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Early Care and Education Leadership and Management Roles: Beyond Homes and Centers

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Abstract

This article reports on a study, among the first in the United States, to examine staff working in early care and education infrastructure organizations, a growing segment of the workforce. This exploratory study used an online survey of 1,091 staff in three different types of organizations in California that receive public funding—child care resource and referral programs, local child care coordinators, and local First 5 Commissions. This study develops a portrait of the demographic and education background of this segment of the workforce, the types of job functions performed, professional development needed, and how this population differs from the direct service workforce. Findings indicate that, like the direct service workforce, staff members in infrastructure organizations are ethnically and linguistically diverse, and they face job-level stratification based on these characteristics. The majority of staff provides direct services, such as training to child care providers, parents, and other organizations, and many are involved in research, planning, and development. Findings also indicate that the education and professional background of staff varies, and that child development, management, and supervision are areas in which staff members most identify wanting additional knowledge. These results, both promising and concerning, suggest that infrastructure staff play an integral role in shaping and delivering services and programs, yet little attention has been paid to their professional knowledge and needs, amplifying the necessity for further research to better understand the range of responsibilities of infrastructure staff and for policies to support their professional development.

Introduction

Today's early care and education (ECE) leaders must be politically astute, aware of and engaged in a multitude of contexts extending beyond one's day-to-day work, and skilled in envisioning and facilitating change (Goffin & Washington, 2007; Kagan, Kauerz, & Tarrant, 2008; Rodd, 1996). This increasingly acknowledged view of essential leadership competencies marks a major shift in expectations about what field leaders need to know and be able to do (Goffin & Washington, 2007; Kagan & Bowman, 1997; Rodd, 1996; Whitebook, 2010; Whitebook & Austin, 2009).

Yet the ECE field to date, both in the United States and other western countries, has largely conceived the enactment of leadership primarily in a site-based context, tied directly to the day-to-day management functions of site administrators (Goffin & Washington, 2007; Nivala, 2002; Rodd, 1997). A review of the leadership literature (Muijs, Aubrey, Harris, & Briggs, 2004) and of leadership preparation programs in ECE (Goffin & Means, 2009) confirms the predominance of this approach to leadership, with the vast majority of works reviewed focused on leading and managing individual programs. ECE teacher-leadership is addressed to a lesser extent, although primarily in the context of an individual program or classroom and often marginalized from the broader field leadership conversation (Maxfield, Ricks-Doneen, Klocko, & Sturges, 2011). Ignored in ECE leadership literature and preparation is the emergence of a multitude of roles filled by

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professionals working on behalf of children and direct service practitioners. These professionals, such as resource and referral counselors and quality rating system administrators and coaches, who work outside of ECE centers and family child care homes, are regularly called upon to shape and implement ECE policy as part of their day-to-day responsibilities (Goffin & Washington, 2007).

This amalgamation of factors—increased expectations of leaders in all roles, new types of leadership roles, and a restricted conceptualization of leadership as center- or site-based management—has created confusion about what it means to study, prepare for, and enact leadership in ECE. Nivala (2002) argues that leadership models adopted by the field are often more appropriate to the business world and that the mass quantities of leadership discourses—the “jungle” (p. 13) of theories—make it difficult to identify leadership models that are most appropriate to the communities of concern. Only a few states articulate leadership competencies for early educators that include engagement with the broader field and policy development and analysis (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2008). Although a handful of college-based programs are focused on developing leaders who understand the broader context of the ECE system, and are prepared to engage in the policy context in which the field operates (Buell Early Childhood Leadership Program, n.d.; Mills College, 2012; Wheelock College, 2010), overall leadership beyond program management receives minimal attention. This lack of attention may stem from a lack of available data about who constitutes the growing population of leaders in roles outside of direct ECE settings.

Among those working beyond the center or home are individuals employed in infrastructure organizations such as child care resource and referral programs (often called CCR&Rs), which operate in most communities across the country. CCR&Rs, which offer an example of a type of ECE infrastructure organization that directly supports children, their families, and the workforce, are involved in shaping policy. Across the United States, more than 700 CCR&Rs help millions of families find and pay for child care; they also develop child care spaces and train 500,000 ECE providers annually. Most CCR&Rs also conduct needs assessments and report publicly on child care supply and demand in their communities (National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies, 2011).

