) in addressing the reliability and validity of qualitative research write that if the interviews were reliably and validly constructed; if the content of the documents were properly analyzed; and if the conclusions of the study rest upon data then there is confidence in the study that is no different than in other (i.e., quantitative) methodologies.

The researcher also considered the issue of external validity. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) maintain that in qualitative research threats to a study's external validity result when a study's comparability and translatability are compromised. They explain that:

> Comparability is the degree to which the components of a study, including the units of analysis, concepts generated, population characteristics, and setting are sufficiently well described and defined that other researchers can use the results to compare to other studies addressing related issues. Establishing the comparability of a study makes it scientifically useful.
>
> Translatability is related, but distinct; it is the degree to which the researcher uses theoretical frames, definitions, and research techniques accessible to and understood by other researchers in the same or related disciplines. A study is of little use to other researchers if its theoretical basis or the constructs around which it is organized are so idiosyncratic that they are understood only by the person who did the study. The lack of comparability and translatability reduces the usefulness of a study to interesting cultural salvage. (p. 348)

Thus, in order to establish comparability and translatability, the researcher must establish that the phenomenon under consideration is comparable to other similar settings and that the theoretical constructs are understood across disciplines.

**Summary**

This chapter included the rationale for using a qualitative approach to this study. A description of the population of this study and the procedures for collecting data and

analyzing data completed the discussion in this chapter. The next chapter, chapter 4, profiled the participants and presented the findings from the study.

## Chapter 4: Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The goal of this phenomenological study was to understand the problem of turnover among military child-development center directors. The first round of interviews included in depth interviews with eight center directors and three CDS Coordinators working in military child care programs in Germany. Five of the directors were working in child-development centers and the other three were in the process of leaving their position as center directors or had recently left their position. The initial interviews took place between March and December. The second round of interviews was completed 12 years later and included two current center directors and one Child/Youth Services (CYS) Coordinator. Interviews lasted between one hour and one and a half hours and were audio-recorded.

Each interview started by collecting basic demographic information on each participant via a data sheet. The researcher then asked a set of predetermined questions to gather information about the phenomenon of center director turnover. Follow-up questions were asked when needed to gather additional information or to clarify responses. The audio-taped interviews were then transcribed professionally prior to analysis of the data.

Data analysis was completed using phenomenological methods following the guidelines of Moustakas (1994). The analysis process consisted of five basic steps. The first step of analysis called for the transcription of the interviews and immersion in the data (Tesch, 1990). The second step reduced the data through a process called horizonalization, whereby all the statements relevant to the research questions asked were delineated and assigned equal importance. Following horizonalization, the

remaining statements and clusters statements common to many of the participants were organized into themes. The fourth step called for the researcher to prepare and write the data analysis using textural and structural descriptions. Structural descriptions describe how the phenomenon was experienced and the textural descriptions tell what the participants experienced. In the fifth step, a composite description of the essential meaning of the experience (Moustakas, 1994) is developed. The result of this process is the emergence of the "essence" of the phenomenon.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section briefly describes each of the respondents. The second section presents the common themes that were found. The third section provides a brief summary of the chapter.

**Description of Participants**

A brief description of each participant is presented below. 11 interviews were conducted in the initial data collection. The first five participants were current child-development center (CDC) directors at the time of the interview. The next three participants were directors leaving their position as CDC Director or had just recently left the position. The third group of participants was Child Development Services Coordinators who served as supervisors of participants in the first two groups. The second round of interviews included two current CDC directors and one Child/Youth Services Coordinator. Of those who participated in the interviews 3 of the 4 CDS Coordinators had a degree in early childhood and the fourth had a degree in home economics. Of the CDC Directors who participated in the study 5 had elementary education background, 3 had early childhood degrees, 2 had business degrees with additional early childhood coursework. All the participants' names used in this

dissertation are fictitious to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

**Current CDC directors.** Current Director A. is a 40-year-old African American female. Ms. A. is the new center director for an 80-capacity CDC with a teaching staff of 25 teachers/caregivers. Ms. A. possesses a bachelor's degree in early-childhood education (ECE) and developed an interest in working with young children while in high school and took courses in home economics. She worked in a program open to teens from low-income families where she could work for pay during the summer. During this time, she gained experience working at a local child care center. Ms. A. went to college and obtained a bachelor's degree in primary education and later earned a master's degree in human relations. Immediately after college, Ms. A. taught third grade for 4 years and then taught sixth grade for 1 year but she was not happy. She realized that teaching primary grades was not something she really wanted to do and she wanted to pursue another career path. Though she retained the goal of becoming a center director she also wanted to serve in the military. Ms. A. resigned her teaching position and went into the military for 3 years and worked as a cook. While completing her military service, she married and had children. Because of the difficulty balancing the military with her family commitments, Ms. A. got out of the military after 3 years on a motherhood discharge and moved with her military spouse to another installation. For 3 years, Ms. A. taught culinary arts, then after her military spouse's relocation to Germany she sought employment with Army child care programs and took a position of caregiver in order to get in the system with the goal of getting a Lead Caregiver position.

After finishing the Army child care training program, she spoke with her

training curriculum specialist to get advice on whether she should pursue a child-development associate credential. Since she already had her bachelor's in early-childhood education, the trainer advised her to go to graduate school. Four months after getting promoted to the lead teacher she was promoted to an assistant director. Shortly thereafter, Ms. A. enrolled in a graduate program in human relations and then was promoted to a training and curriculum specialist and worked in that position for 1 year and 2 months before moving with her family back to the United States where she transferred in as a trainer. Still hoping to be a director, her supervisor at the time advised her to go back to Europe due to the number of vacancies there. She transferred back to Europe as a trainer and after 4 months was moved to a child-development center director position when a vacancy occurred. At the time of the interview Director A. had been in position for 3 months.

Current Director B. is a 45-year-old Caucasian male. Mr. B. is the CDC Director for a center with a child capacity of 60 and supervises a staff of 20 teachers/caregivers. Mr. B. has a bachelor's in early childhood, elementary education, and secondary education with a major in math. Mr. B. also holds a master's in child psychology and early childhood and has experience teaching students from birth to college. Mr. B. has taught in both public and private schools and had 14 years' experience as a child-development director before moving to his current position. Mr. B. worked in all sectors from profit to nonprofit to governmental organizations. Mr. B. initially worked for the IRS as a director for the IRS' in-house child care, which was administered though GSA. Through this federally affiliated program he became familiar with other opportunities for employment with the government and was particularly

interested in positions overseas that would provide an opportunity for travel and to see the world. After applying he was selected for a position in Germany and had been in this position for a year and a half at the time of the interview.

Current Director C. is a 47-year-old Caucasian female. Ms. C. is single with two adult children and originally came to Europe as a military spouse but has since divorced. Ms. C. is the CDC Director of an 85-child capacity center and supervised a teaching/caregiving staff of 22. Ms. C. has an associates' degree in nursing and a bachelor's degree in management. Ms. C. worked as a nurse for about 10 years and then moved overseas with her military spouse. After following her husband in his transfer to Okinawa, she got involved with a kindergarten and a preschool program long before the Army Child/Youth Services program were established by the Dept of Army. Relying on her background in pediatric nursing, Ms. C. worked as a director of a small part-day preschool. She enjoyed the new position and decided to go back to school to pursue a degree in management and also complete some additional early-childhood coursework. Later, she and her family moved to Europe where she continued her management degree and worked for a local University connected with the military. After completing her management degree, she took training and curriculum position with the Army child-development program and stayed in that position for 3 years. Her goal was to gain upward mobility, so she took a promotion to an assistant director position. After 1 year as the assistant director she was promoted to a director position. At the time of the interview, Ms. C. had been in the director position for 7 years.

Current Director D. is a 37-year-old, African American female. Ms. D. is the spouse of a military service member and has two school age children. Ms. D. is the

CDC Director of a CDC with a child capacity of 122 and supervises a teaching/caregiving staff of 40. She has a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a master's degree in education. Ms. D. worked with children for over 12 years and taught in the public school system for the majority of those years with children between kindergarten and eighth grade. Ms. D. went to Europe a military spouse and first attempted to find a teaching job in the Department of Defense Schools (DODDS). After having a difficult time gaining employment in DODDS schools due to limited number of vacancies, Ms. D. tried other avenues and explored military child care. What appealed to Ms. D. about military child care was the ability to continue to work with children year round without some of the paperwork requirements associated with teaching (i.e., grading papers, report cards, etc). During the time of the interview, Ms. D. had been in the CDC Director position for approximately 5 months.

Current Director E. is a 50-year-old African American female. Ms. E. is single with one adult child. During the time of the interview, Ms. E. supervised a teaching and caregiving staff of 47 and directed a 181 capacity CDC. Ms. E. holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a master's degree in human relations. After finishing college, she decided to go into the military after speaking with a recruiter who convinced her she could pursue a singing career while in the military. The singing career never really panned out as a military officer, so Ms. E. served as executive officer and also an equal opportunity counselor. An injury resulted in her having to resign her commission. After leaving the military, she went to Europe to live with her adult daughter and grandchild. After moving to Germany, she decided to look into employment. While substitute teaching at the DoDDS school, she decided to apply for

an assistant CDC director's job. She was selected for the position and worked as an assistant CDC director for a year. From there, she moved to a training curriculum specialist in another community. After eighteen months, she was asked by her former installation to come back to assist in getting her previous CDC accredited. Ms. E. returned to her former CDC and helped get the program accredited. Shortly thereafter, that installation closed permanently and a new director position was vacant at a nearby CDC. She applied and got the job of CDC Director, which she held for 2 years at the time of the interview.

The 2nd round of interviews included two current directors- Directors L and Director M. Current Director L worked at the same CDC as Director D and Current Director M worked at the same CDC as Director G.

Current Director L is a 25 year old Caucasian single male. Mr. L is the center director for a center with a full day enrollment of 50 children (110 in school year with part day preschool) and a teaching staff of 28 teachers/caregivers. Mr. L. possesses a bachelor's degree in elementary education with an emphasis in educational technology. Mr. L participated in a student teacher program and was assigned to a DODDS school in Germany. Mr. L returned to college in the U.S to finish his last semester of school and then came back to Europe to work a summer job as a lead child/youth program assistant in a Child Development Center in June of that year. After the summer, he transitioned to another position within the CDC and worked as a program associate for the Pre-K program for 14 months. He was then promoted to an Assistant Director position and worked in that position for 1 year before moving to the CDC Director position. At the time of the interview Director L had been in position for 5 months.

Current Director M is a 49 year old Caucasian male married to a local national spouse and has two adult children. Mr. M retired from the Air Force and has a degree in Business Administration with additional coursework in early childhood education. After retirement he considered pursuing the Troops for Teachers program, but it was not being offered by DoDDS school system in Germany. He then explored other positions that involved working with children and took a position with Child/Youth Services where he worked as a Program Operations Specialist at an Area Support Group (ASG) headquarters office which provided oversight for three Army installations.

After a restructuring in Europe, the ASG office was disbanded and Mr. M found a position as a Child Development Center (CDC) Director at an installation. Mr. M is the center director for a center with a total enrollment of 200 children including part day, full day, and hourly care children and a total of 47 staff. At the time of the interview Director M had been in position for a little over two years.

**Leaving CDC directors.** Leaving Director F. was a 26-year-old Caucasian female. Director F. was the director of a 95-child capacity CDC and supervised a staff of 25 teachers/caregivers. She is a family member of an Army officer and has two children ages 5 years old and 10 months. Director F. has a bachelor's degree in elementary education. This position is Ms. F.'s first job after graduating from college. Ms. F. holds a degree in elementary education. She first considered pursuing employment in the DODDS school system but due to hiring policies where she found she would only be offered a temporary appointment for 1 year a time, she explored other options. After applying for positions with Army Child/Youth Services, she was offered a position of assistant director. Shortly thereafter, the director position became

available and she took over the responsibility for CDC Director though she was technically in the assistant director slot. During the time of the interview Ms. F. had been in the position for a little over two and a half years.

Leaving Director G. is a 51-year-old Caucasian male who was married with one adult child. Mr. G. has a bachelor's degree in Anthropology and a master's degree in early childhood education and supervised a 108 child capacity center with 17 teaching or caregiving staff. Mr. G. was former military and after retiring from the military earned his degree in early-childhood education with the goal of teaching for DODDS schools. However, in early 1990s the American military presence in Europe was being drawn down significantly, and due to the excess number of teachers needing placement, it was virtually impossible to get a permanent position in the DODDS school system. Mr. G. substitute taught for almost a year but didn't see any prospects of getting a full-time position in this DODDS school. In order to stay in a profession working with children, he decided to pursue a career in the child-development arena. Mr. G. first accepted an assistant director position and then eventually moved into a director position. At the time of the interview Mr. G. worked in his position as CDC Director for 5 years.

Leaving Director H. is a 44-year-old African American female who is married to a military spouse and has two adult children. Ms. H. is the CDC director for a 198 capacity center with 52 teaching or caregiving staff. Ms. H. holds a bachelor's degree in Special Education and initially got into early education 11 years prior to the date of the interview. In 1989, she owned a child-development center with her mother. From there she went to Europe with her spouse. Though she originally into to work in special

education Ms. H. started in military child care while stationed with her spouse in Italy. At the time of the interview Ms. H. had been the CDC Director for 2 years before returning back to the U.S.

**Current CDS coordinators.** Coordinator I. is a 55-year-old Caucasian male with oversight for four Child Development Centers with child capacities ranging from 80-280 children. Mr. I. is married with two adult children and his wife is a Department of the Army civilian. Mr. I. has a bachelor's degree in early education, a master's degree in Early Childhood and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Counseling Psychology**.** Initially enrolling as a psychology major while in college, he decided to switch his major to education after taking a course on Piagetian psychology. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in education, he got a job teaching preschool at the YWCA. While working there, he finished his master's degree in early-childhood education.

Due to the poor compensation in child care, he moved to a therapist position at a local children's hospital and worked with autistic and learning impaired children. While working at the hospital he started his doctorate in early childhood but later switched to a counseling psychology program. While finishing his degree, Mr. I. submitted an application for the Federal government and had forgotten about it when one day he received a letter inviting him to an interview at the Naval Base in the area. He was hired as an education specialist and conducted technical training for sailors. Later, he moved to a position as a guidance counselor in the Army's Adult Education program and after 2 years was promoted to the supervisor over three counselors.

After moving to Europe for Army Education where he was responsible for

oversight of some of the government contracts with universities, he was introduced to one of the university professors who after hearing of his background in early childhood invited him to an early-childhood professional conference. At that conference, Mr. I. noticed a job vacancy announcement that was posted for a Child Development Services Coordinator. He applied for the position and was selected as a CDS Coordinator. At the time of the interview, Mr. I. has worked in the administrator with Army child-development services for 8 years at this installation and an additional 3 years in the same position at a close-by installation.

Coordinator J. is a 40-year-old Hispanic female who was married to a military service member and has a 10-year-old child. Ms. J. has a BA in Biology and Chemistry and an Ed.M. in Early Childhood Education. Ms. J. provided oversight for four CDCs with a child capacity ranging from 53-148. She supervised four CDC directors. After graduating from college with a BA in Biology and Chemistry, Ms. J. was accepted to medical school and also was offered a commission in the military. She accepted the military commission and served for 3 years. After leaving the military, Ms. J. taught worked in the pharmaceutical field for a year and a half before getting married to a military service member. Due to the transient nature of her spouse's military career, Ms. J. went back to school taking more classes in education in order to get her teaching credential. She later taught high school biology and French and also took a federal position teaching adult soldiers instructional methods. After moving to Europe, Ms. J. was offered a position in a military child-development center as a lead teacher working with preschool and school-age children since she had experience in an educational job series. After working at the CDC for 4 months, she was promoted to an assistant

director position. After staying in that position for 6 months she was offered a training and curriculum specialist position and did that for 5 months before returning to the center as the CDC director. Ms. J. worked as the CDC director for a year and then was promoted to the CDC Coordinator where she supervised several CDC Directors. After serving in that position for 1 year she was promoted to CDS Coordinator position. After 3 months in that position her husband was re-stationed to another installation where she continued working for military child care but as a supervisory training and curriculum specialist. Within 3 years her spouse was re-stationed to Europe and came back as a CDS Coordinator. At the time of the interview Ms. J. had been in the CDS Coordinator position for 3 years.

