Continuous Practices During Kindergarten Transitions

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by

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Abstract

Although children's development may be continuous, their early learning experience may not be. Absent from the field is literature describing actual teacher practices that are continued from early learning settings to kindergarten. This quantitative comparison study explored the continuous adult behaviors in two types of childcare early learning environments to determine if these behaviors are continuous, and to what degree, with the adult behaviors exhibited by kindergarten teachers at the time of kindergarten entry. Twenty-one classroom teachers were observed in the areas of physical environment, adult-child interactions, and teaching strategies. Of these classroom teachers, eight were in childcare early learning programs self-categorized as socio-emotional/socio-behavioral in focus, six were in childcare early learning programs self-categorized as having a pre-academic focus, and the remaining seven were kindergarten teachers within the same district boundaries as the childcare early learning sites. The largest statistical difference in data was present in the area of teaching strategies. Despite the sample size, the partial eta squared value revealed relationships between several classroom comparisons and identified options for further study. These findings suggest the instructional aspects of children's continuous experiences have the greatest variance. Recommendations for collaborations and professional development conclude the study.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to the past, present, and future.

To my ancestors. I am honored to be living some of your most wildest dreams. I stand on your shoulders. I share this with you.

To Donald F. Turner, Sr., and Charles E. Logan, Sr. Thank you for your limitless dreams, your legacies, and your regular words of expectation and hope. This work is evidence of your cultivation. I share this with you.

To my parents, who cultivated a love for learning, believing both then and now in my potential. You let go and let God. I share this with you.

To past students of all ages, and their families. You caused me to question and empowered me as a change agent. This is because of you.

To the village, for your provisions and encouragement. As far back as I can remember you have poured into me, and now my children, endlessly. This dissertation is a manifestation of our collective work and purpose. This achievement is ours. I share this with you.

To my children, Charles, III, Neah, and Noah. You came along and exponentially intensified meaning in my life. Your strength, purpose, and comfort resound ever so loudly; you are people of victory. This achievement is because you audaciously exist and is for you to know you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you (Philippians 4:13). Press towards the mark, children.

And to *you*. My calling is surer than ever. Thank you. My God does not call the qualified, He qualifies the called.

for your sisterhood, exhortation, prayers, and listening to me talk endlessly about the small details of my progress.

To my family, friends, and the village, I am deeply grateful for your encouragement. All the smiles, kind words, and prayers you shared with me and my children have not gone unnoticed or unappreciated. Thank you.

Preface

A lover of the urban learning experience, I taught fourth- and second-grade children for several years before transitioning to teaching kindergarten children. It was in those fourth and second grade rooms where I found the gaping trench of disparities and their subsequent discouraging reality. I was saddened by the annual revelation of what my students had accomplished academically up to that point. Overwhelmed by the urgency of the moment, I transitioned to teaching kindergarten. It was in kindergarten I hoped to influence children's earliest formal learning experiences and actively work to eliminate many of the disparities. I perceived I could be one to affect their educational journey, setting them on an early trajectory of success.

I quickly found that disparities were paramount in the early years, often appearing in unexpected tasks such as holding a book, sharing supplies, cutting paper, or communicating ideas. In transitioning to kindergarten, still I was often perplexed as to the range of children's competencies when they entered school and the differences in the duration and ease of their adjustment. As the years progressed I observed children displaying an increasingly wider range of pre-academic and social competencies, with some children independently reading texts, while others were unable to identify a letter in their name. Over time, their adjustment appeared seemingly longer and more challenging than in years past.

I began visiting childcare environments across the city. The diversity of settings, teacher experience, teacher practice, and the environment's culture, began to inform some of my curiosities, while igniting many others. For those children who adjusted to kindergarten with ease in shorter durations, or who displayed pre-academic or

socio-emotional/socio-behavioral prowess, what were the teacher behaviors they experienced in their prior setting that allowed them to transition with ease in their new setting?

       With a goal to inform the experiences of all early learners, the pages that follow are a result of these early wonderings.

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ANOVA: Analysis of Variance

CCS: Childcare Continuity Scale

CELP: Childcare Early Learning Program

CHELLO: Child/Home Early Language and Literacy Observation

CLASS: Classroom Assessment Scoring System

FFN: Family, Friend, and Neighbor

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Scientist (statistical software)

Chapter 1: Introduction

Marked as a rite of passage for children all over the world, educational transitions are identified as a pivotal experience influencing the success of children's learning. Early transition experiences are said to be foundational occurrences forecasting a predictable trajectory for children's future learning and adjustment during subsequent transitions or life changes (Barblett, Barratt-Pugh, Kilgallon, & Maloney, 2011; Cote et al., 2013; Elder, 1998; Goldstein, Warde, & Peluso, 2013; Keys et al., 2012; Mangione & Speth, 1998; Mayfield, 2003; Santos, 2015). Current early transition practices in education focus primarily on short-term immediate goals and outcomes, with minimal regard for middle- and long-term education outcomes specific to adjustment in transition (Barblett et al., 2011; Goldstein et al., 2013; Mangione & Speth, 1998; Mayfield, 2003; Santos, 2015).

The transition from early learning settings to kindergarten is a shared experience, and partnership of children, their peers, families, communities, and schools (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003). Each partner embodies values, beliefs, and practices that meet those of other partners with great intensity during transitions (Barblett et al., 2011; Ebbeck, Saidon, Rajalachime, & Teo, 2013; McIntyre, Eckert, Arbolino, DiGennaro-Reed, & Fiese, 2014; Schulting, Malone, & Dodge, 2005; Whitted, 2011; Wildenger & McIntyre, 2012). Because of this interface, transitions to kindergarten are inherently complex experiences. The identifiable convergence of the many partners during a shared new experience is an ongoing multi-layered occurrence (McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, DiGennaro-Reed, & Wildenger, 2007).

Research repeatedly highlights challenges during kindergarten transition for children, families, and school staff specific to discontinuous practices and experiences—the practices

or experiences implemented in one setting and to a lesser extent, or obsolete, in another setting. The discontinuous experiences children have due to discontinuous practices, has consequently caused the disruption of smooth and successful transitions for many (Barblett et al., 2011; DiSanto & Berman, 2012; Ebbeck et al., 2013; Hanson et al., 2000, Beckman, Horn, Marquart, Sandall, Grieg, & Brennan, 2000; Mangione & Speth, 1998; McIntyre et al., 2007; Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000; Whitted, 2011; Wildenger & McIntyre, 2012). Current transition practices are often nothing more than a simple school visit. To promote a more comprehensive and inclusive early learning to kindergarten transition, practices must extend beyond simple school visits and begin a process to gradually prepare children, families, and teachers through intentional continuous efforts between settings (Santos, 2015).

Although children's development is continuous, their early learning experience may not be. Young children can experience discontinuity in their early learning experiences due to mismatched expectations, environments, philosophy, curricula, lack of information and inadequate planning by adults, as well as other unanticipated changes (Barblett et al., 2011; Santos, 2015). Discontinuity in the early learning and kindergarten experiences can influence the socio-emotional, socio-behavioral, and pre-academic adjustment of children transitioning into school.

Continuity, the continuation of strategy and experience, as well as philosophy or belief, is an integral component of a comprehensive and coherent transition process. Not synonymous with alignment, continuity allows for overlap in the above characteristics, while gradually releasing and acquiring additional practices with fluidity, all while adjusting for the child's development. Alignment, the act of arranging and matching curricula concepts, is a

noteworthy factor in transition, however distinct from continuity and not a focus of this study.

Introduction to the Problem

Local and national attention has highlighted challenges in early learning environments, in both childcare and school settings alike, related to academic preparedness and socio-emotional or socio-behavioral incidents leading to student dismissals. The ongoing media attention has fueled further conversations about school expectations, among other educational concerns, both locally and nationally (Brown, 2016).

Naturally, early transitions impact a child's ecological system inclusive of the child, his/her peers, family, educators, and school. Because continuity represents an ongoing progression rather than a collection of isolated opportunities, strategies to nurture continuity must be addressed. For these strategies to be effective, the individuals and groups directly and indirectly influencing children must be involved (Mayfield, 2003). Both horizontal continuity—the interconnections between the home, school, and community at a point in time—and vertical continuity efforts—the upward shift from one institution to another and the linkage of service across time—need to be enacted to foster collective continuity (Barblett et al., 2011; Mangione & Speth, 1998). Horizontal and vertical continuity together "support children's dual need for stability and change" (Mangione & Speth, 1998, p. 383).

According to Mangione and Speth (1998), children's development is supported when they are stable and confident in their current experiences, their present stage of development, and also when they are fittingly challenged to move forward to the next developmental stage. When children experience excessive change, abrupt change, or inappropriate or unmatched

expectations, their expected developmental progress may be stifled (Mangione & Speth, 1998). As a natural consequence, discontinuous experiences can result in maladjustment because of the imbalance of stability and change, while continuous experiences champion and accelerate anticipated adjustment.

For children of marginalized populations—inclusive of children in poverty, children of color, children learning English as a second language, and highly mobile children—kindergarten transitions can be wrought with layers of additional challenges as they learn the explicit and implicit rules for governing their participation in a new environment, while also identifying with the many facets of their lived experience.

Teacher perspective on the problem. Transitions are an expected experience for the professionals who provide service for children. While the historic view of transitions as an event rather than a process is changing, so are the early learning expectations and needs of young children.

Abounding in the research on kindergarten transitions are the voices of teachers eager to name the ongoing concerns they attribute to kindergarten adjustment (Santos, 2015; Whitted, 2011; Wildenger & McIntyre, 2012). Among the concerns are cognitive skills of entering kindergartners and teacher perceived socio-emotional/socio-behavioral inadequacies. Adding to the perceptions of the problem are teacher beliefs about early learning settings. Continuous experiences within transition, as well as actual teacher continuity practices, have also influenced teacher perception of the problem (Barblett et al., 2011).

In a national survey conducted by Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, and Cox (2000), teachers stated 32% of children entering kindergarten experienced a moderately difficult transition, while 16% experienced a difficult transition. Defining difficult, teachers cited cognition skills, socio-emotional, and socio-behavioral deficiencies as the culprits. Teachers claim many children are entering kindergarten with minimal pre-academic skills and socio-behavioral skills—the early academic skills in preparation for grade school and children's outward behavior as response, respectively. Simultaneously there is an increasingly broad range of pre-academic skills children have been exposed to, rather than similar skills among children entering kindergarten (McIntyre, Eckert, Arbolino et al., 2014).

McIntyre, Eckert, Arbolino et al., (2014) have shared that "differences in school readiness characteristics include dissimilarities in young children's general knowledge, approaches to learning, social competency, as well as emergent reading and mathematics skills" (p. 203). With the adjustment in academic weight towards literacy and other cognitive competencies, greater emphasis has been placed on children's pre-academic skill-sets during the transition process (Santos, 2015). As an example, the shift in thinking that reading and writing are primary-aged interventions also influences the growing shift in the perspective of emergent reading in early learning settings prior to kindergarten entry (Santos, 2015). Adding to the teacher's perception of the problem is this gradual modification in the developmental expectations of children entering kindergarten.

In a survey conducted by Rimm-Kaufman et al. (2000), teachers suggested their most salient concern regarding kindergarten transition experiences was socio-emotional and socio-behavioral skill deficits. Teachers claimed young children entering kindergarten lack

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the needed socio-emotional and socio-behavioral competencies expected for school success. Much of these competencies are related to self-regulatory behaviors such as aggression, disruption, opposition, or compliance. Teachers reported more confidence and competence in their ability to scaffold academic challenges, and have suggested they lack the knowledge and training to support extensive socio-emotional and socio-behavioral concerns (Whitted, 2011). As a result of this lack, teachers have reported responding to children with punitive disciplinary actions, which can prompt children's feelings of alienation. These conditions induce environments where both teaching and learning become increasingly difficult (Brown, 2016).

Pertinent to this study are kindergarten teachers' perceptions of non-school-based early learning settings and efforts toward continuity. Teachers identified continuity as a significant component of successful adjustment in kindergarten entry (McIntyre, Eckert, Arbolino et al., 2014). According to Barblett, Barratt-Pugh, Kilgallon, and Maloney (2011), when asked their beliefs about the importance of continuity in transitions, kindergarten teachers identified reasons for its significance, stating continuity:

- facilitates transitions between settings,
- facilitates ongoing and uninterrupted learning for the child,
- facilitates socio-emotional development through consistency in the context and understanding roles and expectations in two settings,
- recognizes prior learning experiences and attainment through the transfer of information, and
- provides socio-emotional security for children.

The few teachers who disagreed with the additional efforts to support continuity from early learning settings to kindergarten illustrated the distinct differences in settings that may attribute to adjustment challenges for children. Comments by teachers suggested early learning settings, such as childcare, are more family oriented, while kindergarten is beginning to focus on *educational* experiences within a school-type environment. Other teachers believed the two settings intentionally reinforced differing expectations in children's lives and that parents were consequently unconsciously entrenched in the expectation reflecting their experience of the moment (Barblett et al., 2011).

Teachers in the same study have acknowledged that supporting transitions and implementing continuity practices has presented challenges (Barblett et al., 2011). These challenges are claimed to stem from having little and limited information, as well as minimal practical support for implementation of continuous practices. Teachers also asserted that school timelines, programming, and requirements often inhibit kindergarten transition practices. Most salient, however, are the challenges preventing continuity. According to Barblett et al. (2011), 89.5% of the teachers surveyed had never visited the childcare or early learning settings attended by their students nor had they contemplated inviting childcare teachers to their kindergarten classrooms. Likewise, the absence of communication about ideologies, curriculum design, instructional practice, and the sharing of information between sites was a contributing factor to the inability to enact continuity efforts, despite teacher acknowledgement of its importance.

Overall, teachers have identified socio-emotional, socio-behavioral, and academic discrepancies as contributing to transition challenges for children. Teachers expressed being

more equipped to address the pre-academic concerns rather than the socio-emotional and socio-behavioral concerns, due to prior training. Teachers transitioning children into kindergarten have awareness of the significance of transition experiences, although their practice may not reflect this notion. Multiple challenges, including preparation, time, communication, and cultural perspectives on the significance of transition have prevented implementation of strategies supportive of successful transition.

Family and caregiver perspective on the problem. The transition to kindergarten can be rich with anticipation as well as ambiguity for families. Caregivers of children entering kindergarten have expressed countless concerns regarding their children's new expectations and experiences, as well as the transition process itself (McIntyre, Eckert, Arbolino et al., 2014; McIntyre et al., 2007). In a study conducted by McIntyre et al. (2007), caregivers ranked areas of their kindergartner's transition that were most troubling to include, in order of concern: attending a new school, compliance and following directions, behavior challenges, academic skills, getting along with peers, bonding with a new teacher, and separation from the family.

Caregivers desired involvement in the transition process, yet often expressed feelings of inadequacy related to their knowledge of kindergarten expectations and experiences due to the variation in the environments and expectations in early learning settings (Hanson et al., 2000; McIntyre et al., 2007; McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, DiGennaro-Reed, & Wildenger, 2010). In the study conducted by McIntyre et al. (2007), a sample of 132 parents of transitioning kindergarteners were surveyed regarding their transition experiences. Their responses indicated 80% of parents were unclear about kindergarten expectations and preferred further

information on the topic, while 68% of parents inquired about how they could better support their children's experiences. This data again suggests caregiver desire to engage in the transition experience, while also noting their expressed inadequacies regarding the process. In addition to caregiver concerns regarding kindergarten transition, McIntyre et al. (2007) also suggested that differing communication practices induce further feelings of caregiver insufficiencies and contributed to a delay in adjustment at kindergarten entry.

As the primary caregivers in young children's lives families often introduce and scaffold transitions beginning as early as birth and continuing as they facilitate additional transitions throughout children's developmental stages. As children transition to kindergarten, families and caregivers participate in the process. Family Systems Theory noted that individuals cannot be viewed in isolation of one another, but rather in relationship with one another (Christian, 2006). In practice this suggests families, and other systems of supports, are affected by the changes their children experience related to kindergarten transition (National Center for the Education of Young Children, 2006). Families are forced to reassess many member roles, duties, and functions due to the interaction with new systems and expectations. Some of these adjustments include before and after school care, altered job schedules, expanded or new duties, routines, even time management of homework.

