

**Understanding Teachers' Experiences Working with Young Children from Diverse
Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds**

By
Yuling Su

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APPROVED

Penny Burge, Ph.D., Chair
Cosby Rogers, Ph.D., Chair
Mark Benson, Ph.D.
Andrew Stremmel, Ph.D.

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Blacksburg, Virginia

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By
Yuling Su

Co-Chair: Dr. Cosby Rogers, Human Development
Co-Chair: Dr. Penny Burge, Education Research and Evaluation
(Abstract)

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to illuminate the experiences of six teachers in southwestern Virginia who are working with toddlers and preschoolers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. These young children were those whose first language is not English and their parents were from countries other than the United States. A phenomenological research method was chosen because the main focus of the study was to learn about teachers' experiences and that method is a tool to explore the essence of human experiences. The study was guided by the main research question: What are teachers' experiences working with these children? Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six toddler and preschool teachers from two day care and development centers. Observations of classroom teaching added vital information to the data collected through interviews. Other tools for data collection included field notes and a researcher's journal. These tools were used to gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon. Strategies for examining the data for this study were narrative, thematic, and constant comparative analysis. Five major themes emerged from the teachers' experiences: (1) Types of teachers' experiences, which include learning,

challenging, interesting and fulfilling experiences, (2) The interaction among experiences and changes in teaching strategies and self-perception, (3) Teachers' relationships with these children, (4) Teachers' relationships with these parents, and (5) Common resources for teachers working with these children. The findings suggested recommendations for future research and practice in the field of early childhood education. The study also generated stories and thick, detailed descriptions of teachers' experiences. The study was intended to inspire other teachers in similar settings to share stories and encourage colleagues.

Dedication
To my husband, Shu-Jen Steven Tsai
And our parents

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Chapter One: Introduction

One student teacher told me that an Asian boy kept nodding his head when she gave him direction, but he did not follow all of them. She pondered these questions: Did he really understand me? Or did he forget what I said? How do I know if he understands me or not?

The story described above is one shared from a teacher's experience with a child from a cultural and linguistic background that was different from her own. Many stories like this one motivated me to investigate teachers' experiences of working with these children and their families. In addition to being motivated by these stories, my personal reflections and experiences of teaching young children have inspired me to use a qualitative research method to explore this area. In this chapter, I explain the significance of the proposed study, provide an overview of the research problems, state the purpose of the study, and describe the influence of my personal experiences on my research. Secondly, I review literature that brings insight into the research questions for my study in the Chapter Two. This chapter also contains the theoretical foundations for the study. After the literature review, a description of the methodology for the study is presented in the Chapter Three. Findings, interpretations and reflections are represented in the Chapter Four. Last, the Chapter Five includes discussion and

conclusions.

Significance of the Study

The Census Bureau of the United States (2000) estimated that half of the preschool population will be children of color by the year of 2020. In 1997, Tabors predicted that by the year 2000, there would be 5.2 million preschoolers from other than English-Speaking homes in the United States. In light of the changing demographics of the United States, teaching young children from diverse backgrounds has become a research priority in early childhood education. Previous researchers have investigated challenges of cultural and linguistic diversity in this field (Demian-Sparks & Anti-Bias Curriculum Task Force, 1989; Fernandez, 2000; Garcia, 1995; Hill, Stremmel, & Fu, 2002; Huntsinger, Huntsinger, Ching, & Lee, 2000; Johnson, Lee, & Templeton, 2003; Klien & Chen, 2001; Lynch & Hanson, 1998; Okagaki & Dimond 2000; Powell & Yamamoto, 1997; Ramsey, 1998; Tabors, 1997), and teacher preparation to meet the challenges (K.S.Cockrell, Placier, D. H.Cockrell, & Middleton, 1999; Fu, Stremmel, & Hill, 2002; Gutierrez-Gomes, 2002; McMahon, 1997; Morales, 2000; Rust, 1999; Weisman & Garza, 2002).

The present study adds to the early childhood education research literature in the critical area that involves teaching young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Previous researchers provided evidence of the significance of understanding teachers'

experiences with teaching these young children. The present study added to the literature on that topic.

In regard to the research perspective, I investigated and described teachers' experiences with teaching individual children from diverse backgrounds and the influences on their beliefs, attitudes and, experiences. I also explored teachers' experiences in interacting with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and the influences of these experiences on the teachers' perceptions of the process of teaching these children, changes in teaching beliefs and methods, and teacher-child relationships. Consequently, the research was, not only a continuation of previous research, but it also expanded other researchers' understandings and discussions on the topic. The study is expected to stimulate discussion among other researchers about the preparation of teachers who are competent to meet the challenges of cultural and linguistic diversity in early childhood education.

In regard to the practical perspective, I recorded and reported stories of teachers' experiences in hopes that these stories would provide inspiration for teachers in similar settings to share their experiences with coworkers. The long range goal of this project was to help teachers, educators and parents from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to generate more love, care, and understanding of each other through the mechanism of sharing experiences and stories.

Another significant aspect of my study is that I used a qualitative research method as previous researchers have advocated (Rust, 1999; Weisman & Garza, 2002). One of the challenges suggested by previous studies was the need to uncover the relevant factors to consider in the preparation of teachers to meet the challenges of teaching in diverse cultural and linguistic early childhood settings. For example, Weisman and Garza (2002) suggested that research methods should offer student teachers the opportunity to reflect and articulate their beliefs and experiences related to teaching children of diverse cultures and languages. For instance, how do the student teachers' experiences influence their attitudes toward diversity? What activities and experiences best support growth and understanding? Rust (1999) asserted that conversation and story telling sustain teacher learning and inquiry as well. My study, using a phenomenological method, embraced the notions suggested by Rust (1999) and by Weisman and Garza (2002) by providing teachers opportunities to reflect on the meaning of their experiences in teaching children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Identification of Research Problems

Even though previous studies pointed to the significance of conducting research on the meanings teachers make of their experiences in teaching diverse children, they revealed some problems that needed future investigation. No previous studies have included detailed interviews as a mean to examine the teachers' experiences of teaching young children in the

context of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Moreover, studies have not documented teachers' reflections on previously suggested ideas that help teachers to interact with children from these backgrounds. Furthermore, researchers have not examined how teachers make meaning of these experiences and transform their teaching practices.

Another problem in multicultural studies related to the goal of this research. Sleeter and Grants (1999) indicated that researchers have emphasized advocacy for multicultural education rather than examining the implementation of it. For example, Tabors' (1997) advocated addressing the significant issues of teaching young second language learners in preschool, such as understanding their needs and providing strategies for teachers to meet the challenges. One of the strategies was to use sign language to communicate. Another was to observe young second language learners' body language. However, Tabors did not review teachers' implementation, nor did she provide feedback from the application of her suggestions. Furthermore, many previous studies concentrated on understanding teachers' perceptions and attitudes, but did not ask details about the origins of their perceptions and beliefs. These details may be drawn from teachers' experiences and reflection on events that happen in every day life with children from diverse backgrounds.

It is my opinion that researchers may want to focus on teachers' experiences by conducting interviews related to their interactions with children and families from diverse

cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and any subsequent changes in teaching. At the same time, researchers need to explore how teachers make meaning of these experiences in a classroom with cultural and linguistic diversity. I embraced these beliefs and posed them in the research questions for this study. My research on teacher experiences in a multicultural society was an extension of previous studies and provided ways to reduce the limitations of previous research on meeting the challenges of cultural and linguistic diversity in early childhood education.

I reviewed research related to teacher-child relationships because these relationships in the early years are known to be important to children's outcomes in school as well as in social and cognitive development (de Kruif, McWilliam, Ridely, & Wakely, 2000; Howes & Smith, 1995; Pianta, Nimetz, & Bennett, 1997). While reviewing literature on teacher-child relationships, I sought to learn how teachers view the experiences of forming relationships with children from diverse backgrounds. Previous researchers have not examined this aspect of teachers' experiences and reflections on the process of relationship formation. Moreover, although previous researchers examined the impact of such relationships on child outcomes, they failed to examine the influence of these relationships on the teachers and how their reflections on these experiences, in turn, affects their interactions with children.

Another problem is that previous researchers did not describe teacher-child relationships in dynamic settings with cultural and linguistic diversity, and they did not attempt to describe

styles of teacher-child relationships other than the styles based on attachment theory. Reigle (2004), who used a qualitative research method to capture details of teacher-child interactions in a day care classroom, stated that as attachment research grew and as society and childcare practices changed, researchers needed to expand the attachment box to make other relationships fit (p. 6). Saracho and Spodek (1995) suggested that researchers need to identify and describe in detail the interactions among teachers and children from diverse backgrounds. Because of the recommendations of these writers, I chose to apply a phenomenological research method to examine the details of teachers' interactions with children from diverse backgrounds in order to expand the opportunity to capture the essence of the experiences of teaching children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Purposes of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of selected teachers in one university town in the United States in regard to their roles as teachers of toddlers and preschoolers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Young children from diverse backgrounds in this study were ones whose first language was not English and whose parents were from countries outside the United States. I decided to use a phenomenological research method in that the main focus of my study was to learn about teachers' perceptions of their experiences with these children.

This study provided a means of eliciting teachers' narratives of their experiences while teaching young children from diverse backgrounds. I anticipated that teachers in similar settings with children from such backgrounds would benefit from reading the stories from my study and would be inspired to share their stories with co-workers. This, in turn, might enable them to support each other when meeting the challenges of linguistic and cultural diversity in early childhood education.

Another purpose of the study was to make a contribution to the preparation of teachers who will be competent to meet the challenges of linguistic and cultural diversity in early childhood education. The results of my study provide suggestions for improving programs of teacher education by providing information that teacher educators can use to help pre-service teachers develop the competence and civic responsibilities needed. This is in response to the call for the "public purposes" of higher education (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003). They explained that college graduates need not only to be aware of this increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in the society, but also need to develop a sense of moral and civic understanding in order to contribute their skills and knowledge. Accordingly, they further claimed, that "moral and civic learning in the curriculum can touch not only the most obviously cognitive aspects of moral and civic understanding but also motivational dimensions as identity and efficacy and some pedagogical approaches that are especially well suited to

supporting moral and civic growth”(Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003, p. xv)

To apply a qualitative research method to examine teachers’ experiences with young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds was another purpose of this project. The decision to use a qualitative research method was based on a recent expression of the need for this type of research in early childhood education. For example, Weisman and Garza (2002) suggested that research methods should offer teachers opportunities to reflect upon and articulate their beliefs and experiences. This study fulfilled that need.

Myself as a Researcher

Teacher A: I told Mei-mei’s parents many times please do not bring a chair to the class for her in circle time, but I do not understand why they still bring it and ask me to put it in circle time for her. Other children wanted to do the same thing.

Teacher B: I heard that Mei-mei won’t sit on the carpet in circle time in the United States because she only sat on a chair in the circle time when she was in China.

Children sit on chairs in a circle time in most places in China.

Two American 4-year-old girls in a classroom were talking about their plan for pretend play. A Chinese boy whose English was limited stood by them. One girl said to the other one, “we don’t need to let him know our plan because he doesn’t understand English.”

These are two of stories that I learned from my experiences in preschool classrooms with cultural and linguistic diversity while a preschool teacher in the United States. I have many other similar stories from other preschool teachers' experiences. Some are from my previous colleague's experiences at working in preschool settings, and some are my personal experiences as a newcomer to the United States, a profoundly multicultural society. I have become sensitive to these phenomena in classrooms with cultural and linguistic diversity because of my multiple roles: an international student, a preschool teacher, and as a mother of a Chinese American child. Sometimes I identify with the children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the stories mentioned above. Sometimes I identify with the teachers in these classrooms, and sometimes I identify with the parents dealing with diversity. I have met some American students on campus who did not have patience in communicating with me. Experiencing such challenging encounters, I tried to help some children and families from Asia in preschool classrooms to have better transition from home to school. For example, I brought cooked tofu to my son's class and asked teachers to feed him tofu for lunch. My multiple roles of student, preschool teacher, and mother of a toddler son in a day care has given me a unique, first hand experience with the challenges and learning in a classroom with cultural and linguistic diversity. I have been reflecting on what these experiences bring to teachers, children, and parents, with particular emphasis on teachers.

Along with my heartfelt commitment to understanding teachers' experiences in teaching young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, I had a passionate desire to identify these experiences by using qualitative research in order to contribute to teacher education in a way that should result in providing help for children and families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Furthermore, this research was designed to help teachers, educators and parents generate more love, care, understanding, and collaboration in a multicultural classroom through the sharing of stories, experiences and reflections. The long range goal of this research interest is to contribute to the important task of bringing unity among the peoples of the world. Laszlo (1993) said that "unity is very different from uniformity; it is not based on the eradication of difference but on their integration within a harmonious whole" (p. 201). Sharing the perceptions of teachers who nurture the youngest of our diverse society is one step toward that long term vision.

Research Questions

Based on my past experiences with teacher-child interactions in a classroom with cultural and linguistic diversity, my personal encounters in diverse settings, suggestions from my previous pilot study, and review of literature, I posed several research questions. Among these are the questions: "What are teachers' experiences with teaching young children from diverse backgrounds?" In particular, I was interested in knowing about their challenges and insights in

relation to teaching children from cultures and language backgrounds that were different from their own. My specific research questions included:

1. What are teachers' experiences of teaching young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds?
2. What is the influence of the experiences on teachers' attitudes toward teaching in a classroom with cultural and linguistic diversity, and on teachers' teaching beliefs and methods?
3. How do teachers' own cultural values, attributes, beliefs influence these experiences?
4. What are teachers' challenges in teaching and learning in the experiences?
5. How do teachers understand these children's needs and build relationships with them and their families?
6. What are teachers' experiences with ideas from previous studies on teaching young children from these backgrounds? What are the sources of these ideas? Where do they find resources?

Definitions of Terms

Some terms have been mentioned frequently in my study, such as "challenges of linguistic and cultural diversity in early childhood education," children from "diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds," and "experiences." I provide definitions of these terms in order to

clearly clarify the meanings of these terms for this study.

Garcia and McLaughlin (1995) as well as Saracho and Spodek (1995) described many challenges that accompany linguistic and cultural diversity in early childhood education. They indicated that people have a great admiration and tolerance for other languages and cultures in a multicultural society and in classrooms, but they are still sometimes uneasy with non-English speakers and are suspicious of people who speak English with an accent or use a non-standard dialect. They suggested that the challenges of teaching in classrooms with children of cultural and linguistic diversity are: (a) meeting the needs of young second language learners, (b) language development in bilingual preschool children, (c) determining the components of effective preschool programs, (d) assessment of bilingual children (e) family support/partnership/roles of parents, and (f) preparing teachers for working in environments with linguistic and cultural diversity.

Children from “diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds” refer to children whose first language is not English and whose cultural background differs from that of middle-class white children. According to Reyes (1992), the terms “bilingual learner,” “English as a second language (ESL) student,” “students who have limited English proficiency” (LEP), “language minority learner,” “second language learner,” English language learner (ELI),” “linguistically and culturally diverse (LCD),” and “linguistically and culturally diverse student” refer to

students whose first language is not English and whose cultural backgrounds differ from those of middle-class white children.

For the definition of experience, John Dewey's philosophy provided a foundation.

According to Dewey (1938), education is life itself and learning comes through experience.

However, Dewey strongly claimed that not all experience is equal to education. People need to pay attention to the criteria of experience: continuity and interaction (Dewey, 1938). The concept of continuity involves the past or present that one brings into development for the future experience. Through the continuity of experience, people have physical, intellectual and emotional growth. The experiences have a moving power. Based on this criterion, educators have to judge the potential trajectory an experience is heading toward when teaching. The other criterion, interaction, is tied with continuity. People have almost continuous interaction with objects and other human beings in the world. In other words, an experience always takes place in interaction. Therefore, teachers' experiences are drawn from their interaction with children. These experiences might be influenced by past ones and impact their teaching strategies or on-going interaction with these children.