Coordinator K. is a 52-year-old Caucasian female who is married and has no children. Ms. K. provided oversight for two CDCs with child capacities of 37 and 302 children respectively. Ms. K. holds a bachelor's degree in home economics and family life. While working as a high school teacher for 3.5 years, Ms. K. completed her master's degree in early childhood. She later married and came to Europe. She started off as a guidance counselor with military's Adult Education Services and worked in that position for 2 years. She decided she wanted to pursue a supervisory position and completed an additional bachelor's degree in business education. While working on her second degree, a classmate who worked for Army Community Services told her about a position that was available for a CDC Director. Wanting a more challenging job where she could problem solve, be creative, and make decisions she accepted the position. After working as a CDC director Ms. K. was subsequently promoted into the CDS Coordinator position. At the time of the interview, Ms. K. had 10 years experience as a

CDS Coordinator in five different communities and had been in her current position for 6 months.

Coordinator O. is a 62 year-old Caucasian female who is married to a retired military Army service member now working as a DOD contractor and has two adult children. Ms. O. holds a bachelor's degree in political science and a Master's degree in early childhood education.

Ms. O. entered into the field of early childhood over thirty years ago while stationed at a military installation with her husband. Unable to find a position as a high school civics/history teacher at the local schools and lacking an early childhood certification she started working as a probationary kindergarten teacher at an on post school. She later earned her Master's in ECE through a state program that funded advanced degrees in early childhood education and continued teaching kindergarten for 9 years until her husband was re-assigned to Germany .

Upon arrival in Germany she pursued employment and was advised to consider Army child development services due to her recent experience in early childhood programs. She was hired a Education Program Specialist and worked in that position for 4 months before being promoted to the Supervisory Education Program Specialist and working in that position for 3 years until she and her family completed their tour in Germany.

After returning to the US she became a CDS Coordinator and worked for 1 year in that position before leaving to work in the public school system as a master teacher for 3 years before being moving back to Europe. She remained in Europe for the next 9 years working at as a Garrison CDS Coordinator for 1 year, at the Regional HQ in two

different positions for a total of 5 years and at the Area Support Group CYS HQ for 3 years. Concerned about enforcement of a 5 year rule she moved back to the US as her own sponsor as a CYS Coordinator for a 1 ½ and then returned back to Germany when her spouse was offered a lucrative position.

At the time of the interview, Ms. O. was working as a CYS Coordinator at recently merged installations which were scheduled to close in the near future. She provided oversight for 3 CDCs with child enrollments of 20, 68, and 200 children respectively. Ms. O. had 7 years' experience as a CDS Coordinator/CYS Coordinator in three different communities and was in her current position as the CYS Coordinator for 5 years.

**Summary**. Of the 5 current CDC directors interviewed in the first group the average age was 43 years old. All of the CDC Directors had a minimum of a bachelor's degree with four of five holding a graduate degree. Two were former military, two were military spouses and 1 was former military and now a military spouse. In the second group of interviews of current directors, the average age was 37 years old. Both CDC directors had a bachelor's degree one in education and one in business administration with additional early childhood coursework. One was former military and one was hired as a civilian previously connected with the military after doing a student teaching internship.

Of the three leaving directors the average age was 40 years old. All of the leaving CDC Directors had a minimum of a bachelor's degree with one holding a graduate degree. One was former military and two were military spouses. The second round of interviews did not include any leaving directors.

Of the three CDS Coordinators, the average age was 49 years old. Two of three coordinators had previously been directors in the military child care system. All 3 had a minimum of a bachelor's degree with all three having completed a graduate degree and one who possessed a doctor of philosophy degree. One of the three was a military spouse who had previously been in the military, and two of three had previous service with the military. In the second group of interviews, the CYS Coordinator was 62 years old and held a Graduate degree. She was a former military spouse who became her own sponsor after her husband retired from the military.

**Common Themes**

Findings of this study will be presented in themes. Significant statements from each interview were grouped together into common themes. The five themes that emerged were (a) No typical day: demanding, fast paced, stressful , long, busy day; (b) The challenge of staffing, (c) For the love of working with children, (d) Creating a center community: Relationships with staff and parents and (e) Sources of Support.

**No typical day: Unpredictable, demanding, fast paced, stressful, long, busy days.** Directors described their days as fast paced, busy, and full of distractions. Many described the work as demanding, stressful, and overwhelming at times. Because all directors worked in programs open for at least 11-12 hours a day, days were often long and sometimes started before even arriving at work. Directors often stated they worked to balance work and life and to not put in too many hours at work. Directors with more experience tended to achieve this balance more than those with less experience. Keeping up with administrative tasks such as email, paperwork, meeting suspenses, and completing reports were challenges expressed by all, along with routine managerial

responsibilities including budgeting, personnel management (hiring, performance evaluations, supervision, orientations, and payroll).

A typical day was fraught with competing demands for the director's time. Directors were often faced with parent, staff, or child issues/problems from the minute they walked in the door and sometimes even before they walked in the door. Nearly all directors described a morning routine where they "made rounds" and visited their rooms. Conscientious effort was made to also make themselves available to staff and parents.

Having adequate staff to meet mandated adult/child minimum ratios, covering the front desk, and ensuring the kitchen was covered consumed many of the director's days and was often expressed source of frustration. Other aspects of a director's day involved monitoring program quality to include oversight for the curriculum, ensuring staff received required training/ professional development opportunities, and leading quality oversight processes like NAEYC accreditation, and managing relations with parents, staff, and the community.

When asked to describe their typical day several directors were quick to reply that there was no "typical" day. Leaving Director H. responded:

> Well, there may not have been a typical day. So it's hard to say, because so much go on because this could be—their way of doing something you call typical, there's something else that's thrown in there to take you off-track.

Staying Director C. described long days where she started receiving phone calls from staff in the early morning hours over 4 hours before her workday started.

Staying Director C. responds,

> Oh, oh, what's a typical day? Well, the typical day for me, I usually work the 9:00 to 6:00 shift because I like being here at the end of the day for the parent. So my typical day could start at 4:30 or 5:00 in the morning … because what they do is they call me at home so that I can get the gears rolling.
>
> Staying Director C. continued,
>
> There are always interruptions of some kind, you know, can we do this for this field trip; you know, can we order this for this food experience? You know, all the typical things that go with —you know, making sure all these expenses are put in on time, training and scheduling, scheduling, scheduling.

Staying Director B. shared a day with distractions and competing pressures for his time. He described how he made a conscientious decision to leave work on time in order to make his staff more self-reliant though he sometimes felt the pressure to stay.

> My typical workday is lots and lots of distractions. Actually, it deals with everything from handling personnel; parents; talking to children; answering questions from the outside community; being Mom, Dad, friend; and all of the paperwork and—and everything else that goes with the day-to-day operations and I end it around 3:00, 4:00 in the afternoon. I try not to stay. I try to—I—I have really forced myself to leave because I—I feel that—I take the attitude that if I wasn't here, it—life and business would still go on. So—and the other thing is, as long as I am here, no one will want to do things because they will always rely on me.

Staying Director E. described some of the stress directors feel and likened her role to one of a “fire fighter” and the need for some transitional time upon arrival before

being faced with the multitude of problems for the day.

> My normal duty hours are from 9:00 to 6:00, but if there is a clerk or something out, I always come in myself instead of asking somebody else because, normally problems arise and so I come in a little bit earlier... The only problem with working 9:00 to 6:00, is as soon as I hit the door, everything faces you — They've got a million problems, you know. Everybody has a fire that needs to be put out, so that's kind of stressful. So what I had to do, I asked them to give me at least a half an hour every morning just to get myself ready for the day --- and then I'm ready for business…. I—I think I—I—I think my title should be center director slash - fire person.
>
> Staying Director D. shared her daily experience:
>
> I try to read the e-mail first thing—because usually tie e-mails to—you can—you can be caught up with e-mail responses, you know, momentarily; but I try to, you know, come in and at least put on that computer and then go and visit the classes –I deal with the budgeting of the center; and at this particular time, it is time for budget revisions so that (Indiscernible) may actually busy in the center.…I deal with the budgeting. I also deal with the signing of medication forms or personal leave forms or sick leave and all of that signing. I actually deal with signing the payroll like once a week—and that's a big thing because we have like up to 40 staff and so I end up doing that once a week. There is a lot of paperwork involved, and you really have to set out—set aside time to actually get it—I'll often just close the door and do that.
>
> The daily routine was described similarly from the leaving directors. Leaving

Director F. shares,

> I think as a CDC director, there is no typical workday. That was the most interesting things about the job. Every day, there is always a new —a new situation; a new problem; a new staff member; a new issue to explore and deal with. I would say, if I had to, you know, come up with a typical day, I probably spend about, I don't know, anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour on average doing paperwork in a day. Most of my time, just because of the type of person I am, is spent with the children or with dealing with the parents and dealing with the customer service aspect of the position; and a lot of that has to do with hourly care, too. I like to spend a lot of time in the rooms, just because I love being with the children. The financial and the paperwork aspect of the job really just bores me to sleep. I hate that part of the job.

Leaving Director G. described a long, busy day:

> I had a varying schedule. I opened the center about 5:30 in the morning and usually left around, 3:30, 4:00 if I could and then the next cycle. I would come in at, oh, about 9:00, 9:30 and stay until 6:00, usually about 6:30. On the days that I was the opener, I was responsible for—the scheduling….And then I would go through the center, and do the facility check, safety check, checking the general condition of the—of the facility, indoors and outdoors.. Typically, I'd have an operations clerk there with me; and the ops clerk would be doing day-to-day operations of taking payments and then making sure kids were checked in and checked out; and if—if the ops clerk wasn't there, then I would have to do that, also—handled a lot of kids and take payments from parents. …If

my assistant director, wasn't there for some reason, when she was on vacation or out or sick or something going on or if we were short-staffed—a lot of days, I'd end up being there until the closing.—so, basically, a 12-hour day. ….Every day was a little bit different, but …if I had to do evaluations, employees annual appraisals and—midyear evaluations also on—on all the staff. I would work on those kind of things, work on paperwork in the morning while usually the—usually a little bit quieter—and a little later in the day, got—got to be a little more hectic. We had to do the payroll. The ops clerk would probably (Indiscernible) that, but I was a backup for—and every day, when people were (Indiscernible) the staff would begin talking about, you know, checking out (Indiscernible) that, make sure that was done and the daily attendance.

Leaving Director G. continues and relays how sometimes the long days sometimes spilled over to the weekend:

Well, I spent a lot of my—my life here at the center; and, sure, like weekends and things like that, a lot of times we had to maintain the facility; and then weekends, Saturdays or Sundays, doing everything from doing dishes to mowing lawns to painting classrooms. I mean, it wasn't a—it wasn't like every—every single weekend, but—

CYS Coordinators also expressed similar insight into the harried day of the director. CYS Coordinator J. described the uncertainty, competing demands and varied daily responsibilities and captured the frenzied day of a center director:

The days starts dealing with all the phone calls from everybody that called in that cannot come into work that day or had a problem or—or somebody's sick or

there's a problem with the family. All the parent concerns…or a child came in sick or you have a medication issue, a parent needing something so you deal with your customers and patrons. Then you go and you walk in to rooms and you visit all the classrooms and then deal with things that are happening in the classroom or monitoring—and the phone's ringing. Of course, people want something from you … Then you go in and start tackling what you're supposed to be doing, you know, working on the budget, what else you need to buy; checking the kitchen; making sure their supplies are there for the kitchen or whatever problem there is in the kitchen—maybe the cook not coming in and you ended up cooking. What else come up …Children having some problems. Somebody calling from a classroom, a—a child has a temper tantrum and you need to go in and check on what's going on or a staff has a concern and you need to address the concern of the staff. In the meantime, you're still work on budget issues. You still work on staff orientations and evaluations, parent orientations. You might have an appointment set up for a parent to do an orientation, taking a tour through the facility, regular reports that need to be submitted…. your day is consumed.

CYS Coordinator I. described the center director as being a tough job with directors under constant pressure from both staff and parents.

First, let me—I got to say, I think the center director's job is the absolute worst in CDS because they get it from both ends. They get it from the staff, and they get it from the parents. So they're getting hammered from both sides—well, there's hammering of—they have to deal with the—you know, the problems are

not with the kids in our program. Kids are—are great. It's the—it's these adults that are—where the problems come. Well, they can't meet everybody's needs; and, in fact, if you make one group happy, you're going to make another group unhappy, so there's not winning. So they have that pressure from both ends, trying to satisfy both sets.

CYS Coordinator K. states,

When you walk in in the morning, whatever time it is, there is a problem—well, I'll call them challenges, opportunity, that you have to solve right then and there; and it'll probably be a parent, it's something that happened at the bus that morning; you know, the staff had a problem with a child…. Then the paperwork, there's the personnel paperwork. There is the scheduling… because it's like a—it's a puzzle that you have to fit in everybody; and—and, honestly, (when I was a director) it took me 4 months before the light went on because— It's like a—it's like geometry; you'll be solving a problem. And then, of course, you know, in the days that I was a director, you've got all of the reporting to do. You've got the annual reports. Now, there's even more reporting. You're responsible also, you know, for the kitchen, the food, making sure—very important, you go through the rooms to make sure interaction is going on, watching the caregivers, watching the children, the tone of the room, what kinds of activities, what's in the room.

Participants in the second round of interviewed mirrored many of the comments and insights to describe the nature of a CDC Directors work. Current Director L. described his typical day as one full of “fire fighting” and many interruptions:

….a lot of running around and putting out fires. I come in and there's usually a few questions for me as I'm walking through the door. So I'm the closing manager most of the time, so as soon as I get in I try to speak with assistant director and see where the day's at, how the schedule looks, if there's any holes we need to fill… *without overstaffing* …everyday's different. And like in the midst of everything, there's little interruptions all the time of you know if we don't have an extra staff member of having to run down and give a bathroom break or just all kind of different things...Yeah and if there's a child having difficulty in the classroom…and we have a couple children on behavior plan….and the teachers need a lot of support right now. So when our trainer's out then I'm the one that steps in a lot of times to assist them in the classroom…That's just one of the interruptions that will happen…there's just a variety of things.

He expressed frustration over the challenge of finishing all his work within an eight hour day as result of concerns with staffing and supporting teachers in classrooms:

But during that timeframe, it's hard for me to get- I'll get into work that I need to complete by the end of the day and then I get pulled to go to different areas or go into a different classroom to help out there to help support them. Or if there's a staff member that needs to go because they're sick or their child's sick, then I have to come out and fix the schedule for that. So it's irritating not being able to have like what I would think of as a normal day in a business world, which I haven't worked in a business setting as an administrator, but how I see it is they're actually able to work at their desk for eight hours and get stuff done,

and I've never had a straight eight hours to get work done.

Like his colleagues in the first round of interviews this meant that as a center director he worked beyond a normal 8 hour day. But unlike some of his colleagues in the first group, he tried to ensure the extra work did not spill over to his off duty weekend time:

> A lot of times I end up staying later than my normal time, so it kind of affects my social life as far as the time I'm at work versus the time I have available to do other things. But for the most part, I don't work on the weekends unless I'm working a special event. I work over during the week so I still have my weekends, so it doesn't affect my social life that much as far as that goes.