Early childhood settings are often regarded as intimate family-focused environments that generate parent partnerships largely attributed to the frequency of in-person encounters (McIntyre et al., 2010). As these young children enter schools, families also adjust to the distinct differences from early learning programs to kindergarten (McIntyre, Eckert, Arbolino et al., 2014). These ever-developing family and school partnerships are integral as children

move from various early learning programs to kindergarten. According to Schulting,

Malone, and Dodge (2005), the success of some transition practices may be attributed to the

degree in which family-school partnerships are bi-directional, thus engaging family's

assets—inclusive of language, cultural, educational, professional, or community

knowledge—and perspectives in the transition of their children. Bi-directional partnerships

offer the benefit of family and school influence during the transition process and encourage

the merging of diverse contributions.

Ultimately, families desire to be knowledgeable participants in the transition to

kindergarten, beginning in the initial stages. Their lack of knowledge about requirements,

processes, and suggested supports has prohibited their full engagement. Bearing witness to

the contrasts in environments between early learning settings and kindergarten, families

acknowledge areas of change affecting their children and family during the transition. The

partnership between families and schools has the potential to influence the transition by

fostering bi-directional contributions.

Children's perspective on the problem. Young children experience many

transitions in their life. The continuity between these transitions is essential for a child's

success (Ebbeck et al., 2013). Children moving from early learning experiences to

kindergarten have indicated a sharp contrast between the approaches taken in early learning

programs and elementary school. Differences have been identified between the

environments, expectations, teaching approaches, teacher-child relationships, balance of play

and formal instruction, as well as frequency of peer interactions happening in early learning

settings versus kindergarten (Ebbeck et al., 2013). Children have noted differences in

routines and procedures with comments such as, "We must raise our hand if we need to ask questions," or "We must sit quietly and listen to the teacher, but we didn't do that in childcare" (Ebbeck et al., 2013, p. 294). Rituals and procedures are part of the explicit and implicit culture of a new setting. Transitions often involve a child changing settings and therefore being exposed to different cultural norms. This change in environment impacts their social adjustment as they develop identity in the new setting (Ebbeck et al., 2013).

Transitioning children also cited differences in autonomy with comments such as, "[We] cannot play during a class lesson, in our preschool, after we finished our work we could play" (Ebbeck et al., 2013, p. 295). When asked further about their transition, children have articulated the differences in regulation expectations with comments such as, "You could have a drink when you are thirsty," or "You could go to the toilet when you wanted to," (Ebbeck et al., 2013, p. 293) when referring to their preschool experience. Child autonomy is influenced by the ability to self-regulate. Self-regulation skills are scaffolded as early as birth by way of caregivers who become a child's regulatory partner. Having experienced years of copying, identifying, and internalizing the regulatory behaviors of adults in the environment, children increase their ability to self-regulate and exercise autonomy at early ages. Due to the discontinuous expectations for autonomy and regulation, some children enter kindergarten and become limited in further developing these skills (Whitted, 2011).

Although physical education or outdoor time was a favorite subject, 88% of children surveyed identified the contrast in the time allowance for large muscle exercise in the elementary setting (Ebbeck et al., 2013). When asked what would make school more fun,

two responders said, "I would like more exercise running," and "I like physical education. I can run very fast, I like to run," (Ebbeck et al., 2013, p. 295). At ages five and six, children maintain a developmental need for physical movement (Wood, 2015). These examples highlight the children's awareness of discontinuity in physical movement and play, resulting in hindering natural progression during developmental stages and consequently setting a scene for maladjustment.

In the same study, children identified significant changes in social relationships as well as active participation in their own learning with responses such as, "You could go outside sometimes," or "She is different from my teacher in the childcare, she does not allow us to talk" (Ebbeck et al., 2013, p. 294). These responses highlighted the children's awareness of the changes in social relationships and participation in their own learning (DiSanto & Berman, 2011; Ebbeck et al., 2013). In addition to parents, children also identified with the physical, social, and academic demands from childcare to kindergarten. For children, there are challenges in adjusting to the differences in teaching approaches, content, social rules, attitudes, expectations, as well as changes in their peer groups and physical environment (Ebbeck et al., 2013).

As active agents in the learning process, children identified the contrasts in both settings and expectations between early learning and kindergarten environments. Articulating their discomfort in adjustment, children have expressed the ambiguity that is heightened during kindergarten transition as well as their desire for continuous active agency. Ultimately, transitioning children seek scaffolded supports from the adults and systems involved in the transition process.

Background of the Study

Children can enter kindergarten having experienced a variety of early childhood pathways. District and state standards, however, expect children to focus on similar goals within a homogenous span of developmental outcomes (Minnesota Department of Education, 2015). Children's development spans chronological age. Threaded with the interaction of experiences, development has natural similarities in addition to unique differences in each child, according to the maturation theory, wherein Gesell (1929) which suggested that the pace and trajectory of development is influenced by both genetics and environment. As such, when children entered school environments where methods of interaction, instruction, expectations, materials, and language use are discontinuous from prior experiences, their adjustment and development was interrupted (Barblett et al., 2011). The maladjustment that some children experienced can be attributed to a range of well-meaning participants—early childhood staff, school staff, and families—as well as inconsistencies in pedagogy, time, alignment, and continuity (Barblett et al., 2011). The interaction of all of these factors influenced children's successful transition to school (Barblett et al., 2011; Ebbeck et al., 2013; Lombardi, 1992; Mangione, 1998; Mayfield, 2003).

Kindergarten transition has long been a conversation and concern among families, children, and professionals in early education and elementary schools. While transitions are complex due to the participants involved, as well as previous and current schooling experiences, efforts towards continuity—or continuous experiences—between settings can

address the socio-emotional, socio-behavioral, and pre-academic concerns teachers, families, and children identify during this transition period.

Statement of the Problem

Various models of early learning programs, all intended to support children's development in any combination of social-emotional, social-behavioral, and pre-academic indicators, tout superior preparation for school success despite the noticeable differences between childcare early learning experiences and school experiences (Parent Aware, 2016). While childcare early learning programs are known for their robust efforts in socio-emotional and socio-behavioral development, differences in pedagogy and approach in these environments, in comparison to the academic environments schools foster, create an opportunity for discontinuous practices, and consequently, disrupted adjustment for children (Barblett et al., 2011; Ebbeck et al., 2013; Lombardi, 1992; Mangione & Speth, 1998).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore adult behaviors in two types of childcare early learning environments to determine if these behaviors are continuous, and to what degree, with the adult behaviors exhibited by kindergarten teachers at the time of kindergarten entry.

- One comparison will examine adult continuous behaviors of caregivers in childcare early learning settings having a socio-emotional and socio-behavioral focus compared to adult continuous behaviors of public school kindergarten teachers during children's transition to kindergarten.

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- A second comparison will examine adult continuous behaviors of caregivers in childcare early learning settings with a pre-academic focus compared to adult continuous behaviors of public school kindergarten teachers during children's transition to kindergarten.

- A third comparison will examine adult continuous behaviors of caregivers in childcare early learning settings with a socio-emotional and socio-behavioral focus to adult continuous behaviors of caregivers in childcare early learning settings with a pre-academic focus during children's transition to kindergarten.

Rationale

Parents and families, along with communities and society as a whole, have a vested interest in children's successes. Elder (1998) suggested that early experiences can lay a foundation for later development. Consequently, early transition successes and adjustments can be one predictor of long term success, inclusive of school environments (DiSanto & Berman, 2001; Mangione & Speth, 1998; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003; Santos, 2015; Whitted, 2011). Continuity of experience has been identified as an influential transition component supporting adjustment and was found to be a contributing factor in successful kindergarten entry. Determining the continuous behaviors in which professionals are actually engaged can provide insight into children's adjustment experience. Specifying behaviors, language, materials, and environmental components most organically used by teaching professionals, in both childcare early learning settings and public school kindergartens, can support more intentional practices and partnerships designed to influence transitions from childcare to kindergarten. The School Ready (Goldstein et al., 2013;

Mangione & Speth, 1998) and Ready Schools (Ebbeck et al., 2013; Noel, 2010) perspectives and approaches, as well as the families and learning institutions involved, benefit from the awareness of live practices influencing children's adjustment during kindergarten transition.

Research Questions

This study consists of the following research questions:

- RQ_1: To what degree does continuity in adult behaviors exist for children transitioning from socio-emotional and socio-behavioral based childcare to kindergarten,

- RQ_2: To what degree does continuity in adult behaviors exist for children transitioning from pre-academic based childcare to kindergarten?

- RQ_3: What difference exists in continuous adult behaviors between socio-emotional/socio-behavioral based childcare and pre-academic based childcare?

Significance of the Study

For transitions to positively influence adjustment and the trajectory of learning for children, increased continuity, at the very least, needs to exist between settings (Barblett et al., 2011). A study of the continuity between childcare early learning settings and kindergarten was significant for several reasons. Research has recognized a lack in identification of continuous teacher practices in settings where early learning and kindergarten are not colocated. Barblett et al. (2011) indicated further research is needed, beyond what currently exists, to distinguish the practices of childcare professionals simply because they work in settings separate from those children enter for kindergarten.

Further, a study with a focus on adult continuity behaviors had multiple implications for practical application. These implications included the naming and collection of practices teachers employ to support children's adjustment. These intuitive actions are those embedded in teacher practice at the time of observation, and are natural to interactions, rather than referenced. The opportunity to enhance named practices or note the absence of them in either environment, becomes a possibility as a consequence of naming intuitive practices that foster continuity across settings.

Barblett et al. (2011) reported kindergarten teachers have divulged their interest in transition practices and have also expressed their lack of training on the topic has prevented some aspects of implementation or continuity. As such, in naming intuitive continuous behaviors that highlight continuity as a process rather than an event, a study of this kind can suggest areas for shared professional development with childcare early learning and kindergarten professionals for the benefit of child adjustment. The implication of this information can influence the trajectory of success during kindergarten transition by encouraging informed decision making, followed by intentional implementation, with direct benefits to school adjustment for young children.

In addition, a study of this kind has the potential to develop authentic community, family, and school partnerships, based on the identification of specific approaches and practices that foster continuity. Because children's relationships with their caregivers and other adults outside the home are essential to their development, intentional collaboration between members of a child's ecological system can have profound implications towards school adjustment (Bates et al., 2006; Mangione & Speth, 1998; McIntyre et al., 2007).

The collective impact of family, school, and community partnerships serves to support the breadth of a child's development as each partner contributes to the developmental trajectory. Cunha, Heckman, Lochner, and Masterov (2006) highlighted the cumulative role of cognitive and socio-emotional skills, joined with skill investments made by families, early learning programs, and schools, as a significant contributing factor to success. Validating this idea is the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (Klien, 2016), which requires intentional and increased community and school partnerships towards improved school entry experiences. Partnerships have multiple benefits for children, families, and staff during the transition process. As an example, family, school, and community partnerships reinforce caregiver voice and choice, increase opportunities for more customized program practices rather than one-size-fits all, and also recognize a community's goals in the education of their young children.

Additional implications for this research include literary advancements to the field through the study of actual practices in a city where universal pre-kindergarten remains a topic among legislators. Further areas of interest this study could inform include the relationship between vertical and horizontal continuity during early transitions, staff retention, and professional development in both childcare early learning sites and kindergarten classrooms. Childcare quality ratings specific to kindergarten transition, parent communication efforts, and community resources extend the areas this study could inform. Other informed topics include childcare and school marketing to the public, which could enhance knowledge of partnerships and potentially increase the appeal and stability of school populations.

Not all early learning programs and experiences are created equal, nor do children respond to or engage with these programs in the same ways. Contributing to a successful kindergarten transition are several factors including, but not limited to, prior experience in early learning settings, access to early opportunities, family engagement, social class, parents' education, and parent-child interaction time. Focusing exclusively on continuity in teacher behaviors as a mitigating factor influencing adjustment and achievement, this study seeks to add to the body of knowledge by examining continuity through variables such as type of prior childcare setting, physical environment, teaching strategies, and adult-child interaction. This study of continuity does not negate the significance of family and community systems that contribute as early nurturers of children's adjustment; however, it offers the opportunity to focus on teacher behaviors that contribute to adjustment during kindergarten transition.

Nature of the Study

This study has a comparative quantitative design, which will investigate the comparison of:

- continuous adult behaviors in settings where children transition from socio-emotional and socio-behavioral based childcare early learning settings to kindergarten,

- continuous adult behaviors in settings where children transition from pre-academic based childcare early learning settings to kindergarten, and

- continuous adult behaviors between socio-emotional/socio-behavioral based childcare early learning settings and pre-academic based childcare early learning settings.

To examine continuity between early learning settings and kindergarten, two tools tested and identified as valid and reliable were combined to create the Classroom Continuity Scale (CCS). The CCS will be used to collect data to answer the research questions. Data will be collected through observation of each participating classroom by a certified reliable observer.

Assumptions and Limitations

This study assumed the reader has some familiarity and interest in modern concerns related to early learning, transitions, and the kindergarten experience. Additionally, it is assumed the childcare sites participating in the study may not exclusively engage in a single pre-academic or socio-emotional/socio-behavioral paradigm, and, on the contrary, the sites may only predominantly engage in the paradigm for which the adult participants have been assigned.

A foreseeable limitation of this study includes the inability to control for type or length of teacher experience and training, teacher time in their current setting and role, language and structures that are curriculum specific, as well as childcare franchises versus independently owned centers.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

Following the definition of terms, a discussion of literature regarding child development, transition history, and effects of adult practice will be provided in Chapter 2, followed by Chapter 3 which includes the detailed methodology of how the study will be conducted and the participating populations. After an examination of the results found in

Chapter 4, the final chapter, Chapter 5, will provide conclusions, implications, and recommendations based on the findings of this research.

Definition of Terms

Academic - Relating to education or scholarship.

Childcare Early Learning Program (CELP) - Programs for young children occurring in a childcare center setting not residing in school buildings. These early learning programs are not inclusive of programs offered by home providers or school based pre-kindergarten programs.

Continuity - The compatibility or similarity of two environments in which there is continuous experience (Barblett et al., 2011).

Pre-Academic - Early academic skills in preparation for grade school.

Pre-Academic CELP (Type B) - An early learning program whose primary focus or paradigm is to develop children through the routine early exposure of school-based academic activities that lead to acquisition of knowledge.

Socio-behavioral - A child's outward behavior in response to people or environment within a social context.

Socio-emotional - A child's ability to understand the feelings of others, control his or her own feelings and behaviors, get along with other children, and build relationships with adults (Missouri Department of Mental Health, 2017).

Socio-emotional/Socio-behavioral CELP (Type A) - An early learning program whose primary focus or paradigm is to develop children through social situations, inclusive of play, that facilitate social interactions and the development of social skills.

Transition - The movement of children from one institutionalized setting to another (Barblett et al., 2011).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Continuity efforts in early education cannot be discussed without a review of foundational knowledge, and contemporary concerns, as well as prior related studies in the field. The following literature review is divided into three primary sections: early childhood development, history of kindergarten transition, and transition practices, all accompanied by additional subsections. Three primary theoretical frameworks will be highlighted in the review of literature. The maturational theory of development, theorized by Arnold Gesell (1929), will be used to frame concepts in early childhood development, while John Elder (1998), Jr.'s life course theory will frame the transition process from historical and contemporary experiences. Lev Vygotsky's (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996) sociocultural learning theory serves as the basis for the discussion of transition practices. In addition, secondary theories of attachment, ecological systems, and psychological stages of development are embedded into the context of the primary theories discussed.

Early Childhood Development

Child development is an anticipated process where each child progresses unceasingly. Maturational theory, identified by Arnold Gesell (1929), recognized the idea that biological, physiological, and cognitive maturation, each potentially having different trajectories, can together illustrate a span of norms that display sequential, and therefore predictable, patterns of growth and development. Gesell concluded the pace and trajectory of development is influenced by both genetics and environment. These spans, often referred to as *ages and stages*, reference how development occurs in a range similar to a continuum, irrespective of chronological age, while often overlapping with chronological age. These spans are the

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perspective in which the field of early learning views early childhood growth and development.

The development and significance of relationships. From birth to age five is the period of the most rapid growth in children's linguistic, cognitive, emotional, social, and regulatory abilities, and it is during this time the foundation for future development is laid (Bates et al., 2006). In these years, children's relationships with caregivers play a significant role in strengthening all areas of development by providing secure attachments in which children feel safe exploring and learning about the world around them (Bates et al., 2006).

Originating with the work of John Bowlby and further developed by Mary Ainsworth, the theory of attachment is a psychological, evolutionary, and ethological theory that created a framework for understanding interpersonal relationships between human beings (Bretherton, 1992). Bowlby and Ainsworth's observational studies supported the belief that close emotional bonds, or attachments, were a prerequisite for typical social and emotional development (Bretherton, 1992).