The answers to my research questions provided information about teachers' experiences working with children from culturally and linguistically diversity. To start my research, I reviewed relevant research and the theoretical literature. Socio-cultural theory and John

Dewey's philosophy were reviewed as well for the theoretical foundations. In the following chapter, I review relevant studies in three areas: challenges of cultural and linguistic diversity in early childhood education, teacher preparation to meet the challenges, and teacher child relationships.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

In light of the changing demographics of the United States, teaching in a classroom with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds has captured the attention of researchers in early childhood education. Some researchers have reviewed the differences of cultures and their influence on children's development and transition from home to schools. Some researchers investigated challenges in diverse cultural and linguistic early childhood education and provided concrete suggestions for teaching strategies. Other researchers examined teacher perceptions toward diversity and teacher preparation for meeting the challenges of cultural and linguistic diversity. I reviewed previous research in two areas: (a) challenges of cultural and linguistic diversity in early childhood education, and (b) teacher preparation to meet the challenges. The reviews of these two areas helped me to determine the significance of my study and to formulate the research plan. I also reviewed the literature on teacher-child relationships in order to learn about the influences of teachers' interaction with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds on teachers' experiences and transformations in their own attitudes and practices. Then, I reviewed the theoretical and philosophical literature that is related to this project: (a) Socio-cultural learning theory, and (b) John Dewey's philosophy. Both the relevant studies and theoretical literature motivated my questions and influenced the design of this study.

Relevant Studies

Challenges of cultural and linguistic diversity in early childhood education

Many studies of teaching young children from multicultural backgrounds have been conducted in order to meet the challenges of cultural and linguistic diversity in early childhood education. According to Garcia and McLaughlin (1995) and Saracho and Spodek (1995), people in general have a great admiration and tolerance for other language and cultures in a multicultural society and classroom, but still are sometimes uneasy with non-English speakers and are suspicious of people who speak English with accent or use non-standard dialect. They suggested that the challenges of teaching in classrooms with children of cultural and linguistic diversity are: (1) meeting the needs of young second language learners, (2) language development in bilingual preschool children, (3) features of the effective preschool program, (4) assessment of bilingual children (5) family support/partnership/roles of parents, and (6) preparing teachers for early childhood programs of linguistic and cultural diversity. Garcia and McLaughlin (1995) suggested several ingredients that address these challenges. These ingredients are: (a) personal commitment, (b) knowledge of what makes a difference, and (c) educational leadership. It is difficult to have the commitment of educators of young children to bridge children's different home cultures and languages with their developmentally appropriate programs. At the same time, many educators are not familiar with or have not experienced

diversity and might not have had adequate training in teacher preparation programs. Educators not only need to apply effective observation and curricula, they also need to reflect on their experiences, construct new meanings and seek reinterpretation in order to better understand children's development and be supportive teachers. Teachers also need to appreciate differences in communicative strategies and understand both the linguistic and ethnographic facets of speech behavior (Saracho & Spodek, 1995). Finally, but importantly, educators need to the commitment and to take action. Educators need action to transmit the knowledge, develop skills, and provide advocacy for better services for children and families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

In a study by Johnson, Lee, and Templeton (2003), they discussed challenges in the early childhood education environment, which are caused partially from cultural and linguistic diversity. The challenges identified by their participants, teachers of young children, were (a) lack of family involvement, (b) lack of opportunities for professional development, and (c) lack of curriculum and assessment. The challenges are grouped into the three major levels of system, professional, and family. They used Brofenbrenner's (1995) social system theory as a framework to interpret the challenges identified by participants.

At the family level, represented by the micro-system, the challenges from families referred to lack of participation in schools and lack of appropriate parenting skills. This

perception of parental non-participation may result from teachers' attitudes and training backgrounds, because teachers may hold inaccurate assumptions regarding parents' roles and expectations for young children. At the professional level, represented by the meso-system, participating teachers indicated that they need to learn more effective communication strategies with families and have training in diversity awareness, including understanding needs of children and families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. For the system level, represented by the exo-system, challenges include (a) lack of community resources, (b) lack of respect for the early childhood profession, and (c) administrative support. These challenges hinder the opportunity to provide quality service to diverse families.

Okagaki and Diamond (2000) illustrated the ways that cultural differences in parents' beliefs and practices may influence children's adjustment in an early childhood classroom, and they provided suggestions for educators responding to young children from diverse backgrounds as they make the transition between home and school. They described the differences in parents' cultural values, beliefs, and socialization goals, beliefs about development, parental roles and language influences. For example, cultural orientations affect how individuals view themselves in their parenting role (Okagaki, 2000). In a cross-national study of mothers of 20-month-old infants from Argentina, Belgium, France, Israel, Italy, Japan and the United States, the researcher (Bornstein, 1998) found that Japanese mothers were most

likely to relate their success of parenting to children's behavior. At the same time, Japanese mothers view failures of parenting as due to their lack of effort. The findings of this study reflected the Japanese culture, which places emphasis on being humble and the significance of working diligently. Another researcher (Chao, 1994) also showed how culture affects how parents view their roles. In contrast to European American mothers, the Chinese immigrant mothers believed that only mothers should care for young children. These mothers stressed the importance of training and teaching children. This concept of training, which derived from the Chinese traditional culture, has influenced Chinese mothers' ideas of their roles. In Chinese traditional culture, the notions of training are controlling and governing; however, they have positive connotation for Chinese. Chinese also regarded these factors as the responsibilities or requirements of teachers as well as parents (Chao, 1994; Ho & Kang, 1984). Another example refers to language influences; home language usage can have a profound effect on children's adjustments to early childhood programs (Okagaki & Diamond, 2000). Fernald and Morikawa (1993) found that American mothers put emphasis on teaching their children about objects around them, but Japanese mother paid attention to socializing their children's interpersonal skills at the same time that they were focusing on naming objects. Japanese mothers made use of naming objects with social interactions, such as "*Hai doozo.*" (I give it to you) (Fernald & Morikawa, 1993, p.653). Therefore, teachers and caregivers may want to ask parents from

diverse cultures how they can support parents' efforts, rather than telling parents what they ought to be doing (Okagaki & Diamond, 2000). Teachers, caregivers, and parents would be able to develop collaborations with the parents from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in class with sensitivity to parents' beliefs and practices (Ramsey, 1998). Additionally, understanding how these parents view their parenting roles and responsibility for children would help teachers and caregivers to understand parents' behaviors toward and expectations for their children better.

Tabors (1997) discussed activities in many early childhood education classrooms, such as activity time, book-reading time, snack and lunch time, outside time and circle time. She suggested several techniques that can help teachers facilitate second language preschoolers' learning during those activity times. One of the suggestions for book-reading time was to keep it short because non-English speaking children may have a hard time sitting for a long time to comprehend the story in English. Keeping the story time short will help children keep interests and gradually develop anticipation for book reading and discussion.

Hill, Stremmel, and Fu (2002) recommended several methods of understanding language of children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in order to build relationships of trust with these children. The methods suggested by Hill et al. were derived from the concept that children have "hundreds and hundreds of languages." This expression refers to the concept

that children speak in many other languages that are meaningful in the same way. Some of the methods suggested by Hill et al. include inviting children to create self-portraits, asking children to select an artifact, and helping children work collaboratively. They also pointed out that 3 to 4-year-olds may be comfortable with differences through repeated, supportive experiences, and they can learn acceptable ways to express their feelings when they need something, want to engage in activities, or when others hurt them. In relation to methods suggested by Hill et al., others have promoted anti-bias teaching and curriculum in multicultural classrooms. Anti-bias teaching requires critical thinking and problem solving by both children and teachers (Dermon-Sparks & A.B.C. Task Force, 1989). Teachers need to create opportunities for implementing an anti-bias curriculum in order to support non-English speaking children's learning and to develop white children's positive identity without promoting the idea of white superiority. Children in a multicultural classroom need opportunities to share their feelings and ideas in many ways and learn to respect each other's cultures and communication skills. The previous suggestion by Hill et al. and Dermon-Sparks provide appropriate guidance for teachers.

Teacher preparation to meet the challenges

Derived from the need to meet the challenge of cultural and linguistic diversity in early

childhood education, many researchers had been investigating teacher preparation and development. Shonkoff, Phillips, Board on Children Youth and Families, National Research Council & Institute of Medicine (2000) suggested that teachers need to be sensitive to the influences of culture in both choosing pedagogical strategies and the use and interpretation of assessment. They also stated that recognizing cultural differences in order to provide diverse services for early childhood intervention is an important practice and reflect the educators' cultural competence. However, most of the available teacher preparation material is conceptual rather than empirical (Shonkoff et al., 2000). Thus the research on cultural competence remains to be developed.

Several studies about developing student teachers' cultural awareness and competence in the United States are described in following paragraphs. Weisman and Garza (2002) examined whether one class about multicultural education will transform student teachers' attitudes toward diversity. The results of their research indicated that one multicultural class is not sufficient to improve student teachers' attitude towards valuing diversity. Weisman and Garza suggested that student teachers should be offered opportunities to reflect and articulate their beliefs and experiences. For instance, how will the student teachers' teaching experience influence their attitudes? What specific activities and experiences best support their growth and understanding? Some studies supported the need for the opportunity for reflection among

student teachers. Rust (1999) stated that conversation and telling story sustain teacher learning and inquiry. These studies suggested that providing student teachers with chances to reflect on their teaching experiences in a classroom with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds is a needed approach for future study about student teachers' attitude and competence. Moreover, Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont & Stephens (2003) also claimed that the reflective process helps students "make sense of their experiences in a way that will foster their development of mature understanding of the relationship of individual responsibility to major social issues" (p. 245).

Identifying teachers' experiences and reflections on their teaching was necessary to explore the phenomenon of multicultural teaching as experienced by the teachers. This argument was based on Vygotsky's idea regarding the role of language in the development of thought. McMahon (1997) suggested that teachers need multiple opportunities with language use to document their thinking to provide distance between teaching and later reflection (p. 199), as well as to develop higher order thinking. John Dewey regarded teaching as a learning process embedded in experiences and dynamic interactions with students. This learning process leads to construction and reconstruction of the knowledge of self and teaching, this adding credence to the notion that reflection comprises an important source of data on teachers' experiences. In addition, Vygotsky and John Dewey both believed that people construct

knowledge with the intention of making sense of their own experiences through the social interaction. Fu, Stremmel, and Hill (2002) stated that competence in teaching is not merely defined by action and activity, but by the ability to generate knowledge through theorizing, questioning, wondering, and discovering. In order to capitalize on these though process, the study used detailed interviews to gather teachers' reflections on their experiences.

One of the factors that limits the opportunity becoming open to diverse cultures is the context in which the teacher was regarded in which he or she lived. Cockrell, Placier, Cockrell, and Middleton (1999) found most student teachers in teacher preparation programs were from white and middle class. This seemed to indicate that student teachers have social and cultural gaps in the life experiences and knowledge of about values, beliefs, and behaviors of persons from cultures that are different form their own backgrounds. Cockrell et al. argued that it is necessary to use new strategies in recruiting teachers from diverse backgrounds and to develop better approaches to prepare teachers for working with diverse population. They conducted a two-year action research study with a focus group of 128 students in a teacher preparation program to learn more about student teachers' identities, experiences and beliefs. In the study, most teachers were white and about two-thirds of them were female. The findings were analyzed in four categories: (1) diversity experiences, (2) relationships between culture and schooling, (3) diversity versus multiculturalism, and (4) how to do multicultural education. In

the first category of diversity experiences, they found that students had little contact with people different from themselves. One student said, “*I only saw diversity in the high school cafeteria once a week when they served foods from different countries*” (Cockrell et al., 1999, p.355). In the findings of the category: relationships between cultural and schooling, the researchers considered three emergent themes: (a) school as cultural transmitter, (b) school as cultural mediator, and (c) school as cultural transformer. In the category of diversity versus multiculturalism, the conversations in the study showed that students had different perceptions of the meanings of diversity and multiculturalism. In the category of how to implement multiculturalism, the finding showed that some student participants said they would approach an informative, how-to method, focusing on content integration, changes in methods of teaching and learning knowledge about “other” cultures. Some students said that they want to use a challenging approach such as practicing and seeing changes in teaching beliefs or practicing role-reversal activities. However, some said that they need a slow and personal approach which indicated they do not want other people to tell them what they should do in a multicultural classroom.

The results also inspired the researchers to ask several questions, such as (a) how teacher preparation programs address the issue of student teachers’ limited experiences in multicultural education, (b) how teacher educators more effectively find student teachers’ assumptions and

beliefs toward teaching in a multicultural classroom for critical examination, (e) how teacher education programs work together to develop student teachers' ability to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students, and (d) how to prepare teachers to live in a democratic, multicultural society. Therefore, the researchers of this study discussed several suggestions for future research and they were: (a) continuing the action research of students' attitudes and practice in multicultural education, (b) addressing the issue of students' limited experience, (c) continuing research and sharing of practices in helping student teachers critically examine their assumptions and beliefs, and (d) sharing practice and change for teacher education program that prepare teachers to meet the challenge of cultural and linguist diversity in education.

Morales (2000) conducted a case study of 23 university students in an early childhood education course on cultural diversity. The students were from various cultural backgrounds: Hispanic (57%), Asian (17%), Anglo (13%), African American (9%) and Filipino (4%).

Twenty-two were females and one was male. The course lasted for 10 weeks and the class met once a week for 3.5 hours. The purposes of the study were (a) to examine how to help teachers to develop an understanding of diversity issues, and (b) to build competence working with children and families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The Developmentally and Culturally Appropriate Practice (DCAP) Teacher Preparation Model developed by Hyun (1995), notions of multicultural education, and concept of the anti-bias education were

implemented in the course. The researcher used pre and post- surveys and analyzed students' reflections to examine the effects from the course. The results suggested that students recognized that they had increased understanding of cultural diversity issues and they felt that they had positive experiences in the course. The author reported that students from the course gained an understanding that teachers learn and appreciate cultural diversity if they start by knowing their own cultures, personal biases and have an understanding of children in classroom. Students in the multicultural class also recognized that children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds need language to defend themselves in difficult situations. Based on the researcher's study with providing prospective teachers varied opportunities to explore issues of cultural diversity, she indicated that preservice and inservice teachers need to made meanings of their fieldwork experiences in order to expand their thinking and to find creative ways to work with children and families. These issues of cultural diversity include teachers' awareness of cultural diversity, knowledge of teachers' own cultural backgrounds, children's socialization and racism, and how to incorporate children's prior knowledge and home culture into their teaching. Morales (2000) believed that learning through inquiry, reflection, active participation, collaboration, and meaningful fieldwork experiences is a constructive way for teachers to empower their competence to work effectively and sensitively with children and families from diverse cultural and linguistic groups.

Gutierrez-Gomez (2002) used a similar research method to examine teacher preparation for multicultural classrooms and she indicated that there will be continuous need for improving teacher preparation for multicultural classrooms. At the same time, educators and researchers will need to have dialogues about teachers' learning experiences in the field. These experiences could be incorporated into the courses for teacher preparation and they can add insight into changes needed in courses.

Researchers cited in the literature review provided support for my planned use of a qualitative research design to study teachers' experiences in classrooms with cultural and linguistic diversity. Using a qualitative method provide an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their experiences (Cockrell et al., 1999; Deering & Stanuz, 1995; Goodwin, 1997; Gutierrez-Gomez; 2002; Hunstinger, Ching & Lee, 2000; Hyun, 1995; Morales, 2000; Pohan, 1996; Rust, 1999; Shonkoff et al., 2000; Weizeman & Gaza, 2002). For example, teacher educators, preservice or inservice teachers, need opportunities to reflect upon their own funds of knowledge, explore their attitudes and beliefs, and extend their repertoires of skills and strategies that form the underpinnings of their work (Rust, 1999). At the same time, future researchers should provide inquiry opportunities for preservice teachers. Preservice teachers should be given many opportunities to engage in reflection and to articulate their beliefs, misconceptions, prejudices and hidden assumptions (Goodwin, 1994). Through this research

opportunity, researchers will be able to contribute suggestions for preparing teachers who will be competent to meet the challenges of linguistic and cultural diversity in early childhood education.

Teacher-child relationships

I also reviewed literature that emphasized the significance of the teacher-child relationship (de Kruif, William, Ridley, & Wakely, 2000; Howes & Smith, 1995; Pianta, Nimetz & Bennett, 1997) because my study focuses, in part, on how teachers understand the needs of children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, how they build relationships with them, their perceived experiences of forming these relationships and what these experiences mean to themselves. What follows are descriptions and discussion of three studies about teacher-child interaction.