Current Director M. when asked to describe his typical work day shared the following:

> Typical day huh? Wow, putting out fires, no. Um, coming in normally in the mornings first thing is – that we have a lot of taskers we have to submit…. My first part of the morning is trying to take care of all those taskers for the day, ensuring the staffing is in the right places, covering breaks and that kind of stuff, and pretty much the day-to-day behind the scenes operation of the CDC. …. I have two assistant directors; so each one of them is tasked to handle a certain area, and one handles all the scheduling to ensure that all the rooms are covered. The other one … handles…all the personnel actions and does the paperwork and the hand receipts and that kind of stuff, so he's more of the behind the scene. But we all cover every program…A lot evaluations, ensuring those are submitted on time, ensuring our programs are staffed, in addition to all the

children, all the spaces are filled. I'm constantly in CYMS making sure that we've got the number of children and constantly seeing how many I can move up the next age group and to mix rooms and stuff, so we're always planning ahead. We do a lot of behind the scenes type stuff just to keep the programs going. That's a pretty typical day I guess; non-stop.

The nature of work for a child development center director was consistent between the first group and second group as described by CYS Coordinators. CYS Coordinator O. like many of the other participants used the analogy of a "firefighter" when describing the role of the CDC director though she also saw a director's preference for "fighting fires" as a means to avoid less attractive work like administrative tasks and paperwork. She shared:

You'll want to get some stuff done want and all you seem to be doing is putting out fires. That is a stressor, but then you have other directors that if they don't want to handle the paperwork, they don't want to do any of that, then maybe putting out fires is their thing.

She continued by describing the competing priorities a center director faces from parent and staff issues; operational issues including managing the food program, front desk, and staff schedule; and ensuring administrative tasks and reports are completed:

Depending on what time of day their shift begins; whether they're opening the Center or coming after the Center has been operating for a few hours, their day would start off a little differently. Then once either the Center is fully operational, everybody's onboard, you know the front desk is

running, the kitchen, everything is running smoothly, or if they're playing problem solving and there's been some issues. It's making sure that the Center is up and every system, every process is running. If they're coming on working a later shift and closing, it's coming in and getting caught up. Okay, what's happened thus far? What's working well? What are the issues? Do I have any parents I need to talk with? Do I have any staff I need to talk with? And then it's kind of then inserting themselves into the operation of the Center. Then their day is what's on my priority list to do today. What meetings do I have? What suspenses? What tasker/reports? What do I need to check on, and so on. So then the closing of the Center of course being the opposite of the opening; making sure that all systems and process for closing are in place, things are going smoothly, and then the financial piece, the database piece, the kitchen piece, the staffing. Then is tidied up at the end of the day, all systems closed down properly, the financial accounting, the closeout is good, and then securing the Center. And no two days are ever the same really. And of my three directors ….they talk about they're just not enough hours in the day. You know it's just – there's always too much to do and priorities are constantly shifting, and that's true for my job as well. I think I know what I'm going to do that day, but then some days it never plays out like that.

**The challenge of staffing.** Nothing seemed to consume a director's daily experience as much as concerns regarding working the staff schedule and having adequate staffing to meet all the requirements of running a child-development center.

All directors acknowledged the challenge of having adequate staff, and the directors that indicated they did not have staffing concerns at the time, agreed that they had previously experienced the problem. Though the primary concern centered around the requirement to have adequate staffing to meet minimum prescribed adult: child ratios the issue of staffing also spilled over to other areas of a center operation to include administrative staff to cover the front desk or food service staff needed for meal service. Some of the directors also shared times when they had leadership vacancies to include assistant directors or training and curriculum specialists resulting in the need to fill in to provide these support functions.

A consistent issue discussed among the directors was the need for reliable and dependable direct care staff. The topic of excessive staff "call-ins" whereby staff would notify the center director that they were unable to come in at the last minute was a routine occurrence at many programs. Several directors seemed to suggest that the number of call-ins were linked to staff morale and commented that the number of staff call ins had drastically gone since assuming the leadership of their center.

Exacerbating the issue of covering the staff shortages, last minute leave requests where special issues related to the military lifestyle (i.e., deployments, field exercises, and block leave) were associated with increases in staff leave requests. Directors expressed the dilemma of wanting to support staff impacted by the military lifestyle by supporting their leave requests, but often times not having adequate staff to do so.

The issue of staff turnover was a consistent observation made by directors. One director referred to the problem as the "military staffing problem." Many of the directors elaborated that in addition to the challenge of constant staff turnover- there

was built in turnover as being part of the military environment. Since the majority of caregiving staff were military spouses, and the average military members tour of duty was 2-3 years, the average stay for typical caregiver 2 years or less.

The issue of turnover resulted in increased managerial time recruiting for new staff, interviewing, and performance counseling, training, and taking action on staff not working out. Directors and CYS Coordinators especially those with significant staffing shortages expressed frustration with the civilian personnel system and expressed concerns about timeliness and being able to reach what they perceived as the most qualified applicants. Directors shared that some staff came into position not recognizing the demands of the position, and their tenure was short lived.

In addition, to the challenge of having adequate staffing to cover center operations, directors stated they had so sometimes spend significant portions of their day covering for missing staff. This meant filling in for caregivers, admin staff or food service staff. This was often frustrating for directors as they were unable to complete their own managerial responsibilities resulting in needing to work very long days in order to get the work done.

> Director D. describes her chagrin with the staffing situation at her center:
>
> About the most frustrating thing is when you're low on staff and you try to figure out "Who can I put in this room?"….It gets frustrating when we are low with staff. That could be either due to emergency leave or it could be for deployment reasons with the spouses here in Europe deployed. I mean, parents —mothers decide to go back to the States and stay, you know, while they're deployed; and that brings us short of staff here; and so that's about the most

> frustrating thing, you know; and having people that are not dependable because our daycare center takes dependable people; and, you know, if you got a person that can't come in for just shopping reasons or whatever, it throws a loop in the —in the program, you know; and, unfortunately, we don't have so many people that we can put on site, you know, to call them in and say, "Well, can you come in?" you know.
>
> She continued, "So, that means that we, as admin, need to go in and fill those holes, and a lot of times, we can't get our work done."

Leaving Director H. shared similar frustration with managing a very large child-development center and suggested that the staffing situation was more difficult at a larger center:

> At the large 303, at one point I did not have an assistant director, a cook in the kitchen, I had only one food service worker and one clerk; and then, of course, the staffing over there, as far as caregivers, was short. So I found myself cooking, trying to direct, working 12-hour days, coming in on Saturday. It was, at first, a horrible experience…. There's always the military problem with staffing, so there really wasn't a typical day. All your days became frustrating ….and you just learned how to deal with all the problems, you know, and go along with it. But after being there as a center director at the 303 in Germany and the demographics of the staffing, I said I would never be one again.

Two directors indicated they did not currently have a problem with turnover and staffing though acknowledged many of their colleagues did and they had also experienced this in the past at other programs. Both directors were working at small-

medium size centers (fewer than 85 children).

Staying Director A. stated,

> I don't see anything that's frustrating here at this center. I don't know if it's because it's a smaller center—but at some of the larger centers that I have worked in, it was frustrating because of the noise levels…because of the chaos; and it seems like, in this center, we always have staff and we always have children and we always have families, so I can't see this as a frustrating place to work because we don't have that much turnover here.

She continued,

> And I think that it has to—to do a lot with the way we interview people, because some centers feel like we have to (indiscernible) ….but because our center is so small, we don't have to choose everybody. We can be selective.

It should be noted that Director A. was just 3 months new into her position but shared her experience at her previous installation in Germany. In her account, we see another dimension of the turnover problem (i.e., center director turnover).

> I was there for 3 years and we went through six center directors in a 3-year timeframe…. I saw a lot of them being stressed; and when I asked them why, they said to me that—and this is each one of them—said that it's a stressful job because of the turnover, because every 3 years somebody's leaving and if you just get here, within 3 months, the employees are gone. And I worked as an assistant director in situations where I had to call coordinators and everybody else and say, "Come help me. I have no staff"; and I think that that is stress and that's why it's hard to retain a lot of them because they feel stressed because it's

always a time when they're in the room and they don't get a chance to check e-mails and to do all of the—the paperwork part of—of being a center director—and if they wanted to go in and play with the children and check on their programming at the center, they can't—because they're so short-staffed that they have to be in a caregiver's role instead of a director's role—and that's what I see as—that's why I think that there is a lot of turnover.

While Staying Director C. reported adequate staff and low turnover at her center, she expressed her dismay that her request for a merit extension for her center's accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children was denied as a result of having high staff turnover. This may suggest that the problem of turnover is so much a part of the military director's experience that sometimes directors don't recognize the turnover they are experiencing as unusual.

She shared,

I just applied for a merit extension for the accreditation because I thought we fit the bill. I've been here, you know, for two accreditations. You know, everything else fit in, but they sent it back saying we had too high of staff turnover. Actually, for an Army center, we don't (Indiscernible) Oh, I don't really know what the percentage would be; but I can tell you right now, I've got probably at least out of those 22, would say seven that have been here for at least 5 years…..But— I complained about it. I said, you know, that—they— the Council should look at Army centers alone, not—not clump them all in with stateside centers.

The constant rotation of staff as a result of military tours of duty, as well as the

bureaucracy of the human personnel system and some of the regulations relating to hiring were discussed by Staying Director B.

> I think the frustrating part is staffing. Over here, we have a limited pool to choose from; and generally, it's the pool of military spouses because we don't generally hire from the outside. So that is probably the —the most frustrating. The other thing is that, by the time you get comfortable in —you know, in everything, it's time to pick up and leave. At least, it seems that way for most of them because of the PCS.

Staying Director E. also discussed her frustration with having adequate staffing and the problem of staff calling in sick or for last minute leave requests.

> I think that's my biggest stress level is making sure that we have the staff to meet ratios…. You know, I check the ratios, make sure that we're in compliance; and I ask how many people called in. See, like now, we have (Indiscernible —overtalking) It —it wasn't until I went on leave myself. Then, while I was gone, everybody was, you know, taking it as a holiday because my requirements were (Indiscernible) If you called out on a Friday or a Monday, you had to have a doctor's slip; and, see, I wasn't here and it was enforced, so they've gotten a little crazy; but we're getting back on track. So, …when I first came here, we could have like 14 or 15 people a day; but, now, we're averaging around two to three who call in, if —if that many. When I first came here it was —it was a nightmare. It was a nightmare, and —and I could understand it. It was that stressful here. You know, people just did not want to be here.

Staying Director B. spoke to the improvement in staff dependability:

A year ago, if you would have asked me, I would have told you it was probably the lousiest group of staff there was, because there was constant call-outs and everything else; and then in probably in the last 6 months, if I have five call-outs, I'm lucky.

CYS Coordinators affirmed the problem of staffing and some of the concerns with the personnel system. CYS Coordinator J. explained,

Staffing is a big one of the frustrations. …So there is a lot of frustration just finding the right person for the job. The system of recruiting through CPO is very frustrating for them…. There is a list but I might have this person here, but guess what? The person is a spouse ….and now you have to look at that before you can look at this. So all of that is very frustrating to them- to all of us, actually. Well …because they are the first line there that face the staff; and you might be great and I cannot give you the promotion or ---- that position and then I have to give it to this other person. So I am not sure if they also have to deal with this in the States but we see a lot more here because of the constant rotation. Turnover —and a new batch of people coming in to the community. They are not free to go ahead and —and select whoever they want to whenever they want to. So that's —that's a big frustration.

She continued,

I think I our directors here feel it is hectic, busy. Sometimes busy work because they don't get the right kind of people to do their job; and they constantly repeating the same thing, over and over again. You know, "This is what you should do with children. This is what you should do with parents"; and they

find themselves addressing it all the time. So it's repetitive (Indiscernible) and I don't think a lot of them really have a chance where they can sit down without interruptions and say, "I'm going to work on it." Constant interruption. The director spends a big chunk of their time in the classroom because to even relieve lunches, one of them goes in. You know, the assistant goes in or the director goes in. That takes away from other director responsibilities…. They are a caregiver…in a lot of our classes. I don't think a day goes by that they cannot say, "I—I didn't put 40 minutes in—in a room ---- being a caregiver today because something happened."

While participants in the second round of interviews addressed the general issue of staffing shortages, staffing shortages emerged as a less critical issue for this group. This was likely attributed to environmental factors where the three communities which were part of this study were significantly downsizing or closing completely. Thus, center enrollment was quickly dropping resulting in less of a staff requirement to run the centers.

One director mentioned a different dimension of the staffing challenge. His challenge was ensuring enough staff to meet adult/child ratios during the transition to closure of the installation without overstaffing. This director also described challenges with children's behavior resulting in teacher turnover when staff could not adequately handle some of the challenging behaviors in their classrooms.

Current Director L from the second group of participants shared,

The brigade which is the majority of our soldiers is separating or disbanding….so all of them are leaving, and then they keep telling us the new

units will come in, but we haven't seen many come in yet, so now we're losing probably about half our staff are leaving...but our children are also leaving, so it hasn't hit us too hard because as our children drop our staff is also dropping. For a long time, we were short-staffed and we haven't been real short-staffed for about a year and a half now. We built up our staff …and we were between 38 and 42 staff members for almost a year…. that was something I've never seen at XXX CDC before….as an assistant director, especially during short times, I still spent a good amount of time in the classroom when we have – when we were really short-staffed. …I've been over here for three years, and then just to have that consistent staff, and that really helps the morale to have staff members that can count on each other to be there every day instead of half our staff being brand new and still learning and then – so it helps when the staff members can all work together for an extended period of time.

But unfortunately with the military people are constantly PCSing and PCSing out so it's hard to keep that consistency. But even as we're losing staff members and we're adding a few new ones; our morale here has been really, really good I think. Though having adequate staffing was less of concern the nature of the work was still stressful for staff especially for new staff and working with children with challenging behaviors. But it's stressful at times, so every so often there – you know at least once or twice a week I have someone come to me and, "Sorry, I can't do it." But then I'm like, "Well take a five-minute break and then come back and we'll talk about what's going on," and they'd always – I've never had someone just say, "Yep, I'm done for sure," after taking a short

> break and looking back on it from the outside…But we just lost a couple of leads and even some of the behaviors are hard for even the leads to handle. So that's definitely difficult that we – I have staff members that aren't able to handle some of the major problems with the children.

The length of time to fill vacancies was still a source of frustration. Several participants in the second group, like those in the first, expressed concerns about the length of time it took the Human Resource offices to replace leaving staff to include the length of time it takes to get new staff on board and the length of time to complete some of the pre-employment requirements (background checks, health assessments, references, etc.). Current Director M. from the second group explains:

> What's really on the downside is getting the staff in a timely manner. That will be our – yeah, that will be I guess the heartburn for all the directors is we just can't get quality staff in a timely manner. We are in a constant…state of recruiting and looking for staff. I just hired six, well eight people…within the last couple of months and only three of them have actually physically started, so the time from when we have the employee saying, "Okay, here's my resignation," they give it to us far enough in advance. We don't have really any, "Well I'm leaving in two weeks."
>
> All of ours are like PCS and they tell us far out in advance, so when we know that they're leaving, we go ahead and start the recruiting. But that person now has gone. The announcement went out, we've got the list, we made the selection, now the person left. By the time that new one comes on to replace them, we're still a month or two without anybody…I think a lot of it is dealing with the whole cycle going from recruiting you know to – I mean even if you

have a job fair, you still can't select somebody off the street today. You know it's just the whole time it takes to bring somebody into a NAF position regardless of where you're at. I've actually selected somebody in February; they're still not on board yet. So – but I've actually selected somebody in April and they're on board now, so it's all hit and miss.