It is through these attachment relationships that children learn how to cope with frustrations, moderate their own behavior, and form positive relationships with others (Whitted, 2011). As the expectations of kindergarten competencies continue to shift, requiring increased social skill proficiency much earlier, kindergarten children are asked to regulate these emotions much earlier than they may be developmentally prepared to manage. Socio-emotional and socio-behavioral challenges during the kindergarten transition are a function of the developmental ability to regulate emotions and behavior.

Early brain development. The cognitive, social emotional, and regulatory systems in the brain are developed through a relationship with genetics and experience. Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory suggested that social interaction plays a fundamental role in cognitive development (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). When babies are born their brains are ready to learn. The nerve cells in the brain, called neurons, grow and develop and also make wiring connections called synapses. Infants and children continuously have experiences helping their brains to make connections. When these connections are not used, they grow weaker and eventually disappear. However, when these connections are used they become stronger and eventually form the basis for how children think about the world around them. Although some aspects of brain development happen naturally and result in similar stages of development for children, experiences account for how children develop differently, indicating that social interactions allow for individual development within developmental trajectories (Edie & Schmid, 2007; Provider-Parent Partnerships, 2013).

The brain is divided into many sections, with each developing differently yet affecting each other. Social cognition is created through complex interactions between several areas of the brain related to communication, emotions, and decisions. Influencing socio-emotional and socio-behavioral development, social interactions are a result of the brain's continuous growth. These interactions are learned young as caregivers teach turn taking in conversations with babbling infants, or play games with toddlers and preschoolers, for example.

The area of the brain making decisions and discerning morals, the frontal lobe, has its fastest growth period between the ages of three to six years. It is also during this time when

the speed of processing, memory, and problem solving increase (Child Development Institute, 2016). Problem solving, as a function of development, is critical to social interactions, socio-emotional regulation, as well as planning and decision-making. Increased competence in each of these skills is an expectation during in the kindergarten year (Ebbeck et al., 2013).

Regulatory behavior is a function of brain development beginning in infancy and nurtured through childhood. Maturation of the frontal lobe, associated with executive functioning and regulatory abilities, develops primarily in the second year of life (Kuczynski, 2003). During these early years, caregivers are of primary importance in the child's increasing ability to regulate their emotions (Bretherton, 1992; Kuczynski, 2003). Caregivers model regulatory practices through soothing, for example, and support the progression from participating as a co-regulation partner with a child, to a child's ability to independently self-regulate. It is when children have these environments supportive of scaffolded practice and opportunity that they become equipped with the skills needed for school success (Whitted, 2011).

While cognitive, socio-emotional, socio-behavioral, and regulatory development in the early years is profound, it is also quite vulnerable. Experiences where children are exposed to little familiarity can cause stress to the limbic system of the brain, the lower portion of the brain, rendering the function of the frontal cortex inaccessible. This can result in maladjustment upon entrance into new environments, engagement with new individuals or materials, or with expanded developmental expectations (Barblett et al., 2011; Child Trauma Academy, 2016; Kuczynski, 2003; McIntyre, Eckert, Arbolino et al., 2014; Perry, 2016).

Although their trajectories are not mutually exclusive, regulatory behavior skills, and socio-emotional and cognitive growth, are a result of the brain's ongoing development.

History of Kindergarten Transitions

Transition to kindergarten has long been identified as an early life change and described as an important milestone in the lives of children, their families, and teachers (McIntyre et al., 2010). Transition to formal schooling marks a rite of passage for children all over the world who reside in locations with formal schooling structures. As such, this experience is not exclusive to specific populations or countries and is rather universal for children around the world.

In kindergarten, the explicit and implicit expectations for social interactions, behaviors, rules, and learning often differ from a child's prior school, family, community, or cultural experiences. During this time children begin to hone their formal role of student as they experience more choice, greater independence and responsibility, as well as an adjustment in their identity as they relate to peers differently (McIntyre et al., 2010). For many children, successful kindergarten entry is crucial because the social and academic skills developed in kindergarten are foundational for future school success (Barblett et al., 2011; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2000). Continuity in both philosophy and practice are variables that can aid in successful kindergarten transitions.

Although kindergarten entry may occur based on a static date or chronological age, in general, the children's stage of development coupled with experience and supports will influence their adjustment to kindergarten entry (Ebbeck et al., 2013). According to past literature, the complexities of kindergarten transitions were evidenced by the myriad of

variables influencing a successful transition. These variables were inclusive of teacher

practice, parent participation and voice, and engagement in transition opportunities, among

others (Barblett et al., 2011; Cote et al., 2013; Hanson et al., 2000; Mangione & Speth, 1998;

McIntyre et al., 2007; Pianta, Kraft-Sayre, 2003; Santos, 2015; Whitted, 2011).

The life course developmental theory, as proposed by Elder, Jr. (1998), is a

multidisciplinary paradigm used to study people's lives through the lens of social

change, life trajectories and pathways, and development as it pertains to behavior

continuity and change. The life course theory highlights the idea that societal

forces—such as those in the mesosystem and exosystem of the ecological system

model (Figure 2.1)—influence individual social changes, while also proposing that

life trajectories are embedded in and shaped by the times and places an individual

experiences, affecting continuity in behavior (Elder, 1998). This lens highlights the

significance of transition experiences given that transitions are the social change

children experience against both a backdrop and interaction with already established

trajectories and fluid developmental stages.

The life course theory proposes that individuals have multiple and simultaneous

trajectories. These trajectories engage with one another and bear developmental

implications. According to Elder (1998), "Life transitions are always part of social

trajectories that give them distinctive meaning and form" (p. 1). Kindergarten transition

posits a life transition. Children's success in the environment, related to their developmental

needs, gives meaning for this transition.

The life course theory states that prior forces, or historical forces, influence the social trajectories of family, education and work, and as a result affect behavior and some continuums of development. Related to this study on continuity in transitions, prior or historical forces were the previous Childcare Early Learning Programs (CELPs) a child had experienced.

Life course theory also emphasized the notion that early events influence future events (Elder, 1998; Wildenger & McIntyre, 2012). When children experience early transitions with ease, their academic and social success creates a foundation for later success as their trajectories remain relatively consistent in the long term. In contrast, negative academic and social trajectories become challenging to modify over time. As discussed in Chapter 1, a rising percentage of children struggle with kindergarten transition in the areas of socio-emotional, socio-behavioral, and cognitive development. These early challenges, resulting in maladaptive behaviors, influence subsequent school adjustment and transition, as well as engagement due to quality of experience.

Perspectives on kindergarten transitions. Among the research were two distinctly different overarching views on readiness that represented significant variables related to continuity in kindergarten transitions. Each view was anchored in a historical context in which the perspective takes value.

Kindergarten readiness perspective. One way in which the transition to school has been discussed in the literature is that of kindergarten readiness, sometimes synonymous with school readiness. The definition of kindergarten readiness has adapted to its social, political, and educational context over many generations. Prior studies (Goldstein et al., 2013;

Mangione & Speth, 1998) illustrated the historical development of the kindergarten readiness concept as an intervention for young children preparing for school entry. According to Mangione and Speth (1998), state and national funding for early childhood programs has been maintained for the purpose of providing "all children with an equal opportunity for success" (p. 508). Quality childcare and early learning settings have been proposed as an intervention for this equal opportunity success (Keys et al., 2012).

In modern use, the term and concept of kindergarten readiness has become increasingly comprehensive and multidimensional as it denotes child competencies at the time of school entry needed for later school success (Goldstein et al., 2013). Inclusive of physical, cognitive, language, and behavioral elements of development, kindergarten readiness in the modern sense emphasizes cognitive/pre-academic skills, as well as socio-emotional behaviors also identified by state standards (Goldstein et al., 2013; Minnesota Department of Education, 2015).

With recognition of the enduring influences family and community systems can have on their children, the kindergarten readiness perspective identifies families and their communities as having the sole responsibility for pre-academic and socio-behavioral socialization, as well as the teaching of pre-academic skills, prior to kindergarten entry (Goldstein et al., 2013; Mangione & Speth, 1998). Despite knowledge base, quality, or available resources, families and communities are assumed to intentionally share and teach this socialization process to a degree in which children have an accumulation of skills acceptable for kindergarten entry. The kindergarten readiness perspective, although increasingly comprehensive in its inclusion of developmental components, relies heavily on

families and their communities to socialize children in the preparation for kindergarten entry.

This traditional view places the responsibility of a smooth transition exclusively on children

and their families, as the goal is to prepare children for a specific point of entry, despite prior

experiences, resources, or knowledge (Ebbeck et al., 2013).

Ready school perspective. An additional way in which kindergarten transition has

been discussed in the literature is through the ready school perspective. In recognition that

historical views on school readiness often excluded marginalized and diverse populations, the

school ready concept was born out of social need (Ebbeck et al., 2013; Noel, 2010).

According to the literature, the ready school perspective has grown in acceptance as it

"provides for the needs of children of diverse backgrounds, knowledge and experiences,"

(Ebbeck et al., 2013, p. 291) and while it values family and community, attempts to form a

reciprocal relationship between these influences rather than an expectation of conformity for

entry (Mangione & Speth, 1998; Noel, 2010).

The ready school perspective suggests school programs are responsible for being

ready to accept children, independent of their individual needs, at school entry (Ebbeck et al.,

2013). The concept of ready schools builds on the notion that schools are nestled within a

community and are one of the active agents in a child's ecosystem, resulting in both direct

and indirect impact on children. According to ecological systems theory, children's

development is influenced by their social interactions within the context of the world around

them (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). In the ecological systems model, children rest in the center,

while schools rest in the first of four system levels called the microsystem (Figure 2.1). It is

at this level where there is direct interaction and influence on the children through the

practices and policies of the systems occupying this level. As a consequence, the ready

school perspective suggests lessening the impact of changes and discontinuities by

developing reciprocal partnerships with other systems at the microsystems level, specifically

families and communities (Ebbeck et al., 2013).

The ready school concept questioned the idea that only children must prepare for

kindergarten and suggests that schools and classrooms must be prepared to accept children

both because of and despite their experiences and development. For this to occur, the school

ready concept suggests families, communities, and schools share the responsibility for

successful school entry. The ready school perspective implies that schools are an active

agent within the community, responding to the experiences and needs of its residents in an

educational setting. To be effective, schools and communities must foster a bidirectional

relationship where schools know as much about their community and its populations as

families know about schools.

Figure 2.1 *Ecological Systems Model*

Transition Practices

In addition to child development and historical perspectives, kindergarten transitions are also influenced greatly by adult beliefs, decisions, practice, and time. Whether individually or as an organization, adult perspectives and practices significantly shape transition experiences (Barblett et al., 2011).

Two views of kindergarten transition permeate the field: the view of kindergarten transition as an event, and the view of kindergarten transition as a process. Influential to family's transition experiences has been the view of kindergarten transition as an event rather than a process. Historically in educational settings, transitions have been treated as an event

with tasks to complete by the family, as well as the teacher or school (Hanson et al., 2000). During this formality a family's tasks may include selecting a school and completing an array of forms, as well as obtaining health immunizations (Hanson et al., 2000). According to Hanson et al. (2000), many families see these tasks as pre-ordained components of the transition experience, leaving no allowance for the influence of family voice or individuality. Consequently, some families are uncertain about the implications these tasks and decisions will have for their children, or their family's transition experience. Adding to the ambiguity of some family experiences, when kindergarten transition is viewed as an event families are frequently left with minimal time in which to prepare their children for kindergarten entry, as these single events often occur just prior to kindergarten entry (Hanson et al., 2000; McIntyre et al., 2007). As a result, the discontinuity families experience during this time can be heightened due to limitations in understanding, time, and foresight about the kindergarten transition.

Some education professionals have also viewed transitions as an event. To justify this view, and their resulting practice, these professionals noted the significance of "meeting legal requirements, meeting local criteria for eligibility, and establishing roles for both parents and professionals" (Hanson et al., 2000, p. 285). Educational professionals also noted the additional time required to manage all the paperwork associated with transitions, and the struggle to balance these managerial requirements with the emotional experience that occurs during transition (Hanson et al., 2000). As a result, from this view children often experience abrupt change during kindergarten entry due to variables such as time constraints for planning and execution, as well as the continuation of implementation over time. These

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variables can contribute to adjustment difficulties (Barblett et al., 2011; McIntyre, Eckert, Arbolino et al., 2014).

Although simultaneously competing notions, the concept of kindergarten transition as a process has gained greater momentum in education, surpassing the historical notion of transition as an event. More recently research has indicated the benefits of transition as a process rather than an event. Barblett et al. (2011) proposed kindergarten transition is a "multi-layered and multi-year process" (p. 43; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2000), reflecting the fluidity of developmental and environmental changes children experience during this time.

When viewed as a multi-year process, transition experiences allow for multiple continuities of experience (Barblett et al., 2011). Children experience less abrupt change while engaging in a balance of stability and change over time (Mangione & Speth, 1998). As a multi-layered process, kindergarten transitions are inclusive of children, families, and communities beyond the formalities of an event (Barblett et al., 2011). In this way, children, families, and communities participate as active agents rather than passive partners, during this monumental early life change. Multi-layered and multi-year processes affords these stakeholders an opportunity to become invested in the process and contribute to its success over an extended period of time.

Teacher behavior and practices. Children's transition experience is significantly affected by adult decisions and practices. Theorized by Lev Vygotsky, sociocultural learning theory illustrated the influence of teachers as active and influential agents in the transition process. Sociocultural learning theory posited that development and its progression were contingent upon human interaction and the tools used within the culture for learning

(John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Sociocultural learning theory noted three ways a cultural tool can be exchanged from one person to another. The first method was through imitative learning. In this instance the actions of one individual are mimicked by another individual. The second method a cultural tool can be exchanged between individuals was through instruction. This method required recalling instructions and using them to complete a task. The third and final method in which a cultural tool can be exchanged was through collaborative learning. Collaborative learning involves working with others for the purpose of learning or creating together (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

Teachers exercise active agency as they make decisions about the learning environment, create expectations for the learning environment, and solicit participation and engagement from a range of vested constituents. Teachers also determine the method in which to engage children and families in the cultural tool of kindergarten transition. From the lens of sociocultural theory, teacher classroom practices, directed towards children or families, as well as the methods used as tools, have direct impact on adjustment during kindergarten entry.

The work of Erik Erikson, in his psychological stages of personality development, suggested there are stages children progress through as they develop their identity (Graves & Larkin, 2006). In the stage of competence versus inferiority, which spans ages five through 12, Erickson suggested that adults, inclusive of teachers, embody significant influence through their behavior (Graves & Larkin, 2006). According to the psychological stages, adult behaviors, specifically reinforcement, can influence a child's success and therefore a child's competence

(Graves & Larkin, 2006). Likewise, the absence of encouraging reinforcement can result in children's inability to meet their potential. In this view, active agency in teacher behavior and practices can significantly shape children's successful adaptation during transition.

Illustrating the prominence of teacher agency, Barblett et al. (2011) conducted a survey inclusive of 38 teachers who shared the practices they often employed to promote ease of kindergarten transitions. Their survey found 47% of the kindergarten teachers surveyed indicated involving parents in the transition process. This parent involvement took the form of an introductory meeting, distribution of an information booklet, and encouraging parents to accompany their child on the first day of school.

In addition, 31% of surveyed teachers revealed they included children in the transition process. Child-related opportunities included visits to the classroom prior to kindergarten entry and participation in orientation (Barblett et al., 2011). Of the teachers surveyed, 40% identified making adjustments to their teaching programs and 16% altered their teaching strategies at the start of kindergarten, from those strategies employed at the end of the previous school year, in attempt to address the unique circumstances of transition. These modifications often included providing clear expectations through the teaching of "rules and boundaries," as well as attempts to foster a welcoming environment (Barblett et al., 2011, p. 45). Noteworthy in the survey results, four teachers indicated they had collaborated or communicated with a child's prior Childcare Early Learning Program (CELP). These four teachers highlighted conversations with individuals regarding the children's transition from childcare early learning settings to kindergarten (Barblett et al.,

2011). McIntyre et al. (2007) noted that teachers who have experienced professional development on kindergarten transitions are more likely to intentionally implement transition practices even when they are labor intensive.

Overall there is an array of teacher-employed practices intended to ease the kindergarten transition for children and families. The active agency of teachers can positively influence the transition process. According to the survey conducted by Barblett et al. (2011), transition practices range in frequency of use among teachers, with few inclusive of direct contact with children or teacher adjustments in teaching strategies at kindergarten entry. Least popular with teachers was collaboration or communication efforts with a child's former CELP.