The first one is mother-child relationships, teacher-child relationships, and school outcomes in preschool and kindergarten (Pianta, Nimetz & Bennett, 1997). The purpose of that study was to examine relationships between measures of child-mother and child-teacher relationships and to predict their influences on early school outcomes. The sample included 55 children in a preschool program. The mean of the children's ages was 4 years and 3 months. Sixty-nine percent of the children was African American and the 31% was Caucasian. There were 33 boys and 22 girls in the sample. Children who were selected to be in study had

developmental risk or potential risk in some areas, such as family income, mothers' education, family stress, cognitive development, motor development, or behavior problems. All children were from families with incomes twice lower than the poverty level. The data were collected for two years. The results of Pianta's study showed that mother-child relationships characterized as behavior problems with control formed teacher-child relationships that were categorized as insecure, conflicting and dependent. On the other hand, mother-child relationships that grouped as mutual and positive were correlated with teacher-child relationships characterized as secure. The results also showed that mother-child relationships were related to a number of school outcome variables, such as work habits, competence and frustration tolerance. The results of regression analyses showed that more positive teacher-child relationships predicted higher Boehm scores. Higher competence in mother-child interaction predicted higher child competence, lower rates of child behavior problems in kindergarten, and higher Boehm scores in preschool.

A study about teacher behavior in child care was conducted by Howes and Smith (1995). The researchers examined the relationships among child care quality, teacher behavior; children's play activities, emotional security and cognitive activity in child care. The sample consisted of 840 children (435 girls) and the ranges of children's age were 10 to 70 months. Sixty-six percent of the groups was from European American and 34% percent was African

American. Children were randomly selected from classrooms in 150 center based, licensed child care programs in Florida. The researchers tested the prediction that differences in children's cognitive activities could be directly or indirectly influenced by child care quality, positive social interaction with teachers, children's play activities, and attachment security with their child care teachers. The results of Howes' study indicated that European American children experienced more positive interaction than did African American children and younger children had more positive interaction more than did older ones. Moreover, 15% to 30% of the variability in children's cognitive activities could be predicted from positive social interaction with teachers, attachment security, and participation in creative play activities.

A study about classification of teachers' interaction behaviors in early childhood classroom was conducted by de Kruif, McWilliam, Ridley and Wakely (2000). The researchers applied the Teaching Styles Rating Scale (TSRS) (McWilliam, Scarborough, Bagby, & Sweeney, 1998) to rate on the observation of teachers' interaction behaviors. Cluster analysis was used to analysis the data. The researchers were interested in investigating whether teachers could be categorized into different groups according to their interaction behavior with young children in an early childhood classroom. There were eight interaction behavior patterns. Directive interaction behaviors included in the study were redirecting, introducing, following, and informing. Responsive interaction behaviors were elaborating, acknowledging, praising and

affect. As well, the researchers examined the relationship between these patterns and child care quality. Finally, the researchers investigated whether the demographic variables of teachers, such as age, race and years in the field, influenced their patterns.

Participants in this study were 63 teachers in 17 child care centers in central North Carolina. The centers were selected from the criteria of center size and service for the children's age range. The target age of children in this study was 12 to 36 months old. Four observers were trained to use the TRSR scale. An observer spent 15 minutes writing notes about a teacher's interaction behaviors with children as described on the TSRS at three different times during the morning (8:00, 9:00, and 10:00 AM). At the end of morning, an observer circled the numbers of items in the TSRS that best depicted the teachers' observed interaction behaviors with children. Cluster analysis conducted in this study showed that there were four clusters. The first one was the Average Group; 24 teachers in this cluster obtained average rating in all TSRS categories. The second one was the Elaborative Group; 11 teachers in this cluster had extremely low scores on redirects, but were extremely high in responsive variables such as elaborating, praising and affecting. The third was the Control Group; 18 teachers in this group had extremely low ratings on all clustering variables. The fourth group was the Nonelaborative Group, in which 10 teachers had average ratings on redirecting and elaborative interaction behaviors. Differences among groups were also found for teachers'

scores on classroom environmental quality. For example, controlling teachers were in classrooms with lower scores on quality of the classroom environment, compared to the classrooms of teachers in other clusters. Clusters were also compared on teachers' demographic variables and the results showed that there were no differences attributable to teachers' ages, races and years of experience working in the field.

Child-adult relationships play a significant role in several areas of early childhood development, including emotional development, self-control, cognitive performance, and language development. Parents and teachers are significant adults for young children in preschool, because children spend most time with them. Many studies have shown that child-parent and child-teacher relationships influence young children's peer relations (Elicker, Englund, & Sroufe, 1992; Howes, 1994) as well as emotional development and competencies in schools (Ladd & Birch, 1997; Pianta & Harbers, 1996). Pianta, Nimetz and Bennett (1997) also stated that young children are sensitive to relationships and that the relationships built up through social interaction also affect children's performance in school. Relationships with adults are also predictors of behavior problems and psychopathology (Campbell, 1994; Greenberg, Speltz, & DeKleyn, 1993; Toth & Cicchetti, 1996). Moreover, teacher child relationships are an important indicator for school-related outcomes (Howes, 1994; Howes & Smith, 1995; Pianta, Nimetz, & Bennett, 1997).

The review of literature on teacher-child relationships not only provided support for the importance of the present study, but it also revealed some new areas that needed attention. Previous researchers have not examined the aspect of teachers' experiences and reflections upon the process of forming these relationships. Previous researchers have not examined the influence of teacher-child relationships on teachers and how the reflection on the experiences changes teachers' interaction with children. Another problem is that previous researchers did not describe teacher-child relationships in a dynamic culturally and linguistically diverse setting and did not attempt to describe styles of teacher-child relationships other than the styles based on the attachment theory (Reigle, 2004).

Based on previous findings, I concluded that researching details of teachers' experiences in working with diverse children is a need. In addition, using a qualitative method, particularly phenomenology, helped me to understand this phenomenon of teachers' experiences in working with young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Therefore, guided by my research questions and suggestions from previous research, I sought to document common themes of teachers' experiences.

Theoretical and Philosophical Foundations

Socio-cultural theory

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (1978) and John Dewey's philosophy (1938) have

influenced my perspectives on teaching and provided a foundation for my study. Both Vygotsky and Dewey regarded teaching as a learning from the experience and from the interactions with those with whom you work. This learning process leads to construction and reconstruction of the knowledge of self and teaching.

According to Vygotsky's social-cultural theory, cognition is a profoundly social phenomenon. He regarded language as a critical bridge between the social world and individual mentality. The focus of language tools and collaborations among adults and children in Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory inspired early childhood educators to examine contexts and processes in early childhood classrooms. For instance, educators would think, not only about children's activities, but also about children's previous experience and cultural backgrounds and the meanings those experiences had for their activities.

Winsler (2003) stated that Vygotskian socio-cultural theory is needed now more than ever before, because it helps educators appreciate, embrace and respond pedagogically to the increasing ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity of today's early childhood classrooms. In other words, the theory provides foundations for early childhood teachers to understand children from diverse backgrounds. By doing this, teachers would be able to plan better ways to interact with and scaffold these children.

Vygotsky's (1978) ideas about the role of language in the development of thought have

also been applied widely in teacher education. These ideas are: (a) knowledge is constructed as the result of language use; (b) higher order mental functions are social and cultural; and (c) learning is accomplished when a more knowledgeable other provides instruction within the learner's zone of proximal development (ZPD). Based on his ideas of the role of language, McMahon (1997) suggested that teachers need "multiple opportunities with language use to document their thinking to provide distance between teaching and later reflection, and to develop higher order thinking" (p. 199). Opportunities for various language usages include encouraging dialogue, sharing reflection of teaching experiences, and recording the development of ideas. Therefore to promote higher order thinking, teacher educators need to provide various, cooperative, social, and reflective opportunities for teachers to construct meaning through language with the assistance of a more knowledgeable other (Manning & Payne, 1993; Maynard, 2001; McMahon, 1997; Samaras & Gismondi, 1998).

John Dewey

Dewey's philosophies of education, school and social progress, images of teachers, and experience and reflective thinking provided a foundation for my study. I have been motivated by Dewey's philosophy to focus on researching teachers' experiences with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, what influences teachers experiences and the influences of these experiences on teaching strategies and beliefs.

According to Dewey (1961), school is primarily a social institution that extends experience from the home and brings a form of community life. School is a place that presents real life for children. Real life includes experiences from children's homes, neighborhoods and communities. School continues the activities with which children are familiar in homes, and broadens the experiences connected with home life. Dewey believed that teachers play important roles in presenting real life and extended experiences for children. Teachers are not in schools to force certain ideas or to form certain behaviors, but to bring stimulation that will inspire children and help them respond appropriately to real world influences.

Dewey described teachers as scholars and students of the learning process (Wirth, 1966). He believed that school enriches children's learning experiences and supports their intellectual, ethical, emotional and spiritual growth. Teachers in school need to be sensitive to children's needs and conditions so that they are able to foster development. Dewey suggested that teachers have to obtain the "attitudes and skills" (Wirth, 1966, p.54) that would allow them to continue learning about teaching. In other words, teachers are also students of education.

Dewey's concept of experience provided a foundation for the significance of reflection. According to Dewey (1938), education is life itself, and learning comes through experience. However, Dewey claimed that not all experience is equal to education. People need to pay attention to the criteria of experience. Two criteria of experience are continuity and interaction

(Dewey, 1938). The concept of continuity involves the past or present one brings into development for the future experience. Through the continuity of experience, people will have physical, intellectual and emotional growth. The experience should have a moving power. Based on this criterion, educators have to judge what direction an experience is heading toward when teaching. The other criterion, interaction, is tied with continuity. People have interaction with objects and other human beings in the world continually. Therefore, educators need to consider thoughtfully the influence of interaction toward students' learning experiences. For example, the environment of a class could affect the interaction of children with each other and with teachers. In order to guide students appropriately and bring educative experiences to children and to themselves, good teachers need to reflect on their teaching.

Dewey (1961) viewed teaching and learning as a process of continual reorganization, reconstruction and transformation of understandings. He purported that learning is a reciprocal and collaborative process. The implication of his philosophy for teaching is that children need support to explore their world and discover knowledge as well as opportunities to learn alongside teachers and peers. Teachers are learners, researchers and children's partners.

Dewey's (1933) notion of reflection as a thought process derived from doubts and directed to a new inquiry has been a foundation for the practice of reflection in teacher education (Johnson 2002; Manning & Payne, 1993; Maynard, 2001; McMahan, 1997; Samaras

& Gismondi, 1998). Influenced by Dewey's notion of reflection, I sought to provide an opportunity for teachers in this study to reflect on their classroom experiences as a means for gaining insight into their experiences in teaching children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Go forth now and question. Ask and listen. The world is just beginning to open up to you.

Each person you question can take you into a new part of the world. The skilled questioner and attentive listener know how to enter into another's experience. If you ask and listen, the world will always be new. (Patton, 2002, p.340)

In order to understand teachers' experiences working with young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, the main tool I used for exploring my research questions was the phenomenological method. This method can serve as a tool for reflection, an in-depth narrative, and can be used to build a theory. Most importantly, experience is a key term in these diverse inquiries (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Muchmore, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Patton (2002) also suggested that in order to acquire such data, a researcher needs to "undertake in-depth interviews with people who have *directly* experienced the phenomenon of interest" (p. 104). Therefore, I applied in-depth semi-structured interviews with teachers to explore their experiences working with these children.

Before I explain the setting, procedure, and data analysis of the study in this chapter, I will first present the results of my pilot study, review its implications for the methodology of this study, and a brief introduction to the phenomenological method.

Results and Suggestions from My Pilot Study

For partial fulfillment of the requirements for my preliminary and comprehensive exam, I completed a ten-day (two school weeks) pilot study using both the phenomenological method and a quantitative research method. Conducting the pilot study not only brought a precious opportunity which enabled me to experience the process of conducting research prior to the dissertation, but it also helped me modify my dissertation design. Seidman (1998) stated that pilot studies assist researchers to discover whether their research design is thorough. The experiences of conducting the pilot study helped me to think more thoroughly for the design of my dissertation study.

Using the phenomenological method in my pilot study, I was able to have teachers describe their experiences in teaching young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Some of the descriptions were “interesting,” “different,” “happy,” “time consuming,” and “privileged.” Teachers also shared their experiences of relationships with young children from these backgrounds. Their roles in teacher-child interactions revealed that they served as helpers, learners, and mediators. From interviews and dialogue with teachers, I also discovered that teachers were aware of certain issues and challenges that were related to cultural and linguistic diversity in early childhood education.

The teachers’ reflections on their experiences during my pilot study stimulated me to start

to find themes of teachers' experiences with instructing young children from diverse backgrounds. These descriptions motivated me to look into more detailed examples of their experiences, examine the influences on these experiences, investigate the resources that teachers have or need for helping young children, learn more about how to be a competent teacher in a classroom with cultural and linguistic diversity, and discover the changes that need to be made for teaching and interaction with children. These findings would not have been possible without using a phenomenological method. With a longer research period, with my revised research questions, and with improved methods of data collection and analysis from the pilot study, I was able to have more data and find more themes and inferences in this study. The suggestions for data collection that evolved from the pilot study included: (a) retention of the phenomenological method, (b) retention of in-depth semi-structured interviews, and (c) discussions with teachers that are focused on teachers' experiences with first-year children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Phenomenological Method

Concept of the method

The main tool for exploring my research questions was the phenomenological method. This method involves using reflection, an in-depth narrative study, and can be used to build theory. Experience is a key term in these diverse inquiries (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 2000;

Muchmore, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The method is also the one that focuses on “descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience what they experience” (Patton, 2002, p. 107) .The researcher serves as the primary instrument and collects data through observations, interviews, and documents. Johnson and Christensen (2004) pointed out that phenomenology refers to the description of one or more individuals’ consciousness and experience of a phenomenon, such as “the death of a loved one, viewing oneself as a teacher, the act of teaching, or the experience of being a member of a minority group” (p. 364). Van Manen (2002) stated that a phenomenological method is a deeply reflective inquiry into the meaning of human life. The purpose of phenomenological research is to look at the essence of participants’ experiences (Creswell, 1998). It can provide rich and relevant details of a phenomenon and an adequate description of the experiences (Sprenkle & Moon, 1996).

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness is comparable to validity and reliability in quantitative research. As such, however, Creswell (1998) explained that it is impossible to think about validity in a qualitative study from a variety of different perspectives because qualitative researchers use data collection techniques that are implemented within a variety of transitions. I would also like to use the terms suggested by Anfara, Brown, and Mangione

(2002), i.e., that the purpose of qualitative research is to bring credibility, dependability, transferability, and conformability.

Qualitative research must meet the criteria of “quality and rigor” (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002, p.30). There are several strategies that are employed to build the credibility, dependability, transferability, and conformability in qualitative research. For example, prolonged engagement in the field, using peer debriefing and examination, triangulation, member checks, providing thick description, using a code-record strategy, and practicing reflexivity are strategies that could be employed to demonstrate a research’s rigor and trustworthiness.

Applications to my proposed study

I decided to use a phenomenological research method, because the main focus of my study was to learn about teachers’ experiences in working with young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The study was designed to describe teachers’ experiences in the natural setting of the classroom; the phenomenological method attempts to capture participants’ experiences in order to generate meaning from stories of these experiences. An important aspect of using phenomenological method to collect and analyze data is acknowledging that reality is what people imagine or perceive it to be. Douglas (1985) signified the importance of these subjective views when he stated that internal ideas, feelings,

and motives are important because they make up the essence of humans, separating us from being little more than a mere living organism.

I identified the themes that emerged from the participants' stories, incorporating my observations via field notes and my research journal and reflecting on the literature. Consequently, the interpretations that emerged allowed me to situate the participants' stories, my observations, and existing literature into a new, broader story that will provide new insight for teachers and teacher educators.

Procedures

Study procedure

I conducted the present study in the Day Care and Development Center number 1 and 2 (Called D1 and D2), located in southwest Virginia during Virginia Tech's spring semester of 2005. Four teachers in the D1 and two teachers in the D2 were interviewed about their experiences of working with children from diverse cultural backgrounds. I met with the director of the D1 and the research director in the D2 to introduce my research project and asked for permission of D1 and D2 as research sites. After obtaining their permission and the approved amendments of my IRB (Appendix A & B), letters (Appendix C) were then sent to teachers inviting them to participate in the study. I explained the present study and consent forms to the teachers by meeting with each one of them. During this meeting, each teacher had

an opportunity to discuss their concerns and questions and was asked to sign the consent form (Appendix D).

After obtaining teachers' consent, interviews of teachers and observations in their classrooms occurred for the duration of three weeks in spring semester 2005. I conducted semi-structured interviews with each teacher twice a week. Each interview was approximately 30 minutes. I interviewed six teachers for a total of eighteen hours over a three week period. The interviews were audiotaped by a digital voice recorder with the participants' permission and then transcribed to be reviewed and analyzed. The goal of the interviews was to understand teachers' experiences in a classroom with cultural and linguistic diversity. I also conducted at least two hours of observation on teachers' interactions with young children in their classrooms twice a week. The tools for data collection included interviews with teachers, observations, field notes, a researcher's journal, and occasionally photographs which assisted in the collection of information and allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of this topic. Regarding photographing, I only took photos of a particular classroom setting or curriculum materials (such as posters or settings that help children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds or help you and children learn about different cultures). I did not take pictures of children and teachers.