Other, mostly publicly funded, infrastructure organizations are concerned with improving ECE quality and child outcomes, and these organizations employ thousands of professionals. Highly influential infrastructure organizations have also sprung up in individual states, such as First 5 in California, Smart Start in North Carolina, and First Things First in Arizona.¹

Yet while a modicum of data is available about the direct service workforce (Kagan et al., 2008; Whitebook, Sakai, Gerber, & Howes, 2001; Whitebook et al., 2006), very little is known about the individuals working in CCR&Rs and other infrastructure organizations, their educational and professional backgrounds, or their leadership capacity and professional development needs. In an era that is increasingly shifting to an emphasis on quality improvement strategies, it is likely that many communities will develop even more infrastructure organizations with roles for leaders who are engaged in decision making and change efforts.

An in-depth understanding of this segment of the workforce is essential to adequately addressing the leadership needs of the field and to delivering high-quality ECE to all children. This study is a first step to examining those working in ECE infrastructure organizations. As such, this study is exploratory in nature. We sought to develop a portrait of this segment of the workforce, including their demographic and education characteristics, the types of job responsibilities, how this population differs from the direct service workforce, and the types of professional development its members identify as a need.

Methods

An online survey was developed by the research team in collaboration with representatives from the three types of infrastructure organizations studied. The survey was administered in English utilizing SurveyMonkey and consisted of primarily close-ended questions. The survey included questions focused on demographics, job history and tenure, levels of education and training, job duties, and assessment of current job skills.

Sample

We drew our sample of participants from employees in three types of ECE infrastructure organizations in California. Each of the organizations operates in every county and receives public dollars—local CCR&R programs, local First 5 Commissions, and local child care coordinators and their staff.

These statewide organizations, representing the local programs—the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, the First 5 Association of California, and the California Child Care Coordinators Association—provided the research team with a list of email addresses for the staff in their respective local organizations. This list of email addresses served as the survey population. This population included all child care coordinators and staff who coordinate local child care planning councils and who primarily provide child care services for local city and county governments, 57 of the 58 local First 5 Commissions, and 56 of the 61 CCR&R agencies.² Our eligible sample included 1,588 staff employed in 200 organizations.

Categorizing the eligible population of staff was challenging because of the diverse missions and functions of

the three organizational types; differences in mission and function occurred even among similar organizations. We found that the participating organizations did not use consistent job titles, nor did job titles signify specific job responsibilities. In order to create a variable that we could use to compare staff in a consistent way across organizational type, we developed a survey question asking respondents to select a “job level that comes closest to what you do” (see Table 1). In general, our findings focus on the sample as a whole, noting differences across job levels when significant variations are identified.

Table 1
Description of Infrastructure Staff Job Levels

Job Level	Description
Administrative/technical/program support	I provide administrative, program, or computer support to a department(s) or to the agency, for example, filing, data entry, backing up computers, or answering the phones. Usually, my daily tasks are assigned to me, and I do not have any supervisory or management responsibilities.
Professional	I implement a project, program, or agency function. Although I am supervised, I decide which tasks I will complete each day. I problem solve and think about the best ways to conduct my job. I do not have any supervisory or management responsibilities.
Supervisor/manager	I supervise other staff and/or manage a program(s) or department(s). For example, I assign tasks, develop time lines, and develop and monitor project budgets.
Director	Includes two director categories: (1) Assistant director—I play a primary role in the management of the entire organization. I report to my director/executive director; and (2) Director/executive director—I have primary responsibility for all aspects of my agency. If I work for a nonprofit agency, I report to my board of directors.

As shown in Table 2, the survey completion rate was 69%. The response rate ranged from 63% for First 5 staff, 70% for CCR&R staff, and 79% for child care coordinators and their staff. The majority of respondents were classified at the professional job level or higher (see Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2
Survey Response Rate

Organizational Type	Eligible Sample	Completed Interviews	Response Rate (%)
Child care coordinators and staff	87	69	79
First 5 staff	454	285	63
CCR&R staff	1,047	737	70
Total	1,588	1,091	69

Table 3
Distribution of Job Levels ($n = 1,065$)

Job Level	Percent
Administrative/technical/support	17.5
Professional	43.0
Supervisor/manager	25.2
Assistant director/director	11.3
Other	3.0

The robust response rate provides us with confidence that the findings can inform workforce and leadership development as well as guide future research. However, we caution readers about generalizing the results to the infrastructure workforce as a whole because this sample was neither random nor a complete census of the workforce.