CYS Coordinator O. described the frustrations of her CDC Directors in dealing with staffing shortages, turnover, having to fill in for support staff when there are vacancies and the length of time it takes the Human Resource office to fill vacancies. When asked about what was frustrating for center directors she shared:

Staffing shortages. I hear a constant refrain of – and it's particularly true here because we've got the turnover. You know if you're short staffed, if the director has to man the front desk or if the director has to go into a ratio or a director has to go into the kitchen because the cook is out, that's a whole other ballgame for the day…This is the difference I saw over here in Europe from back in the States. We have such turnover. It's like I'm always starting over. I have this many new staff and I've got to go back to square one with them, and we've got to start over. I never feel I can get ahead because I'm always starting over. Um, that's frustrating for them… It's frustrating when your CPAC doesn't move with the speed of light like you want them to. When it takes so long to get somebody on board; and you're of course having to keep your program together with all these vacancies…

CYS Coordinator O. also offered a comparison of her experiences with staff turnover in Army child care programs in the U.S. versus Europe. While the constant rotation and turnover of direct care staff in Europe was acknowledged as an ongoing problem and source of frustration, an equally frustrating challenge for directors was when there is no staff turnover especially with staff that were not a "good fit" for child care work. She explains:

> But now an interesting point –… Back in the States, I wasn't seeing the turnover, and where directors here it's I keep starting over. I can't move forward, I'm starting over all the time with new staff. The problem in the States that I saw was that staff that have been there since Moses was a puppy and they're resistant to change. Well why should I do this?
>
> Why should I do that? You're going to leave here pretty soon. Yes, I will start over and grow people the way I want them to, mold them my way. They don't know any different. But the people – the *intransigents* back in the States were just unreal.

**Creating a center community: Relationships with staff and parents.**

A central part of the director's day is spent managing relationships with staff and parents. Touching base with staff was a common theme among nearly all directors interviewed. They described a routine where they made rounds to all the rooms upon arrival in the morning. Room visits included touching base with caregiving staff, determining if staff have any needs, observing staff, monitoring the curriculum and staff/child interactions. Directors also met with their support staff to include their admin staff, food service staff, their assistant director(s), and their training and

curriculum specialists. These meetings were primarily to touch base, communicate updates, and plan and formulate goals and tasks.

Directors also recognized the need to relate to staff personally and to create a work environment where staff felt connected and a sense a belonging. Several directors referred to their center as "homey" or like a "family". They described center rituals like pot lucks, staff birthday celebrations and the use of staff meetings as times to "build community."

Building and maintaining good relationships with parents was also a common concern for these center directors. Directors described how they made themselves accessible to parents by making their morning rounds and also freeing up time at the end of the day to meet and greet parents and discuss any of their concerns. Some directors attributed their good parent relationships to having good direct care staff and stated that often parent concerns and issues were resolved before ever needing to make it to the center director. Staying Director E. spoke to improved parent relationships where a parent meeting might have 40-50 parents in attendance because they had a problem or concern.

Those interviewed, shared stories of parents who were happy with the center, but also those who were never seemed pleased. Some directors expressed concern over the number of hours children in the center spent away from their parents, especially if the parents were not working while the children were in care. Like maintaining positive relationships with staff, making time to maintain positive relationships with parents was part of the many job responsibilities center directors handled in their very busy days. Overall, directors were empathetic to the special circumstances experienced by military

parents and worked to accommodating and supportive.

***Relationships with staff: Staff meetings as community building times.***

Staying Director D. discussed using staff meetings as times to build a more cohesive team:

> With this center being the largest center in the area, most of the staff relationships are great within the rooms. Even though we're in the same center, we don't see each other in each of the classes until we have our staff meeting. So at our staff meeting, we try to make it a big bash. You know, we try to do incentives and stuff like that to pull them closer together, try to do group interactions at our staff meeting, just so that they can meet the other caregivers and stuff like that.

Staying Director C spoke about creating a center environment where staff felt supportive of another:

> Well, starting with this center… this is a good place to work; and I have heard that -- I've worked hard to get it that way and it's good being consistent here for about 7 years, too. That helped—and then I have heard in the community that, you know, people like to come to this center, which, you know, makes you feel good. Staff and parents. And I think the group here, because we're a good team; we have a lot of support for each other. We have, you know, the monthly staff meetings. We have the rooms, and we use the planning time. We have potluck, you know, at least once a month for birthdays and farewells. It's just a good group of people. It's—it's really (Indiscernible). We don't have a lot of back-biting….

Staying Director B shared how he also uses center get togethers as opportunities to "build community" among his staff:

> I think I have a wonderful staff. They are some of the best caregivers I have worked with in—in all of my, you know, career. They're very caring. They're very loving, nurturing. They're constantly looking out for the welfare of the children. You know, we don't—we don't do a whole lot of socializing outside of work; and I think it's because of the demographics and—and military. They all seem to have their families and—and, you know, do family things and—and so forth, at least that's what I see here. So we don't do a lot of socializing or anything like that. We do birthday celebrations. We do potlucks from time to time; and from time to time, we do get together and—and go out and—and, you know, do things. I try to—when we have staff meetings, I try to do things, like I'll cook out, you know, or—or do dinners or something for the staff. I'll cook and things like that. So—or from time to time, I'll surprise them with breakfast and I'll cook breakfast up and things like that. I mean, they never know what to expect from me. I mean, because I just—I don't let people know. I kind of like just do things surprisingly, which makes it, I think, a whole better and—and it means a whole lot more. They—they tend to appreciate it a whole lot more. I—they're hardworking. I—I think that they're a hardworking bunch of staff.

Staying Director E shared how she worked to improve staff morale:

> So it's just—to me, the environment is excellent right now. One or two room, I'll—we still have some work to do, but that's because we've lost some excellent people and I've got (Indiscernible) and, you know, we standards this high…- So

like—for like for birthdays, we were having problems, like some people got recognized more than others. So instead of doing it that way, … I give birthday gifts to the staff, and—and it's not really—it's not—it—it—I'm saving—when I think of the morale—because I give special gifts and it—because it's coming from me, they—that's the same thing as a cash reward, and so it's a psychological—you know, for them, it's like, "She recognized me personally"; and I take the time to give personal gifts so, that way, I know that everybody gets the same across the board. So those are the kinds of things I have to make sure that I try—I can't be equal all the time, but I try to be at least fair about what I do.

Leaving Director G. described a home/family like center environment:

The center because it was small, everybody got along quite well. It was kind of a homey-type place. I don't think it was quite formal as some of the bigger centers. Everyone, you knew; and they knew you and you knew them real well, it was a very friendly place. We had a lot of people (Indiscernible) center, and we had a waiting list of people who—employees from other centers who'd like to get to us. I think we were—I mean, we had just enough staff to …. So you had barely enough people to cover the programs that I had if someone was out. So I did it myself or the assistant director did it 'cause we didn't have a lot of extra staff. It was just a—I—I don't know, just the overall feel it was sort of like just—just—because, again, it was small, probably just a relatively warm, friendly place—oh, we had—we had (Indiscernible) excellent (Indiscernible) did a lot of things. We had swap meets and things like that, you know, always

something to do—but it'd be, you know, something like pot luck; and everybody (Indiscernible) and it was just a pleasant place to work.

***Relationships with staff: Making rounds and connecting with staff.*** Staying Director C. also started her day by touching base with her caregiving staff, "I usually make my rounds, go to all the rooms; make sure, you know, I meet and greet; and on Monday, we normally will have a room meeting (Indiscernible) about 9:15."

Staying Director D. talked about her daily routine of checking in with her caregiving and leadership staff:

> I always come in a little bit early because I am the center director and I always want to be there in case of a need. I do have two assistant directors that are very good. We try to communicate, you know, momentarily as to what's going on in the center. Usually, when I'm in the center, I never get out of the center until closing. What I try to do is go around to visit each room because, if I don't get it done in the morning, I'm usually called up in to a specific room throughout the day. So I try to go around in the morning and to visit each room; and then after that, I come back and I get with my assistant directors, as to what our day is like and the goals that we need to set and the goals that we need to meet by the end of the day. We always try to set up and we try to meet them; sometimes, we don't because of other things happening in the center.

Staying Director A. had a similar routine and addresses the importance of checking in with staff to listen to their concerns and needs:

> I think that one of the most important things, when you start your day out, is to visit your rooms and find out—you know, and just listen to some of the

caregivers' needs ….so you can know what are the —what are their needs, You're here for … the caregiving to the children; and as long as they see you, at least that morning and again in the afternoon, it makes them feel good. So —so that's how I start my day out. Then I get with my assistant director and talk to her to see what happened the morning because most of the time she opens and she can brief me on what happened during the day, what are some of the things that I need to be concerned with…. you know, you need to check …. your developmental programming. You … get with your TACS and find out some of her needs and what are some things that she saw or she noticed in the classrooms so you can be on top of it.

Staying Director E described her efforts to improve staff relationships and make her center more like a family like environment:

…and it's just being here for the staff, going around looking in the rooms and things like that. I—guess 'cause I do it every day, I—I have never thought about what I do. That's basically it. We have 50-some staff. It's not as bad as it was when I first came here. You know, every day, I would have to pray…I had every religion when I first came here, but it's—it's not like that anymore. Everybody is—we're more of a family now, finally, so it's not really that bad. I go in and greet everybody in the morning, make sure that, you know, I check the ratios, make sure that we're in compliance; and I ask how many people called in. I've seen the center—center come around to a family instead of, you know—and like, people weren't even speaking to each other and—and now people don't mind going in to another room to help out another room.

Staying Director B. related the importance of caring and listening to staff concerns:

> I think—a lot of things, the fact that they know that that I care or that I listen and I try to, you know, help them resolve or help them accomplish whatever—and it happens to be. I think more than anything just listening and—and trying to, you know, come up with a solution to whatever a problem or—or concern or whatever it—and caring, just, you know, that that they know that I am not afraid to get down there in the trenches with them and—and help out and—and things like that. You know, the—they know what my expectations are. I don't waiver from those. I don't change from those. They know that there are certain things, and—and that's the way that it is—that I am fair. I feel that I am fair and equitable. That's—it's a give and take, you know. You give; I give; and, you know, we—we take.

Leaving Director G. described his routine of making morning visits to all his rooms and meeting with his leadership team:

> Usually, in the morning,… I would go in to all the classrooms and—as they opened up. We used to open up one classroom at a time, kind of a staggered (Indiscernible) and we'd go—go in to the classrooms and, I guess, greet the staff; and sometimes—sometimes I would go in the classrooms when we were short-staffed ….then (indiscernible) checking out the curriculum….Usually, the trainer will be coming in some time a little bit later in the morning. Most days, not every day, but usually a couple days a week, we'd—we'd sit down and discuss training—training things, goals of where the staff were and training,

things that we wanted to work on. For example, like last year, one of the last things I was doing was preparing for accreditation; and we'd work on those kind of issues.

Leaving Director G. continued,

It was just being at—again, the people, I think, the—I was working (Indiscernible) and managed to get good staff. I didn't—I didn't do a lot of micromanaging of the—the staff. I gave them some guidelines and (Indiscernible) of what the—the regulation says, this is our goals; and then I turned them loose to do what they wanted with it (Indiscernible) but I didn't try to tell them we did this and did that; and—'cause I let the (Indiscernible) do that, they were—they were happy. I didn't have a lot of staff issues, so I think that was satisfying. I think they felt comfortable. The staff felt—felt good about being there.

Leaving Director H. had a similar routine checking in with her caregiving staff, support staff, and leadership team:

Okay. I was the—the—the late shift, come at 9:00. I would go around to each room and greet the staff and say hello or good morning to them and also go (Indiscernible) by the kitchen, and, of course, sit down (Indiscernible) --- and see what had to be done or what was left of the last day or prior and then meet with the assistant directors, when they came in. One was already there; one came in later —and see if there was any concerns or problems; but, of course, they made their rounds….talk to the TACs about training, check with the kitchen.

CYS Coordinator K drew on her own experience as a director and filling in for directors and related the following:

> The first thing you need to do is to go around to all of the rooms and say, "Good morning" and ask how your morning was and—and let them know that you're there and you'll answer anything that happened in the morning. Then you're dealing—I try to greet and talk with the parents that are there, you know, find out what's happening at the desk; but first of all, I think you have to go around and take care of all of your people and make sure they're fine.

Coordinator K continued by describing the coaching role of the center director:

> You go through the rooms to make sure that interaction is going on, watching the caregivers, watching the children, the tone of the room, what kinds of activities, what's in the room. Have they moved it around? Are they making changes every month? …. You know, commenting on—on what they're doing. You know, "I like that." Trying to go in and observe, sometimes, the children and then looking around for things that they have, you know, what's on their bulletin board, have they reported the faucet that's leaking, and have they reported the door that won't close. Looking at things they need, asking them what they need. Sometimes role modeling. Sometimes they had a problem in the room and, right then and there, you know that you have to (Indiscernible) and you're down on the floor with the children, helping solve their problem…All of these—teaching your staff, or coaching. I like the word *coaching* better, but—but really this—I find being a director in any job in CYS, it's a different level of teaching; and it should be more like coaching these days to have them

do what needs to be done. So I think teaching, coaching, is very important, and also ensuring people to do what they're supposed to do.

The center directors and CYS Coordinator in the 2nd group of interviews addressed several of the same themes in regard to fostering positive staff and parent relationships. Unlike the first group of interviews, the specifics of using staff meetings for community building times or making rounds to touch base with staff did not specifically come up. However, all described the importance of having good staff morale and relationships and being available to staff.

Director L. shared,

> And I think we have pretty good morale at our Center. In the past, our Center hasn't had great morale, but in the past six months or so it's been improving a lot, and that's definitely a positive. And we just really have to keep building them up and telling them you know your cold will be gone, you'll get used to the kids, they'll grow. You know, you guys will grow together and form relationships and things will start to be easier. So the first couple of weeks, it's hard for staff when they first start, and it seems really overwhelming having only one caregiver and ten preschoolers in a classroom. ……It can be very overwhelming, but our staff seemed to handle it all very well. It's just once they get used to it and get into the hang of it…. And now I'm seeing it from kind of the outside, and I'll see staff members come to me and they're really excited bringing like something one of the children wrote or art work and show me what the children are doing and they're excited about it.

Director M. spoke about the diversity of his staff and staff forming relationships with each other that extend from the work environment:

> Well fortunately here we're very diverse. I have people that are just out of high school, and then I have some that's been with CYS for close to 20 years, so we have that big you know from one end to the other. So we have – they get in their groups. You can see their rooms where they'll create their own little group atmosphere, and it seems to be that they would hang out more together for lunch or on weekends or something like that, and they find their own ages like a lot of the high-schoolers. You know just graduated high school, a lot of them are grouped together. And then you have the older ones that were you know they really don't want to do anything on the weekends; they just want to go home and spend time with their family.

Director M. described the importance of open communication, being available for staff, and leadership involvement in fostering teamwork. He explains,

> So we don't really have as much I would say gossip going around the Center. We did have a spurt here and there, but it was just miscommunication, perceptions, and we had – you know we talked to everybody involved and they don't really understand now that it didn't seem like it that way at first, but now everybody's fine so it's pretty much a good team. You know we don't – I don't --…I don't like to say, "I'm in charge, I'm closing the door, don't bother me," type thing. I'm involved in everybody out there, I know what's going on, and hopefully the assistant directors are projecting the same image to where we're

showing that we care, we're involved, so we don't have a lot of – I don't think we've had any complaints or anything like that. We try to work everything out.