Choice of Samples and Settings

I interviewed six teachers at two child care and development centers. The choices of these teachers were based on the criterion sampling strategy (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002).

According to Patton (2002), criterion sampling is choosing participants that meet some criterion. The underlying idea of sampling strategies for qualitative research study is to select “information-rich cases-cases from which one can learn a great deal about matters of importance and therefore worthy of in-depth study” and “lend credibility to the study” (Patton, 2002, p.242). It is essential that all participants experience the phenomenon being studied.

Creswell (1998) said that “Criterion sampling works well when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon” (p.118). The participating teachers in this study have had at least one year experience of working with young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In each of the classes at least one fifth of the students were from diverse backgrounds.

The classrooms and teachers in research site D1 were chosen for the study because of the director’s suggestion and because of my relationships with the teachers as I had been a frequent visitor in the center. The director suggested that the classes present a diversity of children’s cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The process of conducting my pilot study with the teachers in D1 helped me to build closer relationships and trust with the teachers. These positive

relationships assisted me to have deeper discussions with them during my study, because they will feel comfortable enough to share their reflections with me. This sampling strategy of building strong relations with the participants is suggested by Rossman and Raillis (2003) as well. Similarly, the research director of research site D2 recommended the teachers who are in one of the classes that present a diversity of children's cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Data Collection

I interviewed six teachers twice a week and observed in their classrooms two mornings a week for the duration of three weeks during Spring semester 2005. The tools for data collection in this phenomenological research included (a) interviews with teachers, (b) participant observation, (c) field notes, (d) the researcher's journals, and (e) occasionally the photographing of classroom environments.

Semi-structured interviews

We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attached to what goes on in the world .We have to ask people questions about those things.(Patton, 2002, p.341)

To understand teachers' experiences working with these children and their meaning making of the experiences, I conducted semi-structured interviews with each teacher using interview guides (Appendix E & F) twice a week for three weeks. The interview guides not

only provided topics to discuss with interviewees and offered areas of interests to explore in the later parts of interviews, but also made sure that “ interviewers carefully use the limited time available in an interview situation” (Patton, 2002, p. 343). I first used interview guide I to learn more about teachers’ background information and their values. Then, interview guide II was used to follow up after completing the interviews with guide I. Interviewees were also encouraged to address anything that I did not bring up at the end of each interview. Each interview section was approximately 30 minutes. The interviews were audiotaped by a digital voice recorder with the participants’ permission and then transcribed to be reviewed and analyzed. The goal of the interviews was to understand teachers’ experiences in a classroom with cultural and linguistic diversity. Seidman (1998) said, “At the heart of interviewing research is an interest in other individuals’ stories because they are of worth” (p. 3).

The interview guide helped me in using questions to guide our conversation and to explore teachers’ experiences. Rossman and Rallis (2003) suggested that the interview guide assists researchers to discover participants’ meaning and point of views. The questions in my interview guides for the study were related to teachers’ reflections on teaching young children from diverse backgrounds. In particular, the processes of working with these young children were addressed, reflecting the influential factors on these experiences and the impact of these experiences on them. The questions were also designed to explore answers for my research

questions. I also created a chart that showed how the interview questions reflected my research questions. (Appendix G). Some questions in the interview guides were adapted from Stremmel (2000).

In order to elicit more information from the six interviewed teachers and obtain an in-depth understanding of their experiences, I constructed and used appropriate probing questions. I also sought to increase my skills for the semi-structured interview as suggested by my co-chairs in the preliminary examination meeting. I encouraged teachers to elaborate on their experiences and to tell their stories as fully as possible. By using probing questions, I might have gotten more detailed and rich data and thus gain in-depth understanding teachers' experiences. Some possible probing questions suggested by Kvale (1996) are: (a) Could you tell me a story about this? (b) Could you give me more detailed description of what happened?, and (c) Do you have further examples of this? Some interview skills that are recommended by Powney and Watts (1987) for probing are (a) eye contact, especially an inquiry glance, (b) an expectant silence, and (c) repeating back the interviewee's own words. In addition, I remained flexible in terms of the questions listed on my semi-structured interview guides in order to change or form new questions for further inquiry.

I applied interview techniques as recommended by Denzin and Lincoln (2003). These techniques emphasized the interviewees' usage of language and nonverbal cues. In terms of the

usage of language, interviewers and interviewees both need to have the same understanding of certain specific terms. As an interviewer, I needed to be aware of language interviewees use in “delineating the type of questions: board, narrow, leading, intrusive, and so on” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 86). I periodically assessed my communication with interviewees by asking them to restate the question in their own words. As for awareness of nonverbal cues, I carefully paid attention to the teachers’ body movements, gestures, interpersonal spaces, lengths of silence in conversations, and pitch of voices.

Participant observation and field notes

The only way for us to really know what another person experiences is to experience the phenomenon as directly as possible for ourselves. (Patton, 2002, p. 107)

One of the tools that I used for data collection in my study was participant observation. The observations were conducted not only to add context to interviews and build credibility, but also to experience the teachers’ world. Participant observation occurs when a researcher spends extended time with the group as an insider (Johnson & Christensen, 2000), and participant observers want to be considered as part of the natural setting (Pellegrini, 1996). Wolcott (1995) also recommended that researchers in educational research should attempt to become more “active” participant observer in the study field (p.195).

I chose participant observation as one of tools for data collection because of several

reasons. First, the role of participant observer in the research provided opportunities to become familiar with teachers and children. Becoming a part of classroom life helped me build closer relationships with them and they became more open to the discussions. Furthermore, the role of participant observer in the classroom not only helped me engage in the setting, but also enabled me to see teachers' perspectives more thoroughly and precisely. In addition, as a teacher of young children, I had experienced that a classroom's detailed dynamics are hard to understand if I cannot be actively engaged in its flow. Moreover, it is difficult to observe without participating since children naturally want to interact with adults and the teachers tend to ask my participation with or help with children from these backgrounds. In addition particularly my help with children from Asian backgrounds are need in classrooms because I am originally from Taiwan and my cultural background is similar to those Asian children. Finally, conducting the observation added additional context of interviews with teachers and built the credibility of the study. Patton (2002) recommended that observations "provide a check on what is reported in interview; interview, on the other hand, permits the observer to go beyond external behaviors to explore feelings and thoughts" (p. 306). Therefore, I used participant observation as one of tools for data collection and triangulation.

I took field notes while participating and observing in teachers' classrooms. Field notes refer to written, or sometime audio, observations that "ethnographers collect as part of their

field studies” (Pellegrini, 1996). However, note taking while participating could be difficult, so I used a combination of actual notes and head notes (Lahman, 2000). Head notes are mental notes and notes that are transcribed at the next possible moment. Lahman (2000) suggested that “these notes are not considered weaker than observational notes and added a richness of synthesis that the observational notes did not have” (p. 37). I also took time after each classroom visit and after the interviews to write head notes and reflect in my research journals on the overall experiences.

Researcher’s journal

Another way to gather data and to be reflexive was by developing my personal research journal. Journaling has been considered as a powerful tool for collecting data in qualitative research. Journaling provides space for planning inquiry and for explaining belief systems. Composing a researcher’s journal gives researchers time to record their reflective thoughts about their attempts to research interests or beliefs, and participant’s beliefs. Moreover, a journal is where researchers ask, discover or generate new questions for further inquiry in a research study. I used a researcher’s journal as a tool to collect data that support my ability to understand teachers’ experiences with teaching young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. During the pilot study, I reflected in my journal that teachers’ shared with me more on how they have helped children from diverse backgrounds than what

motivated them to do so. In this reflection, I asked myself whether I need to reframe my interview questions so that teachers would understand more clearly or have opportunities to reflect on what influenced their actions and experiences. The process of keeping a research journal helped me to discover questions and gather more data in my pilot study.

The researcher's journal additionally provided me a chance to reflect on what I learned, what I knew, and how I knew the phenomenon being studied. Reflexivity focuses on the importance of "self-awareness, cultural consciousness and ownership of one's perspectives" (Patton, 2002, p.64). This process of reflection also brought triangulation to the inquiry in this study. Therefore, I kept using a research journal as a tool to collect data and to be reflexive in this dissertation study.

Confidentiality

In order to protect participants' privacy and hold in confidence what they shared with me, I used pseudonyms for the research sites, teachers and some children that teachers mentioned in the reports. The data in my study were used for academic purposes only. Only the researcher and the committee members had access to the data. In addition, I was the only person who transcribed the data.

Trustworthiness

I used several strategies to establish the study's trustworthiness. My objective was to describe the participants' experiences as precisely as possible. Trustworthiness was built through simultaneous data collection via teacher interviews, observation, field notes, a researcher's journal and other strategies such as triangulation, member checks, data analysis, reflexivity, audit trail, peer debriefings, coding schemes, purposeful sampling and thick descriptions (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). The diverse methods of collecting data helped me to provide thick and accurate descriptions of the teachers' experiences. I also conducted member checks. I took the data and analysis back to teachers for discussion of the results in order to elicit their opinion and further inquiry. Using the code-recode strategy was another method I applied. I read the data three times, and I read the transcripts of each interview the first time to have an overall idea of the content. I re-read the transcripts and searched for themes in the interviews. I designed an analysis chart that put the original raw data on the left side, and put my reflection and search for themes on the right side. During the process of searching for themes, I reminded myself of the research questions and theoretical perspectives guiding my research. The final review of the transcriptions was used to find examples of different themes. I also considered adding or deleting a theme, and forming new questions for the next interview in the stage of final review. Peer examinations occurred as my

committee chairs and members gave me feedback on findings. By reflecting on what I learned in the research field and by journaling, I was able to practice reflexivity. Long term observation at the research setting was another method that I employed to increase the conformability. I also conducted purposeful sampling to enhance the rigor of the study. Finally, I clarified my own position in the study. The clarification of this position allows examination of researchers' bias and increases the study's conformability (Merriam, 1998; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). I applied this strategy by presenting both in the choices of my theoretical foundations and my statement of personal experiences.

In summary, trustworthiness is "achieved by the systematic collection of data, using acceptable research procedures and allowing procedures and findings to be open" to audiences. (Galyean, 2004, p.66). Guba and Lincoln (1989) developed four criteria as an index to establish the quality of qualitative inquiry. These four criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. According to Schwant (2001), credibility can "address the issue of the inquirer providing assurances of the fit between respondent's views of their life ways and the inquirers' reconstruction and representation of same" (p. 258). Transferability concerns researchers' responsibility for "providing readers with sufficient information on the case studied such that readers could establish the degree of similarity between the case studied and the case to which findings might be transferred" (p.258). Other readers or researchers can

“engage in reasonable but modest speculation about whether findings are applicable to other cases with similar circumstances” (p. 107) when they are provide by sufficient details about the circumstances of the situation or cases. Dependability focuses on ensuring the research process was “logical, traceable, and documented” (p.258). Conformability concerns with establishing the links among assertions, findings, and interpretations.

The strategies mentioned above were employed to build credibility, dependability, transferability, and conformability of this study. The following table outlines the strategies employed to meet credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability in this study.

Table 1

Strategies Employed for Establishing Trustworthiness of This Study

Qualitative terms for assessing research	Strategies employed
quality and rigor	
Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prolonged engagement in the research sites-three weeks • Peer debriefing-obtained feedback to findings from committee chairs • Data and method triangulations (interviews, documents, observations, researcher’s journal) • Member checks-obtained feedback from teachers
Transferability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided thick descriptions of

Qualitative terms for assessing research	Strategies employed
quality and rigor	<p>participants, interview context , and the findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purposeful sampling technique-teachers had at least one year experiences working with these children and there were minimal one fifth of these children in their class.
Dependability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit trails-kept accurate records, tapes of interviews, transcriptions of interviews, photos of artifacts, and other forms of data management • Code-recoded strategy-conducted coding schemes • Data and method triangulations • Peer examinations-feedback from committee chairs for findings and the report
Conformability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data and method triangulations • Practice reflexivity-reflection on the research process and findings in my researcher's journal • Clarification of researcher's position-choice of my theoretical foundations , my statement of personal experiences, roles of a researcher

Roles of the researcher

Enter into the world. Observe and wonder. Experience and reflect. To understand a world you must become part of that world while at the same time remaining separate, a part of the apart from. (Patton, 2002, P.259)

A researcher is considered as a character inseparable from other participants in qualitative research (Merriam, 1998). I examined the multiple roles that might influence my interpretations of the findings. The role of participant observer in the research provided me opportunities to join teachers' classroom life. The role of participant observer was a marginal position and personally difficult to sustain (Merriam, 1998). In my pilot study, I felt distress in being in two roles in the setting because of desire for participating and collecting research data at the same time. In addition, the observed teachers might behave differently when I participated in activities in the classroom. However, having the role of participant observer in the classroom helped me engage in the setting and made meaning of this participation (Eisner, 1998). On the other hand, the role of being merely an observer in the classroom might also cause teachers to feel uncomfortable and this may affect their interaction with children. The mere presence of the observer in the setting could affect the climate of the setting, often creating a more formal atmosphere than is usually the case (Merriam, 1998).

The fact that I was a researcher whose first language is not English, but Mandarin, and

who is not from Euro-American background also had an effect on my research in several ways. It is still challenging for me to conduct a narrative analysis in a cultural and linguistic setting which is different from my own culture and language. Even though I am able to express myself clearly, and I am capable of conducting research in English, my understanding and use of English are not the same as that of my native language, Mandarin. However, my bi-lingual background enabled my understanding and consideration of teachers' difficulties when working with young children from different language and cultural backgrounds. I once was a non-native preschool teacher who tried to learn about children from Euro-American backgrounds or other diverse backgrounds in the US. It was beneficial to be both an outsider and insider during my research. Anthropologists have labeled the researcher's perspective of the etic, or outsider, perspective. They refer to the perspective of the participants as the emic, or insider, perspective (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Additionally, my familiarity with Asian cultures and the understanding of Mandarin contributed to exploration in teaching young children from Asian backgrounds and expand the depth of our interview conversation. Therefore, based on this perspective, I perceived this role as a unique asset.

On the other hand, the strength of this bi-lingual and bi-cultural role in the research could be a bias or limitation. Based on my experience as a non-native English teacher and researcher, I assumed that teachers might find challenges and changes in their teaching beliefs and

methods in a multicultural classroom. However, it might have been possibly to learn that they will not have both experiences or they will only have one of them, either challenges or changes. Therefore, I was open-minded to the coming data and reflexive in this study. Reflexivity is an interactive and cyclical phenomenon in which the qualitative researcher is open to the interplay of what is considered fact and opinion (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Data Analysis

Analysis finally makes clear what would have been most important to study, if only we had known beforehand. (Patton, 2002, p. 431)

A rich and meaningful analysis of the data would not be possible if analysis had been begun after all data were collected (Merriam, 1998). My data analysis started when I entered into the research field. There were three important components that I would like to present about how I analyzed data. They are analysis strategies, ongoing analysis, and data management.

Analysis strategies

To analyze the data from my transcriptions of interviews, I applied two strategies that are used commonly in educational research: narrative analysis and general thematic analysis. One reason I applied these two strategies was due to the purpose of my phenomenological study,

which was to understand teachers' experiences working with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The purpose of phenomenological studies is mainly to looking for "themes of meaning in participants' lives" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 276). Shaped by the genre of this study, I used thematic analysis to find themes of teachers' experiences. Another reason was because of the anticipated format for presenting findings. The format of the data I expected was stories of teachers' experiences with teaching young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds for each theme. Patton (2002) suggested that narrative analysis has concentrated on how to interpreting stories to reveal "social patterns through the lens of individual experiences" (p. 478). Additionally, at the heart of narrative analysis is "the ways humans experience the world" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000).