Data Collection

Prior to launching the survey, the research team emailed a notification letter to all the potential respondents describing the purpose of the survey, encouraging participation, and informing the respondents about their rights as research subjects. We then sent a second email to each potential participant with a link to the online survey. We made multiple efforts to encourage staff to respond to the survey, including emailing weekly reminders to all potential respondents and working directly with the directors of individual organizations to encourage their staff to participate in the study. In addition, the three statewide organizations frequently encouraged staff in their member organizations to participate in the study. The research team also worked closely with the three statewide organizations to fix any incorrect email addresses and was available to respond to email and telephone requests for assistance in completing the survey. The survey was available between January 22, 2009, and March 20, 2009, for the First 5 staff and the child care coordinators, and between April 14, 2009, and May 8, 2009, for the CCR&R staff. The survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete. The responses to the survey constitute the basis of this paper.

Analysis

For all questions in the survey, we computed frequencies for participants at each job level and for the entire sample. We performed inferential statistical tests to examine trends in the data. We also compared data from this study to data collected in a previous study of direct-service staff in the state (Whitebook et al., 2006) to establish how those filling infrastructure roles in the three organizations were similar and different from teaching and administrative staff in child care centers.

Findings

Demographic Characteristics

Gender. Similar to the workforce in child care centers and licensed family child care homes, the workforce in the ECE infrastructure organizations that participated in this study was overwhelmingly female. More than 9 out of 10 respondents (92%) identified themselves as female. Gender varied somewhat by job level, with a greater percentage of directors being male (16%) compared to staff in other positions.

Age. Respondents were asked to report their date of birth, which allowed us to calculate their age at the time they completed the survey. Only 14% of study participants were under 30, and 31% were 50 years or older. Compared to teachers and assistants working directly with children in center-based ECE programs (Whitebook et al., 2006), those participating in the current study were less likely to be younger than 30 years old and more likely to be 50 years or older (see Figure 1).

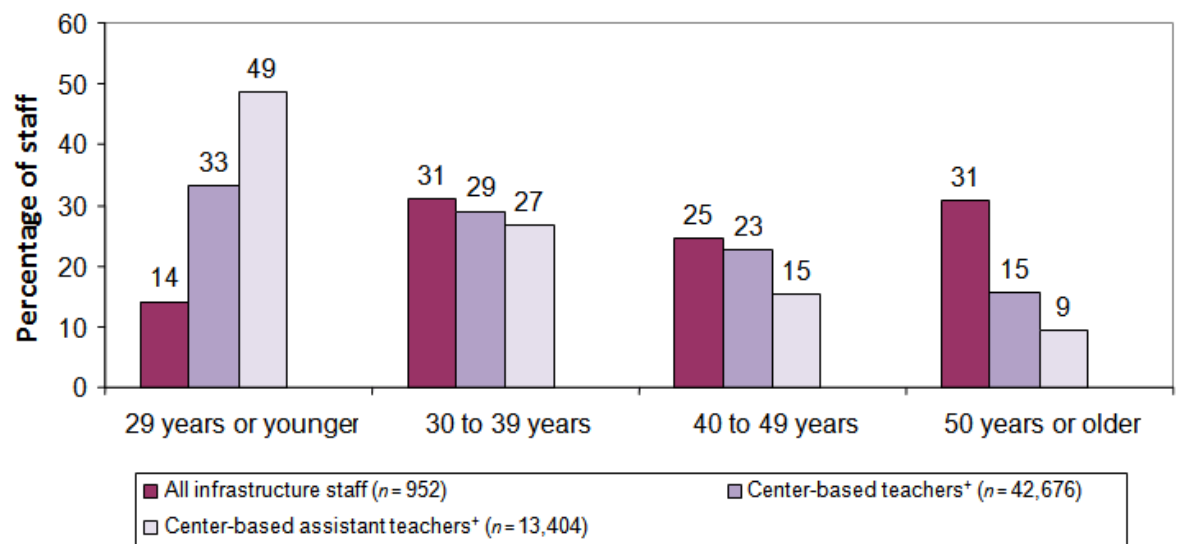


Figure 1. Age distribution of the workforce in three types of infrastructure organizations compared to child care center-based teaching staff (*Whitebook et al., 2006).