Family, school, and community partnerships. Ecological systems theory, developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, proposed how children's development is influenced by their relationships within the context of their surroundings. A review of ecological systems theory identified four environmental systems noting children's potential relationships within communities and the wider society (Figure 2.1). In the ecological systems theory children are nestled in the center and are directly impacted by those in the microsystem due to their immediate proximity. Family, peers, school, and community agents rest in this circle immediately outside the child, indicating their intensity of influence. Although bi-directional with the child, those influences frequently interface and can influence each other, as well.

Past research indicated family participation in transition planning may nurture favorable child outcomes (McIntyre et al., 2007; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003). Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (2003) identified the necessary participants for kindergarten transition success to

include the child, their peers, families, teachers/administration, and community, with the child in the center. These participants were identical to those found in the microsystem of the ecological model. Families and communities play a foundational role in nurturing and socializing children beginning in infancy (McIntyre et al., 2007). Their familiarity authenticates the transition experience while ensuring the process is reflective of communal beliefs, goals, and practices.

In accordance with ecological systems theory and attachment theory, parents, schools, and communities are a natural partner in educating young children, despite policies and practices in the remaining environmental systems that can interfere with the functionality of the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Views of kindergarten readiness illustrated the strengths and influence of early family and community supports, while diminishing the importance of children, families, and communities as authentic partners (Goldstein et al., 2013; Mangione & Speth, 1998). Other views of transition as an event have engaged families in formalities often limiting the recognition of familial influences, including culture and language, on the transition process (Hanson et al., 2000). As such, to support a more comprehensive and partner-inclusive transition for children, the process must extend beyond simple school visits and formalities, and instead gradually prepare children, families, and teachers through intentional continuous efforts (Santos, 2015).

The salience of family, school, and community partnerships has grown in acceptance relative to elementary settings. Written into the national Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) designed to address achievement, were programs for parent engagement as well as community childcare collaborations (Klein, 2016). These opportunities have illustrated the

growing acceptance of family contributions and community partnerships towards successful

kindergarten transition and school success. Programs having increased their inclusion of

families, schools, and communities through partnered kindergarten transition practices, can

also increase their trajectory of success through engagement of children's natural systems of

support (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

A range of variables influence successful kindergarten entry and include child

development trajectories, child attachment, adult-child relationships, adult philosophical

views underpinning the concepts of readiness, as well as the view of transition as an event or

process. Additional factors that impact kindergarten transition are the collective influence of

families, schools, and communities, as well as teaching behaviors and practices.

Of the adult teaching behaviors experienced during kindergarten entry, continuity of

practice—the continuation of adult behaviors and child experiences from one environment to

the next—was a thread that remained limited in the research. The following chapter outlines

the research methods and design intended to explore the behaviors of adult teaching

professionals in early education as they scaffolded the transition process for children moving

from childcare early learning programs (CELP) into kindergarten.

Chapter 3: Research Methods and Design

Philosophy and Justification

Educational research studies can be examined using a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods approach, depending upon both the research problem and the research question (Creswell, 2014). While qualitative designs gather data such as words, objects, or pictures to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Patton, 2014), quantitative research designs focus on collecting numerical data and using mathematically based methods to test relationships between variables, minimizing the impact of researcher bias (Muijs, 2011). Noting that the purpose of this study was to compare adult continuity behaviors in two childcare environments with adult continuity behaviors in kindergarten classrooms upon kindergarten entry, a qualitative approach would have been least appropriate. This study was designed to explore the tendencies of adults in early education to scaffold the transition process for children moving from childcare early learning settings into kindergarten. As a result a quantitative approach was deemed most suitable to gather and analyze answers to the research questions.

This study on continuity relied on data collected through observations using the CCS, a tool developed from two pre-existing early learning assessments—Child/Home Early Language and Literacy Observation (CHELLO) (Brooks, 2007) and Pre-K Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) (Pianta, LaParo, & Hamre, 2008)—using categories of observable continuity components derived from the research, whose dimension descriptions are listed in Appendices A and B, respectively. This study was intended to benefit early learning professionals, children transitioning from childcare early learning settings, and their

specific institutions as they facilitate children's adjustment and success in elementary settings.

Research Questions

The following research questions were explored in this study:

- RQ_1: To what degree does continuity in adult behaviors exist for children transitioning from socio-emotional and socio-behavioral based childcare to kindergarten,

  - in the subscore of physical environment,

  - in the subscore of adult-child interaction,

  - in the subscore of teaching strategies, and

  - as an aggregate behavior score?

- RQ_2: To what degree does continuity in adult behaviors exist for children transitioning from pre-academic based childcare to kindergarten?

  - in the subscore of physical environment,

  - in the subscore of adult-child interaction,

  - in the subscore of teaching strategies, and

  - as an aggregate behavior score?

- RQ_3: What difference exists in continuous adult behaviors between socio-emotional/socio-behavioral based childcare and pre-academic based childcare?

  - in the subscore of physical environment,

  - in the subscore of adult-child interaction,

  - in the subscore of teaching strategies, and

○ as an aggregate behavior score?

Theoretical Framework

Four primary theoretical frameworks were used to guide this study on adult continuity behaviors. The maturational theory of development, theorized by Arnold Gesell, was used to frame concepts in early childhood development, while John Elder, Jr.'s life course theory framed the transition process from historical and contemporary experiences. Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory was the basis for the discussion of transition practices. In addition, observation as a method of research was used to frame the study design.

Variables

The independent variables for this study were childcare and kindergarten teacher behaviors. The dependent variable for this study was the degree of continuity as measured by the CCS used to assess the organization of environment, adult-child interaction, and teacher strategies.

Hypotheses

The goal of this exploratory study was to uncover continuous behaviors of childcare teachers of four-year-olds, as well as kindergarten teachers, during the transition from CELP to kindergarten entry. Since there was an absence in the literature of prior research indicating a relationship, or lack thereof, between the teachers in each setting, a hypothesis was not formed.

Research Design Strategy

This study was designed to explore the tendencies of adults in early education to scaffold the transition process for children moving from Childcare Early Learning Programs

(CELPs) into kindergarten. This study sought to compare two types of childcare early learning environments to one another, as well as each childcare type to kindergarten classrooms, therefore a quantitative comparative design was used for this study (Figure 3.1). A comparative design is one in which the researcher compares "two or more things with a view of discovering something about one or all of the things being compared" (Przeworski & Teune, 1970).

Often comparative designs seek to describe a subset of a social phenomenon, rather than the phenomenon itself. For this study, rather than explain the grand theories related to transition, the researcher aimed to discover continuity, specifically continuous adult behaviors, as a branch of the transition process. A quantitative comparison design was appropriate to answer the research questions in descriptive and numerical form, as well as without experimentation.

Comparative research designs are frequently used in non-experimental research designs where researchers do not attempt to manipulate or control the variables and only describe them as they exist naturally (Creswell, 2014; Muijs, 2011; Patten, 2014). This design allowed the researcher to record observations, such as teacher behavior, using the CCS for childcare and kindergarten teachers.

Other designs, such as experimental, were both unnecessary and unethical. Experiments require a researcher to arrange both control and experimental groups, and then influence variables to measure effects (Creswell, 2014). The researcher had no control over a teacher's classroom practice in this study. In addition, researchers must take precaution to avoid harming research participants (Creswell, 2014; Patten, 2014). Had the researcher

asked teachers to purposefully alter their environment and instructional practices, it would

harm the children through disruption of routines. As such, use of an experimental design to

manipulate teacher environment and instructional practices would be dishonorable. This

study investigated the teacher's existing continuity efforts, conscious or unconscious, with

the intent to compare natural occurrences.

Figure 3.1 *Adult Behavior Continuity Comparison*

Instrumentation and Measures

A review of the literature revealed both explicit and implicit types of continuity

present during early transitions, as illustrated in Table 3.1 (Barblett et al., 2011; Ebbeck et

al., 2013; Lombardi, 1992; Mangione, 1998; Mayfield, 2003). Of those named continuity

types, the most common forms of continuity, identified as having been addressed in two or

more peer reviewed articles, as well as the less frequent forms of continuity, are outlined in

Table 3.2. Illustrated in the third column of Table 3.2 are the continuity types appropriate for

this study on continuous adult behaviors during transition.

Table 3.1 *General Continuity Types*

Continuity Types	Descriptor
Philosophical Continuity	Refers to the underlying philosophies of early childhood programs including purpose of early education, concepts of childhood and how children learn, child development, and methods of teaching (Barblett et al., 2011; Mayfield, 2003).
Curricular Continuity	Refers to the learning themes and continuity of curriculum across levels and programs (Barblett et al., 2011; Mayfield, 2003).
Developmental Continuity	Refers to how to address continuity for individual children and includes basing decisions on each individual child's social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development, and factor these into programs and instructional practices (Lombardi, 1992; Mayfield, 2003).
Environmental Continuity	Refers to classroom design, available materials, furniture, and equipment for children, size, space, etc. (Barblett et al., 2011; Mayfield, 2003).
Organizational or Administrative Continuity	Refers to length of school day/week, educator/child ratios, and other structural variables. Also includes program government (Mangione, 1998; Mayfield, 2003).
Teaching Strategies	Refers to teaching practices and behavior practices (Barblett et al., 2011).
Relationships and Emotional Continuity	Refers to the attachment and interactions between adults and children in early childhood settings, in addition to emotional feelings of confidence, safety, and worth as a result of these relationships (Barblett et al., 2011; Ebbeck et al., 2013).
Parent-Teacher Communication	Refers to the communication effort, style, content, and frequency between parents and teachers (Ebbeck et al., 2013; Lombardi, 1992).
Physical Location	Refers to the geographical, and often site sharing,

	locations of early learning programs (Ebbeck et al., 2013; Mangione, 1998).
Socialization Expectations	Refers to the hidden and overt rules and expectations (i.e. raising hands, waiting for bathroom, making choices, interactions with peers, interactions with adults, independence, methods for governing or solving problems, etc.) children must learn for success in an environment (Ebbeck et al., 2013).
Physical Activity	Refers to play through large motor activity, inclusive of schedule and not scheduled times, as well as child and adult initiated (Ebbeck et al., 2013).
Family, School, and Community Partnerships	Refers to families as partners, shared leadership, comprehensive and responsive services, inclusion of culture and home language, communication, knowledge and skill development, community voice in the education process (Lombardi, 1992; Mangione, 1998).

Table 3.2 *Frequency of Continuity Types in Literature*

Frequency	Continuity Type	Significant for the Study
Most Common types of Continuity (addressed in <2 articles)	- Location Continuity - Philosophical Continuity - Curricular Continuity - Developmental Continuity - Administrative Continuity - Environment (+ Materials) Continuity - Partnerships (Parent Involvement, Community, Supportive Services) Continuity	- Curricular Continuity - Developmental Continuity
Least Common types of Continuity (addressed in >2 articles)	- Teaching Strategies - Physical Activity - Socialization Expectations - Relationships	- Teaching Strategies - Physical Activity - Relationships

There was no singular tool available for this study that provided a comprehensive quantitative instrument highlighting all significant areas of study from the literature, designed with early learning indicators, intended for use in early learning settings, containing observable measures, and measuring teacher behaviors. As a result, two tools tested in the field of early education and identified as both valid and reliable were combined to create the CCS intended to collect data on the variables in the research questions (Child/Home Language and Literacy Observation, 2007; Pianta et al., 2008). These two tools were the Child/Home Early Language & Literacy Observation (CHELLO) and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). Appendices A and B illustrate the scoring components of each original tool.

The Child/Home Early Language and Literacy Observation (CHELLO) is a sister version of the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) and is designed to measure childcare and home daycare settings in the areas of physical environment, support for learning, and adult teaching strategies (Brookes Publishing, 2007). This tool addressed physical environment, socialization expectations through adult-child interaction, as well as teacher supports as strategies, all which were identified in the research as areas of continuity and were measurable. Specific teaching strategies, such as StoryBook/StoryTelling Activities, Writing Activities, Use of Print, were also observed using the CHELLO tool. Table 3.3 illustrates the subscales of the CHELLO appropriate for the purpose of this study as identified in the research. Appendix C notes a description of each selected subscale of the CHELLO used in the study.

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The Pre-K CLASS, designed for children in their last year prior to kindergarten entry, does not evaluate the presence of materials, the physical environment, or curriculum, and very broadly addresses teaching strategies. On the contrary the CLASS measures interactions between teachers and students and what teachers do with the materials they have. Teacher-child interactions, interactions among children, as well as emotional supports, classroom organization, and instructional supports are addressed in the CLASS as it attempts to measure interactions with the belief that child and adult interactions are the primary mechanism of student development and learning (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008). Teacher-child interactions and the resulting environment appeared in the literature review often under relationships and expectations. Table 3.4 illustrates the domains of the CLASS appropriate to the goals of this study as identified in the research. Appendix D highlights the description of each selected domain of the CLASS used in this study.

Table 3.3 *CCS CHELLO Subscales*

CHELLO Subscales	Corresponding CCS Category
- Organization of the Environment - Materials in the Environment - Daily Schedule - Management Strategies - Vocabulary Building - Responsive Strategies - Use of Print - Storybook/Storytelling Activities - Writing Activities	- Physical Environment for Learning - Physical Environment for Learning - Physical Environment for Learning - Adult-Child Interaction - Teaching Strategies - Teaching Strategies - Teaching Strategies - Teaching Strategies - Teaching Strategies

Table 3.4 *CCS Pre-K CLASS Components*

Pre-K CLASS Dimensions	Corresponding CCS Category
● Positive Climate ● Teacher Sensitivity ● Regard for Student Perspectives ● Instructional Learning Formats ● Concept Development ● Quality of Feedback ● Language Modeling	● Adult-Child Interaction ● Adult-Child Interaction ● Adult-Child Interaction ● Adult-Child Interaction ● Adult-Child Interaction ● Adult-Child Interaction ● Adult-Child Interaction

Table 3.5 *CCS Categories*

CCS Category	Combined CHELLO and CLASS component
Physical Environment for Learning	● Organization of the Environment ● Materials in the Environment ● Daily Schedule
Adult-Child Interaction	● Management Strategies ● Positive Climate ● Teacher Sensitivity ● Regard for Student Perspectives ● Instructional Learning Formats ● Concept Development ● Quality of Feedback ● Language Modeling
Teaching Strategies	● Vocabulary Building ● Responsive Strategies ● Use of Print ● Storybook/Storytelling Activities ● Writing Activities

Similarities in the CHELLO and CLASS tools include the use of a Likert scale with descriptors for each numerical rating. Differences in the tools include a Literacy Checklist with Yes or No indicating presence of specific learning materials in the CHELLO. The

CHELLO has a 5-point Likert scale, with the lowest mark of *deficient* being awarded 1 point, with *basic* = 3, and *exemplary* = 5. The CLASS has a 7-point Likert scale, with the lowest marks of *low range* being awarded a score of 1 or 2, a score of 3, 4, or 5 are in the *middle range*, and while scores of 6 or 7 are in the *high range*. The CLASS requires a reliability test to become a CLASS Reliable Observer, with reliability expiring annually and requiring new certification. The researcher is currently a CLASS Reliable Observer.

In an effort to maintain the reliability of internal consistency for the respective tools in the combined form of the CCS, CHELLO sections continued to be scored using a Likert scale of 1-5, while CLASS dimensions continued to use a Likert scale of 1-7. To address the threat to construct validity the researcher field tested the CCS with another CLASS Reliable Observer who also employed the CHELLO tool regularly, until there was interrater reliability, at which point the researcher coded independently.

Additionally, all observations were coded using SPSS 24 software. Keeping with the expectations of the CLASS tool, observation codes were determined based on the behavior of all adults in the classroom during the observation. If multiple adults were present during the observation, behaviors were weighed "according to the number of students with whom they are working, the amount of time they spend with the students, and their responsibility for the activities" (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008, p. 10).

Sampling Design

The study was conducted in a metropolitan area of the upper Midwest, with a population of nearly 301,000 individuals, inclusive of three-, four-, and five-year-olds, nearly 5,000 each. All participants in the study were from within the geographic boundaries used to

determine enrollment by the local school district, and all kindergarten classroom participants were from within the school district. The population to be studied was comprised of teachers working in urban settings where children were preparing to transition, or had recently transitioned, into kindergarten. This sample population included three subgroups:

- teachers of children transitioning from pre-academic based CELPs to kindergarten settings,

- teachers of children transitioning from socio-emotional/socio-behavioral based CELPs to kindergarten settings, and

- public school kindergarten teachers.

This study would be generalized to teachers who prepared or scaffolded children for kindergarten transitions, both in CELPs and kindergarten.