I read the entire transcript of each interview the first time to have an overall idea of the content. At the second time of review, I then re-read the transcripts to code and recode group codes to develop themes. I designed an analysis chart in which I put the original raw data on the left side and put my reflection and search for themes on the right side. Rossman and Rallis's (2003) suggestions for generating categories, themes and coding were applied in the analytic process of this study. They suggested that "looking for recurring words" from participants' descriptions and that "coding is the formal representation of categorizing and thematic analysis (p. 284). Therefore, I also developed code schemes in three phases in the

process of coding and searching for themes (Appendix H). The first coding was “simple” and “used four or five large categories initially” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 286). Then I recoded data, and refined and added codes. Moreover, during the process of searching for themes, I reminded myself of the research questions and theoretical perspectives guiding my research. Additionally, I kept in mind that “qualitative studies proved a blend of analyst and indigenous categorizations” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 283). Indigenous categories are from participants’ expression and they were often developed through inductive analysis. Analyst categories represent researchers’ views and are developed through deductive analysis. These categories are “developed through the literature or through previous experiences that are expressed in the conceptual framework” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 283). Therefore, during the process of the analysis for this study, I combined both inductive and deductive analyses to provide a balance between insiders and outsiders’ views. The final review of the transcriptions was used to find examples of different themes, to give consideration to adding or deleting a theme, and to form new questions for the next interview.

Ongoing analysis

As for ongoing analyses, in addition to analysis of my interview transcripts, I had continuous review and reflection of my field notes, audio-taped interviews with teachers, and

my personal journal. These reflections and decisions enabled me to shape further inquiry and to reform previous themes. The data collection and analysis actually happened at the same time. Lahman (2001) stated that this process is called the cyclical process of data collection. Some reflection and decisions were discussed with my advisors for insights. My reflections were incorporated a few important threads suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1998): (a) trying to make decisions that narrow the study, (b) developing analytic questions, (c) planning to pursue specific leads for the next data collection, (d) challenging my thinking, (d) writing analytical memos, (d) trying out ideas and themes with participants, (f) exploring literature and (g) playing with metaphors, analogies and concepts.

Data management

In regard to management of data, I applied several methods to organize my data, included using files folders for each participant's materials; recording interviews in digital recorder and saving them in computer files, and highlighting some content in my journals.

Summary

The study was designed to bring in-depth understanding of teachers' experiences with teaching young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It resulted in teachers' stories and helped to improve teacher education by providing information that can be used in preparing competent teachers who will be able to meet the challenges of linguistic and

cultural diversity in early childhood education. The qualitative methodology for this proposed study was necessary for the research in the field and the phenomenological method was applied. Data Collection occurred during Virginia Tech's Spring semester of 2005 for the duration of three weeks in the Day Care and Development Center 1 and 2, located in the southwest Virginia. Tools of data collection included weekly semi-structured interviews with six teachers, observations of their classroom interactions with children from these backgrounds, researcher's reflection journals, field notes and photos. Strategies of data analysis included narrative and thematic analysis, and ongoing analysis. The possible limitation of the proposed study might be situated in my researcher roles: A role that I have with past experiences of being a non-English speaking preschool teacher and being a participant observer in the research site. Therefore, I was open-minded to the data and I was reflexive.

Chapter Four: Findings, Interpretations and Reflection

In this study, I explored teachers' experiences working with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in a university town in southwest Virginia. The study relied upon the following methodological tools: in-depth interviews with six participants, observations, field notes, and researcher's journal. As I read and interpreted interview transcripts, and conducted member checks with teachers, I developed a comprehensive understanding of how the teachers made sense of their experiences. Based upon this inquiry and my understanding of the data, I also developed a descriptive profile of each teacher and I identified themes from across all the data. Five major themes are as follows: (a) Types of experiences (b) The interaction among experiences and changes in teaching strategies and self-perceptions (c) Teachers' relationships with these children, (d) Teachers' relationships with these parents, and (e) Common resources.

Some of following sections that present the themes are descriptive in nature, and need only a few examples from participants or field notes from observations to illuminate their meaning. On the other hand, other themes or sub-themes are more complex and descriptive of specific experiences or perspectives. In those cases, several quotations from participants or field notes are provided for an adequate description.

All interviews with these six teachers took place in southwest Virginia. Most interviews

took place in an administrative office or an empty classroom of two Child Day Care and Development Centers where the interviewees worked. (called Day Care and Development Center1 and 2 in this report). One interview took place in a teacher's home. All teachers had at least one of year such experience of working with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and such children composed at least one-fifth of the interviewees' current classrooms. In order to maintain their privacy, I offered the participants the option of being referred by a pseudonym in this dissertation. In response, three of them assigned themselves a pseudonym each, while the other three agreed to leave that responsibility to me. All in all, real names of the interviewees have not been used anywhere in this dissertation. I have also avoided using the names of children, who have been represented through symbols. I have also chosen to omit the children's cultures and countries from my descriptions as well as quotations, simply because I did not want my readers to come to that data with any cultural preconceptions and stereotypes. I also provided a summary table for the description of participants (See Table 1 in the end of this section of introduction to participants).

Introduction to the Participants

Before introducing the thematic findings of the interviews, it is essential to introduce the six participating teachers in this study. Their stories are presented below.

Married with a child, **Mary** is a young, Irish-American woman who has been employed as

a full-time toddler teacher in the Day Care and Development Center 1 for five years. When I interviewed her, she had five toddlers in her class from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds out of a total of seventeen students. Mary's passion is teaching young children, she believed that teaching young children helps her grow as a person, and she told me that she hopes to stay in the profession in the future. For instance, she develops her patience as she tries to teach toddlers.

Mary described herself as funny, loud, and honest. A description was validated in my observation of her class.

One child found a broken plastic bracelet and brought it to show Mary. Mary said, "Yeah, it is broken, but you know what, it could be an earring!" Instantly, she opened the ring, put it on herself as an earring, and then asked the child, "How do I look?" The child giggled.

(Field notes, 02/22/05)

On being asked what groups she identified herself with, Mary mentioned teachers, educators, Irish-Americans, Yankees, and women. Suggesting that her self-identification with these groups is apt to reflect her values, Mary went on to articulate the values with which she associated. She associated teachers and educators with patience and continuous learning. She believed that teachers need to have patience with young children, particularly those who do not

speak and understand or speak English. Regarding continuous learning, Mary said that she learns new things everyday as a teacher and feels obligated to improve aspects of her character and personality, such as patience.

She identified herself as an Irish American because it is her cultural and ethnic heritage and her family strongly followed that tradition. She merits this heritage for her sense of humor and caring personality. While viewing her strength and outspokenness as Yankee qualities, she traces her penchant for the equality of opportunities to her self-realization as a woman. The later trait has to do with her finding in life that women often do not get the same opportunities as men.

Mary's family heritage included contrasting views toward diversity. Mary mentioned that her father was rigid, but her mother was quite the opposite. Mary was taught by her mother that everyone is an individual and an individual is not seen by race or skin color. Despite the mutual differences, Mary's parents had a combined effect of making her an open-minded person who welcomed diversity. Nevertheless, Mary considered her mother's influence to be more positive and consistent with what she wanted to be. One story she shared with me about how her mother opened the door for an African American man in a store in Mississippi when she was a child. The man, however, was thrown out of the store by a store employee. Her mother had attributed the incident to racism and segregation practices in Mississippi. From this story, Mary

said that she came away with the lesson that race should not be a factor in how one treats the other and she learned to be an open-minded person.

Renee is in her early 20's and is single Euro-American woman. She has been working with Mary as a full time toddler teacher in the Day Care and Development Center 1 for almost two years. She is also a part-time student in a nursing school, and she is preparing for a career as to be a nurse. She described herself as compassionate, loving, caring and friendly person. Her friends considered her to be friendly as well. I also found that Renee is a compassionate, loving, caring and friendly. My classroom observations attested to Renee's self image.

During a circle time, Renee was reading a book, All about My Feeling, to the class. When reading the page about happiness, she told the class that I feel happy when I play with and help you all in class.

(Field note, 03/01/05)

Heather danced with children in a group movement time. One boy whose first language is not English stood out of the group and watched them dancing. Heather invited him to dance with a smile and by saying, "come, XXX (the child's name), let's dance" and reached her hand out for him. He smiled and held her hand, but did not dance.

(Field note, 02/17/05)

Renee identified herself simultaneously with educators and students. As a teacher of

young children, she understands the values and importance of the role teachers play in children's learning and growth. Renee believes that teachers are there to help and support children; and the greatest reward for her being a teacher is to be able to see children grow and develop. Since Renee is a student at a nursing school and plan to be a nurse in the future, she associates students as a group with the values of love and tender care; who believes that her studentship is her preparation to help other people as a nurse.

In terms of her family attitude toward diversity, Renee reported that she comes from a family that has a open attitude toward cultural diversity. Her family did not judge people by race or appearance. For example, her parents told her that she should feel free to befriend with people from other races and that different looking people are not inherently unfriendly. She also stated that she had family friends from China and India and she grew up in an environment with diverse cultural influences. These past experiences influenced her to be open to people and cultures from diverse backgrounds.

Tina is a middle-aged, African American woman who is married and has children. She had been working as a preschool teacher in a Head Start program for nineteen years. This is her third year working full time as a preschool teacher in the Day Care and Development Center 1. At the time of my interview with her, three of the fifteen children in her class were from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. She described herself as friendly, considerate and

loving. Features that manifested themselves, for instance, in the way she greeted the parents in the morning and her invitations to parents from minority cultural and linguistic backgrounds to the class to talk about their cultures to the children.

In response to my questions concerning her group identity, Tina mentioned that she viewed herself to be part of such professional groups, such as Head Start and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). She reported high joy and satisfaction working with Head Star, and she valued greatly NAEYC's advocacy for children and provision of resources and workshops for teachers. Those organizational attributes were important to her because she loves children and her role as a preschool teacher. In terms of family attitudes toward cultural diversity, she mentioned that her family impressed upon her, through conversations and interaction, that what matters is the individual, not his or her race or physical appearance..

Kate is a young 20s, and married Euro-American woman. She has been working full-time as a toddler and preschool teachers for about three years in the Day Care and Development Center 1. When I interviewed her, she was a co-teacher with Tina in a preschool classroom. Kate described herself as a family-oriented person who loves children. She hopes to become an elementary school teacher. In response to my questions regarding her group identity, she mentioned that she views herself as a spouse, daughter, Virginian, Hokie, and educator. She

indicated that the above categories defined her life and reflected her values. As far as her family's attitude toward cultural diversity, she flatly mentioned that her family did not really talk about cultural differences. She also noted that she grew up in a predominantly white area in which non-whites were few and far between. There were not any African American children in her elementary school. For all that, Kate did not experience much cultural or racial diversity until she attended college in Blacksburg. Regarding her family background, Kate told me that her grandparents were conservative, and they did not want her to grow up with other cultures and racial backgrounds; they wanted her to grow up with white people. One time when there was a homicide case going on in her hometown, her grandfather blindly blamed African Americans. Kate further mentioned as a child, she felt stressed about her family's attitude toward cultural differences when growing up. In contrast to the atmosphere at home, she was taught in schools that people are people no matter what their cultures or colors. She opined, however, that the conservative attitudes of her grandparents and education she received at school together helped her become a person open to cultural diversity. Kate stressed that her own openness to diversity is partly a reaction against the close-mindedness of her grandparents in that she did not want to be like them.

Olivia is a young 20's, single Euro-American woman with an undergraduate degree in art. She has been working in the field of early childhood education for almost one and a half years.

Currently, she is a full time preschool teacher in the Day Care and Development Center 2. At the time I interviewed her, her class had five children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds out of a total of fifteen. She described herself as a fun, artistic, and free-spirited person. She claimed to be passionate about working with children in the Day Care and Development Center 2, because she believes that children are honest and share their real feelings, and because the school supports using art to help children develop their multiple intelligences. As I observed her teach, I concurred with her opinion about herself as a fun teacher for children. The following descriptions from my field notes provided examples for my concurrence.

One child tied a leash on herself and barked to Olivia. Olivia said, "Oh, you are a dog".

The child barked again. Olivia said, "Do you want me to walk you?" The child barked and laughed. Olivia held the leash and walked the child in the classroom. Some other children watched them walking and came to tell Olivia that they want to be a dog as well.

(Field note, 03/17/05)

One child who spoke limited English sat across from Olivia at the table during the snack time. The child watched Olivia opening several small milk boxes. The child laughed wildly and said in Chinese, "Please do not make me laugh. The way you opened the box is so funny, so funny." Olivia laughed back pleasantly to the child and said, "What? XXX (the

child's name), what is so funny?" The child laughed even louder.

(Field note, 03/09/05)

In response to my questions regarding groups, Olivia identified herself with mentors, artists, researchers, and music lovers. She valued the roles of the mentor and researcher because they respect children as people, and perceive children are capable and competent. As a researcher, she attempts to learn about children's interests; as a mentor, she tries to find out how to help them succeed in their preschool endeavors. Therefore, she further mentioned that she respects individual learning styles and rates for each child and wants to create an environment to support their learning. In this connection, it is useful to mention that Olivia uses art to help children learn. For instance, according to an account she gave me, she only gave primary colors to her class in the painting area. As the children began to paint, one child came up to her and asked her how people make the color orange. Olivia replied to the girl that she did not know and why don't you try first. The child tried several times and figured it out that red and yellow make orange.

Olivia also emphasized that she identified with the descriptors of "free spiritedness" and "creativity". She values being free and believes that music can reduce stress in people's lives. She also believes that music and art are ways to express one's creativity and personal expression. In accordance, through the use of music and art, she helps children to discover

themselves and to build self-confidence.

In response to my questions regarding group identity, she reported that her family was open to and respectful of cultural differences; her mother frequently stressed the significance of cultural diversity and human rights. In order to illustrate her family's tolerant atmosphere, she recalled a story from her childhood. Once her sister, who was then in Kindergarten, told her mother that a girl's eyes looked funny at school because they had only one layer of eyelids. Upon hearing that, Olivia's mother kept asked her sister what the girl's eyes color was. As the sister identified that girl's eye-color to be brown, the mother commented that the girl must find her eyes funny too, because they were green. This took Olivia's sister by surprise that no one is the same, and she needed to respect the differences.

Married with children, **Ben** is a middle-aged teacher who immigrated from Europe. Having worked in the field of education as a teacher and a researcher for several years, he is currently employed part-time as an assistant preschool teacher with Olivia in the Day Care and Development Center 2. Last semester, however, he worked as a lead teacher in Olivia's class.

Ben described himself as honest, open-minded and loving person who also values liberty. The values, the goals and identities of the parent, the spouse, the researcher, and the liberal person attached the elements of love and care to the roles and images of the parent and the spouse; he respects people who are liberal because they stand for individual freedom, and as a

researchers, he aspired to study children and make them free or self-reliant. Ben also mentioned that he wanted children to be happy and viewed education as a tool to bring that happiness. As an educator, he focuses children as they are rather than they as should be.

On the whole, Ben believes that he is dedicated to researching child development and education and to the advocacy for children. He strongly believes that people should listen to children and address their needs and interests, and that they should respect children's individual differences. He concluded and suggested that for all that, he does not really identify groups much, focusing, instead, on individual difference and changes.

In response to my questions concerning his family attitude toward cultural diversity, he stated that there were different voices in his family. His parents were rather conservative, but his brothers were liberal and open to diversity. As such, while his parents were restrictive, he had been influenced more by his older brothers on the area of diversity and changes in a society. The brothers often discussed politics and political alternations. As for his family with wife and children, they have been open to different cultures and ideas. His wife even arranged a series of workshops for children in Europe to learn and appreciate cultures from different geographical regions. The workshop that impressed him most focused on life in Zimbabwe. In the workshop, some Zimbabwe women showed the children how people carried water on the top of their heads in Zimbabwe, and they talked about the value attached to water in that country. His

wife's hope is to create an association for the appreciation and understanding of diversity in the world.

Table 2

Descriptions of Participants

Pseudonyms	Marital Status	Self-Description	Family Attitudes Toward Diversity	Ethnicity
Mary	Married	Funny Loud Honest	Mixed values: mom was liberal to diversity, but dad was conservative	Irish-American
Renee	Single	Passionate Loving Caring Friendly	Liberal	Euro-American
Tina	Married	Friendly Considerate Loving	Liberal	Euro-American
Kate	Married	Family oriented Loves children	Conservative	Euro-American
Olivia	Single	Fun Free spirit Artistic	Liberal	Euro-American
Ben	Married	Open-minded Loving	Mix values	European

Notes:

- Liberal: The participants reported that his or her family was accepting of cultural and linguistic diversity in society.
- Conservative: The participants reported that his or her family was intolerant of cultural

and linguistic diversity in society

- Mixed: The participant reported that his or her family held a middle ground on social diversity.