The age distribution of the workforce in the sample differed by job level. More than half of agency directors (55%) were 50 years or older. Fifty-four percent of staff in administrative jobs and 54% in professional positions were younger than age 40. More than a quarter of administrative staff (29%) were under 30 years old, compared to 18% of professional staff and 3% of supervisors/managers. None of the agency directors reported being younger than 30 years old.

Ethnic Background. Similar to the center-based teaching workforce reported in the *California Early Care and Education Workforce Study: Licensed Child Care Centers. Statewide 2006* (Whitebook et al., 2006), the workforce employed in the infrastructure organizations in our sample are ethnically diverse (see Figure 2). Survey participants were asked to select the ethnic categories that best described their identity. One-half (50%) were White, non-Hispanic, and one-half were people of color, with Latinos composing the second largest racial/ethnic group (31%).

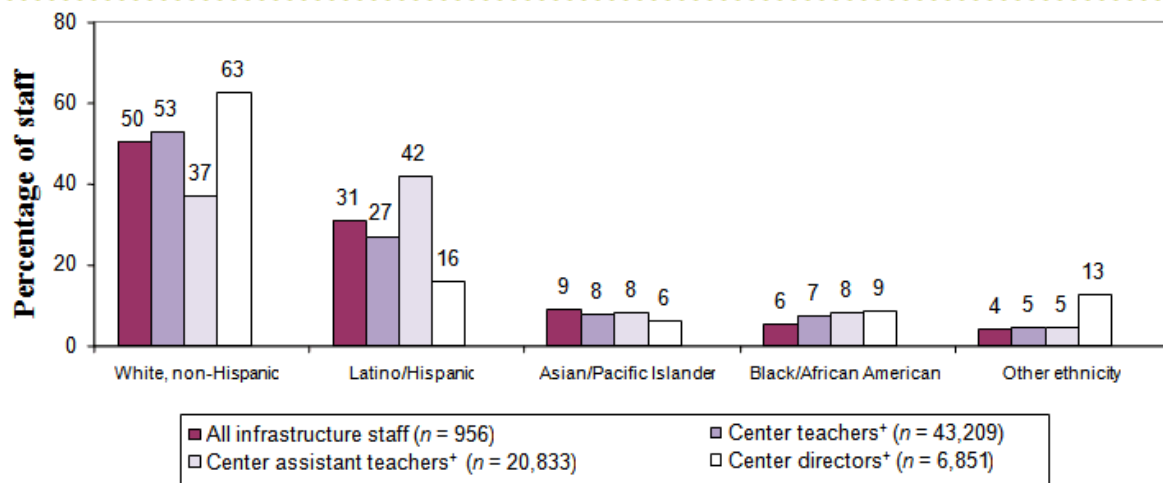


Figure 2. Ethnic distribution of the workforce in three types of infrastructure organizations compared to child care center-based teaching staff and directors (* Whitebook et al., 2006).

Across job levels, ethnic diversity decreased as job level increased in responsibility, with the category of director showing the least amount of diversity. Less than one-quarter (24%) of directors and less than one-half of supervisors/managers (42%) were non-White, whereas more than one-half of professional (55%) and administrative (59%) staff were non-White. This distribution pattern reflects a similar stratification found in the center-based ECE workforce, with those in director roles being less ethnically diverse than others staff (Whitebook et al., 2006).

Linguistic Background. Virtually all staff (97%) reported being able to speak, read, and/or write English, and one-third (33%) reported being able to speak, read, and/or write Spanish. Less than 1% of staff reported being able to speak, read, and/or write a language besides English or Spanish. The workforce represented by the infrastructure organizations in this study was more linguistically diverse than center directors and teachers but less linguistically diverse than assistant teachers (Whitebook et al., 2006).

Bilingual ability was found to vary by job level. Agency directors emerged as the least linguistically diverse group and administrative staff as the most linguistically diverse. About one-fifth of agency directors (22%), 33% of supervisors/managers, 47% of professional staff, and 53% of administrative staff reported being able to speak, read, and/or write a language other than English. This pattern reflects a similar stratification by job found among the ECE center-based workforce during our previous study; center-based directors were found in that study to be the least linguistically diverse, followed by teachers, who were in turn less linguistically diverse than assistant teachers (Whitebook et al., 2006).