In order to obtain a sample representative of the city's CELPs and district populations, unbiased towards teachers serving specific demographics or in select geographic attendance areas, both purposive sampling and snowball sampling methods were employed (Muijs, 2011). Purposive sampling was employed in good faith as the researcher attempted to identify eight pre-academic-based and eight socio-emotional/socio-behavioral-based CELPs within the district boundaries, based on their shared mission statement or other public materials indicating their philosophy of early education. In good faith the researcher attempted to also identify a kindergarten teacher in each attendance zone, totaling eight kindergarten teacher participants.

The study relied on equal teacher participation in both CELP settings. When purposive sampling offered an inadequate sample size or an inadequate representation of the

populations studied, snowball sampling was also employed (Patten, 2014). As childcare early learning programs (CELPs) developed interest in the study, and similarly as kindergarten teachers were recruited to participate, the researcher requested these participants recommend other potential programs and teachers to consult regarding the study.

Data Collection Procedures

Observations are a useful way of investigating many research questions in education. Using observation as a method for research enables the researcher to flexibly study an array of phenomenon, inclusive of adult behaviors (Muijs, 2011). Observation-based research allows the researcher to determine what truly happens in a setting rather than relying on what participants report doing (Barblett et al., 2011; Muijs, 2011). Muijs (2011) suggested that research by observation is beneficial because in some situations participants provide socially acceptable responses and their self-reports are often in contrast to those of external observers. As such, a teacher survey would have been less appropriate for this study. As an additional advantage, observation-based research has the benefit of being generalizable to other real-life settings because these occur in their natural setting (Muijs, 2011).

Observation-based research requires significant attention to the instrument design which can sample participants and settings in segments of time (Muijs, 2011). For this study, the CCS tool observed teacher behaviors in three settings during a two- to three-hour segment of time, mirroring the CHELLO tool, which recommends a minimum of two hours of time when using the tool's components. This slice of time allowed generalization of findings to a teacher's continuity of behaviors on other days.

A rating scale is a common method permitting the researcher to "observe the occurrence or quality of observed factors" (Muijs, 2011, p. 48). Rating tools have the potential to measure both high-inferences which makes judgement on what was observed, as well as low-inferences which counts behaviors (Muijs, 2011). The CCS tool utilized a Likert scale and is both a high-inference tool as it rates the quality of each occurrence, as well as a low-inference tool because it also observes frequency and presence.

These two different types of rating tools, high and low-inference, were combined into a single instrument allowing the observer to consider various factors. For this study nine sections of the CHELLO and seven dimensions of the CLASS were combined to create the CCS (Tables 3.3 and 3.4). Collectively, the categories of the CCS observed the physical environment, adult-child interactions, as well as teaching strategies. In addition, the CCS functioned as a low-inference tool by detecting the presence of any category through the use of scripted notes. The CCS also functioned as a high-inference tool by observing quality of presence through the recording of scripted notes used to determine the rating on a Likert scale.

To conduct the observations, the researcher observed teacher behaviors beginning with the official start of the day until the start of lunch for each classroom. This time varied from two to three hours. For the duration of the observation, descriptive notes, inclusive of scripted teacher language and interactions, were recorded and used to determine the rating for each component. Data collection began in Spring 2017 for the CELPs, using a four-week span for 14 observations, and concluded in the Fall of 2017 with kindergarten teachers, using a two-week window for seven observations.

Field Test

A field test was conducted in December 2016 alongside another reliable observer. Teachers who did not participate in the study, one each from a CELP and kindergarten, were observed using the CCS. The goals of this field test were to be certain the CCS and its questions answered the research questions, to test the interrater reliability on the combined CCS tool, to assess the usability of the tool itself, and to practice effective and efficient recording on the combined CCS tool. After completion of the field test the researcher and co-observer discussed results for interrater reliability. As a result the researcher made minimal adjustments to the tool format.

Pilot Test

A pilot test of the observable indicators was provided to both two CELP and two kindergarten teachers who did not participate in the study. Although many CELPs and their teachers were familiar with these observable indicators from the separate tools, kindergarten teachers were less likely to have this same familiarity and therefore had additional questions regarding the indicators. The researcher gathered feedback on the observable indicators for consideration prior to beginning the study.

Data Analysis

For this study an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine the degree of continuity in adult behaviors for both subscores and aggregate scores on the CCS for each of the following:

- teachers of children transitioning from pre-academic based CELPs to kindergarten settings,

- teachers of children transitioning from socio-emotional/socio-behavioral based

  CELPs to kindergarten settings, and

- public school kindergarten teachers.

Because a single ANOVA can compare a number of means, the researcher used a multiple comparisons test to compare the three subscores and single aggregate score of the CCS (Table 3.5) for all three teacher settings to determine which "individual pairs of means are significantly different from each other," as well as the degree of continuity over all (Patten, 2014, p. 137). In conjunction with SPSS, the researcher originally coded participants based upon the single classification of teacher type—pre-academic, socio-emotional/socio-behavioral, or kindergarten.

Limitations of the Methodology

Observation methods are a limitation of this study. Observations require training and reliability in order to be valid (Muijs, 2011). Without proper training in observations, data collection becomes subjective and relies on the researcher's disposition. Because observation-based research methods are rather intrusive, observations occurring in classrooms may prompt changes in adult behaviors simply because the researcher is present (Muijs, 2011). In addition, as a non-experimental method, observations make causal comparisons difficult (Muijs, 2011).

Other limitations included the use of purposive and snowball sampling. Both of these sampling methods can be assumed to be biased simply because participants were not selected at random (Patten, 2014). Due to the constraint of one researcher viewing many classrooms within a similar period of time, as well as the willingness for teachers to be observed, a small

sample size and sampling errors were a consequence. Lastly, the naming of the CELPs as pre-academic and socio-emotional/socio-behavioral may have dissuaded some CELPs from participating in the study due to the connotations of the terms.

Ethical Considerations

It is crucial to consider potential physical or psychological harm to participants when planning research (Patten, 2014). The Belmont Report (1979) identified the basic ethical principles that should safeguard research that is inclusive of human subjects. These three guiding principles are respect for persons, beneficence, and justice.

Related to this study, respect for persons was evident as individual teachers, rather than their program managers or administrators, were treated as autonomous agents when recruited to participate in the study (Belmont Report, 1979; Patten, 2014). Although CELP directors and school administrators were notified of the study and agreed to participate, each individual teacher consented to participate in the study. Beneficence, the assurance that individuals are treated ethically by respecting their decisions and protecting them from harm, was evident in the study through anonymity of identifying characteristics and their data, as well as data privacy. Finally, the principle of justice was evident in the selection process for the sampled population. Participants were selected solely on the characteristics that directly relate to the study: the type of CELP where they are employed, or the geographic location of the kindergarten classroom.

In addition to being mindful of ethical principles of research with human subjects, informed consent was acquired to ensure participants willfully participated in the research (Belmont Report, 1979; Patten, 2014). Informed consent made participants aware of the

research purpose, indicated what would happen during the research process, noted the potential benefits of participation, identified any potential for harm, and informed participants of their right to withdraw from participation at any time (Patten, 2014). For this study a letter of informed consent was sent to participants prior to the start of the study (Appendices E through H).

At the conclusion of the study and the analysis of data, the researcher shared with all teachers, program managers, or administration the accumulated results of the study. Debriefing with participants provided a holistic picture of their contributions to the study, the field, and potentially became a catalyst for professional development.

Chapter 4: Results

This quantitative comparison study explored the potential continuous behaviors between childcare teachers of four year-olds at the conclusion of their four year-old childcare experience, and kindergarten teachers at the beginning of the kindergarten year. Occurring in three settings, the study compared two types of Childcare Early Learning Programs (CELPs) to one another, as well as each CELP to kindergarten classrooms. The results of this study were gathered and analyzed according to the methodology in Chapter 3. This chapter contains defined degrees of continuity, a discussion of the research sample and data collection, as well as the data results for each research question.

Defined Degrees

Exploratory in nature, this study attempted to uncover continuous teacher behaviors in each setting. Since prior research had not revealed a relationship, or lack thereof, between teacher behaviors in each setting, a hypothesis was not formed, and therefore, not tested. The following research questions were used to guide the study.

- RQ_1: To what degree does continuity in adult behaviors exist for children transitioning from socio-emotional and socio-behavioral based childcare to kindergarten,
    - in the subscore of physical environment,
    - in the subscore of adult-child interaction,
    - in the subscore of teaching strategies, and
    - as an aggregate behavior score?

- RQ$_2$: To what degree does continuity in adult behaviors exist for children

  transitioning from pre-academic based childcare to kindergarten,

  - in the subscore of physical environment,

  - in the subscore of adult-child interaction,

  - in the subscore of teaching strategies, and

  - as an aggregate behavior score?

- RQ$_3$: What difference exists in continuous adult behaviors between

  socio-emotional/socio-behavioral based childcare and pre-academic based childcare,

  - in the subscore of physical environment,

  - in the subscore of adult-child interaction,

  - in the subscore of teaching strategies, and

  - as an aggregate behavior score?

For the purpose of this study, individual teacher degree of continuity is defined using raw

scores from the CCS as identified below, while statistical significance between classroom

types, and their subscales, is used to identify the degree of continuity for entire classroom

types. See Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 *Degree of Continuity*

Degree of Continuity	Score
High Continuity	71 – 94 (75%)
Mid Continuity	47 – 70 (50%)
Low Continuity	Below 47

Research Sample

This exploratory study used purposive sampling to allow the researcher to select participants based on the constraints of geographical area, as well as classroom type. Snowball sampling, the bridging of potential participants by existing study participants, was employed conservatively.

Potential research participants were identified through outlets such as the state's childcare location website, electronic recruitment through the chair of the state's childcare association and several elementary administrators, in addition to online searches specific to the geographical boundaries of the study. All CELPs identified were within the school district boundaries where the kindergarten classrooms reside. The intent of the researcher was to identify CELPs that may be a pathway to local kindergarten program, based on geography.

Participants represented varied characteristics that were both expected and appropriate to the study. Childcare Early Learning Programs (CELPs) maintained classrooms that differed in the ages they served, with some programs having designed their classrooms to serve a mixed-aged group of three- through five-year-olds, therefore having the capability of serving any one child for two or more years, depending upon the timing of the child's birthdate. Other CELPs designed their classrooms to serve four-year-olds the year prior to kindergarten, therefore targeting a particular stage of development for a determined amount of time. In addition to the differences in classroom ages, other characteristics of CELP participants included those with a National Association for the Education of Young

Children (NAEYC) accreditation, as well as those with a religious or culturally specific focus in their program.

Kindergarten teacher participants, although within the same school district, exhibited diversities in school focus such as the arts, science, technology, or International Baccalaureate programing. Both CELPs and kindergarten classrooms had maximum classroom enrollments of 20 or 28, respectively. Childcare Early Learning Programs and kindergarten classrooms also had a range in the number of additional support staff assigned to each classroom. These additional adult staff included full and part time individuals, some who were volunteers and others who were employees. Both CELP settings, as well as kindergarten settings, were full-day environments, providing full-day learning services for a minimum of six hours.

Participants in this study on continuity represented three types of classrooms. For the purpose of this study, type A classroom teachers were CELP classrooms whose teacher and director self-identified as largely having a socio-emotional/socio-behavioral focus. The following three questions determined their self-identity.

- Is the philosophy of your CELP more pre-academic skill focus or socio-emotional skill focus?

- Does the observed classroom have more pre-academic skill focus or socio-emotional skill focus?

- Is the curriculum more pre-academic skill focus or socio-emotional skill focus?

In these classroom settings teachers spent increased time on social interactions and relations, for example, and intentionally planned learning opportunities to teach these skills through both explicit and embedded instruction. Pre-academic skills were often embedded in socio-emotional/socio-behavioral learning and were a secondary focus. There were eight CELPs that self-identified as having a socio-emotional/socio-behavioral focus.

A second type of classrooms were type B classroom participants, who represented CELPs whose teacher and director self-identified as primarily having a focus on pre-academic skills by answering the same questions as noted above. In these classroom settings teachers spent increased time on early literacy and math skills, for example, and intentionally planned opportunities to teach these skills largely through explicit instruction. Socio-emotional/socio-behavioral skills were often taught through child-to-child interactions and were secondary during explicit pre-academic skill instruction. There were six CELPs who self-identified as having a pre-academic focus.

Type C participants—kindergarten teachers—represent the third type of classroom in this study. All seven kindergarten teachers taught in the same urban school district in classrooms where all children were five years old prior to September 1st. These classrooms were full day and located within elementary school buildings also housing first through fifth grades.

Data Collection

For this exploratory study on continuity, observation was the identified method for data collection. Observation based research allows the researcher to determine what truly happens in a setting rather than what participants report doing (Barblett et al., 2011; Muijs,

2011). As an additional advantage, observation-based research has the benefit of being generalizable to other real-life settings because these occur in their natural setting (Muijs, 2011).

The CCS was the research-based tool used to conduct and record classroom observations in each setting. There was no singular tool available for this study that provided a comprehensive quantitative instrument highlighting all significant areas of study from the literature, designed with early learning indicators, intended for use in early learning settings, containing observable measures, and measuring teacher behaviors. As a result two tools tested in the field of early education and identified as both valid and reliable were combined to create the CCS intended to collect data on the variables in the research questions (Brooks, P., 2007; Pianta et al., 2008). These two tools are the Child/Home Early Language & Literacy Observation (CHELLO) and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). Appendices A and B illustrate the scoring components of each original tool.

For Childcare Early Learning Program participants, the observation window spanned four consecutive weeks in the spring just prior to kindergarten entry. This allowed the researcher to conduct up to four observations each week. Kindergarten teacher participants were observed during a two-week window within the first four weeks of the kindergarten start date. This allowed the researcher to observe up to four classrooms each week.

Observations for each classroom were conducted in the morning. The consistency of morning observations, with the exclusion of lunch times, allowed the researcher to eliminate potential barriers impacting the study, and therefore generalize findings. During

observations the researcher remained an observer and not a participant in adult or child interactions.

Each classroom observation in a CELP began at the arrival of over 50% of enrolled children, a time identified in advance by each CELP director, while the kindergarten classroom observation period began at the official start of the school day. Each classroom was observed for up to three hours or until the beginning of the lunch period, whichever happened first. For two classrooms this time period was two hours, meeting the minimum requirements of the study and the CHELLO tool requirements, while for other classrooms the time spanned up to the three hours allotted. All observations occurred within the two- to three-hour window, with no observations occurring less than two hours, or more than three hours.

During the two- to three hour observation periods in the CCS for each indicator observations were recorded. At the close of each classroom observation the researcher scored all items within 20 minutes and while onsite. The researcher used the Pre-K CLASS manual while viewing all notes, comparing these to CLASS dimension descriptions for reliability. A score was then identified for each CLASS dimension of the CCS using the Likert Scale of 1, *low range*, to 7, *high range*. All remaining CHELLO subscales on the CCS were scored using a Likert Scale of 1, *deficient*, or 5, *exemplary*, using the three descriptors for each indicator, with the CHELLO subcomponent.

Data Collection Results

Using SPSS 24, data in Table 4.2 provides descriptive statistics for each of the three subscales of physical environment, adult-child interaction, and teaching strategies, in

addition to the aggregate scores for these three subscales. This data summarizes the CELP

and kindergarten teacher participants in the sample.

Table 4.2 *Full Sample Descriptive Statistics*

	Socio-Emotional/ Socio-Behavioral		Pre-Academic		Kindergarten	
	N = 8		N = 6		N = 7	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Physical Environment	12.63	1.275	11.67	1.538	12.21	1.868
Adult-Child	34.38	10.813	31.25	5.007	34.71	4.786
Teaching Strategies	14.44	2.043	16.42	3.826	17.57	2.573
Aggregate	61.438	12.6023	59.333	9.9633	64.500	8.2563

Table 4.3 provides a correlational analysis for the complete participant sample of 21

classrooms, inclusive of all three classroom types. Correlation data for each classroom type

(socio-emotional/socio-behavioral, pre-academic, and kindergarten) are shown in Appendix

I.