What follows below is themes and characterization of teachers' experiences with these children. The major themes that emerged from teachers' experiences include (a) Types of experiences, (b) The interaction among experiences and changes in teaching strategies and on self-perceptions, (c) The teachers' relationships with these children, (d) The teachers' relationships with these parents, and (e) Common resources. I narrowed my focus to finding themes that were relevant to my research questions. I also have included some direct quotations from my interviews to illustrate and substantiate the types and character of the experience. My reflections on and interpretations of their experiences will follow a general description of each major theme

Types of Experiences

The first theme is types of experiences. Teachers have several types of experiences working with these teachers. Based upon what the teachers said in the interviews, I could identify at least four different types of experience they had with the children. There are four sub themes under the types of experiences: (a) learning, (b) challenging, (c) interesting, and (d) fulfilling experiences. The following figure presents the first major and sub themes. After the

presentation of the figure, I will describe each sub theme briefly.

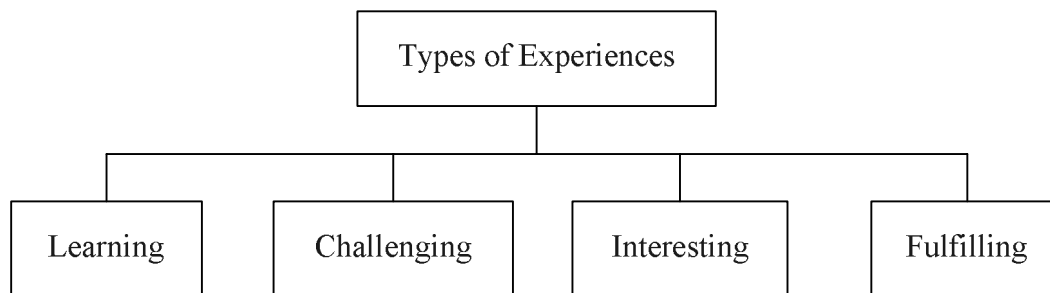


Figure 1. The first major theme and its sub themes

Learning experiences

Teachers indicated that working with children from diverse cultural and linguistic background is a continuous learning experience. The types of learning include: (1) children's cultures or languages and diversity of this world, (2) ways of communicating or interacting with them and their parents, and (3) learning from co-teachers. In regard to the category of learning children's cultures and languages and about the diversity in the world, teachers stated that learning experiences with these children opened their eyes to diversity, and led them to incorporate newer information from other countries and cultures into the curriculum and assisting children's learning. As suggested in the following statements, teachers reflected their learning experiences. Mary, for instance, pointed out

Teaching these children over the years has helped me to learn specific things people do differently in different cultures, particularly [in relation to the] parenting of toddlers. For example, from my experiences, I learned that parents from different countries start potty

train at different times for toddlers. In XXX (a country), parents start potty training in the 18th months, which is at least 6 months earlier than people do in the United States.

Parents in some other XXX countries start even earlier when children are one year old.

Learning this helps me to know some parents' expectations [regarding] when to start potty training and prepares me to explain [how we do things differently here in the US].

(Mary)

Reinforcing the aspect of learning newer things through working with these children, Renee stated following:

Working here in the Day Care and Development Center 1 really opens my eyes to see cultural differences. I saw a child from XXX wearing a belt around his belly and was told by his mother that it is a sign of being a young boy in their religion. The mother also told me that there are belts of different colors for girls and boys and that children wear the belts until they are ten years of age. (Renee)

As a teacher of these children, Tina also mentioned several things she learned. The following quote illustrates her learning experience.

Working with these young children and parents gave me a chance to explore their countries, cultures and languages which I did not know anything about. One parent from XXX came to my class to show us how to make dumplings with children. One parent

from XXX came to my class and taught children and me a few words in their home language. In my class, all children are interested in learning numbers in their friends' home languages other than English, such as Spanish, Korean, and Chinese. Parents from these countries helped me create posters of numbers [see the figure 2] in their languages and we counted them in these languages during circle time. (Tina)



Figure 2. Language posters in Tina's and Kate's class

Kate also shared similar feelings as regards learning through working with these children. The following were what she reported.

It is amazing for me to work with these young children and parents in that I learned so much about being aware of different cultures and some words in Children's languages. I did not know that Spanish and Romanian are alike until I worked with the child and her

parents from Romania for this preschool class. Also, I learned some Chinese and Korean for numbers one to ten. Moreover, I learned that women in some cultures have lower status than men. A mother came into the class before and talked to us, but she did not talk when her husband was here with her. The other mother came from the same background told me that is the culture. (Kate)

Olivia learned about a cultural difference when working with these children. She say the trace of gender difference in hierarchy in cultural case as well. She noted,

I learned something about these children's home cultures and observed the differences in our interactions. For example, I found that a child from one [particular] culture does not listen to me because I am a woman; but he listens to Ben, because he is a man. Therefore, I communicated to his parents that he needs to listen to both us [Ben and herself] at school. (Olivia)

Another thing that teachers learned includes communication and interaction skills. They experienced that they can not expect that these children would understand exactly what they said to them. So they need to have patience in talking with these children in a busy classroom. Some strategies teachers have learned and applied to communicate and interact with these children who do not speak or understand English are (a) slowing down speed of talking, (b) repeating words, (c) using gestures, sign languages or body movement, (d) saying a word and

showing an object or symbol at the same time, (e) giving these children words to talk to each other, (f) partnering these children with older children who speak English and listen well, (f) guessing children's words from context, (g) reinforcing new words, (h) using music or art activities as approaches for understanding children's expression, and (j) collaborating with parents to help their interaction and communication with the children. Tina reported following experiences of using gesture and body movement, and saying a word and showing an object.

I can't expect these children to understand exactly what I say. I need to take a little bit more time and effort to do what ever that helps them to understand...like we need to physically show a child who dose not understand English how to do things in class. I told [one boy] to pick up a toy and he just looked at me, so I need to take him [where the toys was and repeat myself as I showed him how to pick it up]. Show and put words and action together. (Tina)

Another illustration of teachers' strategies for communicating to these children was from Mary's report. She mentioned collaboration with parents that helped working with these children and trying to give children English words to use.

I found that children learn more visually than just by hearing it, so I always associate words with symbols or sign languages. It is helpful across the board, but especially more helpful for children who are learning English. Also, I have been using children's

words and putting them along with English words. A parent told me what was their term for needing to go to the potty. For example, going to potty in their language is “Shishi” and I use that “Shishi” with “go potty” and “go PP” [In order to make the child understand]. (Mary)

Renee also recalled the experience in communicating to these children by reinforcing some English words, repeating words and giving these children words to talk.

One child X who is learning English took another child Y’s toy. Y screamed and said, “It is my toy. That is my toy.” X did not know and I explained to him it is not ok....The child Y kept kicking child X’s chair and X looked at me. I told X to tell Y “stop”.

(Renee)

Kate also mentioned about showing objects to these children when talking, and reinforcing new words to these children like below.

I told parents whose children are learning English that what new words we are learning today and they can follow up at home if they are willing to do that. If they are not willing to help, we just have to remind these children of those new words again during activities in following days. For example, I said to them [whose parents did not want their children learn English first] and pointed to plastic vegetables, “do you still remember we talked about this vegetable yesterday?”(Kate)

Olivia reported that how she guessed what these children want to express from context. She mentioned a case below.

One child who is developing English said to me, “tiger”, and I was so happy to hear him speaking English and got him a tiger stuff animal. But, he said, “no”. I asked him again, “oh, do you want a cat?” He cried and said no again. Then I finally figured out that he wanted a lion by trying to give him different animals. Sometime situation like this is frustrating and confusing when they can not express why they get upset. (Olivia)

Another example mentioned by Ben illustrates teachers using music or art activities as approaches for understanding children.

I knew that one child who only speaks a little bit of English likes to dance in the classroom, so I said to her “beautiful” when she danced. Then I put music in the class and she laughed and kept dancing with the music. (Ben)

Another thing teachers learn when working with these children is that learning from each other is a crucial component of their overall learning from their experiences in teaching these children. Mary mentioned that she learned how to approach parents who have language barriers in her center, such as by standing close, patting parents’ shoulders when trying to talk to them. This approach helps her to get attention from parents and show her care to them.

Renee reported that she has learned from Mary about how to use words while showing the

objects they represented to these children. Olivia pointed out that she learned about cultural differences from some of these children's interaction with Ben. For instance, Olivia pointed that a particular child from a particular culture listened only to Ben, apparently because the child's culture values men more than women.

Challenging experiences

Challenging experiences is the second sub theme under the major theme: types of teachers' experiences. Most teachers found that teaching young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds was challenging. The teachers have had difficulties in communicating with these children and understanding their needs or interests simply because the children do not have a sufficient grasp over English. The teachers described the feelings of this challenging aspect of their experiences as "hard," "difficult," "discouraging," "sad," "upsetting," and "frustrating." Kate and Tina, for instance, mentioned that it was difficult at the beginning to understand these children's needs, especially when they cried. Ben told me that it also has been challenging to explain things and give directions to these children, particularly when many of these children who are learning English are in circle time in class. He also found that it is more difficult to explain "why" or the reason than with native English speakers. Renee mentioned being discouraged by the slow pace and improvement in her communication with these children. She brought up specifically about doing potty training with children who do not

understand English. Following descriptions that she reported illustrate her discouraging experiences.

I want to tell the child something, let him understand [that] it was not ok to urinate in his pants. With the potty training at beginning, he urinated on his pants on purpose so that he can go to the bathroom with us. It was part of an attention-grabbing thing for him; we figured that out later. It was very discouraging for me; I need more patience with him than other children who speak English. (Renee)

Mary also gave an example of feeling frustrated when she tried to communicate with a girl in her class.

I had one child and she did not speak English; and I would say the first sixth months I had her, she never spoke a word. And any time anything happened to her, she just screamed. And you couldn't get her [to] stop screaming. You couldn't find out what was wrong with her. It was sad for her and it was very frustrating for me...I did not even know what the sound of her voice was other than a scream. (Mary)

The challenging experience was also described by Kate as following.

Sometimes it is hard for us when you have a case of parents planning to stay in the United States forever and they want their child to learn English. It is hard. You know he needs to learn English to be able to function in school. That is one conflict I had. I feel like in order

for them to be able to function in school, maybe focusing a little bit more on English first and then bring their home languages later. (Kate)

Another challenge is working with these children's parents who have different ideas of education or cultural values, and who do not show respect for the school culture or teachers. One example is from Mary and Renee's class. They have a two-year-old boy who is from another country, and his parents plan to stay in the United States in the future. They teach different ideas from the parents' ideas about children learning English. Mary and Renee were told by the boy's parents that they are not concerned if he learns English now or not and what they truly care about is that he learns his home language first. Mary and Renee felt that situation was difficult in that they had a really hard time understanding the child and the child has showed his confusion in class. In addition, Mary has realized it through her experiences that toddler children from these backgrounds acquire English quickly if their parents work together with the teachers. The following descriptions are from her report.

I had a lot of experiences working with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Well, I learned that at this age [when they are] 24-36 months [old], it is an easy time for these children to pick up English as long as parents are willing to work with you. I had the experiences that they do not want [that], like the one now in my class...but it made it confusing for the child in the class. The child makes up his language now; he

mixes between his XXX (home language) and English; we have a hard time understanding what he said. But we always do what parents want...I do not judge their value, but it is just hard for him to communicate here. (Mary)

Renee also reminisced a similar challenging experience below.

I had another experience when parents did not want their child [to] learn English. [But]This is the biggest challenge for me. In this case, I guess that these parents' English were not that great, so we lost [them in] translation as well. They did not understand what we said. For example, we told them that we would have a field trip and [we] needed a car seat from home, but on the other day, they said that they did not know this [that]. (Renee)

Kate mentioned one challenging experience caused from seeing different status between men and women in another culture.

I did not remember where the family was exactly from, but they are XXX (race).When the father was here, the mother would not say anything. The other family from the same background told me that it was their culture. That was really one thing I had hard time with. I wondered [just] why he can not just let her talk. It was challenging for me to see this. (Kate)

Tina felt challenged and discouraged when these parents did not show respect for her. The following description illustrates her experiences.

I wish people could be respectful to me like I respect them. Even though we speak different languages, you can still tell if there is any consideration or respect when greeting or talking. I have had experiences in which parents did not say “Hi” to me or did not respond to what I said to them, but I still smiled and greeted to them. I did not know if that was a cultural thing or language barrier, but that was very discouraging for me. (Tina)

Olivia reported another challenging experience when she encountered different values from parents of these children and strived to ask them to respect both American and their home cultures. The following statement represents her experience.

In some cultures, women listen to men and men told women what to do. It happened to one of my children in class, he does not listen to women teachers...the child also took out his toys out of his bag everyday, and I asked his mother if she can take out the toy from his bag. She said no because he told me what to do... I realized how men’s authority is in their culture. But since we have such diversity, I feel like we respect your culture, I definitely respect your culture, but I think it has to be a give and take relationship. I am respecting your culture, but when your son comes to our school, he needs to respect our culture too. Just because he might not listen to women in his culture, [but] when he comes to school, he kind of has to [listen to women here]. (Olivia)

Other than the learning and challenging experiences motioned above, teachers pointed out

interesting experiences. The interesting experiences are presented below.

Interesting experiences

Interesting experiences is the third sub theme of types of teachers' experiences. Even though teachers encountered challenging experiences, working with diverse children, they deemed those experiences interesting owing to the opportunities that offered to know about cultural differences in the world. The teachers called their experiences "exciting," "happy," and "joyful." Here are a few examples from some teachers:

The experience is interesting, because you learn so much that the world is different; people are different. You can not expect they do the same thing, they celebrate different things. It forces you open your mind. For instance, a parent from XXX country brought you a beautiful cake to celebrate Ramadah, and then it became a conflict here because we do not celebrate any holidays here in the center. Also some other parents here do not want children to eat sugar. (Ben)

Working with these children makes the room more interesting, and we are blessed to have all these cultural differences here. I think it is not only good for the teachers but also for children to grow up around. I wish I had had more cultural diversity when I grew up, but I did not. So it is interesting; I enjoyed working with them. (Kate)

Sometimes I feel happy, joyful, and curious when working with these children because I

have been trying to figure out what they say and what they are interested in. For example, XXX (a child who has limited English) came to me with a smile and said whole lot of her language. I was curious about what they say about me or the class. I hope that they can speak English, but I wish I could speak their languages too. I guess they want me to speak their languages too. (Olivia)

Other than these quotations from teachers, all of them mentioned that it is interesting to see these children's use of two languages with their classroom peers and parents, and the adoptions of two different cultures by their families. Kate mentioned that many people from other parts of the world are bilingual or even trilingual, while many American speak only one language.

Here is a short quote from Kate's statement:

It is interesting to see they adopt some of American ways but they still have their own.

(Kate)

Olivia also pointed out some peculiar incident that accompanied multicultural aspect of her experience teaching children from these backgrounds. Following is her description about this incident.

These students are integrated into the American culture. We do not celebrate the American/Christian holidays, such as Christmas or Valentines Day [at this center].

However it is the non-American families that bring in Valentine cards and Easter eggs.

One parent brought me an American Valentines Day card with her country's bookmark. I thought that was cool, like [as it showed] showing two cultures together and adopting two cultures [adopt them both]. (Olivia)



Figure 3. A gift symbolizing two cultures

In addition to “learning,” “challenging,” and “interesting,” teachers had fulfilling experiences with these children. In the following section, I present a sketch of the fulfilling experiences.

Fulfilling experiences

Teachers often feel fulfilled when working with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and I interpreted that as another sub theme under the major theme of types of “Teachers’ Experiences.” The fulfillment was attributed by trying hard to work with

these children, to understand them and to build relationships with them. They had been able to witness the progress children made in expressing themselves in English and in interacting with peers and teachers. Since the amount of hard work the teachers typically put in, being able to see these children improve was rewarding. The teachers also felt rewarded from working with their parents as well. Following are the descriptions from teachers that illustrate the fulfilling experiences.