Educational Attainment

Overall Education. The infrastructure organizations represented in this study employed staff with high levels of formal education. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of all staff participating in the study had completed a B.A. degree or higher. Members of this workforce are thus more likely than the average ECE center-based teacher working directly with young children to have completed a four-year degree or higher. In the earlier study, 25% of that population had college degrees (Whitebook et al., 2006). Almost one-quarter (24%) of infrastructure staff in this study had completed a M.A. degree or higher.

Educational attainment among participants in this study varied somewhat across job levels. Most professional staff (65%) and nearly all supervisors/managers (80%) and agency directors (89%) had completed a four-year degree compared to about one-third (32%) of administrative staff.

Educational Attainment by Ethnicity and Language. As described above, the infrastructure organizations represented in this study employed an ethnically and linguistically diverse workforce. Although educational attainment was relatively high across all ethnic groups, there was considerable variation, with 81% of Asian/Pacific Islander, 70% of White, non-Hispanic, 68% of African American, and 53% of Latino staff reporting that they had completed a four-year degree or higher. Across all educational levels, 43% of staff reported the ability to read, speak, and/or write fluently in a language other than English.

We also examined whether, despite the high levels of educational attainment among this workforce, education was stratified by ethnicity and linguistic background. Fifty percent of all surveyed staff and 65% of staff with a M.A. degree or higher were White, non-Hispanic. Latinos constituted 31% of surveyed staff but only 12% of staff with a M.A. degree or higher. Forty-five percent of participating infrastructure staff with no degree were Latino.

As noted earlier, among participants in the study, the ability to communicate in a language other than English

decreased with additional formal education. Respondents with no degree (50%) were somewhat more likely to speak a language other than English followed by staff with an A.A. degree (44%), B.A. degree (44%), and M.A. degree or higher (34%).

Education Related to Early Childhood Education and Child Development. Although degree attainment among infrastructure staff was relatively high, their degrees were more likely to have been obtained in the fields of psychology, education, or policy than in the fields of ECE or child development. Unlike the ECE teaching workforce described in our earlier workforce study, which found that 64% of teachers with a B.A. degree or higher and 83% of teachers with an A.A. degree had obtained an early-childhood-related degree (Whitebook et al., 2006), only 23% of infrastructure staff participating in the current study reported that their college degree was in ECE or child development.³ Infrastructure staff were much more likely (43%) to have earned a college degree in psychology, education (elementary or higher), or policy. One-third (35%) of those with non-ECE college degrees reported having no college credits related to ECE, 19% earned between one and 11 credits, and 46% reported having earned 12 or more ECE college credits. Among the small number of staff without a college degree, nearly all (98%) reported having at least one college credit related to ECE, and 66% reported earning 24 or more ECE-related college credits.

Three-quarters (75%) of the infrastructure staff in this study reported participating in non-college professional development related to their jobs in the year prior to completing the survey, with ECE or child development being the most commonly reported topic (62%). Just over half (51%) of the respondents reported receiving training related to some other area of their jobs.

Employment Characteristics

Tenure. Our findings indicate that the respondents in the infrastructure organizations that we surveyed have been employed in the field for a number of years and are largely stable in their employment. Slightly more than three-quarters (77%) of the staff reported working in the ECE field for more than 5 years. In contrast to the instability of the ECE teaching workforce, where more than one-half of assistant teachers and teachers report being employed in their workplaces less than 5 years (Whitebook et al., 2006), the infrastructure organizations represented in this study have a relatively stable workforce. Less than one-half of the participants (46%) in this study had been working at their organizations for 5 years or less. Almost one-third (30%) of the workforce in the infrastructure organizations had been at their organization for 6 to 10 years, and nearly one-quarter (24%) had been working in their organization for 11 or more years.

To ascertain more about the work history of the infrastructure workforce, we asked about movement in and out of the field and tenure in other fields. Less than half of the respondents (43%) reported working consistently in the ECE field, 23% reported working mostly in other social service fields, 18% reported working mostly outside of ECE or social service fields, and 14% reported working both in and out of the ECE field. A higher proportion of administrative staff (32%) reported working mostly outside of ECE compared with staff at other levels. Compared with other infrastructure staff, a higher proportion of agency directors reported that they had worked mostly in other social service fields (33%).