Table 4.3 *Full Sample Correlations*

Full Sample Correlations		Physical Environment	Adult-Child Interactions	Teaching Strategies	Aggregate
Physical Environment	Pearson Correlation	1	.566**	.542*	.723**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.007	.011	.000
	N	21	21	21	21
Adult-Child Interactions	Pearson Correlation	.566**	1	.432	.943**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007		.051	.000
	N	21	21	21	21
Teaching Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.542*	.432	1	.689**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.051		.001

	N	21	21	21	21
Aggregate	Pearson Correlation	.723**	.943**	.689**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.001	
	N	21	21	21	21

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

MANOVA analysis allows a test of all subscales simultaneously, recognizing that each is related to each other. For this study, a series of ANOVAs was a more pragmatic approach to test the comparison of the above research questions. The dependent variables used to test the research questions were the subscales and aggregate scores (physical environment, adult-child interaction, and teaching strategies) of the Classroom Continuity Scale based on classroom type (socio-emotional/socio-behavioral, pre-academic, and kindergarten).

Research question 1: Socio-emotional/socio-behavioral and kindergarten results comparison. The first research question was as follows: To what degree does continuity in adult behaviors exist for children transitioning from socio-emotional and socio-behavioral based childcare to kindergarten? To explore this question the ANOVA tests compared subscales and aggregate scores of socio-emotional/socio-behavioral Childcare Early Learning Programs (CELPs) with those of kindergarten classrooms. See Table 4.4.

The research question contained four subcomponents, by convention each requiring a p value of $>.05$ to demonstrate statistical significance. The two classroom types were first compared on the subscale of physical environment. The results of the ANOVA indicated no

significant differences between the socio-emotional/socio-behavioral CELPs ($M = 12.63$, SD = 1.28) and kindergarten classrooms ($M = 12.21$, $SD = 1.53$), $F(1,13) = .253$, $p = .623$, partial eta square = .019 on the physical environment.

For the second subcomponent the two classrooms were compared on the subscales of adult-child interaction. Results of the ANOVA indicated no significant differences between the socio-emotional/socio-behavioral CELPs ($M = 34.38$, $SD = 10.81$) and kindergarten classrooms ($M = 34.71$, $SD = 4.78$), $F(1,13) = .006$, $p = .940$, partial eta square = .000 on the adult-child interaction subcomponent.

The third subcomponent compared the subscales of teaching strategies. Results of the ANOVA indicated a significantly higher score on teaching strategies in the kindergarten classroom (($M = 17.57$, $SD = 2.57$) than in the socio-emotional/socio-behavioral CELPs ($M = 14.44$, $SD = 2.043$), $F(1,13) = 6.92$, $p = .02$, partial eta square = .347 on teaching strategies.

The final subcomponent of the first research question compared the aggregate scores of both classroom types. Results of the ANOVA indicated no significant differences between the socio-emotional/socio-behavioral CELPs ($M = 61.438$, $SD = 12.602$) and the kindergarten classroom ($M = 64.50$, $SD = 8.256$), $F(1,13) = .299$, $p = .594$, partial eta square = .023 on aggregate scores.

Table 4.4 *Tests of Effects of Socio-Emotional/Socio-Behavioral CELPs with Kindergarten Classrooms*

Tests of Effects of Social-Emotional/Social-Behavioral CELPs with Kindergarten Classrooms						
Social-Emotional/ Social-Behavioral *M*	Social Emotional *SD*	Kindergarten *M*	Kindergarten *SD*	*F*	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Dependent Variable: Physical Environment						
12.63	1.275	12.21	1.868	.253	.623	.019[a]
Dependent Variable: Adult-Child Interaction						
34.38	10.813	34.71	4.786	.006	.940	.000[b]
Dependent Variable: Teaching Strategies						
14.44	2.043	17.57	2.573	6.915	.021	.347[c]
Dependent Variable: Aggregate						
61.438	12.6023	64.500	8.2563	.299	.594	.023[d]
a. R Squared = .019 (Adjusted R Squared = -.056)						
b. R Squared = .000 (Adjusted R Squared = -.076)						
c. R Squared = .347 (Adjusted R Squared = .297)						
d. R Squared = .023 (Adjusted R Squared = -.053)						

Research question 2: Pre-academic and kindergarten results comparison. The

second research question was as follows: To what degree does continuity in adult behaviors

exist for children transitioning from pre-academic based childcare to kindergarten? To

explore this question the tests compared subscales and aggregate scores for pre-academic

Childcare Early Learning Programs (CELPs) with those of kindergarten classrooms. See

Table 4.5.

As in the first research question there were four subcomponents, by convention each

requiring a *p* value of >.05 to illustrate statistical significance. The two classrooms were

first compared on physical environment. For this first subcomponent results of the ANOVA

indicated no significant differences between the pre-academic CELPs (*M* = 11.67, *SD* =

1.538) and kindergarten classrooms ($M = 12.21$, $SD = 1.868$), $F(1,11) = .325$, $p = .580$, partial eta square = .029 on the physical environment.

For the second subcomponent the two classrooms were compared on the dependent variable of adult-child interaction. Results of the ANOVA again indicated no significant differences between the pre-academic CELPs ($M = 31.25$, $SD = 5.007$) and kindergarten classrooms ($M = 34.71$, $SD = 4.786$), $F(1,11) = 1.623$, $p = .229$, partial eta square = .129 on adult-child interaction.

The third subcomponent compared the dependent variable of teaching strategies. Results of the ANOVA indicated no significant differences between the pre-academic CELPs ($M = 16.42$, $SD = 3.826$) and kindergarten classrooms ($M = 17.57$, $SD = 2.573$), $F(1,11) = .420$, $p = .530$, partial eta square = .037 on teaching strategies.

The final subcomponent of the second research question compared the aggregate scores of both groups. Results of the ANOVA again revealed no significant differences between the pre-academic CELPs ($M = 59.333$, $SD = 9.963$) and kindergarten classrooms ($M = 64.50$, $SD = 8.2563$), $F(1,11) = 1.048$, $p = .328$, partial eta square = .087 on aggregate scores.

Table 4.5 *Tests of Effects of Pre-Academic CELPs with Kindergarten Classrooms*

Tests of Effects of Pre-Academic CELPs with Kindergarten Classrooms						
Pre-Academic *M*	Pre-Academic *SD*	Kindergarten *M*	Kindergarten *SD*	*F*	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Dependent Variable: Physical Environment						
11.67	1.538	12.21	1.868	.325	.580	.029[a]
Dependent Variable: Adult-Child Interaction						
31.25	5.007	34.71	4.786	1.623	.229	.129[b]
Dependent Variable: Teaching Strategies						
16.42	3.826	17.57	2.573	.420	.530	.037[c]
Dependent Variable: Aggregate						
59.333	9.963	64.500	8.2563	1.048	.328	.087[d]
a. R Squared = .029 (Adjusted R Squared = -.060)						
b. R Squared = .129 (Adjusted R Squared = .049)						
c. R Squared = .037 (Adjusted R Squared = -.051)						
d. R Squared = .087 (Adjusted R Squared = .004)						

Research question 3: Socio-emotional/socio-behavioral CELPs and pre-academic CELPs results comparison. The third and final research question was as follows: What difference exists in continuous adult behaviors between socio-emotional/socio-behavioral based childcare and pre-academic based childcare? To explore this question the ANOVA tests compared subscales of socio-emotional/socio-behavioral CELPs with those of pre-academic CELPs. See Table 4.6.

As with both previous research questions there were four subcomponents, by convention each requiring a p value of $>.05$ to illustrate statistical significance. The two classroom types were first compared on physical environment. For this first subcomponent the results of the ANOVA indicated no significant differences between the socio-emotional/socio-behavioral CELP ($M = 12.63$, $SD = 1.275$) and pre-academic CELPs

(M = 11.67, SD = 1.538), $F(1,12)$ = 1.628, p = .226, partial eta square = .119 on the physical environment.

For the second subcomponent the two classrooms were compared on the dependent variable of adult-child interaction. Results of the ANOVA revealed no significant differences between the socio-emotional/socio-behavioral CELP (M = 34.38, SD = 10.813) and pre-academic CELPs (M = 31.25, SD = 5.007), $F(1,12)$ = .426, p = .526, partial eta square = .034 on adult-child interaction.

The third subcomponent compared the dependent variables of teaching strategies. The results of the ANOVA indicated no significant differences between the socio-emotional/socio-behavioral CELP (M = 14.44, SD = 2.043) and pre-academic CELPs (M = 16.42, SD = 3.826), $F(1,12)$ = 1.573, p = .234, partial eta square = .116 on teaching strategies.

The final subcomponent of the third research question compared the aggregate scores of both groups. Results of the ANOVA again indicated no significant difference between the socio-emotional/socio-behavioral CELP (M = 61.438, SD = 12.602) and pre-academic CELPs (M = 59.333, SD = 9.9633), $F(1,12)$ = .113, p = .742, partial eta square = .009 on aggregate score comparisons.

Table 4.6 *Tests of Effects of Socio-Emotional/Socio-Behavioral CELPs with Pre-Academic*

CELPs

Tests of Effects of Socio-Emotional/Socio-Behavioral CELPS with Pre-Academic CELPs						
Social-Emotional/ Social-Behavioral *M*	Social Emotional *SD*	Pre-Academic *M*	Pre-Academic *SD*	*F*	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Dependent Variable: Physical Environment						
12.63	1.275	11.67	1.538	1.628	.226	.119[a]
Dependent Variable: Adult-Child Interaction						
34.38	10.813	31.25	5.007	.426	.526	.034[b]
Dependent Variable: Teaching Strategies						
14.44	2.043	16.42	3.826	1.573	.234	.116[c]
Dependent Variable: Aggregate						
61.438	12.6023	59.333	9.9633	.113	.742	.009[d]
a. R Squared = .119 (Adjusted R Squared = .046)						
b. R Squared = .034 (Adjusted R Squared = -.046)						
c. R Squared = .116 (Adjusted R Squared = .042)						
d. R Squared = .009 (Adjusted R Squared = -.073)						

Additional Exploratory Research Questions

After completing the analysis of the original exploratory research questions, the

researcher identified four additional classroom types within the existing data, by which to

compare degrees of continuity. The following questions arose:

- RQ_4: To what degree does continuity in adult behaviors exist for children

    transitioning from religious or culturally specific based childcare to kindergarten,

    - in the subscore of physical environment,

    - in the subscore of adult-child interaction,

    - in the subscore of teaching strategies, and

- RQ_5: To what degree does continuity in adult behaviors exist for children transitioning from childcare with no religious or culturally specific affiliation, to kindergarten,
  - in the subscore of physical environment,
  - in the subscore of adult-child interaction,
  - in the subscore of teaching strategies, and
  - as an aggregate behavior score?
- RQ_6: What difference exists in continuous adult behaviors between religious or culturally specific based childcare and childcare with no religious or culturally specific affiliation,
  - in the subscore of physical environment,
  - in the subscore of adult-child interaction,
  - in the subscore of teaching strategies, and
  - as an aggregate behavior score?
- RQ_7: To what degree does continuity in adult behaviors exist for children transitioning from single-age childcare classrooms to kindergarten,
  - in the subscore of physical environment,
  - in the subscore of adult-child interaction,
  - in the subscore of teaching strategies, and
  - as an aggregate behavior score?

- RQ_8: To what degree does continuity in adult behaviors exist for children transitioning from mixed-age childcare classrooms to kindergarten,

  - in the subscore of physical environment,

  - in the subscore of adult-child interaction,

  - in the subscore of teaching strategies, and

  - as an aggregate behavior score?

- RQ_9: What difference exists in continuous adult behaviors between single-age childcare classrooms and mixed-age childcare classrooms, in the subscore of physical environment,

  - in the subscore of physical environment,

  - in the subscore of adult-child interaction,

  - in the subscore of teaching strategies, and

  - as an aggregate behavior score?

As with the three original exploratory research questions, SPSS 24 was used to identically analyze data on the additional six exploratory questions. A series of ANOVAs was again used to test the comparisons of the additional research questions. The dependent variables used to test the additional research questions remained consistent with those of the original exploratory questions, and included the subscale and aggregate scores (physical environment, adult-child interaction, and teaching strategies) based on the classroom type (religious or culturally specific, no religious or culturally specific affiliation, single age classrooms, and mixed-age classrooms).

In addition to identification as a socio-emotional/socio-behavioral or pre-academic classroom, Childcare Early Learning Programs (CELPs) also self-identified as having a religious or culturally specific focus or no particular affiliation (see Classroom Continuity Scale cover page in Appendix H). Of the CELPs indicating a religious or culturally specific program, most identified a Christian religious affiliation.

Within the same data set, some childcare participants taught in single-age classrooms. Single-age classrooms were those that required children to be at least four years old before entering and occurred the academic year prior to kindergarten. Other teachers taught in mixed-age classrooms where children were between the ages of three and five years old, rather than between four and five years old. Tables 4.7 and 4.8 illustrate the descriptive statistics for exploratory research questions 4-6, and 7-9, respectively.

Table 4.7 *Descriptive Statistics for Research Questions 4-6.*

	Religious/Culturally Specific		No Religious/Cultural Affiliation		Kindergarten	
	N = 8		N = 6		N = 7	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Physical Environment	12.31	1.689	12.08	1.114	12.21	1.868
Adult-Child	32.50	6.782	33.75	11.401	34.71	4.786
Teaching Strategies	15.56	3.017	14.92	3.185	17.57	2.573
Aggregate	60.375	9.5385	60.750	14.0419	64.500	8.2563

Table 4.8 *Descriptive Statistics for Research Questions 7-9*

	Single-Age		Mixed-Age		Kindergarten	
	N = 8		N = 6		N = 7	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Physical Environment	12.38	1.157	12.00	1.817	12.21	1.868
Adult-Child	32.88	18.655	33.25	9.512	34.71	4.786
Teaching Strategies	15.56	3.343	14.92	2.691	17.57	2.573
Aggregate	60.813	11.6648	60.167	11.5701	64.500	8.2563

Correlational data for each additional classroom type (religious or culturally specific, no religious or culturally specific affiliation, single-age classroom, and mixed-age classroom) can be found in appendix I. Summary tables for the tests of effects comparing the four additional classroom types are shown in appendix K. No statistical significance was identified in the comparisons of the additional classroom types.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications, Recommendations

Overview of the Study

This exploratory study sought to uncover continuous teacher behaviors across Childcare Early Learning Programs (CELPs) and kindergarten settings, and examine the degree of continuity of these behaviors. All participants in the study were from within the geographic boundaries used by the local school district, and all kindergarten classroom participants were within the school district.

Observations of 21 classrooms (14 CELPs and seven kindergarten) were conducted using the CCS, which focused on the areas of physical environment, adult-child interactions, and teaching strategies. Observations in CELPs occurred during the spring prior to entering kindergarten. Kindergarten classroom observations occurred within the first four weeks of the start of kindergarten.

The data were analyzed with relationship to the research questions. Upon completing the original analysis, the researcher explored additional questions based on the data that were collected. The researcher added six exploratory research questions then conducted further analysis. Descriptive statistics and results for all research questions are outlined in Chapter 4, along with tests of effects summaries for the three original research questions. Correlational data for all research questions are shown in Appendix I. Summary tables for the tests of effects for research questions four through nine are shown in appendix K.

Research Questions

The following research questions were explored in this study:

- RQ_1: To what degree does continuity in adult behaviors exist for children transitioning from socio-emotional and socio-behavioral based childcare to kindergarten,

  - in the subscore of physical environment,

  - in the subscore of adult-child interaction,

  - in the subscore of teaching strategies, and

  - as an aggregate behavior score?

- RQ_2: To what degree does continuity in adult behaviors exist for children transitioning from pre-academic based childcare to kindergarten?

  - in the subscore of physical environment,

  - in the subscore of adult-child interaction,

  - in the subscore of teaching strategies, and

  - as an aggregate behavior score?

- RQ_3: What difference exists in continuous adult behaviors between socio-emotional/socio-behavioral based childcare and pre-academic based childcare?

  - in the subscore of physical environment,

  - in the subscore of adult-child interaction,

  - in the subscore of teaching strategies, and

  - as an aggregate behavior score?

- RQ$_4$: To what degree does continuity in adult behaviors exist for children transitioning from religious or culturally specific based childcare to kindergarten,
  - in the subscore of physical environment,
  - in the subscore of adult-child interaction,
  - in the subscore of teaching strategies, and
  - as an aggregate behavior score?
- RQ$_5$: To what degree does continuity in adult behaviors exist for children transitioning from childcare with no religious or culturally specific affiliation, to kindergarten,
  - in the subscore of physical environment,
  - in the subscore of adult-child interaction,
  - in the subscore of teaching strategies, and
  - as an aggregate behavior score?
- RQ$_6$: What difference exists in continuous adult behaviors between religious or culturally specific based childcare and childcare with no religious or culturally specific affiliation,
  - in the subscore of physical environment,
  - in the subscore of adult-child interaction,
  - in the subscore of teaching strategies, and
  - as an aggregate behavior score?
- RQ$_7$: To what degree does continuity in adult behaviors exist for children transitioning from single-age childcare classrooms to kindergarten,

- in the subscore of physical environment,

- in the subscore of adult-child interaction,

- in the subscore of teaching strategies, and

- as an aggregate behavior score?