You work really hard, try to work with them [these children] so that they [could] understand English and what you are saying. Then, when you see that they [have] start [ed] understanding you and the progression of their learning. It is fulfilling. You realize that you have helped them learn. That is a big step. XXX (A child who is learning English), when he first came here, he cried for the first two months; that was non-stop. He did not understand the repeat of what we were saying. We tried to say anything to calm him down. We tried other things like rubbing his back, having him bring the teddy bear from home, kept talking to him, and lying down with him during the nap time. [But] Now he is not dependent on the teddy bear, stops crying, understands more what we say, and talks a few words to us and to other children. It took a long time for him to get comfortable here. It took a long time; we tried hard to accomplish it. That was difficult, but [we had] a great feeling when you see [we saw] the progression. (Renee)

A lot of time, you know that you feel more for those kids, because they do have a harder time....Y's [a child whose first language is not English and who is from another country] mother finally let go of all the things she did for Y. It is really great that we have good relationships now. At first it was not so much so. She wanted to do so much for the child while we focused so much on self-help skills. I needed to keep reminding her; like the child can feed herself in the breakfast time or she could eat the breakfast later on her own. One day, the child suddenly told her mother that she can eat breakfast herself and she wants to do it later, her mother was shocked. Now we move together to move ahead. This experience is rewarding! (Mary)

XXX does not speak a lot of English and we are still trying to figure out what she says. But when I hear her telling me in English that she likes me, I feel so happy and fulfilled that we have built our relationships. (Olivia)

Having presented the first major theme and its sub themes by providing descriptions and teachers' quotes, I will now present my interpretations and reflection on "Types of Experiences."

Interpretations and reflection on types of experiences

The teachers' experiences working with these children can be categorized into four common types and they are "learning," "challenging," "interesting," and "fulfilling." Teachers

stressed that they learned about different cultures, ways to communicate with children when they do not speak or understand English, and learned from the experiences from each other. There were challenging moments for teachers, such as trying hard to communicate with these children, to find children's needs and interests, to work with parents who have different cultures and ideas. However, at the same time, teachers still experienced "interesting" times such as seeing diverse cultures in this world, learning about the diversity and different languages, and observing the blending of cultural practices and languages. More importantly, the experiences were "fulfilling" for teachers, because they experienced the progression of these children after spending time with them, and trying hard to build relationships, to understand them, and to help them learn.

I also found that in teachers' these common experiences, language and communication have played critical roles in their experiences. In "learning" experiences, teachers reflected that they learned about some different languages and ways of communication with these children. In "challenging experiences," communications between teachers and children, and children learning English were the primary concerns. In "interesting" experiences, teachers felt interested in learning children's language and in later seeing some of these children and families bilingual. In "fulfilling" experiences, teachers reflected that it was rewarding when seeing these children being able to communicate their needs in English or use words for

self-expression. I inferred that language, especially children learning and using English is carrying great weight in teachers' experience with these children. According to Vygotsky's social-cultural learning theory, cognition is profoundly social phenomenon (1978). He regarded language as a critical bridge between the social world and individual mentality. This inspired educators to look more into the relationships between context and process in early childhood classrooms. Based on this learning theory, I found it is understandable that teachers focus on language in their experiences with these children.

Meanwhile, teachers' experiences with these children provided strong evidence for Dewey's images of teachers, which is that teachers have to obtain the "attitude and skills" (Writh, 1966, p. 54). This would allow teachers to continue learning about teaching. Working with these children provides stimulation for teachers to reflect on the experiences and learn from them. Their experiences reinforce the notion that teachers are scholars and students of the learning process. Their experiences also strengthen Dewey's idea of education, which is life itself. Life at school in the United States now is characterized by diversity. Teachers' evolving experiences with these children not only bring them challenges, but also learning, interests and rewards. As such, the teachers work in a wondrous world. I noted this element of wonder in my journal after I heard the teachers speaking about their experiences:

Although I told myself to be open to the findings, I continue be surprised by what these

teachers have had to say. the feeling of being surprised still came out. Influenced by past experiences working with children, roles of being an insider, and some previous studies, I feel so empathetic to teachers' challenging experiences. On the other hand, I also feel excited about teachers' learning and rewarding experiences. Interesting experiences, somehow, is a new element that I notice from these teachers. Is it because that my outsider role as a researcher helped me to learn this? Or did my role as a foreigner helps me to notice this phenomenon that nations might miss? (A researcher's journal, 03/01/05)

Although Vygotsky's theory provides some explanations for the important role of language in teachers' experiences with children, I still ponder what other possible ideas could explain teachers' experiences, particularly to challenging encounters. They mentioned the challenges of not being able to understand or communicate with children in English. Teachers said that after the children know more English, communication becomes easier and that helps children learn faster. I felt that the teachers were anxious, even though they did not use that word, about whether children were able to use English or not. The words they did use to characterize their experiences were "hard," "difficult," and "frustrating." That made me reflect upon my own experience as a non-native learner of English and the preparedness of American teachers to work with immigrant toddlers and preschoolers who have little or no command over English:

How did I and do I continue to learn English? How do people understand learning a

second language? Do American teachers of young children understand or relate to how these young children learn a second language? It seems that they are learning to these children on the job. If teachers had more knowledge of how children learn a second language, would that help both children and teachers struggling in learning and communication? (A researcher's journal 03/18/05)

Another possible explanation that I ponder is the influences of the media in the society now on teachers' experiences. I wonder if the teachers are not subconsciously seduced by the idea of finding a quick solution to this problem, simply because we are in media saturated "quick-fix" society. One day when I watched a commercial on television, I saw this: XXX for fast and effective relief; physicians preferred, doctor prescribed this XXX more than other prescriptions. It is interesting that I saw other similar commercials for other products. I speculated that this phenomenon in the society to look for a quick solution could affect finding a faster way for communication with these children. Therefore, they might encourage children to learn English as a way for communicating and interacting with others.

Furthermore, this reflection on young children learning English reminds me of the discussion of assimilation and pluralism in the United States. Assimilation means the loss of some or virtually all of the behavior and values of the ethnic minority group. For example, people who advocate assimilation say that "educational programs for immigrant children

should stress the learning of English as early as possible” (Santrock, 2004). Pluralism refers to advocating for respect of cultural differences and coexistence. I felt that teachers are facing a conflict between these two ideas when working with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The teachers did not explicitly express this challenge as a conflict, but they do want children to learn English first, even as they themselves must prepare to appreciate different languages and cultures. According to the phenomenon that teachers described, I noticed this is another issue in teachers’ challenging experiences. This tension is brought out well in the following entry I made in my journal.

I followed up with the teachers about their challenging experiences. They said that they wanted children to learn English, and appreciated their parents’ enthusiasm for the same. They also wanted to develop the children to be independent even though some cultures focus more on interdependence. The teachers have told me this is not a conflict, but a challenge. It made me think of the discussion between assimilation, like a melting pot, and pluralism, like a salad bowl. It also made me think of what one researcher (Sue, 1990) said about suggestions to this conflict of two stands. She suggested expanding the parameters for judging useful skills in school on the base of context and cultural relativism. For example, teachers may employ both culturally universal and culturally specific approaches to their teaching of social studies. However, I think this is still quite

difficult to find a balance point between the two stands. (A researcher's journal, 03/20/05)

After presenting my interpretations and reflection upon types of teachers' experiences, I move on to the second major theme: The effect of the teachers' experiences on their evolving strategies and changes in teaching.

The Interaction among Experiences and Changes in Teaching Strategies and Self-perception

The interaction among teachers' experiences and changes is my second theme in this study.

Teachers were asked to reflect on how the influences of their past personal and professional experiences affected their specific teaching interactions with these children and how these interactions influence their teaching strategies and cultural values. In this study, the teachers were able to articulate the interaction between their past experiences and values and their current experiences. They all expressed influences of past experiences or values on their current teaching experiences. Because the teachers came from different backgrounds, their responses as to how their pasts affected their teaching were dissimilar, even as were their responses to how their teaching experiences affected their values or teaching strategies. One common response, however, was that they learned that they can not assume everyone does the same things or to assume behaviors of people from alien cultures; and that it was better to actually ask the parents or consult other resources in order to ascertain why children from alien backgrounds did particular things differently. However, there are two sub themes in their

stories. These two sub themes are: (1) Influences of the past experiences or values on the current experiences (2) Influences of the current experiences on changes in the self as multicultural teachers. I will present a figure that shows this second major theme and its two sub themes. Followed by the figure, a chart is presented to show the teachers' responses to my questions concerning reflection upon their experiences and transformations in their teaching and personal lives through working with these children and parents. (Please see the table 2).

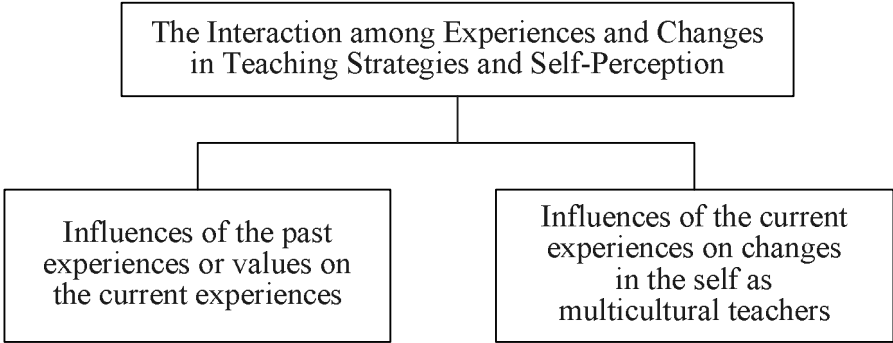


Figure 4. The second major theme and its sub themes

Table 3

Teachers' Experiential Profile Based Upon Their Responses to Interview Questions

Name	Previous exposures to/experiences in diversity issues	Personal stance on and/or personal definitions of diversity, including in teaching	Past influences and current priorities in teaching these children	Effects of teaching experiences with these children on selves and teaching strategies
Mary	---Had five years experiences teaching these children ---Father's attitude was conservative to diversity and mother is open	---Believes that everyone is not the same, but everyone is equal ---Diversity entails: #Equality #Voice: freedom and equality of speech #Openness to diversity	---Learned through experiences what works and does not work in teaching with these children ---Brings her own certain expectations to bear on these children ---Learned to respect cultural differences ---Incorporate cultural topics into curriculum ---Would like to encourage toddlers to learn English first ---Learn and ask parents, fellow teachers	---Has redesigned her curriculum ---Approaches each child uniquely ---Has learned to respect ideas of parents from diverse cultures ---Has begun to reflect on her own experiences ---Has learned newer approaches to build relationships with parents ---Has become a better person

Name	Previous exposures to/experiences in diversity issues	Personal stance on and/or personal definitions of diversity, including in teaching	Past influences and current priorities in teaching these children	Effects of teaching experiences with these children on selves and teaching strategies
Renee	---Has had family friends from non Euro-American backgrounds ---Has been working with Mary in the classroom with a diverse toddler population the past 2 years	--- Believes that everyone is different ---Open to diversity ---Values caring for each child	--Care about these children ---Try hard with different ways to approach these children and parents --- Have certain expectations for these children based upon her past experiences ---Learn and ask parents, fellow teachers	---Has had her family ideas confirmed ---Understands learning as a continuous process
Tina	---Has been working in the preschool class with diversity for the past 3 years ---Family members are very open to diversity and family members are very diverse as well.	---Believes that everyone is the same ---Respects different cultures	---Advocates uniformity in teaching, expect for an added emphasis on English instruction ---Introduce different cultures to preschoolers ---Learn and ask	---Aims to become a better teacher

Name	Previous exposures to/experiences in diversity issues	Personal stance on and/or personal definitions of diversity, including in teaching	Past influences and current priorities in teaching these children	Effects of teaching experiences with these children on selves and teaching strategies
Kate	<p>---Little exposure to diverse cultures of people during childhood</p> <p>---Has been working with toddlers and preschoolers from diversity for the past three years</p>	<p>---Open to diversity</p> <p>---Still forming her own other values relations to diversity</p>	<p>---Try different ways to interact with these children and families</p> <p>---Introduce different cultures to children</p> <p>---Learn and ask</p>	<p>---Forming her ideas of how this diversity will change her</p>
Olivia	<p>---Parents were very open to diverse cultures</p> <p>---Was exposed to diverse cultures and people in college</p> <p>---Has been teaching in classes with diversity for more than a year</p>	<p>---Open to diversity</p> <p>---Everyone is different</p> <p>---Respects all cultures</p>	<p>---Try different ways to understand these children, using art</p> <p>---Interested in learning even newer foreign cultures</p> <p>---Respect two cultures</p> <p>---Do not stereotype</p> <p>---Learn and ask</p>	<p>---Aim to become a better teacher</p> <p>---Alter some curriculum for accommodating the cultural differences</p>

Name	Previous exposures to/experiences in diversity issues	Personal stance on and/or personal definitions of diversity, including in teaching	Past influences and current priorities in teaching these children	Effects of teaching experiences with these children on selves and teaching strategies
Ben	---Had taught children from other countries while he was in Europe ---Has been teaching in preschool classes with diversity for more than a year in the US.	Diversity entails: ---Open to diversity ---Liberty ---Open to changes ---Everyone has the same needs, but address them in different ways	---Try different ways to engage these children ---If preschoolers are not interested in learning English now, it is ok.	--This experiences teaching diverse children has confirmed his theory of learning ---Hopes to incorporate more cultural themes in curriculum

The following stories illustrate how past experiences influenced the teachers current professional practices. Mary's past experiences working with children of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds has led her to expect certain things from these children; she also knows better now than before about what works with these children and families. Specifically, she strongly expects these children to be able to defend themselves and to express their needs. She thinks it is important for these children to use words to defend themselves, such as, the first two words she teaches children who do not speak English are "help" and "stop." Those two words help children find assistance from others and to stop something they do not like in the class. She also found it practically useful to discuss with parents their assumptions about parenting and their expectations related to their children's education. For instance, her experience has taught her to ask parents if they want their children to learn English. If certain parents are not really concerned about this, teachers will respect parents' wishes and do not ask parents to follow up at home some English words.

Another example is that she learned that in some cultures parents do not like their boys to wear women's clothes in dramatic play, so she tries to ask parents from these cultures ahead of time. Her values toward diversity are also reflected in the interaction with children. She shared with me a story that some girls do not have the same equality as boys in certain cultures, but she really values equality. Therefore, in the class, she encourages girls to express their interests

or stand up for themselves.

Renee told me that her family value toward diversity helps her to work with these children. She has been working hard to care for these children and trying various ways to interact with them and help them feel comfortable. Since she has worked with Mary for a while, she said she has been kind of in the same line with Mary about some expectations for these children.

Kate brought up how her past experiences in a conservative family and family values, motivated her to work with children from diverse cultural and linguistic background and to become an open-minded person. She has enjoyed working with these children and introducing themes of different cultures in her curriculum. Tina actually reflected that her value toward the diversity has influenced her interaction with children and teaching. She thinks that everyone is the same, so unless a preschooler really has or needs special help in English, she teaches everyone the same way. The preschoolers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in her class now all speak English and she does not have a difficult time communicating with them. Therefore, she said that she teaches them the same. She referred to a girl who had limited English and cried a lot in her classroom last year. She mentioned that she used different strategies for helping that girl and for understanding her needs. Some strategies were using gestures or repeating words more.

Olivia shared with me how her values of teaching and cultural diversity were reflected in

her curriculum and interaction with these children. Olivia uses art activities to allow children from these backgrounds to express themselves, because it is a very helpful as a medium of expression for children who do not speak English.

Ben also talked about how his ideas of education for children applied to his teaching and interaction. He strongly believes in instrumental learning, by which he means to refer to the idea that children learn what interests them and connects to them. He believes that his theory applies to all children, including these children who are learning English. According to this idea, he said that it is not necessary for preschoolers to learn English unless they are ready or feel a need for it. He explained that although people are different in ways of doing things, but they have same in needs, such as that all children want to be happy and want to learn when they are ready.

As far as influences of their current experience, Renee felt that her teaching experiences confirmed her long-held views that each individual is unique. Kate, on the other hand, had a hard time forming thoughts regarding whether everyone is the same or different. Her current experiences are allowing her to evolve her values regarding cultural diversity. Tina believes that she has been able to improve her teaching overall because she has been able to incorporate multicultural ideas in the curriculum. Thanks to these children, Ben has also developed an interest in different cultures because of his teaching experiences with these children. He thinks

that intentionally having some cultural themes, like celebrating different festivals in different cultures or introducing different cultures in class activities, will open both teachers' and children's eyes to diversity and develop open-mindedness.

On the other side, Olivia wants children and parents from other cultures to respect American cultures as well. Her personal experience on September 11th attacks, coupled with current experiences teaching young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds has reinforced her idea of anti-racism and anti-stereotyping.

My father died in the September 11th attacks on the world trade center; and I remember when it happened, Americans were terrified or feared any person from the Middle East or resembling someone from Middle East. When I worked at the center and talked to some children from middle east, my friends ask me, "Don't you worry while this kid is in your class, his dad is at home plotting to attack the USA?" I responded, "What a prejudicial comment. I have met these families and they are so nice and so wonderful. It just shows you how awful stereotypes can be. I do feel that I am sensitive to the diverse cultural needs and am gaining a better cultural understanding everyday. (Olivia)

After reviewing stories that exemplify the themes, I present my interpretations and reflection on the interactions between experiences and change below.