CYS Coordinator O. described the center director as managing a complex system inclusive of relationships between the staff, parents, and children:

Well from center director perspective, I kind of – what comes to mind,…is one of those diagrams with all the circles and the overlapping circles. As I talked systems earlier, you've got your people, your personnel, you've got your staff and you've got parents, and you've got the kiddos, and you've got your support staff. And so a typical day -- if the director has done a good job in creating an emotional environment of support and respect and putting all those systems into place, then you would hope that the Center is humming along during the day. And I want to contrast this with a center director who does not know how to do that or has not done a good job. So what you've got as far as staff goes; or staff that maybe they're poorly trained, they don't know what the procedures are, rumors are rampant, gossip, and they're backstabbing each other. So you have a very dysfunctional environment versus a very supportive professional respectful type of environment, and that I think does a lot to – as how the day plays out. You're talking different issues; you're fighting different battles depending on that kind of environment you've created…. I put a lot of credibility and importance on the emotional environment. You know you can walk into a center or a room and if there's a lot of tension and stress you can feel it.

Coordinator O. continued to describe how center directors need not only the organizational skills of a manager but the leadership abilities to influence staff :

> I think it's a little bit of everything……If you have a director that maybe is a great manager and can sit at a computer and develop all of these SOPs and these policies and the smart books and do all this, but cannot go out and have the communication people skills to explain it, to implement it and make people follow it. It takes both of those. And conversely, you can have someone who is absolutely a wonderful people person; everybody loves this person to death. Just so, so supportive, and you know can just talk with anybody and get anybody calmed down, but then gets back as far as organizational skills or making decisions, putting together a smart book, the nuts and bolts of how you do things but you can't do it. I mean that doesn't do any good either. Yeah, so if you have a policy or a standard operating procedure and you know why it's there and you can articulate it and then persuade and show folks why this is necessary to do it this way, then you've got the whole package.

Two of the three participants in the second group of interviews, mentioned that supporting staff growth and professional development was one of the most rewarding and satisfying things about their job as a center director. Director L shared,

> So now I'm seeing the staff members grow more than I'm seeing the children grow from when I was in the classroom. So it's exciting to see staff members grow, and then really I encourage all my staff members to take …college classes because we pay 50% of them and they'll gain more knowledge for their profession and that's how they're able to move up throughout CYS as they go to different duty stations. Last semester we had ten staff members taking classes, so it's really exciting to see staff members that care enough to take their

> personal time and go to a classroom and try to improve their skills through that when it's not on the clock time when they're in that classroom or doing homework…… So now seeing staff growth is definitely one of the things that keeps me going.

CYS Coordinator O. confirmed the satisfaction directors experience in supporting and watching staff's professional development as well as having the opportunity for professional development themselves:

> I think seeing successful staff members. You know hiring somebody. Hiring is a gamble anyway. And then hiring folks and watching them progress and blossom and grow and become a really, really successful staff member, and then the internal promotion possibility. It's going from a CYPA to a lead, maybe to a supervisory program lead to an assistant director, and then maybe going on to being a director of another program… So I think it's like growth and development of staff, and having the opportunity themselves to go off to school. Two of my three directors have been to the civilian basic course in our – in the – and they're waiting for a word now in their acceptance into what's it -- the intermediate or whatever. Yeah, so being able to go to schools. I think that's what is satisfying…

***Relationships with parents.*** Staying Director D. spoke of the role of the director not being easy: "I mean, the tasks are not always easy. Sometimes, you may have some busy, busy days, you know, a lot of complaints coming from the parents." Though she acknowledged that the good days outweighed the bad.

Staying Director A. shared her role in meeting parents' needs:

In this center, I can truly say that the parents are happy. Like I said, I have been at this center for only a week and I haven't seen one parent in my office; and they are happy with the services that we provide; and our surveys show it, that they are happy customers; and when I work at the front desk, it makes me feel good because I could tell that they—they're happy that their children are here….Yeah. I think that one of the most important things, when you start your day out, is to visit your rooms and find out—you know, and just listen to some …of the parents' needs so you can know what are the—what are their needs, what do you need to do to meet the parents' needs if they have, you know—talk to them about any of the needs of their children and their families because that's why you're here. You're here for the families….

Staying Director C. spoke of planning her day to make sure she was available to parents:

Towards the end of the day is, I try to free myself up if I'm doing anything here by about 5:00 so that I can be visible to the parents 'cause—you know, on any typical day, there is, you know, parent questions or—or you talk (Indiscernible) whatever and just to let them know I'm here. They can see me, and I can greet them, and I can—I like that. I like knowing the parents and letting them know that I am here…..That's the goal I strive for, to have a good reputation in the community and that people are enjoying what they're doing and that their children are happy and parents.

Staying Director B. empathized with the special struggles of military parents:

I have more understanding when a parent comes and says that they—you know,

that they have this problem or that problem. I understand. You know, I see it. I see their struggles, you know, being a parent and—and trying to juggle being a military person and a parent. I—not ever being in this and seeing this, I would have never thought that it was a problem, but it's a big problem because of deployments and—and everything else. So it's helped me to be more understanding and sympathetic and—well, I guess it's—...Very demanding. I think it's—it's probably more demanding than it would be in elementary or secondary because these are the first years of parents, of their children and so forth; an—and sometimes, this is their first child and they're very demanding and very protective.

Staying Director E. described gaining the confidence of people in the community and creating a family like environment at her center.

So that's—I think that's my biggest achievement, making this a family environment. You know, parents like—when I first came here, we'd have 40 and 50 people at the meeting. Now, I try to get somebody to show up for a meeting, 'cause our new colonel comes to everyone but nobody comes because – We've done some things, like we had a child find here; and that day, you know, people were like apprehensive about bringing their children over here, but we had a—we had a child find, which, you know, about a 100 children from the community that don't use our center—and the parents were like, "That's the way"—and "This is really a nice place to—I want to bring my child." So word has gotten out that…--- I think we've—we've worked hard to get a positive light in the community.

Both leaving Director G. and Director F. reported they did not have a lot of parental issues, which Dennis said was satisfying. Leaving Director F. elaborated:

> …and, here, we're very fortunate. Parent problems don't really—aren't bad. We don't have a lot of parent problems, and I contribute a lot of that to the staff. They're so good that, one, if a parent does have an issue, they go—they know to go to that person in the room first and they're great with talking to the parents and really solving that issue at their level, you know, so it—so it—that it stays something minor—but I really don't do a whole lot of that, you know, solving those parent problems because they just aren't there because I think we're—we're really providing high quality care and that's what keeps the—the parents happy.

CYS Coordinator I. spoke about how Army regulatory requirements sometimes created conflict with parents and directors, but that the majority of parents had good relationships with the program staff:

> Well, we have such rigid requirements, or strict requirements, that we try to enforce—we are the policemen. We are the policemen a lot. So that's where a lot of the conflict with parents come in, saying, "This is our health SOP. Your child can't come back for 24 hours." Even though you want to empower staff as much as possible, the directors are there to interpret the rules, you know—but there are certain things that they can't bend on. You know, your kid is sick; we can't infect everybody else. So we have to end up being—enforcing the rules, and, sometimes, the people don't like that. You have to see the other side of it, too. I mean, 90% of the parents are happy almost all of the time. It's only 10% out of the difficult parents, so—You see parent growth. There's close

relationships that they develop. So—but you do see growth and development and you do see people happy; and, you know, there's a lot of warmness from the family and staff and from the parents. It's just, you know, you got to balance that over the 10% that are always complaining.

CYS Coordinator K. spoke of supporting family relationships:

And then I think they have more—then you're more of a family, comfortable feeling; and that's what we really need to promote. We are about family and children. That's what parents expect. That's what we need to be, very open, feeling and caring.

CYS Coordinator J. noted that directors were responsive to military families and their unique needs:

I think … they get a lot of satisfaction …when they tend to families and their needs, you know, the kids definitely coming in being comfortable in a classroom, happy; ….there is a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. Especially way over here, there's a lot of deployment, a lot of field exercises; and I know a lot of our parents go out there and let them know that what they do is important; and they really are thankful for being there and—and taking the extra time to know that child so that child has somebody familiar to them to look after them.

Participants in both the first and second group of interviews, shared many of the same issues in regard to their efforts in maintaining positive relationships with parents, while also acknowledging the stress created by some parents whose expectations they could never seem to meet. Directors indicated that parents overall

were respectful and appreciative of the demanding job of child care. The 2nd round participants also shared their satisfaction in supporting parents in their role and making a positive impact on children and families.

Director L. shared:

> And then working with the parents because now if a parent has a question or concern, a lot of times it comes to me so instead of when I was in the classroom, some of the stuff I wasn't able to handle myself so it would get passed up, and now a lot of the stuff I'm able to take care of. So really helping parents out and reassuring them that what we're doing and how we're teaching their child…. Um but working with the parents; .. – we have two children right now with the behavior plans and in the past two weeks we've had meetings with both those parents and … teachers and ….– we saw incredible improvement with one of the children this week after meeting with the father and telling him what we're doing here….And asking him what he's doing at home, so now we're on the same page as him, and we've seen incredible growth in the past week from that so that – you know being able to see that is great…when I'm able to help bridge that gap between us and them. ….You can really impact the lives of the children and the families because by helping a child through behavioral difficulties, you know that can take a lot of stress off the parent if the child's behavior also improves at home of their reading, writing , you know, all of those skills improve. That helps the parents too, not only the child;…. And you know it's a really rewarding profession because you can see the growth of the children and how you can help the families.

In regards to perception of parental respect both directors and the CYS Coordinator indicated that parents acknowledged the hard work that child care staff do.

Director L explained:

> I feel like I receive respect from the parents and that they respect what I'm doing, so I think it's the parents understand because they have their own children, whether they have one child or four children, they understand that sometimes it's hard to deal with that one child, and then they think about what our staff members are dealing with….so I think parents respect what we do. For the most part, they all seem very respectful, especially the – it seems like military guys are more respectful than anyone else because they come in and they're like, "I don't know how the hell you handle ten preschoolers at once," "or four babies at once." And you know I tell them the same thing, "I don't know how you're able to do your job, but you do it."

Director M. agreed, "I've actually had parents come in and say, "I couldn't do what you guys do all day."

CYS Coordinator O. described the satisfaction directors feel when parents acknowledge the efforts of the center staff:

> Having parents that say, "You've made a difference," with the parents that are PCSing and they're pulling their kids out, and the parents that come up to the director and say, "Thank you, you've made a difference. My kiddo just loves it here." You know, "You've done an excellent job."
>
> That validation for them that what they do every single day of the week just made a difference in somebody's life.

Though overall, having positive relationships with parents was rewarding-all three participants in the 2nd group of interviews acknowledged that parents can also be a source of stress.

Director L. spoke about the working through some of the challenges with parents and trying to meet their expectations:

> I have one parent that they've been – their son's five now I believe….and he's been in the Center since he was a baby so they've been here longer than I have, and she's a parent that one of those that always has something to complain about or something like that. So anytime like there's an accident report if her son falls and scrapes his elbow, she always questions it and wants to like schedule a meeting with me and talk about it, and then she wants to make sure that I'm fully aware of it and that I've looked on the tape to make sure that's what happens. So she just questions all our teachers, and so for a while she was being really rude to a lot of the staff members if something happened during the day. I was the one that would always share the information because she just – she really intimidated the staff members, and so I kind of had to take over the role with that, and it just kept persisting, so the coordinator and I actually had a meeting with her and that was maybe five months ago or so….And since then, she's improved a lot, but -- and she's nicer to the teachers. She'll actually listen to them and talk to them; and because our teachers were scared to talk to her because she would come back at them anytime they tried to tell her that her son wasn't perfect.

CYS Coordinator O. spoke of the importance of interpersonal and communication skills in fostering positive relationships with parents:

> If you're supportive of parents, if you have good communication skills, respectful, your policies are well known, open door and good communication skills, your relationships and the issues you talk about with the parents are going to be different than if there was an absence of all of those qualities as far as parents. And we do have parents that are just Lord, high maintenance. They're dysfunctional themselves and they're taking everything out on you because you happen to be the first person they see in the morning. And how a director handles that or how a director has trained the staff to handle that goes a long way in how the day plays out…

CYS Coordinator continued by describing the stress that some parents cause:

> That is very stressful, high maintenance parents. We've got one now at one of the centers that I'm going to – our civilian misconduct and having her barred from the staff…. I'm just – she's not going to abuse the staff anymore. She's not going to abuse the director. She's got issues….So it's – you have parents that you may not agree – the parent may not agree. There may be a different philosophical perspective there, but if you've got the good communication skills, you're kind of able to reach a respectful, "We agree to disagree but this is the way it is."

**For the love of children.** Whereas staffing shortages and staff turnover were the source of most director frustration, the love of working with and on behalf of children was one of the most satisfying aspects of the center director's job. Directors

enjoyed supporting children's growth and development, and spoke about how rewarding it was to interact with children and the power of "hugs." Director spoke of how satisfying it was to see happy children interacting with caregiving staff. Working on behalf of children was related by many as service and a way to make a difference.

The intrinsic reward of working with and on behalf of children emerged as a common theme among directors. Directors cited the desire to work with children as their reason for getting in the field. Nearly every director told of how satisfying it was to visit with children. They expressed how positive they felt when they knew children were happy in the center environment and in their interactions with the caregiving staff. They described how receiving a hug at the end of a frustrating day kept them going. Some directors referred to their work as service and felt that they were doing valuable work that makes a difference. There was a sense that directors saw the work as a sacrifice.

Staying Director D. shared,

> I enjoy it because there's more personal one-on-one attention, if I want to get it, you know, with any child. I could just go around and get that one-on-one attention. It—it's a sense of belonging….but the most satisfying is when I see the kids happy, the caregivers happy.

Staying Director A. described the satisfaction felt at seeing children happy and ensuring their needs are met:

> I find it satisfying when I walk in to an environment and watch the children and the caregivers interacting with each other and—and—and being happy; and if they're being—and if I walk in to an environment where the children seem

stressed and where they seem frustrated and a majority of the children seem that way, then it's something that the caregiver needs to change or that we need to change so that we can meet the needs of the children.

She continued saying that her work with children is more than a job and more about making a difference:

I have a lot to offer children; and I put all of my energy into my job and into the children because I don't look at this as a job. I look at it—at it as watching the children grow. I think that a lot of times, with the children being from a military family, they need me and I feel needed; and— that's why I think that I will be in this business for a long time, because there is a lot of work to be done.

Staying Director B. affirmed,

You know, just we're here for the kids. That's what we are for. We have chosen to work. This is what we've chosen to do; therefore, our focus is on the kids, not ourselves; You have kids that when you walk in to the room, they all stop what they're doing and come and run and hug you and—and I—I don't know. It's—it's trying. It—but it's also rewarding, you know. I mean, there's—there's no amount of money in the world that can pay for a kid running up and—and giving you a hug and—or, you know, just coming up and—and saying, you know, thanks for something…The rewarding things are, you know, seeing children grow and—and seeing those smiles and those happy faces and—and everything.

Staying Director E. confirmed that relationships with children are what kept her in position even during trying times:

It's the—the children. You know, they—every day, they come up and hug. You know, a lot of the kids call me Grandma…..And just knowing that I'm helping to create a good, safe environment for children…and a hug ….you can't put a price on that either, so that's just kept me in here.

Leaving Director H. agreed and described the positive interactions with children as "therapy" after trying days:

I found a lot of satisfaction being in the room with the children; and I've seen the smiles on their faces. They'd run up to you and hug you, and, "Oh, Ms. H." you know, so that, a lot a times when I felt down during the day, I'd go in the toddler room or something or go into the infant rooms and then one of the little ones would run to me and give me a big hug or pull my hand to show me something. That soothed a lot of things that had happened that day. I found that to be a therapy for me.