- RQ_8: To what degree does continuity in adult behaviors exist for children transitioning from mixed-age childcare classrooms to kindergarten,

   - in the subscore of physical environment,

   - in the subscore of adult-child interaction,

   - in the subscore of teaching strategies, and

   - as an aggregate behavior score?

- RQ_9: What difference exists in continuous adult behaviors between single-age childcare classrooms and mixed-age childcare classrooms, in the subscore of physical environment,

   - in the subscore of physical environment,

   - in the subscore of adult-child interaction,

   - in the subscore of teaching strategies, and

   - as an aggregate behavior score?

Conclusions

The first research question and its four subcomponents were posed to explore teacher behaviors in socio-emotional/socio-behavioral CELPs that are continuous, to any degree, in kindergarten classrooms. Individual degrees of continuity were based on raw classroom scores, while degrees of continuity based on classroom type were averaged. For

subcomponents one, two, and four (physical environment, adult-child interaction, and aggregate scores), the statistical results indicated there was not enough evidence to suggest significant degrees of continuity.

For subcomponent three of research question one, teaching strategies, the kindergarten classroom yielded exceptionally higher scores than the socio-emotional/socio-behavioral CELPs, with a *p* value of .02, which indicated a noteworthy contrast in the teaching strategies practiced by teachers in socio-emotional/socio-behavioral CELPs and kindergarten classrooms. The specific areas of contrast are vocabulary building, responsive strategies, use of print, storybook/storytelling activities, and writing activities, according to the teaching strategies section of the CCS. Childcare Early Learning Program (CELP) teachers in socio-emotional/socio-behavioral classrooms scored significantly lower, indicating great dissimilarity in teaching strategies that kindergarten teachers were employing with greater intensity and higher frequency.

The second through ninth research questions, and their four subcomponents, were posed to explore teacher behaviors in CELP types (pre-academic, religious or culturally specific, no religious or cultural affiliation, single-age, and mixed-age classrooms) that are continuous, to any extent, in kindergarten classrooms. Research questions three, six, and nine explored teacher behaviors in CELPs as compared to each other. For research questions two through nine, there was not enough evidence to suggest significant degrees of continuity in teaching behaviors.

The volume of data indicating little evidence to suggest significant degrees of continuity between CELP and kindergarten classrooms, suggested that the data was

inconclusive and calls into question the study's sample size of 21 classrooms. For example, in research question three, comparing socio-emotional/socio-behavioral and pre-academic CELPs, there was a correlation of .389 between adult-child interaction and teaching strategies (see Appendix I, Socio-Emotional/Socio-Behavioral CELP Correlations). This is a sizable correlation, however it is statistically insignificant due to sample size. The relatively small sample size of the study required the use of ANOVAs for pragmatic reasons, rather than MANOVA analysis. The sample size was limited because the researcher conducted observation alone, without assistance.

The descriptive statistics of several subcomponents displayed a near one point difference between subjects in means (*M*) and standard deviations (*SD*). For example, in research question one, subcomponents one and two, related to physical environment and adult-child interaction, respectively, illustrated a nearly one point or more difference in *SD* (see Table 4.4). After running ANOVAs, the point difference was considered insignificant. This was true of ANOVAs for all research questions and their subcomponents, with the exception of research question one, subcomponent three, teaching strategies (see Table 4.4). This could be because there were no actual significant differences or because the sample sizes were not quite large enough to display the differences. Because this cannot be confirmed with certainty, the results of the exploratory study are inconclusive in terms of statistical significance.

Despite the relatively low sample size, the partial eta squared values reveal intriguing information regarding the influence of the dependent variables, specifically teaching strategies, on the type of classroom. The partial eta squared value is a measure of effect size

that is not impacted by the sample size. According to Cohen (1969), acceptable cut-offs of partial eta square values are .0099, .0588, and .1379 for small, medium, and large effects.

After review of each research question, the researcher determined the partial eta squared value of questions one, two, six, and nine, and their subcomponents, revealed the dependent variable had minimal influence on the types of classroom. In contrast, research questions three, four, five, seven, and eight uncovered a strong relationship between the physical environment or teaching strategy dependent variables, and the type of classroom (see Table 5.1).

For research question three, the partial eta squared value was .119 for physical environment, indicating that 12% of the physical environment score was explained by the socio-emotional/socio-behavioral and pre-academic classrooms themselves. Likewise, a partial eta squared value of .116 for teaching strategies suggested that nearly 12% of the teaching strategies score for both types of CELPs was due to the type of classrooms being compared.

The subcomponents of teaching strategies continued to expose and explain the measure of effects in research question four, five, seven, and eight. The partial eta squared value of research question four was .127, suggesting that 13% of the scoring difference between religious or culturally specific CELPs and kindergarten classrooms were related to the type of classroom itself. At a surmounting 20%, the partial eta squared value of research question five asserted that 20% of the difference in teaching strategies between CELPs with no religious or cultural affiliation and kindergarten classrooms, was related to the classroom type. Research question seven has a partial eta squared value of .113, indicating 11% of the

difference in scoring was related to the variation in single-age CELPs and kindergarten

classrooms. Lastly, 23% of the teaching strategy score in research question eight is due to

the difference in mixed-age CELPs and kindergarten classrooms.

Table 5.1 *Context of Partial Eta Squared Value*

Research Question	Comparison Classroom Types	Dependent Variable	Partial Eta Squared Value	Percentage of Influence
3	Socio-Emotional/ Socio-Behavioral Pre-academic	Physical Environment	.119	12%
3	Socio-Emotional/ Socio-Behavioral Pre-academic	Teaching Strategies	.116	12%
4	Religious/Culturally Specific Kindergarten	Teaching Strategies	.127	13%
5	No Religious/ Culturally Specific Affiliation Kindergarten	Teaching Strategies	.201	20%
7	Single-Age Kindergarten	Teaching Strategies	.113	11%

The partial eta squared values in teaching strategies suggested the instructional

aspects of children's continuous experiences had the greatest variance in this study. This was

a logical influence considering the varied professional training offered in Childcare Early

Learning Programs and the professional training and education required of public school

teachers. The literature review, Chapter 2, was inclusive of child, parent, and teacher

perspectives on the immediate shift in intensity related to teaching practices and expectations upon kindergarten entry.

There were potential internal challenges with the study that the reader may want to consider. The first potential challenge, previously mentioned, was sample size as it produced a limited data set and therefore rendered an inconclusive analysis. Additional observations may allow for a more conclusive analysis. A second possible concern was participant sampling. Although random sampling as a method to identify participants was the least influenced by researcher bias, this researcher targeted a specific geographic area to conduct the study in order to generalize findings for, and give context to, a specific geographic location, within the context of additional early childhood well-being indicators (Patten, 2014). The researcher's intent was to observe in a variety of CELP and kindergarten classrooms across the district attendance areas, each having a varied demographic based on their location within the city, and within the district boundaries.

The reader will also want to consider a possible internal challenge of time. Due to the study being conducted by a single researcher, rather than multiple researchers simultaneously, only one classroom could be observed each day. As a result, participants observed later in their respective observation window (four weeks for CELPs and two weeks for kindergarten classrooms) may have had slightly more time to refine the components being observed. An additional potential internal issue includes teachers' self-identification into three of six finite classroom types. The reader should consider that some CELP teachers were able to determine their classroom types swiftly and with ease, while others grappled

with selecting one group identification over another, indicating their CELP was not exclusively any one classroom type.

The final potential internal challenge of the study involved capturing the nuances in each teaching environment. Childcare Early Learning Programs of different types, as well as kindergarten teachers located in elementary settings, demonstrated a range of nuances in the physical and emotional environment, types, content, and frequency of interaction, and methods of instruction (play, embedded, explicit, etc.). The CCS, a combination of two tools, one used in CELP settings while the other in academic settings, attempted to encapsulate many of these nuances that made a difference in scoring, although the tool could only observe a finite number of these nuances for the study.

Implications

The conclusions have practical implications for Childcare Early Learning Programs (CELPs), classroom teachers, and district decision makers. First, the school district studied provides a pre-kindergarten program the year prior to kindergarten entry. The program is free, often half day, and can serve approximately 1,400 children each year. With the city population inclusive of approximately 5,000 five-year-olds, this means that approximately 3,600 five-year-olds could potentially enter the district kindergarten from a route other than pre-kindergarten (Children's Defense Fund Minnesota, 2016). Childcare Early Learning Programs across the city and within the school district boundaries, have the potential to serve many of these children, influencing their early experiences prior to kindergarten entry. The need to address continuous teacher behaviors, rather than exclusively react to child maladjustment, becomes critical in view of these numbers.

To advance efforts towards continuous experiences for children, their families, and teachers, it is imperative to increase awareness of the nuances in each setting. Understanding some of these nuances, including the physical and emotional environment, the culture of adult professionalism and child learning, teacher autonomy and accountability, hierarchy of management or administration, and beliefs about children's potential, can influence the programs, opportunities, and systems making early decisions for young children. Awareness of the nuances can assist in the development of collaborative efforts between CELPs and the elementary schools housing kindergarten classrooms.

An increase in collaborative efforts has mutual benefits for programs and people. Through collaborative efforts, early learning professionals have the opportunity to share language, contexts, successes, and strategies with the intent of impacting children's earliest experiences and strengthening continuous practices. Childcare Early Learning Programs and kindergarten collaboration efforts have the potential to develop the profession by bringing together communities of early learning professionals across the public and private divide to address and plan for the early learning experience.

CELPs and school administrators are urged to consider one result of increased collaboration: shared professional development opportunities. With nuances of each environment in mind, shared professional development recognizes and affirms current beliefs and practices in each setting, while acknowledging the need for some degree of shared experience and understanding. For example, based on the study's data, socio-emotional/socio-behavioral CELPs scored significantly lower than kindergarten

classrooms in the area of teaching strategies. Opportunities for shared professional learning

could address this for both types of classrooms.

Any efforts towards bridging the city's CELPs and school district kindergartens, must

be mindful that these early environments are chosen by families based on both overt and

nuanced differences. The goal of collaborative experiences would be to develop shared

knowledge. Intentional efforts must be made to maintain program identity for the purpose of

parent choice, rather than assimilation of early programing so each becomes

indistinguishable.

Recommendations for Practitioners

Through observation this study shows a need for CELP teachers to become more

aware of kindergarten entry expectations and the actual lived experiences of children during

the first six weeks of departing CELPs and entering kindergarten. The data collected in this

study, although inconclusive due to sample size, implied nuanced differences impacting

children's early experiences that can be identified through regular visits between settings. To

address this, the researcher recommends CELP directors, managers, and teachers, converse

with school district kindergarten teachers regarding kindergarten expectations during the

winter prior to kindergarten entry. These conversations can influence and encourage

programming efforts for children, as well as identify targeted teaching opportunities related

to both socio-emotional/socio-behavioral, and pre-academic skills. It is the researcher's

recommendation that CELP teachers observe their former students during the initial six to

eight weeks of kindergarten. With a goal to observe both socio-emotional/socio-behavioral

and academic adjustment, information from the observation should be used to reflect on the

learning experiences provided by the CELP the prior year, as well as inform the current

practice in preparation for the children entering kindergarten the following fall.

The analysis of the study's data informs recommendations for kindergarten teachers

as well. The researcher recommends kindergarten teachers schedule time off-site to observe

CELPs within their immediate geographic area. Knowledge of children's early learning

experiences can aid teachers in selecting continuous behaviors to employ, decreasing anxiety

and maladjustment for children, during the initial weeks of kindergarten. Being aware of the

overt and subtle nuances in CELPs allows kindergarten teachers to plan more appropriately

to receive students, supporting the ready school perspective (Ebbeck et al., 2013). This

knowledge prompts teachers towards both customization and differentiation as children

gradually adjust to their new environment.

The study's analysis gives evidence demonstrating stronger teaching strategies in

kindergarten classrooms in comparison to many CELPs. Maladjustment, however, is

inclusive of both pre-academic and socio-emotional/socio-behavioral experiences. An

additional recommendation to kindergarten teachers, and those who work with them, is to be

aware of the social and cultural contexts within their geographical area that influence the

early experiences children may have been exposed to prior to kindergarten entry. Because

children attending the observed CELPs are transported daily by their caregivers, there are

opportunities for teachers and parents to communicate regularly. It is often in these

communications that teachers develop contexts for each child's life experience. In contrast,

children attending elementary schools are often transported by bus, eliminating the frequency

in which kindergarten teachers have in-person contact with parents. Thus, an urgency exists

to aid kindergarten classroom teachers in planning for and attending to the whole child, rather than exclusively to the child's role as a student.

A final recommendation is for early learning decision makers and suggests initiating facilitation of shared conversations among CELPs, Family Home providers, Family, Friend, and Neighbor providers (FFN), kindergarten teachers, the local childcare policy advocacy group, and school district representatives. The intent would be for decision makers to become more intimately familiar with the experiences of children, families, teachers, and providers during the early years. Developing authentic partnerships between these parties is essential for both preparing children for kindergarten, and being prepared to receive children as they are.

Recommendations for Academics

Due to the inconclusive data provided by the study, there is a need to further explore continuity in teacher behaviors on a larger scale. The partial eta squared values related to research questions three, four, five, seven, and eight, suggested a need to uncover the contributions classroom type makes on the dependent variables. Additionally, the education field could benefit from exploring with precision, and articulation of, the differences in behavior between any two classroom types.

Primary consideration should be given to observation as a method of research. The field remains void of continuity studies that report actual teacher practice, rather than teacher perception of their practice or teacher knowledge of the significance of continuous experience during kindergarten transition; data in both of these areas are often collected through surveys.

Concluding Comments

      The study of 21 classrooms revealed inconclusive results regarding continuity between each comparison, however the study identified statistical significance in the subcomponent of teaching strategies when comparing socio-emotional/socio-behavioral CELPs with kindergarten. Re-sorting the results within the same data set into additional classroom types provided further opportunities to compare continuity based on other teacher and CELP identified characteristics. The study revealed inconclusive results for the comparison of all additional classroom types. A review of the partial eta squared values indicated an elevated relationship between classroom type and the dependent variable of teaching strategies in four comparisons, as well as between classroom type and physical environment in one comparison. The results of this study encourage further research, using larger sample sizes, to examine actual teacher practices for additional insight into the relationship between classroom type and teacher practices in early learning settings.

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Appendices

Appendix A: CHELLO Section Descriptions

Appendix B: CLASS Pre-K Observation Sheet

Appendix C: CHELLO Subscale Descriptions

CHELLO Section	Description of Observable Measure
Literacy Environment Checklist	Observes the designated Book Area, Book Use, Accessible Writing Materials, Accessible Toys, and Available Technology (Brookes Publishing, 2007).
Organization of the Classroom	Observes: Status and organization of furnishings, as well as observations of traffic flow, activities, cognitively stimulating interest areas, movement and quiet areas, and materials available to children (Brookes Publishing, 2007).
Materials in the Environment	Observes: Organization and content of materials and room displays, and is inclusive of toys and materials that support learning and creating explorations (Brookes Publishing, 2007).
Daily Schedule	Observes: Written schedule, applied schedule, lesson plans, or observations of daily routines experienced by children (Brookes Publishing, 2007).
Management Strategies	Observes: Interactions between provider and children, and children and peers, concerning rules and routines and the nature of conflict resolution (Brookes Publishing, 2007).
Vocabulary Building	Observes: Interaction between provider and children during learning activities that includes introduction of new words and concepts, engagement in representational thinking, and encouragement of language in play (Brookes Publishing, 2007).
Responsive Strategies	Observes: Responses to children's queries or requests in a way that supports children's learning and is

	inclusive of task specific praise (Brookes Publishing, 2007).
Use of Print	Observes: Presence of print and its use in the environment and is inclusive of environmental print, evidence of functional writing, and literacy props (Brookes Publishing, 2007).
Storybook/Storytelling Activities	Observes: Storybook reading or storytelling events and is inclusive of interactive reading, multiple reading opportunities, reading in various groupings, and coordination of reading experiences with ongoing classroom activities (Brookes Publishing, 2007).
Writing Activities	Observes: Writing materials and opportunities for children and teachers to be engaged in writing, and is inclusive of modeling, demonstrating, and assisting children with communicating through writing (Brookes Publishing, 2007).