Direct Service Experience with Children. Approximately one-half (51%) of the infrastructure staff reported having had paid work experience providing direct services to children birth to 5 years of age in an ECE setting, and nearly one-half (47%) of these reported having done so for 7 or more years. Compensation was the most frequently reported reason for leaving direct service work. Two-thirds (65%) of staff with such experience reported that the reason they stopped working directly with children was because they sought higher salaries. About one-half (54%) of staff reported wanting to try something new or wanting to pursue the opportunity for better benefits as reasons that they stopped working directly with young children. About one-third mentioned the opportunity for more job responsibility (37%) or the opportunity to develop or implement programs or projects (35%), and about one-quarter (26%) mentioned the opportunity for better working conditions as reasons that they had stopped working directly with young children.

Compensation. Infrastructure staff in this study, at all job levels, earned more on average than the highest paid assistant teachers and teachers in child care centers, with an average hourly wage of \$25.64. As shown in Table 4, although infrastructure administrative staff with a B.A. or higher degree earned less than other infrastructure staff, they earned, on average, \$3.58 per hour more than the highest paid center-based teachers with a B.A. degree or higher, \$6.29 per hour more than the lowest-paid teachers with a B.A. degree or higher, and \$10.57 per hour more than the highest paid assistant teachers. This represents an annual salary difference ranging from \$7,441 to \$21,969 for full-time employment, when comparing compensation for staff working directly with young children to those working in infrastructure organizations.

Table 4

Mean Hourly Wages Paid to the Workforce in Three Types of Infrastructure Organizations with B.A. Degrees or Higher, by Job Level and Compared to Child Care Center-Based Teaching Staff

Job Level	Mean Hourly Wage	SE	Number of Staff*
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All assistant teachers, highest wage, statewide **	\$11.29	0.8	4,758 centers
Teachers with B.A. degree or higher, lowest wage, statewide **	\$15.57	0.2	3,754 centers
Teachers with B.A. degree or higher, highest wage, statewide**	\$18.28	2.5	3,700 centers
Infrastructure administrative staff	\$21.86	1.4	47
Infrastructure professional staff	\$23.96	0.7	249
Infrastructure supervisors/managers	\$30.11	0.6	183
Infrastructure directors	\$42.97	1.5	85
All infrastructure staff***	\$28.61	0.5	573
*Mean wage data for infrastructure staff were for each staff person. Data for center-based teachers and assistants were collected by center. **Whitebook et al. (2006). Mean hourly wages per center, collected in California, have been adjusted for cost of living increases between 2005 when data were collected and 2009 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.). ***Includes infrastructure staff who did not provide job level information but did provide information on wages and educational attainment. Includes a small number of infrastructure staff who reported "other" job level.			

Job Responsibilities and Skills Levels

To acquire a rudimentary picture of the job functions and responsibilities of infrastructure staff, we asked survey participants whether they performed any of the following duties as part of their job:

- *Client services to parents, providers, and organizations:* providing child care referrals, training, responding to questions, providing case management, administering provider subsidies, and conducting site visits
- *Early care and education research, planning, and policy development:* coordinating Local Planning Councils, performing needs assessments, conducting research and data collection, participating in professional and community meetings, and/or providing information and services to government agencies, business, media, etc.
- *Administrative tasks:* accounting; managing budgets, grants, and contracts; human resources; clerical assistance; managing databases; providing computer support, marketing, and/or overall agency management

Client Services. Results of the survey indicate that infrastructure staff have a great deal of interaction with ECE providers, families, and other organizations. Although staff responsibilities vary depending on the type of infrastructure organization, nearly all (87%) infrastructure staff reported providing direct client services to ECE providers, families, and/or other organizations (see Table 5). Nearly three-quarters of all staff, regardless of job level, reported that part of their job included responding to questions and concerns from child care providers (77%) and families (72%), and two-thirds (67%) reported that part of their job included responding to questions and concerns from ECE organizations. Almost two-thirds of all staff (62%) reported providing training to child care providers, with supervisors/managers (68%) and professional staff (66%) being more likely than others to provide this service. Almost one-half of all staff (47%) reported providing child care referrals and counseling to families. This service varied by job level. About one-half of professional (56%) and administrative staff (49%) and one-third (39%) of supervisors/managers reported that making child care referrals and providing counseling were among their job responsibilities compared with only 13% of agency directors.