Leaving Director F. spoke about how love of children was what initially attracted her to this work:

I like to spend a lot of time in the rooms, just because I love being with the children…. I like to be with the children. I miss being with them in the classroom. I think that's why—I probably spend too much time in there sometimes. I probably spend at least an hour and a half—an hour to hour and a half a day in the classrooms at—you know, one part of the day or another. Being the director, too—sometimes, I know myself and other people in management staff, we talk about how it's hard for us not to be with kids, because that's—you know, that's why we get into this field, you know, originally, to be

with children; and sometimes, the difference in being with children and having to manage them and manage adults is very hard…

Directors in the second group of interviews shared some of the same thoughts. Director L. described the joy of seeing children's growth and development:

Some of the satisfying things are now coming in the classroom… you're on the ground. You're in there with the kids every day so you're seeing those small growth moments all the time, which you know that's incredibly rewarding.

Director M. added:

I feel that this is my calling now. I mean I spent 23 years in the military moving around everywhere and I really enjoy watching the children grow up. I really enjoy that now. I'm a grandfather now, and I've got pictures of my grandson hanging in my office and you know, so it's – I really enjoy working with this age group.

He continued:

I really enjoy working with children. I've seen the children start off in the infant room and now they're already into pre-school. You know, not during my time, but I mean when I was over as a program ops, but I would see them. You know, I saw them as an infant and now they're older. But I've actually seen some of them now that were in the pre-tods now that they're transitioning into pre-school, and it's just amazing how the, you know, the change. That's fulfilling for me.

CYS Coordinators in both the first and second groups of interviews also recognized the intrinsic rewards for directors received in working with children.

CYS Coordinator O. shared:

> Satisfying things would be I think when they're out and about in their programs, the kids -- that they walk into a room and the kids come running up to them. That absolute delight of a kid you know seeing you walk in the room and shouting out your name and running up to you.

**Sources of support: Leadership team, supervisor, staff, colleagues, and family, higher headquarters.** Nearly all directors described how they were able to cope with some of the more difficult aspects of the center director position and had developed support systems and relationships. The majority of directors described receiving support from their peers- other directors, the training and curriculum specialist, and/or their supervisor —the CYS Coordinator. Others also mentioned support from caregiving staff and their family.

Staying Director A. spoke of getting support from her fellow directors:

I get support from the other center directors because we have four centers here; and if I have a question—I mean, one good thing about working with a whole bunch of centers being around is you can rely on each other. It's a close-knit family. I could pick up the phone and ask any one of these center directors questions and they're there for me ---- and I think that that is one of the most important things, because we're team players.

Staying Director C. agreed and also mentioned her training and curriculum specialist as a source of support and help:

> Well, I left off, I think, with the other directors, as far as the cohesiveness and—you know—of course, you got so many things and you only can get so many other resources that come into play with everything you—you need to run a

child-development center. I think as far as CYS people go, we do well together. You know, you have your little family feuds here and there. Yes, and TACS, I've had really good TACS here…they're a good support help also.

Staying Director B. shared how his fellow colleagues often looked to him for support and how he relied on his CYS Coordinator and viewed her as a mentor:

> I go to other colleagues, the directors—but when you're kind of the veteran having been here for a year and a half, it's hard to go and get support—…..But I'm also, not only in age but also in experience, the oldest director also. So, yeah, they look to me for a whole lot, more so than I look to them. But me, personally? I probably look at our CYS chief. She's pretty much my mentor because my aspirations are to move up in the system and I look to her because —because of her wisdom and what she's accomplished and so forth.

Staying Director D. also described a supportive relationship with her supervisor:

> For support I…go to my coordinator —And any information that I can't get here, I go to her and she usually can get me basically anything I need or just that shoulder to lean on or —whatever, you know, that she can do for me.

CYS Coordinator K speaks about the importance of the support of CYS Coordinator as a mentor and teacher for directors reflecting back to when she was a director:

> …My first coordinator here; and she was really good in teaching a lot of good things. She was a really good supervisor. It's important to have a supervisor to help teach you the skills you got to be able to learn. One of the things that I use that we talked about, giving the children words to use with other children so when like this

morning when I out and talked with the caregivers, I said, "Have you talked about parent issues and how you talk to parents and customer service?" I said, "I'm here this morning to give you some tools, to give you some words that you can use with them. This is how you approach" and, you know, we need more time to do that.

Staying Director E. relied on support from her family and lamented that she never developed supportive relationships with either colleagues or her supervisor: “I guess my family. There's really—I know—I don't know. I—I've never—I've never bonded with anybody here, and I—and—and unfortunately for me because it makes me like, you know, I'm a rebel.”

Leaving Director H. expressed how her caregiving staff provided support:

> Actually, the people within the center, I actually had great support from the program assistant. I had a program assistant and Ed techs that would go the extra last mile for me, so that was—that—all that was gratifying to feel that they would support me like that.

Leaving Director F. shared how having a strong working relationship with her training and curriculum specialist was important in helping her cope with the challenges of being a center director:

> My TACS she’s great. She's wonderful. We have a great team. I mean, we work together. I mean, she finishes my sentences. She knows what I'm thinking even before I say it, that kind of thing. I mean, that's wonderful. I couldn't—I couldn't make it without her, you know. In this job, as long as I've been in it, I would not have survived; and before she came onboard I had another TACS that we did not have that kind of relationship. We really clashed, and it made it very

difficult.

She continued,

> Yeah, I think that helps, too; and it helps with the staff. If they look at the management team and they're working together really well, and they get along, and they're, you know, going above and beyond to bend over backwards for the parents and to, you know, meet the needs of the staff, then they're going to do the same for you. You—you know, the (Indiscernible) thing is true. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours; and I think that's what happens here. We just really—you know, we—we just stick together, and we help each other out whenever we can, and that's what keeps us happy.

She concludes with sharing a positive and supportive relationship with her supervisor:

> The coordinator now is wonderful. She's great, and we've had people that weren't so great before. She's the type of person that, you know she's there; she gives you lots of praise, lots of encouragement. She's there to mentor you; but, at the same time, if you do something wrong, she doesn't hesitate to let you know and not in a negative way, but more in a learning— constructive criticism kind of way; and you -- you know, you don't get defensive; you just kind of sit there, you know, and take it and say, "I know I screwed up. I'm sorry"; and that's good, though. You need somebody that can do that. If it's somebody that's very domineering and is going to micromanage, that's just going to turn you off.

While the director and coordinators interviewed described how they developed

supportive relationships to manage some of the more difficult parts of the jobs, there were other relationships that emerged as a source of frustration for many of the participants. Several participants described how not having a supportive relationship with their chain of command (supervisor to commander) in regard to obtaining resources was frustrating. One mentioned supervisor interference is managing staff conflict as a concern. Some mentioned the perception that command was not involved, knowledgeable or respectful of child care work.

Leaving Director G found the most dissatisfying aspect of position was not having the enough support in obtaining resources from his chain of command and supervisor. He shared,

> Things that ….probably weren't satisfying were we….we didn't have…well in my opinion, a whole lot of support of higher headquarters up to the CYS chain….You were kind of on your own to do your own thing, which (indiscernible) a good thing but it's (indiscernible) to get all the (Indiscernible) support, resources, especially- was dissatisfying.
>
> He continued:
>
> Going to have to say the whole gambit of having resources or -- and one thing I didn't mention is while I was in Germany, spending quite a bit of my own money to buy stuff from a lawnmower to … classroom supplies 'cause we didn't have enough money. So having the resources to buy required materials the classroom and support materials and also just to have -- have enough staff to adequately run a facility.
>
> He also shared the need to have chain of command involvement in the program

in order to understand the nature of child care work and some of the challenges and needs:

> I would think, also, getting the -- the command down into the center and somehow -- I'm not sure exactly -- have like an orientation but actually getting them in there and seeing what it's like. Have a come down and visit with VIPs or come down and say "Hi" and "How're you doing?"; but they -- they -- they really don't get to feel what -- what it's like in the center. So I -- I would think it'll be good to get the -- the chain of command down into the facility and actually observing for -- not for just five minutes, but for a period of time. "Okay. This is what you -- what we really have to do every day, day in and day out."

Director C. agreed support from her chain of command in competing for resources needed to run her program was frustrating.

> The frustrating? I think, given the outside resources to work with. We've been trying to get a playground here for years. You know, the money goes someplace else or, you know, somewhere or another that flops, so we haven't gotten that. We have a nice (Indiscernible) Sergeant XXX (Indiscernible) getting us pieces now and then whenever he can, so he's helping us out. There's always people like that. Trying to get things done within the center, I think is probably the biggest frustration, for one. Getting a paint job, getting new tile.

Director B mentioned a different dimension of chain of command support and spoke to how he sometimes perceived that his chain of command did not respect child care work as a profession.

> Well, I think that, you know, we, in some way, in some fashion, need to push to people that are higher than we who make decisions and everything, that they need to see that -- that childcare is no longer babysitting or anything like that, but it is early childhood education, just as elementary education and secondary education.

Director E. indicated that not having the support of her supervisor in regarding to resolving staff concerns was frustrating:

> We have some caregivers, you know, instead of them -- when they get upset about …. instead of them coming to me, they'll go to Ms. XXX and that's very frustrating for me.

Director H. indicated that while being short staffed was her biggest frustration, that her chain of command not understanding the challenges a director faced with staffing was also frustrating:

> The biggest frustration was being short-staffed --- and you could not explain that in the -- in the upper chain of command. When I say upper chain, I'm talking about (Indiscernible) the colonel. You see, for -- for some reason, they couldn't see that. ….For those who couldn't (Indiscernible) so they couldn't understand that; but, yet, they want you to bring good numbers, get the children in; but you can't do that if you don't have the staff to take care of them. So that was the frustrating part just because they didn't understand the day-to-day, the -- the –

CYS Coordinators also agreed that command support and appreciation could either be a support for directors while lack thereof was frustrating. CYS Coordinator I.

explains:

> Well, not being appreciated -- working hard and not being appreciated; and it depends on the chain of command, too. You know, if you got a Colonel Bubba [sic] coming around saying, "You're doing a great job," that's fine. You got a Colonel XXX coming around saying, "You know, do more -- better, faster," that's a different thing.

The second group of participants also described finding support from their CYS Coordinator, colleagues, networking contacts, and family.

Director L. spoke about getting support from CYS specialists like the Program Operations Specialists for financial issues and his peers. He described how having supportive supervisor influenced retention among center directors:

> For a lot of my like financial stuff and personnel stuff I go to our program ops, and she's incredibly helpful; so for stuff like that she's definitely the first person I go to when I have questions on that or need help. And then our coordinator right now is hands down the best boss I've ever had, and he's incredibly helpful with anything I have questions on, especially being a new Director, and he helps with the experience he has because he comes from a CDC director in the past, so he's gone through a lot of the stuff I'm going through and so he supports me in different ways. If I have a question about how to deal with the behavior, if that's the proper technique, or if I have a parent that just – we had a parent that would keep canceling anytime we tried to schedule a meeting for a behavior plan. So he ended up assisting with that and he's just always willing to help, so it's good to have a boss that's always there.

Director L. also acknowledged receiving support from his other colleagues who were directors, but mentioned that there was a significant difference in age thus impacting the relationships.

> And now most of the supervisors around here are at a totally different stage in their life than I am because for me, I'm 25 and single over here in Germany, and a lot of my peers are twice my age and married and have children, so there's a disconnect from that as far as my age and my work level of peers. I don't know how to phrase that, but people that are at about the same point in their life professionally at my base are in general quite a bit older. …But they are helpful. When I ask them for something anytime I need something they're willing to help.

Director L. emphasized the role a CYS Coordinator had in influencing a CDC Director decision to stay in position:

> I think a lot of it comes from just the leadership above you and how it trickles down about staff retention. Just like if my CYPAs can't stand me and they think I'm a horrible supervisor; then they're not going to stick around and work. Just like for me, if my coordinator is just the worse person ever, then I'm going to try to find a different job away from that coordinator….So I think it really just depends from the leadership even up. So mainly the coordinators, the leadership above the directors and how helpful they are, how willing they are to help, and then just the encouragement from them. I definitely think that's – it just all comes from whoever your leadership is…. It really wears you down if you have a supervisor that you just can't seem to get along with.

Director M. spoke of receiving support from his CYS Coordinator, colleagues outside of CYS and from his family. He emphasized the importance of having autonomy to run his program and a trusting relationship with his CYS Coordinator.

> It feels like they're more people listening to us I guess instead of trying to tell us how to do it and sort of letting us do it…Or like my coordinator; she comes down and she only does like as a staff assistance visit every month, and she just asks, "How are things going?" that kind of thing. But other than that, she's letting me run the program. I'm not being micromanaged…As long as I'm in the guidelines and if there's something I need her attention, I will go to her. But we have that relationship that you know I guess is adult – the trust. You know as long as the children are safe and you know everything is in compliance then you know she's happy and content with where we're at. It lets me do my job.

Another source of support came from relationships and networking with colleagues outside of CYS established when working at a headquarters position. Director M. explained:

> When I was the program ops, I was very connected with all of the directors; D, FMWR and everybody up in that area you know working with…. so I knew everybody, and I kept those friendships, so I guess I had it easier than probably some directors maybe. I know everybody in the community. I just can call them up, "Hey, can you help me out with this?" So I guess I get faster service than me trying to go up through the chain type thing. Because I guess it's been networking that I've created before.

He also shared the importance of support from his family especially when

needing to work additional hours:

> My wife knows so it's really not as bad. As far as doing other things in the community, I really – once I leave work I pretty much go home, which I do not live on post so I get away from the military so I might have American and German friends…. And my wife you know she supports me 100%. I mean she – when I'm not back, she'll be looking out for jobs and she'll say, "Well are you going to look for something outside of CYS?" And that's when I say, "No, not right now." So she supports me with staying where I'm at.

CYS Coordinator O. shared some insights into how she viewed her role in supporting CDC Directors as a resource and mentor.

> It's you know taking advantage of those teachable moments. You know, usually you lift up a stone and you know, oops, we got a problem. And it's using that as a teachable moment to guide somebody through the corrective action. Give them the resources; the information you know to say, "Okay, if we do this, if we add this, if we write a policy, if we change our procedures," or, "Okay, let's go back over a conversation we just had with this parent. What was the real issue? What was the parent mad about? How could that have been changed?" and using the teachable moment. … And then making sure they get to the civilian education system.

When asked about what she thought directors needed to be successful she answered:

> Well good question. Part of me says the best thing is just good old experience. We need to learn from our mistakes, and so we don't want them to happen

again. But I agree that mentoring, that reflective conversation on, "Okay, let's look at this. Why did this happen? How can we tweak things so it doesn't happen again?" And so yeah, there's mentoring and know that mentoring comes from the more experienced,

more mature crowd. …And they do; and they do here mainly because of all the transformation that we're going through. They talk to each other, we're sharing staff back and forth, we're you know as XXX closes this summer. You know XXX is getting ready to distribute a lot of equipment, materials, and so they are talking with each other and networking and doing some problem solving. But kind of the reason they start this conversation is related to transformation.

One additional source of support that came up with the second group of interviewees that was not specifically mentioned by the first group was support obtained by higher headquarters via training opportunities and the development of automation tools.

Participants spoke about the use of automation and management information systems to include electronic filing of their daily activity reports (DARS) a financial report, and the Child/Youth Management System (CYMS) management information system and how it made their job easier.

Director M. explained:

I think things are getting a lot easier for us…. You know CYMS is a big change I guess, because everybody was telling me you have a pen and paper, you know stubby pencil keeping track of everything. There's so much automation that's

out there now, but I think we're getting more. Feels like they're more people listening to us I guess instead of trying to tell us how to do it and sort of letting us do it.

CYS Coordinator O. shared how some of the management tools helped directors to gain efficiencies resulting in time savings:

> Through all of these years we have created a lot of systems and processes that's made everybody's life easier…So you run a report on this, you run a report on that; so instead of having maybe to pull files if you're checking the staff health assessments. You know if you've –So I think we had a lot of things in place. Not only the technical piece that's helped our work lives, but it's kind of eased a little bit of the stress and it's shortened the time we need to do something to where maybe they can work nine hours instead of ten hours. And if they've got their act together, then they really kind of have everything in place. They know okay, "Today I go run my CYMS report on background checks or health assessments or whatever; see who I need to follow up on." That can be done -- you know to run a report in two minutes.