Appendix D: CLASS Pre-K Dimension Descriptions

CLASS Dimension	Description of Observable Measure
Positive Environment	Observes: The emotional connection between the teacher and students and among students and the warmth, respect, and enjoyment communicated by verbal and nonverbal interactions. This is inclusive of indicators relating to relationships, positive affect, positive communication, and respect (Pianta, La Paro, Hamre, 2008).
Teacher Sensitivity	Observes: The teacher's awareness of and responsivity to students' academic and emotional needs; high levels of sensitivity facilitate students' ability to actively explore and learn because the teacher consistently provides comfort, reassurance, and encouragement. This is inclusive of indicators relating to awareness, responsiveness, addressing problems, and student comfort (Pianta, La Paro, Hamre, 2008).
Regard for Student Perspectives	Observes: The degree to which the teacher's interactions with students and classroom activities place an emphasis on students' interests, motivations, and points of view and encourage student responsibility and autonomy. This is inclusive of indicators relating to flexibility and student focus, support autonomy and leadership, student expression, and restriction of movement (Pianta, La Paro, Hamre, 2008).
Instructional Learning Formats	Observes: The ways in which the teacher maximizes students' interest, engagement, and ability to learn from lessons and activities. This is inclusive of indicators relating to effective facilitation, variety of modalities and materials, student interest, and clarity of

	learning objectives (Pianta, La Paro, Hamre, 2008).
Concept Development	Observes: The teacher's use of instructional discussions and activities to promote students' higher-order thinking skills and cognition and the teacher's focus on understanding rather than on rote instruction. This is inclusive of indicators relating to analysis and reasoning, creating, integration, and connections to the real world (Pianta, La Paro, Hamre, 2008).
Quality of Feedback	Observes: The degree to which the teacher provides feedback that expands learning and understanding and encourages continued participation. This is inclusive of indicators relating to scaffolding, feedback loops, prompting thought processes, providing information, and encouragement and affirmation (Pianta, La Paro, Hamre, 2008).
Language Modeling	Observes: The quality and amount of the teacher's use of language-stimulation and language-facilitation techniques. This is inclusive of indicators relating to frequent conversations, open-ended questions, repetition and extension, self- and parallel talk, and advanced language (Pianta, La Paro, Hamre, 2008).

Research Participation Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study of continuous adult behaviors during kindergarten transitions. I hope to learn how teachers of four year-olds, as well as kindergarten teachers, organically support children during their kindergarten transition through continued behaviors across settings. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because your childcare early learning program has an academic or socio-emotional focus and also resides in the geographic area being studied. This research is being conducted as part of the requirements for Doctoral studies at Bethel University.

As a director or manager, if you decide to participate I will provide a research consent for both you and your teacher of four year-olds. I will then observe your four year-old classroom on one occasion for a duration not to exceed 3 hours, during the weeks of April 3rd through 27th.

To ensure confidentiality any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you or your center will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable and only aggregate data will be presented.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future potential relations with ███████████████████████████████████ in any way, as the researcher does not represent ████████████████. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without affecting such relationships.

This research project has been reviewed and approved in accordance with Bethel's Levels of Review for Research with Humans. If you have any questions about the research and/or research participant's rights, or wish to report a research related injury, please call Nikole Logan at ████████.

You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

_____

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

_____   _____
Signature   Date

Research Participation Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study of continuous adult behaviors during kindergarten transitions. I hope to learn how teachers of four year-olds, as well as kindergarten teachers, support children during their kindergarten transition through continued behaviors across settings. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because your childcare early learning program has an academic or socio-emotional focus and also resides in the geographic area being studied. This research is being conducted as part of the requirements for Doctoral studies at Bethel University.

As a early learning teacher of four year-olds, I will then observe your four year-old classroom on one occasion for a duration not to exceed 3 hours, during the weeks of April 10th through May 4th.

To ensure confidentiality any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you or your center will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable and only aggregate data will be presented.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future potential relations with Bethel University in any way. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without affecting such relationships.

This research is being conducted as part of the requirements for Doctoral studies at Bethel University. The research project has been reviewed and approved in accordance with Bethel's Levels of Review for Research with Humans. If you have any questions about the research and/or research participant's rights, or wish to report a research related injury, please call Nikole Logan at ███████████, primary researcher, or Dr. Erica Hering, research adviser, at ███████████.

You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

_____

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

_____   _____
Signature   Date

Research Participation Consent Form

My name is Nikole Logan and I am a former ████████████████ classroom teacher, having taught a range of grades including kindergarten. I am currently the ████████ ██.

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for my doctoral degree I am conducting a research study, titled Continuity in Kindergarten Transitions, focusing on continuity of teacher practices during the kindergarten transition. I will specifically study continuity of childcare programs and ██████ Kindergartens by conducting classroom observations of teacher practices. These observations will seek to identify similarities and differences in classroom environment, adult-child interactions, and teaching practices during the transition process.

As the school principal, if you decide to allow the study to be conducted at your site, I will observe one kindergarten classroom, on a single occasion, for a duration not to exceed 3 hours during the weeks of September 25th through October 6th provided there is a kindergarten teacher willing to participate in the study.

Data from the observation will be used to compare teaching behaviors as children exit childcare to teaching behaviors as children enter ██████ Kindergarten. Once the analysis is complete I will share the combined scores of all observed kindergarten teachers, and will not share the individual data regarding kindergarten staff observed at your site due to confidentiality.

To ensure confidentiality any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with your school will remain confidential. In any written reports or publications, neither your school nor staff will be identified or identifiable and only aggregate data will be presented.

This research is being conducted as part of the requirements for Doctoral studies at Bethel University. This research project has been reviewed and approved in accordance with Bethel's Levels of Review for Research with Humans. If you have any questions about the research and/or research participant's rights, or wish to report a research related injury, please call Nikole Logan at ████████████, primary researcher, or Dr. Erica Hering, research adviser, at ████████████.

You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow an observation to occur at your site provided a kindergarten teacher is willing to participate in this study. You may

withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form if you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

_____   _____
Printed Name   School site

_____   _____
Signature   Date

Research Participation Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study of continuous adult behaviors during kindergarten transitions. I hope to learn how teachers of four year-olds, as well as kindergarten teachers, organically support children during their kindergarten transition through continued behaviors across settings. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because your school resides in the geographic area being studied and does not use an immersion, bilingual, or Montessori approach to learning. This research is being conducted as part of the requirements for Doctoral studies at Bethel University.

As a kindergarten teacher, if you decide to participate I will observe your kindergarten classroom on one occasion for a duration not to exceed 3 hours during the weeks of September 25th through October 6th.

To ensure confidentiality any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you or school, will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable and only aggregate data will be presented.

This research project has been reviewed and approved in accordance with Bethel's Levels of Review for Research with Humans. If you have any questions about the research and/or research participant's rights, or wish to report a research related injury, please call Nikole Logan at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮.

You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

_____

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

_____   _____
Signature   Date

Appendix I: Correlations

Socio-Emotional/Socio-Behavioral CELP Correlations					
		Physical Environment	Adult-Child Interactions	Teaching Strategies	Aggregate
Physical Environment	Pearson Correlation	1	.535	.799[*]	.690
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.172	.017	.058
	N	8	8	8	8
Adult-Child Interactions	Pearson Correlation	.535	1	.389	.975[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.172		.341	.000
	N	8	8	8	8
Teaching Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.799[*]	.389	1	.577
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.017	.341		.134
	N	8	8	8	8
Aggregate	Pearson Correlation	.690	.975[**]	.577	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.058	.000	.134	
	N	8	8	8	8

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Pre-Academic CELP Correlations		Physical Environment	Adult-Child Interactions	Teaching Strategies	Aggregate
Physical Environment	Pearson Correlation	1	.980**	.861*	.978**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.028	.001
	N	6	6	6	6
Adult-Child Interactions	Pearson Correlation	.980**	1	.834*	.974**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		.039	.001
	N	6	6	6	6
Teaching Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.861*	.834*	1	.936**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.028	.039		.006
	N	6	6	6	6
Aggregate	Pearson Correlation	.978**	.974**	.936**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.001	.006	
	N	6	6	6	6

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Kindergarten Classroom Correlations		Physical Environment	Adult-Child Interactions	Teaching Strategies	Aggregate
Physical Environment	Pearson Correlation	1	.581	.577	.743
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.171	.175	.056
	N	7	7	7	7
Adult-Child Interactions	Pearson Correlation	.581	1	.780*	.954**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.171		.038	.001
	N	7	7	7	7
Teaching Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.577	.780*	1	.894**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.175	.038		.007
	N	7	7	7	7
Aggregate	Pearson Correlation	.743	.954**	.894**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.056	.001	.007	
	N	7	7	7	7

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Religious/Culturally Specific CELP Correlations					
		Physical Environment	Adult-Child Interactions	Teaching Strategies	Aggregate
Physical Environment	Pearson Correlation	1	.499	.760[*]	.772[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.208	.029	.025
	N	8	8	8	8
Adult-Child Interactions	Pearson Correlation	.499	1	.339	.906[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.208		.412	.002
	N	8	8	8	8
Teaching Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.760[*]	.339	1	.692
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.029	.412		.057
	N	8	8	8	8
Aggregate	Pearson Correlation	.772	.906[**]	.692	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.025	.002	.157	
	N	8	8	8	8

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

No Religious/Culturally Specific Affiliation CELP Correlations					
		Physical Environment	Adult-Child Interactions	Teaching Strategies	Aggregate
Physical Environment	Pearson Correlation	1	.954**	.326	.928**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003	.528	.008
	N	6	6	6	6
Adult-Child Interactions	Pearson Correlation	.954**	1	.403	.979**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003		.428	.001
	N	6	6	6	6
Teaching Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.326*	.403	1	.580
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.528	.428		.228
	N	6	6	6	6
Aggregate	Pearson Correlation	.928**	.979**	.580	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	.001	.228	
	N	6	6	6	6

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Single-Age CELP Correlations		Physical Environment	Adult-Child Interactions	Teaching Strategies	Aggregate
Physical Environment	Pearson Correlation	1	.890**	.482	.898**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003	.226	.002
	N	8	8	8	8
Adult-Child Interactions	Pearson Correlation	.890**	1	.468	.964**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003		.242	.000
	N	8	8	8	8
Teaching Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.482*	.468	1	.682
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.226	.242		.063
	N	8	8	8	8
Aggregate	Pearson Correlation	.898**	.964**	.682	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.000	.063	
	N	8	8	8	8

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Mixed-Age CELP Correlations		Physical Environment	Adult-Child Interactions	Teaching Strategies	Aggregate
Physical Environment	Pearson Correlation	1	.437	.798	.702
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.386	.057	.120
	N	6	6	6	6
Adult-Child Interactions	Pearson Correlation	.437	1	.194	.936**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.386		.712	.006
	N	6	6	6	6
Teaching Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.798	.194	1	.518
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.057	.712		.293
	N	6	6	6	6
Aggregate	Pearson Correlation	.702	.936**	.518	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.120	.006	.293	
	N	6	6	6	6

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Appendix J: Classroom Continuity Scale (CCS) Cover Page

Appendix K: Tests of Effects on Additional Exploratory Research Questions

Tests of Effects of Religious or Culturally Specific CELPs with Kindergarten Classrooms						
Religious or Culturally Specific M	Religious or Culturally Specific SD	Kindergarten M	Kindergarten SD	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Dependent Variable: Physical Environment						
12.31	1.689	12.21	1.868	.011	.916	.001[a]
Dependent Variable: Adult-Child Interaction						
32.50	6.782	34.71	4.786	.518	.484	.038[b]
Dependent Variable: Teaching Strategies						
15.56	3.017	17.57	2.573	1.894	.192	.127[c]
Dependent Variable: Aggregate						
60.375	9.5385	64.500	8.2563	.790	.390	.057[d]
a. R Squared = .001 (Adjusted R Squared = .076)						
b. R Squared = .038 (Adjusted R Squared = -.036)						
c. R Squared = .127 (Adjusted R Squared = .060)						
d. R Squared = .057 (Adjusted R Squared = -.015)						

Tests of Effects of No Religious or Culturally Specific Affiliation CELPs with Kindergarten Classrooms						
No Religious or Culturally Specific M	No Religious or Culturally Specific SD	Kindergarten M	Kindergarten SD	*F*	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Dependent Variable: Physical Environment						
12.08	1.114	12.21	1.868	.022	.884	.002[a]
Dependent Variable: Adult-Child Interaction						
33.75	11.401	34.71	4.786	.042	.841	.004[b]
Dependent Variable: Teaching Strategies						
14.92	3.185	17.57	2.573	2.770	.124	.201[c]
Dependent Variable: Aggregate						
60.750	14.0419	64.500	8.2563	.358	.562	.032[d]
a. R Squared = .002 (Adjusted R Squared = .089)						
b. R Squared = .004 (Adjusted R Squared = -.087)						
c. R Squared = .201 (Adjusted R Squared = .129)						
d. R Squared = .032 (Adjusted R Squared = -.056)						

Tests of Effects of Religious or Culturally Specific CELPs with No Religious or Culturally Specific Affiliation CELPs						
Religious or Culturally Specific M	Religious or Culturally Specific SD	No Religious or Culturally Specific M	No Religious or Culturally Specific SD	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Dependent Variable: Physical Environment						
12.31	1.689	12.08	1.114	.083	.779	.007[a]
Dependent Variable: Adult-Child Interaction						
32.50	6.782	33.75	11.401	.066	.801	.005[b]
Dependent Variable: Teaching Strategies						
15.56	3.017	14.92	3.185	.150	.705	.012[c]
Dependent Variable: Aggregate						
60.375	9.5385	60.750	14.0419	.004	.953	.000[d]
a. R Squared = .007 (Adjusted R Squared = .076)						
b. R Squared = .005 (Adjusted R Squared = -.077)						
c. R Squared = .012 (Adjusted R Squared = .070)						
d. R Squared = .000 (Adjusted R Squared = -.083)						

Tests of Effects of Single-Age CELPs with Kindergarten Classrooms						
Single Age M	Single Age SD	Kindergarten M	Kindergarten SD	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Dependent Variable: Physical Environment						
12.38	1.157	12.21	1.868	.041	.842	.003[a]
Dependent Variable: Adult-Child Interaction						
32.88	8.655	34.71	4.786	.248	.627	.019[b]
Dependent Variable: Teaching Strategies						
15.56	3.343	17.57	2.573	1.661	.220	.113[c]
Dependent Variable: Aggregate						
60.813	11.66489	64.500	8.2563	.485	.499	.036[d]
a. R Squared = .003 (Adjusted R Squared = -.074)						
b. R Squared = .019 (Adjusted R Squared = -.057)						
c. R Squared = .113 (Adjusted R Squared = .045)						
d. R Squared = .036 (Adjusted R Squared = -.038)						

Tests of Effects of Mixed-Age CELPs with Kindergarten Classrooms						
Mixed-Age M	Mixed-Age SD	Kindergarten M	Kindergarten SD	*F*	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Dependent Variable: Physical Environment						
12.00	1.817	12.21	1.868	.044	.838	.004[a]
Dependent Variable: Adult-Child Interaction						
33.25	9.512	34.71	4.786	.129	.726	.012[b]
Dependent Variable: Teaching Strategies						
14.917	2.691	17.57	2.573	3.299	.097	.231[c]
Dependent Variable: Aggregate						
60.167	11.5701	64.500	8.2563	.619	.448	.053[d]
a. R Squared = .002 (Adjusted R Squared = -.089)						
b. R Squared = .012 (Adjusted R Squared = -.078)						
c. R Squared = .231 (Adjusted R Squared = .161)						
d. R Squared = .053 (Adjusted R Squared = -.033)						

Tests of Effects of Single-Age CELPs with Mixed-Age CELPs						
Single Age M	Single Age SD	Mixed-Age M	Mixed-age SD	*F*	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Dependent Variable: Physical Environment						
12.38	1.157	12.00	1.817	.224	.645	.018[a]
Dependent Variable: Adult-Child Interaction						
32.88	8.655	33.25	9.512	.006	.940	.000[b]
Dependent Variable: Teaching Strategies						
15.56	3.343	14.92	2.691	.150	.705	.012[c]
Dependent Variable: Aggregate						
60.813	11.6648	60.167	11.5701	.011	.920	.001[d]
a. R Squared = .018 (Adjusted R Squared = -.064)						
b. R Squared = .000 (Adjusted R Squared = -.083)						
c. R Squared = .012 (Adjusted R Squared = -.070)						
d. R Squared = .001 (Adjusted R Squared = -.082)						