Table 5
Job Responsibilities Related to Client Services ($n = 918$)

Services	Percent
Services to families	
Respond to questions/concerns	72.0
Child care referrals and counseling	47.0
Training and support	45.0
Case management for child care subsidies	20.0
Services to child care providers	
Respond to questions/concerns	77.0
Training and support	62.0
Site visits to child care providers	40.0
Administer child care provider subsidy	17.0
Services to organizations	
Respond to questions/concerns	67.0
Training and support	49.0

Research, Planning, and Development. Nearly three-quarters (71%) of survey respondents reported performing some job duties related to research, policy, advocacy, and planning, with research and data collection being the most commonly reported duty (59%) (see Table 6). This varied by job level, with those in supervisory/management and director roles more likely to report duties in these areas. For example 28% of

professional staff reported involvement in ECE-related policy development, while almost half (47%) of supervisors/managers and 82% of agency directors reported such job duties. Similarly, 42% of professional staff reported providing ECE information to the public, and about two-thirds of supervisors/managers (62%) and agency directors (69%) reported this as a job responsibility. Almost one-half (48%) of professional staff, 58% of supervisors/managers, and 70% of directors reported ECE-related advocacy as part of their job responsibilities.

Table 6
Job Responsibilities Related to Policy, Planning, and
Research ($n = 921$)

Job Function	Percent
Research and data collection	59.0
ECE-related advocacy	52.0
Provide ECE information to the public	50.0
ECE-related policy development	40.0

Administrative Tasks. The majority (86%) of the workforce responding to this survey, regardless of job level, reported performing administrative tasks such as those indicated in Table 1. Those tasks varied, as would be expected, by job level. While only about one-third (36%) of professional staff, supervisors/managers, and agency directors reported providing administrative support to staff, three-quarters of administrative staff did so. Supervisors/managers and agency directors were more likely to report program management (70%) or managing grants, contracts, and budgets (72%) as part of their jobs. A higher proportion of directors also reported job responsibilities that included agency management (68%), fund development (53%), and human resources (51%) compared with infrastructure staff at other job levels.

Skills for Current Job. Participants were asked to identify the skills necessary for their current jobs, their level of satisfaction with their own current skills, and whether additional knowledge would be helpful to their job performance. Across job levels, staff reported a high level of satisfaction with their skills, although the data suggest that some staff did not feel adequately prepared for their current positions. Of note, and perhaps reflecting the types of educational attainment reported above, less than one-half (41%) of professional staff reported satisfaction with their level of child development expertise, and nearly one-half (46%) reported desiring additional knowledge in this area. Of the professional level staff who report child development expertise as applicable to their current job, those who did not have an early childhood related degree (57%) were more likely to report wanting additional knowledge related to child development compared with staff who had completed a degree with an early childhood focus (28%).

Additionally, more than one quarter (29%) of professional staff reported wanting additional knowledge about organizational development and communication. More than one-third (37%) of supervisors/managers reported that additional knowledge would be helpful for their current job in the areas of management and supervision.

Discussion

This study presents a preliminary profile of a segment of the ECE workforce that has not been well studied. Across job levels, the majority of participating staff perform diverse functions. Most are called upon to provide services and training to child care providers, families, and other organizations; engage in early care and education research, planning, and policy development; and carry out administrative functions.

The career backgrounds of staff in the participating infrastructure organizations also reflect diversity, with half reporting experience working directly with young children in center- or home-based ECE settings, about a quarter with backgrounds in social services, and the remainder drawn from fields other than early childhood or social services. The majority of staff responding to the survey reported satisfaction with their current level of job skills, although many staff reported that additional knowledge in the areas of child development and management and supervision would be helpful to their jobs.

In reflecting upon these findings, we note ways in which staff working in ECE beyond centers and homes are both similar to and different from those working directly with young children. Staff composition, as indicated in this study, tends to be predominately female and ethnically and linguistically diverse. However, staff in the participating infrastructure organizations have achieved higher levels of education and earn considerably higher salaries than is typical for direct-service personnel, even when taking level of education into account.

The picture of the infrastructure workforce emerging from this study is both promising and cause for concern. The career opportunities for ECE professionals have clearly expanded beyond center- and home-based settings, providing thousands of stable jobs that reward education and expertise. This expansion has allowed ECE practitioners to share their knowledge by performing such functions as providing training to others and addressing the needs of child care providers and families.