Additional support was provided via training opportunities from higher headquarters. Director M. indicated that he was able to participate in some of the training opportunities normally offered to just CYS Coordinators but available to him because his Coordinator could not travel. He indicated this helped him develop a macro perspective of the CYS organization:

> So I got to see a lot more of the bigger picture, and being able to see that I wasn't – oh this is only my piece of the pie that's you know I was just stuck in

> and I didn't know the big picture. But once I saw the big picture and actually went through a lot of the European training with the Region Program Manager. And actually seeing all of CYS… And I think that's where CYS is hurting ourselves is that we're not looking in it as a team, everybody's just focused on their one area and seeing what's going on… Just knowing that people up there at the IMCOM Region were looking at all these aspects of CYS and trying to I guess bring us up to the 21st century type thing.

**Summary**

This chapter profiled the participants and presented the findings from the study and analysis of the data. Five themes emerged: (a) No typical day: demanding, fast paced, stressful, long, busy day; (b) The challenge of staffing, (c) For the love of working with children, (d) Creating a center community: Relationships with staff and parents and (e) Sources of Support. Chapter 5 will summarize the data analysis section and answer the research questions. The chapter concludes with implications of the research and recommendations for practitioners and researchers and limitations of the study.

## Chapter 5: Summary, Findings, Implications, Recommendations

This chapter presents a summary of the study and findings, implications, and recommendations. The first section reviews the purpose of the study and statement of the problem, the research questions, and the methodology for collecting and analyzing the data. The second section presents the major findings of the study, provides answers to the research questions based on these findings, and compares the findings of this study with the literature and research presented in Chapter II. The last section discusses the implications of this study and offers recommendations for practitioners and researchers.

### Summary of the Study

**Purpose of study**. The primary purpose of this study was to gain insight into the problem of turnover among child-development center directors working in outside the continental United States (OCONUS) military centers. Though there are numerous studies on the problem of turnover in child care settings most of the research addresses the turnover of direct care/teaching staff. This study is unique in that it looks at child development center directors, and specifically Army CDC directors in OCONUS settings as a distinct group. The study offered insight into child care centers as an adult work as distinct from a child learning environment and adds to the limited research in that area (e.g., Manlove, 1993; Whitebook et al., 1982; Phillips, Howes, Whitebook, 1991; Rutman, 1996; Schwarz et al., 2003; Lower, J. K. & Cassidy, D. J. , 2007; Talan, T. N., Bloom, P. J., & Kelton, R. E., 2014).

The overarching research question that guided this study is: "How do Army CDC Directors working outside the continental United States (OCONUS) make sense of and interpret the nature of their work environment and the issue/problem of center

director turnover?" To help answer this question the following sub-questions were asked.

Question 1: How do Army CDC directors working OCONUS describe the nature of their work environment?

Question 2: What are the factors within the work environment that influence Army CDC Directors decisions to leave or stay in their position?

Question 3: What are some of the factors outside the work setting (i.e., personal, family, etc.) that influence Directors decisions to leave or stay in their position?

This study was conducted at American military child-development centers in Germany. At the time of the study, there were 75 Army child care centers operating within Germany. At the end of the study there were 29 Army child care centers operational in Germany.

The primary sample for this study included all current directors and Child Development Services Coordinators working in Army child care programs within a 60-mile radius from the Kaiserslautern Military Community. The initial round of interviews included five current directors, three departing directors, and three Child Development Services (CDS) Coordinators who participated in the in-depth interviews. In the second round of interviews conducted 12 years later at those same sites, two current center directors and one Child/Youth Services Coordinator participated.

**Instrumentation.** The primary method for gathering data in this study was personal interviews. These instruments included predetermined questions and allowed

for the addition of probing questions to gather additional information or to clarify a response.

**Procedures.** Permission to conduct this research was initially requested through Headquarters United States Army Europe Child Development Services (CDS). Telephone contact was made with all the directors and coordinators working within child care programs within a 60-mile radius of Kaiserslautern. Face to face interviews were arranged with all the current directors and CDS Coordinators who agreed to participate. The CDS Coordinators in those communities agreed to send information on leaving directors who were also included in the study. Phone or personal interviews were arranged with the leaving directors who agreed to participate. For the second round of interviews, permission was requested through Installation Management Command (IMCOM) European Region. Emails were sent to all directors and CYS Coordinators at the original three communities. Phone interviews were coordinated with all those who responded to the email request and agreed to participate.

The initial round of interviews included in depth interviews with five current directors, three departing directors, and three Child Development Services (CDS) Coordinators. The second round of interviews conducted 12 years later at those same sites, included two current center directors and one Child/Youth Services Coordinator.

The initial interviews with the current directors and CDS Coordinators were scheduled between the months of March-December and were conducted face to face. Interviews with leaving directors were conducted during the same time period with one director interviewed in person, and the other two interviewed by phone. Interviews lasted between 1 hour and 1 hour and 30 minutes and were tape-recorded. The three

follow on interviews with two current directors and one CYS Coordinator were conducted by phone 12 years later.

**Analysis.** This study used phenomenology using the guidelines of Moustakas (1994) as the research method to study the issue of turnover among Army child-development center directors working in outside the continental United States (OCONUS) settings. The analysis process consisted of transcription of the interviews and immersion in the data (Tesch, 1990). This was followed by data reduction using a process called horizonalization, whereby all the statements relevant to the research questions were delineated and assigned equal importance. Following horizonalization, the remaining statements and clusters statements common to many of the participants were organized into themes. Textural and structural descriptions were then written based on the data. Structural descriptions described how the phenomenon was experienced and the textural descriptions told what the participants experienced. The result was a composite description of the essential meaning of the experience (Moustakas, 1994) resulting in the emergence of the "essence" of the phenomenon.

## Findings Applied to Research Questions and Literature

This section summarizes the major findings of the study that were presented in Chapter 4 and discusses the answers to the research question based on the findings of this study and how those findings relate to the literature.

**Summary of findings.** For the participants in this study, a total of five themes emerged during the interviews. The five themes that emerged were:

(a) No typical day: demanding, fast paced, stressful, long, busy day;

(b) The challenge of staffing,

(c) For the love of working with children,

(d) Creating a center community: Relationships with staff and parents,

(e) Sources of Support.

The research questions and the common themes that emerged serve as the basis for discussing the conclusions of this study. In order to answer the overarching research question: "How do Army CDC Directors working outside the continental United States (OCONUS) make sense of and interpret the nature of their work environment and the issue/problem of center director turnover?"; the following sub-questions were asked.

Question 1: How do Army CDC directors working OCONUS describe the nature of their work environment?

Question 2: What are the factors within the work environment that influence Army CDC Directors decisions to leave or stay in their position?

Question 3: What are some of the factors outside the work setting (i.e., personal, family, etc.) that influence Directors decisions to leave or stay in their position?

***Research Sub-Question One: How do Army CDC directors working in outside the continental United States (OCONUS) settings describe the nature of their work environment?*** Directors described their days as fast paced, busy, stressful, demanding and full of distractions. Many likened their job to a "firefighter" – reactive and constantly responding to unplanned emergencies. Directors described a day full of constant interruptions and the difficult of balancing administrative tasks (i.e. email, paperwork, suspenses, personnel management, and reports) with staffing issues,

building/maintaining relationships (with parents, staff, and children); and monitoring program quality.

A director's work day was long, largely attributed to centers being open beyond a normal 8-9-hour work day. Due to unique military work schedules (i.e. physical training conducted before work for soldiers), military child care centers were open longer than their civilian centers. Due to the long hours and the constant challenge of having adequate direct care and support staff directors found it a constant challenge to achieve a good work life balance. Directors with more experience tended to achieve this balance more than those with less experience.

Other aspects of a director's day involved monitoring program quality to include oversight for the curriculum, ensuring staff received required training/ professional development opportunities, mentoring staff, leading quality oversight processes like NAEYC accreditation. Managing relations with parents, staff, children, and the community was another aspect of a busy director's work and one of the more rewarding aspect. Directors described the "rewards" they received in working with children and serving soldiers and their families.

A consistent challenge and source of stress for directors was not having adequate staff to meet mandated adult/child minimum ratios and other program area shortages (admin desk, kitchen, trainer, etc.). Mitigating some of the more stressful aspects of the position was supportive relationships with supervisors and the military chain of command. Directors described some aspects of their work as demanding, challenging, and stressful but also found the intrinsic factors (meaningfulness, making a difference, challenge of child care work) at the same time fulfilling and rewarding and

expressed a commitment to the job and the profession.

These observations support research by Phillips et al., (1991), Lower, et al., (2007), Klinkner (2005), Jorde Bloom (1992), Hayden (1997), Whitebook (1989) that called for the need to look at child care as an adult work environment, the impact of organizational climate, and the need for additional research on how the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of child care work interact to impact the quality of care and staff turnover. These studies suggest that poor morale which precedes turnover in child care settings may not be attributed exclusively to low pay and status but also to organizational climate suggest there is limited information on how child care staff (directors, teachers, etc.) experience their work. Hayden (1996) states it is necessary to look beyond what Herzberg (1975) calls hygiene factors (salary, etc.) for cause of discontent in child care centers. Directors in this study described many dissatisfying aspects of their work environment but none indicated intent to leave their position which supports the research suggesting that though there is a relationship between dissatisfaction and turnover it is weak Cotton, Tuttle (1986), Mobley, et al., (1979), suggesting other factors may serve as mediators.

***Research Sub-Question 2: What are the factors within the work environment that influence Army CDC Directors decisions to leave or stay in their position?*** Of the directors involved in this study, though none expressed an immediate intention to leave their position nearly all believed there was a problem with center director turnover and specifically job/position turnover in Army CDC programs. Within one year of conducting the first round of interviews only one of the original eight directors remained in place and within two years eight of eight (100%) had left position. Of the

two directors in interviewed in the second round of interviews, one mentioned that he had three directors filling in during a five months period before he assumed a leadership position. Though center director turnover in this study was largely attributed to the military personnel rotations, the lack of director stability still has a negative impact. Additionally, occupational turnover (those leaving position but not moving to another Army position at their new location) is also of concern with three of eight directors in the initial round of interviews leaving Army CYS/DOD child care after their departure from position.

Regardless of the reason this this high turnover rate among Army CDC directors, the impact on program quality, staff, and children is documented in the literature. Evidence suggests that the director establishes or at least significantly contributes to the organizational climate essential for a quality program Klinkner et al., (2005), Riley et al., (2005) Decker & Decker (1984), Greenman & Fuqua (1984), Jorde-Bloom (1988) and Peters & Kostelnik (1981). Bloom and Sheerer (1992) found that directors "shapes the work environment for the teaching staff who in turn provide the critical link to children" (p. 580). Klinker, et al., (2005) study documented the relationship with staff satisfaction and increased retention when working in a program with a good organizational climate.

In exploring the problem of center director turnover, participants were asked about what aspects of their job they found satisfying and dissatisfying as Army center directors. Literature suggests as negative relationship between job satisfaction and intention to leave a position which then precedes turnover Mobley, et al., (1978), Hellman, (1997) Cotton & Tuttle (1986), Mobley, Griffeth, Hand & Meglino, (1979).

One of the biggest areas that participants described as frustrating was the challenge of not having adequate direct care staffing. A primary concern was the built in turnover of direct care staff due to the rotational nature of the military workforce and the lengthy time it took the human resource office to fill vacancies. While the military PCS cycle impacts all military installations, it has more impact in an outside the continental United States (OCONUS) setting due to a limited more stable civilian applicant pool to include military families who retire and leave near a military installation.

This ongoing staff shortage and military turnover cycle created stress for both directors and direct care staff as they struggled with the continual challenge in meeting mandated adult child ratios while also trying to ensure quality care with novice staff and staff who may be burnt out due to the ongoing instability and turnover cycle. These findings are consistent with the 2001 study by the Center for Child Care Workforce (CCCW) and the 2003 study by Schwarz, et al., that found that when direct staff leave, continuity of care for children and essential element of quality care is negatively impacted. Likewise if staff who are burnt out stay then care will be less than optimal. The researchers posit that the turnover cycle leads to less qualified employees, increased job stress for the employees remaining which leads to lower job satisfaction. The CCCW data in this study also suggested that the high rate of turnover among teaching staff negatively impacts director's job satisfaction which is consistent with the findings of this study.

Some of the directors expressed concerns that turnover impacted their ability to ensure program quality and maintain accreditation. Research on turnover supports this

concern and shows a relationship between high quality programs and staff stability (Cummings, 1986; Howes, Hamilton, & Phillipsen,1998; Kontos & Fiene, 1987, Philipps et al., 1991). The CCCW study found that instability and turnover among directors was linked to higher teacher turnover and that is an area that military leaders likely should explore.

Several directors relayed anecdotes of colleagues who left Army CDC director positions due to the challenge with the direct care staffing shortages and the stress it created. Likewise, this same turnover cycle and challenges in filling positions impacted the continuity of CDC Directors with one director reporting three different directors filling in for a vacant CDC Director in a five-month period due to the length of time it took to permanently fill the position.

While most of the literature focused on direct care staff shortages that were largely attributed to low staff wages, the CDC directors in this study indicated the staffing shortages were most attributed to the normal military PCS and that the human resource offices were not able to fill positions in a timely matter. The military rotational cycle may impact turnover in other ways as well. Since the average tour is three years, some individuals may take the position as an interim job due to the short tour length. Likewise, for similar reasons once taking a position they may be more likely to "stick it out" in spite of dissatisfaction until the end of their tour. Some of the research suggests that intention to leave may be affected by variables like the presence of alternative work (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979; and Stremmel, 1991).

Mentoring, professional development and promotion opportunities were also considerations directors expressed when deciding to leave or stay in the job. Army

directors suggested that support groups and classes geared toward the duties and responsibilities a CDC director and specifically the administrative side of running a CDC would provide support for center directors. Findings in the research support the need for systematic and focused training specific to the needs of early childhood directors (Jorde Bloom, 1988; Strober, 1990; Hayden, 1997; Lower et al., 1997; Talan, 2014).

One additional source of support that came up with the second group of interviewees that was not specifically mentioned by the first group, was the need for support from higher headquarters via professional development opportunities as well as management information system and reporting tools to assist directors in their program management responsibilities. Participants spoke about the use of automation and management information and how it made the administrative aspects and report requirements of their jobs easier.

Nearly all directors described how they were able to cope with some of the more difficult aspects of the center director position and had developed support systems and relationships. Receiving support from peers, staff, supervisor, and their chain of command were satisfying for directors. In contrast, not having a supportive relationship with their chain of command and supervisor was dissatisfying. These findings support the research of Phillips et. al (1991). Porter (2012), Russell (2010, Whitebook & Sakai (2003), Torquati (2007) where researchers noted the importance of a supportive work environment.

Directors in this study were empathetic to the special circumstances experienced by military parents and worked to accommodating and supportive. Director expressed

these positive relationships with families were a source of satisfaction stated many families expressed appreciation for the support provided by the center staff and recognized the challenge of the work. Parents could also be a source of frustration for directors due to challenges related to meeting their expectations as well as conflicts related to adherence to administrative policies (fee policies, child health/nutrition regulations, etc.).

Whereas staffing shortages and issues were the source of most director frustration, the love of working with and on behalf of children was one of the most satisfying aspects of the center director's work. Directors enjoyed supporting children's growth and development, and spoke about how rewarding it was to interact with children and the power of "hugs." Working on behalf of children -and especially military children - was viewed as service and a way to make a difference. Some directors referred to their work as service and felt that they were doing valuable work that makes a difference." There was a sense that directors saw the work as a sacrifice. These findings are congruent with findings by what Marshall et al., (1990) leagues that suggested that the value adults place on "helping others" may moderate the associations between wages, job satisfaction and turnover. Phillips, Howe, Whitebook (1991) also discussed the intrinsic rewards related to their position.

CDC Directors also described the importance building relationships and being available to staff. They expressed satisfaction with building relationships with staff and creating a center community. Consistent with the research by Stremmel, (1991) were the positive outcomes achieved through communication forums like staff meetings where the emotional exhaustion connected to the nature of the work could be mitigated

by providing opportunities for staff and directors to communicate regarding child guidance and staff development.

In contrast to the Phillips et al., (1991), Whitebook et al., (1993), Whitebook (2001) studies which found that staff wages to be the most important negative predictor of staff turnover, staff wages did not surface as a significant factor in the turnover of Army child care directors or their staff. This likely is attributed to the fact that direct care and management staff in Army child care programs are better compensated than many of their civilian counterparts as a result of provisions in the Military Child Care Act.

So while salaries in particular did not surface as major concern for Army CDC directors in this study, several did point out the inequity of pay inequity with other government positions that required like qualifications and education. Specifically, in the first group of interviews directors voiced frustration with disparity in compensation and responsibility between a CDC Director and a DODDS school teacher while directors in the second round addressed disparities with other government positions with the same grade but less responsibility and work demands. Of those interviewed in the first round, several reported colleagues leaving to work at DODDS schools due to the higher pay grade and more social respect. There was a difference between the first and second group of interviews, where the availability of DODDS positions was limited largely due to the significant number of military base closures. This suggests support for Philips, Howe, Whitebook's (1991) findings that researchers that perceptions and evaluation of alternatives to their current job may decrease voluntary turnover. However, fair compensation for this very difficult and demanding position cannot be

completely overlooked as a significant number of directors in the study left military child care after their tour in Germany. Though, it is not clear if compensation was a factor for some of the attrition, given the rotational nature of the military, any occupational attrition has a negative net results on the military delivery system.

Army Child Development directors in this study expressed a high level of commitment. Directors in this study did not express any intentionality to leave their position this and also indicated a high level of career/job commitment. Studies by Talan (2014), Jorde-Bloom (1988), Hayden (1997), Strober (1990), Stremmel (1991), suggest that a high level of organizational commitment may mediate other dissatisfying aspects of the job (i.e. staffing challenges, compensation inequities, parental issues, etc.). These same studies found a negative relationship between turnover and job commitment. The findings of this study are also consistent with Hayden (1996) study where she found that while the work of directors is "onerous and stressful it appears to be carried out by a committed group of professionals" (p.59)

***Research Sub-Question 3: What are some of the factors outside the work setting (i.e., personal, family, etc.) that influence Directors decisions to leave or stay in their position?*** As already discussed, the military rotational cycle is one of the biggest factor outside the work setting that influenced Army OCONUS directors to leave position. Beyond this a common theme for many of the participants was challenge of maintaining a work life balance between demands of the center administration and their family and home life. More experienced directors were able to balance the demands of the work better than their junior counterparts.

Several participants indicated that the support of their family was critical when

trying to balance the demands of the center with their home life and spoke about the stress it caused. One noted that she was neglecting her own family to dedicate my time and efforts to improve other people's families and children. Others reporting having their spouses and children come to the center over the weekend to take care of odd jobs and facility maintenance issues but also allow for them to spend time together as a family.

**Conclusions from the Study**

The general conclusion of this study focused on the perception of outside the continental United States (OCONUS) Army child development center directors on the issue of turnover and also provided insight into a center director's daily experience their work environment. The conclusions from this study were based on a combination of a literature review, transcribed interviews and analysis of the data. The study findings were organized and clustered around five themes:

1. No typical day: demanding, fast paced, stressful, long, busy day
2. The challenge of staffing,
3. For the love of working with children,
4. Creating a center community: Relationships with staff and parents; and
5. Sources of Support.

**Recommendations for Practice**

Based on the findings of the study that emerged from the experiences of study participants below are recommendations for practice:

1. Staffing initiatives:

a. Streamlined, efficient, quick hiring processes: This study highlights the need for effective and efficient hiring processes to ensure quick fill times as staff turnover. Innovative human resource initiatives to offset occupational turnover are critical. Study participants consistent voiced their frustration with the length of time it took to fill positions and the negative impact as a result of being short staffed.

b. Staff transfer programs: An enterprise transfer program to facilitate the placement of CDC leadership staff and direct care staff into positions at their new location as well as a formal succession planning program would help mitigate the impact of turnover job turnover and promote personnel from staying within the Army Child and Youth delivery system thus reducing occupational turnover.

c. Recruitment and retention incentives: Given the inherent military turnover cycle, minimizing any additional voluntary turnover is critical. Hiring and retention incentives (i.e. reduced child care fees, priority placement on waiting lists for staff children, professional development bonuses) should be explored as tools to attract and retain directors and direct care staff.

d. Staff Pre-Screening tools: Ensuring "good fit" candidates for leadership positions (or direct care staff) is a critical component in looking at staff retention. Army leaders should explore the use of human resource screening tools a component of the hiring process in

addition to traditional screening methods such as interviews, resume reviews, and reference checks. This would increase the likelihood of ensuring directors selected have the qualities and competencies to be successful leaders.

2. Director professional development and training:

    a. Directors Course/Webinars: Participants called for the need for professional development opportunities specifically geared for CDC Directors and their administrative role. A CDC Director 101 course inclusive of program administration components specific to the management of a child development center was recommended by participants. Participants also expressed the importance of directors establishing a supportive work environment. This supports need for leadership training in assisting directors in shaping the organizational climate of their programs. On line webinars on program management/leadership topics would help to address immediate training needs in between formal course offerings. Participants spoke of the stresses for directors being in positions where they were not adequately prepared for the director position in addition to not having the early childhood education background to meet the unique needs of young children.

    b. Director Credential: Participants spoke about the need for director specific training/professional development. Exploring the feasibility of professional director credential to promote professionalization and

development of core competencies specific to the role of center administrator could be considered.

c. Professional Development and Tuition Reimbursement Benefits: Since the average career span for career military services members is approximately 20 years, it is likely that a family member starting in a direct care staff position at one location, would be attracted to stay in the profession if given professional development opportunities. Scholarship programs, tuition reimbursement, and paid professional development opportunities (i.e. attendance at national/state/local early childhood conferences) are opportunities to foster and promote professional commitment and building the bench.

3. Director tools and support staff. State of the art management tools and supports to assist directors in the management of their programs will assist in "reducing firefighting". Participants expressed the need for tools to assist with their program management/administrative responsibilities. State of the art scheduling tools, food program management tools, financial management and budget tools, standard operating procedure templates, director handbooks, and the use of technology all would help support directors in the program management aspects of their program. To assist with administrative tasks adequate support staff are needed as many of the participants spoke about filling in during shortages of support/administrative staff diverting attention away from their leadership role.

4. Evaluation and analysis and assessment. If recommendations above are implemented, an additional recommendation for Army CYS leadership is to consider the implementation of assessment tools to measure program outcomes related to the topic area. Specifically, more accurate measure of the different types of turnover (position, job, and occupational turnover) could be tracked as the implications for each are distinct. Additionally, the use of program administration assessment scales such as Jorde-Bloom's Program Administration Scale (PAS) which includes 25 items and 10 subscales: human resource development, personnel cost and allocation, center operations, child assessment, fiscal management, program planning and evaluation, family partnerships, marketing and public relations, technology, and staff qualifications would help to measure program outcomes. Finally, tools like the Early Childhood Work Environment Survey (ECWES) which evaluates organizational climate based on 10 dimensions: collegiality, professional growth, supervisor support, clarity, reward system, decision-making, goal consensus, task orientation, physical setting, and innovativeness and could be used by Army leadership to assess the organizational climate of programs.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Recommendations included in this section are based on the review of literature, findings and conclusions from this study. This study investigated the issue of Army Child Development Center Turnover. The following recommendations for further study are offered:

1. The study could be expanded to include Army Child development center directors in the Continental United States.

2. The study could be expanded to include other DOD child development center directors.

3. The study could be expanded to compare Army/DOD child development center directors to civilian child care center directors.

**Limitations of the Study**

The researcher recognizes the limitations of the proposed study. First, data were gathered from child-development center directors working in Department of Army centers in central Europe and was only generalizable to that group. The findings and conclusions of the study are based on the perceptions of the individuals involved in the study, and should be regarded as such. Last, the study did not include all child-development center directors assigned to outside the continental United States (OCONUS) military centers, thus, it is possible that not all factors that affect turnover among this group were captured within this study.

The researcher recognized and dealt with potential validity problems (see methodology for specifics). External validity (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984) is hampered by "effects that obstruct or render a study's comparability and transferability" (p.228). Due to the small sample size employed in this study, the intent was not to generalize findings. However, a goal of the study was the "transferability" of the findings to similar contexts.

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## Appendix A: Director Interview

### I. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

### A. PERSONAL DEMOGRAPHIC INFO:

Name: _____Gender_____Race:_____

Birthdate:_____ Marital Status:_____Children(ages)_____

Pay grade/salary_____/_____Type of appointment: _____

Spouses occupation _____Education : _____ Professional affiliations:_____

### B. CENTER DEMOGRAPHICS:

Number of children in center_____ Number of classrooms _____

Number of staff_____

Hours of operation: of center_____

### C. QUESTIONS ABOUT BACKGROUND

Life/Work history & experience (How did you come into the field of ECE, How did you get into ECE leadership? How long have you been your current position?)

Can you tell me about your work history and background?

### II. NATURE OF WORK

1. Can you describe your typical work day as a CDC Director?

2. Could you talk a little about the environment in which you work (the people, feelings, events, relationships).

3. Talk a little about the things that you find satisfying/frustrating about your work.

4. Probes or follow up areas: sources of support, supervisor/staff relations.

**III. FACTORS RELATED TO TURNOVER WITHIN WORK ENVIRONMENT**

1. Some people think there is a problem with the retention of CDC Directors…what do you think and why?

2. What are your plans related to your current position?

3. Have you ever thought about leaving and why? (Frequency)

4. What are the factors that influence your decision to leave/or stay?

Probes/Follow up: Perception of job prospects on outside, ECE field?

**IV. FACTORS RELATED TO TURNOVER OUTSIDE THE WORK ENVIRONMENT** (pursue examples/stories)

1. How does your work affect other areas of your life?

2. How does working as a CDC Director affect other areas of your life?

3. How does your family influence you working as a CDC Director?

**VI. PROFESSIONAL STATUS OF CHILD CARE WORK**

1. Can you tell me about how you view your work in child care as a job or as a career?

2. How do you think the public views your job/field of work? (Perception of social respect)

3. If you had a child or a close friend who came to you and said they were considering a working as a CDC Director, what would you advise them to do?

4. Would you choose again to work in child care?

Is there anything else you would like to add related to the issue of CDC Director turnover?

## Appendix B: Director Interview (Exit Survey)

**I. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

**A. PERSONAL DEMOGRAPHIC INFO:**

Name: _____Gender_____Race:_____

Birthdate:_____ Marital Status:_____Children(ages)_____

Pay grade/salary_____/_____Type of appointment:_____

Spouses occupation _____Education:_____ Professional

affiliations:_____

**B. CENTER DEMOGRAPHICS**:

Number of children in center_____ Number of classrooms _____

Number of staff_____

Hours of operation: of center_____

**C. QUESTIONS ABOUT BACKGROUND**

Life/Work history & experience (How did you come into the field of ECE, How did you get into ECE leadership? How long have you been your current position?)

Can you tell me about your work history and background?

**II. NATURE OF WORK**

1. Can you describe your typical work day as a CDC Director?

2. Can you talk a little bit about the environment you worked in (people, feelings, events, and relationships)?

3. Talk a little bit about the things that were satisfying/frustrating about your work.

Follow up: staff/supervisor relationships; sources of support

**III. FACTORS RELATED TO TURNOVER WITHIN WORK ENVIRONMENT**

1. Some people think there is a problem with retention of CDC Directors…what do you think and why?

2. What were some of the reasons you left or are leaving?

Follow up: What do you think the job prospects are like outside? Where did you consider going?

**IV. FACTORS RELATED TO TURNOVER OUTSIDE THE WORK ENVIRONMENT (**pursue examples/stories)

1. How did your work affect other areas of your life?

2. How did your family influence your work as a CDC Director?

## V. PROFESSIONAL STATUS OF CHILD CARE WORK

1. Can you tell me about how you viewed your work in child care….as a job or as a career?

2. How do you think the public views your job/field of work? (Perception of social respect)

3. If you had a child or a close friend who came to you and said they were considering a job as a CDC Director how would you advise them?

4. Would you choose to work in child care again?

Is there anything you would like to add related to the turnover of CDC Directors?

## Appendix C: Coordinator Interview

## I. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

**A. PERSONAL DEMOGRAPHIC INFO:**

Name:_____Gender_____Race:_____

Birthdate:_____Marital Status:_____Children(ages)_____

Pay grade/salary_____/_____Type of appointment: _____

Spouses occupation _____Education:_____Professional affiliations:_____

**B. PROGRAM DEMOGRAPHICS**

How many CDCs? What is capacity of each?

How many CDC Directors on board? How many positions vacant?

**QUESTIONS ABOUT BACKGROUND**

Life/Work history & experience (How did you come into the field of ECE, How did you get into ECE leadership? How long have you been your current position?)

Can you tell me a little about your work history and background?

**II. NATURE OF WORK**

1. Can you describe the typical work day of a CDC Director under your supervision?

2. Can you talk a little bit about the environment your CDC Directors work in (people, feelings, events, relationships)?

3. Talk a little bit about the things you think are satisfying/frustrating for CDC directors.

Follow up: staff/supervisor relationships; sources of support

**III. FACTORS RELATED TO TURNOVER WITHIN WORK ENVIRONMENT**

1. Some people believe there is a problem with retention of CDC Directors…what do you think and why?

2. What were some of the reasons you think CDC Directors are leaving/staying?

**IV. FACTORS RELATED TO TURNOVER OUTSIDE THE WORK ENVIRONMENT (**pursue examples/stories)

1. How do you think work affects other areas of CDC Directors lives?

2. How do you think a CDC Directors families influence the work as a CDC Director?

**V. PROFESSIONAL STATUS OF CHILD CARE WORK**

1. If you had a child or close friend and they came to you and said they were considering a job as a CDC Director what would your advice to them be?

2. Can you tell me about how you view your work in child care….as a job or as a career?

3. How do you think the public views your job/field of work? (Perception of social respect)

4. Would you choose again to work in child care?

Anything you would like to add?

## Appendix D: Informed Consent Form

**(Form to be given to the participant at the beginning of the interview. One signed copy to be kept by the interviewer, one signed copy to the participant).**

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research project. This research is an analysis of turnover among Child Development Center Directors in USAREUR and is conducted under the auspices of the University of Oklahoma, Norman Campus. The principal researcher is Christine Welde, a graduate student in the Organizational Leadership doctoral program, and the sponsor is Dr. Fred Wood, a member of the College of Education faculty. You will be interviewed by the principal researcher and have several rights:

* Your participation in the interviewing is entirely voluntary.
* You are free to refuse to answer at any time.
* You are free to withdraw from the interview at any time without penalty.

The interview will be audio-taped, will be kept strictly confidential, and will be available only to members of the research project. Excerpts of the interview may be made part of the final report, but under no circumstances will your name or identifying characteristics be included in the reports or publications.

Signing this form shows that you have read its contents and agree to participate in the project. If you have any questions about the research itself you can contact me at 06371-15849. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant contact the Office of Research Administration at (405) 325-4757 1000 Asp Avenue, Room 314, and Norman OK 73019).

_____SIGNED _____DATE