This movement of practitioners into a range of ECE job roles is to be lauded as evidence of the continued growth and development of the ECE profession. Yet our data reveal that practitioners were most often

motivated to enter infrastructure jobs by higher compensation rather than by the development and growth of professional competencies. The need for earning a higher salary was the most common reason reported for no longer working in a child care center or a family child care home. This exodus of well-trained practitioners from the classroom, even into the lowest paying infrastructure jobs, underscores the decades-long problem of persistently low wages that plagues those who work most closely with children. This study contributes to the volume of evidence that poor compensation continues to undermine retention of the direct service workforce, particularly of those with the highest levels of education (Herzenberg, Price, & Bradley, 2005; Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1989; Whitebook & Sakai, 2004).

Furthermore, our findings suggest that the growth in stable and well-paid ECE jobs does not necessarily mean that there are new opportunities for teachers and other practitioners; half of the staff members participating in this study had no experience working with young children. While it is important for ECE infrastructure organizations to interact with groups in other disciplines concerned with early childhood issues in order to develop common goals and shared strategies for working with children and families, the fact that more than half of infrastructure staff lacked any ECE-related education and experience is nonetheless cause for concern. This situation is particularly distressing given the large number of infrastructure staff who report being involved in training child care providers and in developing ECE-related policy.

The range of job functions in ECE infrastructure settings provides infrastructure staff ample opportunity to influence both ECE policy and the professional development to which providers have access. Yet these infrastructure staff are seldom the focus of leadership development initiatives and policies (Goffin & Means, 2009; Whitebook & Austin, 2009). As the ECE field increasingly moves toward developing better data systems, such as workforce registries, in order to learn more about direct service practitioners, it is essential to broaden the understanding of what constitutes the workforce to include ECE infrastructure organization staff working on behalf of practitioners, children, and their families. The inclusion of infrastructure staff will allow for more research about this segment of the workforce—what are the job functions, who fills the jobs—and about contextual factors such as formalized career ladders and credential or degree requirements that influence both access to infrastructure jobs and levels of preparedness for such roles.

When developing professional leadership competencies for the field, the definition of leadership should include not only administrative roles in center-based programs but also those roles filled by infrastructure staff. Just as educator competencies provide a guide for assessing how well prepared teachers are to perform their jobs, the field should expect those working with and on behalf of educators to have certain skills and knowledge to effectively carry out their duties. As a start, standards of competency for infrastructure staff should address child development and pedagogy for teaching young children, ECE systems, adult learning, organizational development, and advocacy. While some states and national stakeholders have begun to define such competencies to guide the development of educational and professional opportunities for those who fulfill roles beyond the center and the home (California Department of Education, 2010; National Professional Development Center on Inclusion, 2011), these efforts are not yet standard practice.

Lastly, our data suggest that, although less stratified by ethnicity and language than the direct service workforce, women of color in infrastructure organizations, similar to their direct service counterparts, are less likely to fill higher level roles; the proportion of men in director roles is double their representation in the sample population. Strategies to address such inequities should be part of states' efforts to improve their professional development systems. Creating pathways for professional leadership roles will address part of the problem, but it is also necessary to intentionally recruit a diverse pool of candidates for these roles.

Although this study was limited by its focus on three types of organizations in one state, the findings amplify the need for further research to better understand the role of infrastructure organizations, the individuals filling the range of jobs, and the professional needs of these staff as the field expands infrastructure roles to support growing quality improvement efforts. The federal government is now encouraging states to consider infrastructure job roles, their influence in the field, and the competencies and experiences expected of persons in these roles as an integral component of their professional development systems (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). After more than 15 years of discussion bemoaning the absence of a pipeline for a diverse ECE leadership (Goffin & Washington, 2007; Kagan & Bowman, 1997), this is a welcome and promising step toward broadening the understanding of who constitutes the ECE workforce and ensuring that managers and leaders across the spectrum are appropriately prepared.

Notes

1. Information on these organizations can be found on their Web sites: First 5 California, <http://www.cafc.ca.gov>; Smart Start, <http://hugh.ncsmartstart.org>; First Things First, <http://www.azftf.gov>.
2. In CCR&R agencies where the resource and referral services and subsidy payment programs (Alternative Payment, AP) were not integrated, AP staff members were excluded from participation because the research team did not have the resources to survey all AP programs in the state.
3. College degree in ECE or child development varied by infrastructure organization. Approximately one-quarter of all staff employed in CCR&Rs (28%) or as child care coordinators (27%) reported that their degree was in ECE or child development compared to only 9% of staff employed at First 5 organizations.

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