Interpretations and reflections on the interactions among experiences and changes

What the above accounts demonstrate is that teachers' experiences influenced teaching strategies and self-perceptions. On the other hand, the values and experiences that the teachers brought from their own upbringing pushed them into implementing their classroom experiences a certain way. For example, Mary's past led her to expect the children to learn how to defend themselves; her experiences in the classroom, meanwhile, motivated her to respect contrasting views that some parents had regarding learnt English or child rearing. Like wise, Olivia's past experiences with cultural diversity allowed or encouraged her to learn about the diverse cultures of the children and their families. Understandably, the September 11th attacks reinforced her belief that one should not stereotype people from alien cultures. For all that, she continues to be interested in asking from parents and learning from other resources about foreign cultures. She thinks that her self-education would make her a better teacher of these children.

Another thing I consider in the impressions from the teachers is that being reflective takes time and requires language as a tool. For instance, when I asked the teachers about their personal values or past experiences, and their influences on the interactions with these children and families, they first responded with silence to ponder. Some teachers said that they needed to think about the questions and get back to answer me later. I reflected on this phenomenon in

my researcher's journal.

It seems that teachers need time to reflect on the connection of past and current experiences, or the changes they have had. There were silences after I asked this reflective question to them. Is it because they are tired after the lunch time or they need time to think of their experiences? Some of them told me their reflections later. Or maybe my question is not clear enough for them? I need to double check again and maybe help them recall what they told me about their values or stories. (A researchers' journal, 02/25/05)

I am kind of relieved and happy today to better understand what teachers think of these reflective questions. Some of them told me yesterday and today after the interviews ended that they felt these questions are really helpful for them to put together of many things and thought they have had, they felt that our conversations were interesting and meaningful.

But they need time to think about these questions. Sometimes they were just tired too. (A researcher's journal, 03/05/05)

My interviews with the teachers appear to reinforce Vygotsky's (1978) idea about the role of language in the development of thought. One of these ideas includes the proposition that knowledge is constructed as the result of language use. Through these conversations with teachers, they had chances to use words to describe their experiences and to reflect on the interactions between these experiences. One teacher wrote down on what she thought about my

questions after going back home and brought her notes to share with me later. Therefore, this situation in the interviews indicated that the teachers need time and support for reflection.

Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens (2003) stated that “structured reflections on their experiences, including discussions guided by faculty or staff, can be crucial in helping students make sense of their newfound appreciation of the depth and complexity of the social problems they are trying to address” (p. 245).

After presenting my interpretations and reflection upon the second theme, I present the third theme: teachers’ relationships with these children.

The Teachers’ Relationships with These Children

When Ben came in to the classroom, four children A, B, C, and D who are developing English rushed to him all together with hands waving shouted, “Ben, Ben, Ben”. Ben said, “Hi, everybody”. The child A gave Ben a dog mask without saying a word. Meanwhile, the child B grabbed one of Ben’s hands and said, “I like you, Ben”. The child C looked down her dress and patted the pockets. The child D kept staying around them. Ben held the child A’s mask and said to B, “I like you too”. Then he turned to the child A said, “Wow, you have a dog mask! What do you want to do?” The child A smiled and mumbled. Ben asked him, “What?” Then Ben tried to figure out what the child A said by guessing and repeating what he said. While B was staying around with him, the child C and D left

for other areas.

(Field note 03/18/05)

It was about circle time in Mary and Renee's class. Mary said, "Circle time, find the black line (of the circle) and sit down." All of the children were finding a seat and ready to sit down in the circle. One child A (who is learning English) wondered around and Mary told him again, "A, sit on your bottom", while patting his bottom and pointing to where he could sit. He sat down by a native English speaking child, B. While Mary turned to take materials for circle time, the child B put his one foot on the child A. The child A screamed. Mary turned to them and asked, "What happened?" and she saw what B did. Mary said, "B (child's name)" and instantly the child B moved his foot away from A. ...The class started a shape game in circle time. Each child was given a piece of construction paper with a certain color and shape. In the center of the circle, Mary put all different kinds of shapes with different colors. Each child took turns and was asked what shape you have and what color you have, then they were asked to find the same thing from a group of shapes in the center of the circle. When it was the child A's turn, Mary asked, "What shape is it?" (What shape do you have?); the child A said, "Circle". Renee and Mary both said with a smile, "Good!" Then Mary kept asking, "What color is it?" A did not response and Mary kept asking while moving herself to the front of the child A. She looked

at him and said, “It is orange” with the sign language The child said, “Yeah, Yeah”. Mary said, “Orange, Could you say orange?” The child said, “Yeah” Mary kept saying, “orange”. The child said, “Circle”. Mary again said, “A, it is a circle, but its color is orange”. The child responded, “Yeah.” Mary stated, “Ok. Could you find me a circle?” The child went to the center and took a circle with a different color to what he has.

(Field note 03/08/05)

These two stories represent the teachers’ relationships with children from diverse cultural linguistic backgrounds. From teachers’ stories, three sub themes emerged. The three sub themes under teacher-child relationships are: (1) closer relationships (2) roles in the relationships, and (3) meanings of the relationships to teachers. Figure 5 presents this third theme and its three sub themes.

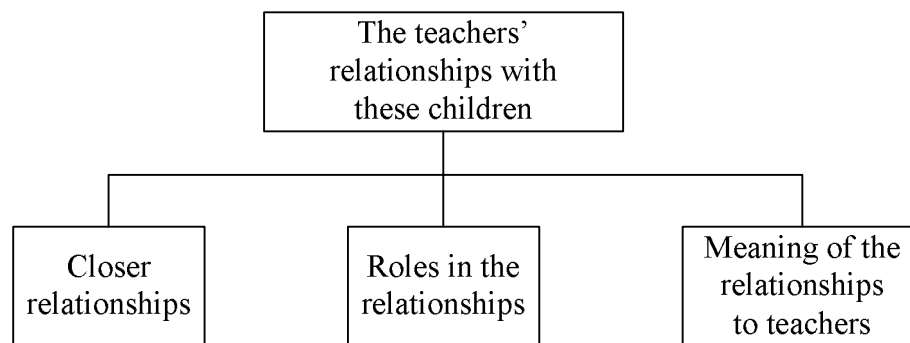


Figure 5. The third major theme and its sub themes

The teachers reflected that they feel closer to these children because they have been trying hard to understand children’s needs and interests, and to build relationships with them. The teachers

found that these children have strong and close relationships with them as well. These children stay around with them and ask or indicate the needs for help often. Even though these children do not understand exactly what they say or do not know at all what they say, they still keep talking to them and using various ways to build relationships.

With these children, a lot of time, you know that you feel more for those kids, because they do have a harder time; I feel I am closer to them because they have bonded with teachers more than other children, at least at the beginning, because you constantly help them. You are like more than a caregiver than regular. You are teaching them to protect themselves... uh... and interpreting for them. You can figure out what they said eventually and express them to other people, children even more. And advocate, I think; I stand up for them. Like I am giving them words or I am using words for them. If somebody hurts them, I encourage and tell them to tell others that you do not like that. Sometimes, they will not say that and I will look at the other child and say, he does not like that. I am speaking for him because he is not having that speaking form yet. (Mary)

Some other approaches to build relationships include helping these children reach out to play with others, giving them words to practice in expressing their needs, supplying concrete objects in play and talking about what they have, comforting when they screamed and cried. One example described by Ben is that these preschool children need more concrete objects to

play with in fantasy play than children who speak English.

With American kids, you can talk to them about fire fighters without having a hat or hose to start and continue fantasy play. But with children whose English is limited, you need to provide more physical objects to start and to talk in play. Otherwise, they get lost completely. For example, I showed these children fire fighter coats, hats, a hose and drew fire on a piece of paper to show them what we were going to play about. I couldn't use many words to explain, so these physical materials kind of substituted for explanations.

(Ben)

According to their experiences, roles that teachers described themselves in the relationship with these children are protector, interpreter, entertainer, advocate, facilitator, and emotional supporter. These following stories illustrate the roles teachers play in the relationships.

One child A (who is learning English) came right away to Ben when he entered the room.

He said to Ben, "X (another native English speaking child) pushed me." Ben held his hand and walked together to the child X in block area. Ben said to X that A told him that you pushed him.

The child X: He breaks my house.

The child A whispered to Ben. Ben said to X: X, A wants to play with you.

X: (silence)

Ben: Maybe A can help you.

X: ok.

The child started playing with X, but he tried to put his truck in the child X's house.

Ben said to A: If you put the truck into the house, the house will be broken down. X will be upset.

A stopped putting the truck into the house.

(Field note, 03/17/05)

My relationships with these children and families are really nice and good. We work together and try to understand each other. I learn more about children's culture as well when trying to help them. I feel like I am facilitating between these children's conversations, helping them to reach out to other people. I help children find the words they need to communicate with their teachers and peers. Sometimes a child gets confused with a teacher or a classmate and may misinterpret what is being said; in turns, we help the child to realize the context of the conversation or interaction. An example is that one child gets upset a lot, like we told him not to jump off stairs from the loft. He got upset and cried. At first I did not know why he was so upset and tried to find what was wrong. So I talked to his mother about this and knew that he thought he was wrong, he did

something bad. I also thought maybe he is from a more refined culture and that is why he felt more upset about a little thing. Later, if similar things happened, I knew better what to do. I rubbed his back and explained to him that I just did not want you to be hurt. He was still upset a little bit, but getting better fast and smiled at me again. (Olivia)

After presenting these stories to illustrate the themes, I present my interpretations and reflection upon teachers' relationships with these children below.

Interpretations and reflection on teachers' relationships with these children

My interpretation of the teachers' relationships with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds is that their relationships are closer at the beginning when children are learning English. It is because teachers are trying hard to work with them by helping these children develop English and express their needs and interests in the process of forming relationships. Teacher-child relationships play a significant role in several areas of early childhood development, but I found that teachers' roles are profoundly important for specific emotional, social and language development of these children when they are learning the new language and new culture. Reflecting on this interpretation, I recalled my journey in the United States. The experienced I had helped me realize this close relationship between teachers and these children.

When I first came to the United States to study early childhood education, I was afraid of

being in the class discussion in the first semester, because I did not understand quite well what other classmates or the instructor were talking about, and I couldn't speak as well in English as I can in Mandarin. Additionally, the structure of class and format was somehow different to what I experienced before in Taiwan. My adviser and some class instructors played significant roles in helping me adjust to the life and learning in the United States by caring and spending more time with patience in discussing my questions. I feel like I really understand what these participating teachers said about their roles in the relationships with these children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. (A researcher's journal, 03/16/05)

These children are strongly attached to teachers strongly perhaps teachers are their interpreters, advocates, emotional supporters, and facilitators in classrooms. Pianta (1997) stated that young children are sensitive to relationships and relationships build up through social interactions. One example from Ben's story is that children from these backgrounds like to stay in close proximity to him and ask for help.

Another aspect of teacher-child interaction is what meanings the teachers realized in these relationships. The teachers said that they learned more about these children and their home cultures by building the relationships with both the children and their parents. Based on Dewey's (1961) views of teaching and learning, he purported that learning is a reciprocal and

collaborative process. The relationship forming between these children and teachers in the present study brought the teachers a strong sense of active engagement in teaching and learning. Meanwhile, by building the relationships with these children, teachers became learners through the learning, interesting and fulfilling experiences as I mentioned earlier. My research suggests that the teachers learned newer things about life and about their own progression as they attempts to relate to these children. Also the teachers appeared to have gained from the teaching. For example, Renee felt fulfilled when one child stopped crying after she spent two months trying hard to comfort him and to understand his needs. Ben said that he felt rewarded that some children who are learning English said to him that, “I like you”, when spending more time listening to them and explaining things to them. When Mary tried to develop some self-help skills of these children in the classroom, she came to the understanding that in some cultures, people focus more on interdependency. So, for instance, she referred to an experience in which a mother from another country was shocked to know that her child could feed himself and put underwear on in the day care, things that she used to do at home for the child until then.

After reviewing this theme, another theme emerged from the data and is presented as following.

The Teachers' Relationships with These Parents

There are three sub themes under the theme of teachers' relationships with parents from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. These three sub themes are: (1) good and collaborative relationships, (2) roles in the relationships, and (3) meanings of the relationships for teachers. Figure 6 presents this fourth theme and its sub themes.

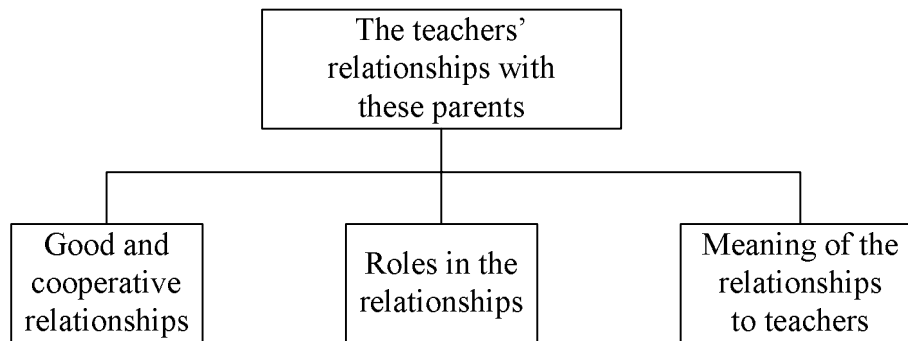


Figure 6. The fourth major theme and its sub themes

Teachers reported that their relationships were open and good, even though they had taken time to build relationships with parents from diverse backgrounds at the beginning. They were encouraged to explain and describe more about what good relationships are like and they talked about good collaboration between teachers and parents. The good collaboration, according to the teachers, includes good communication, sharing cultural differences to help children from these backgrounds, and parental volunteering in class to introducing their cultures to the class and teachers. The following stories illustrate the good and collaborative relationships.

Mary cited the commonality of interests between the parents and the teachers in relation to the children as the foundation for good collaboration.

Mum, I think right from the start we (the child A and his mother) communicate well. I always tend to focus on communication with parents, but some people are just not sure, taking more time to warm up, like B's parents (the child B is another child from these backgrounds). We (A's mother and her) never had that. We warmed up and talked right away. Yeah, and I think we both have the same goal too, and that helps. We want him to get comfortable as quick as possible in the environment, because it is strange for him. She wanted him to learn English and I want him to be able to communicate. So those are in the same line, and she wants her to potty trained and we want that too. You know, all kinds of those things. (Mary)

My observations in Mary's class also validate Mary's report of commonality of interests between the parents and the teachers are the foundation for good collaboration. The observations show that Mary had good relationship with one of the parents. One of the observational notes is presented as follows:

The child A came in to Mary's class in the morning with his mother. Mary sat on the carpet across the door where the child A and mother entered, and said, "Good morning!" A did not respond, but looked at her. The mother said to Mary and the class, "Good

morning and good morning, friends". His mother patted A with a smile and said, "Say good morning!" He still did not say anything. Mary said, "Maybe it is not a good morning." Then both Mary and the mother laughed. The mother told Mary that he slept longer this morning than usual and she likes that. Mary said to the mother, "A fell asleep yesterday right away in the nap time, the first one, we did not rub his back at all!" The mother said, "Wow, that was good!"

(Field note, 03/01/05)

Olivia also reported her good relationships with these parents. The following is one of her reminiscences.

My current relationships are good. The parents are extremely nice and easy to work with.

We celebrate our cultural diversity here at the center, so we welcome families to share the cultures and customs with us. My role is to make them feel welcome at the center.

Actually, one of parents from XXX (a country) is coming to celebrate the health of children in their cultural ways. Also, in some circumstances when a child who is from these backgrounds was really upset, we called the parents and allowed the child to converse with them and then have the parents let me know what is going on or what needs to be done. They are really helpful. (Olivia)

Kate also mentioned her good relationships with these parents as following.

My relationships with parents from these backgrounds are open and good. Many of them in the center speak English; they let me know their confusion of what I said to them.

Sometimes they asked, and sometimes they showed it from the facial expression. I have been always trying to make sure I speak and explain to them slowly and clearly. Like the term “show and share,” most parents from these backgrounds asked me what it is or showed a puzzled look to me when I brought this up to them. I explained to them it is about allowing a child to bring a toy from home and share it with friends to play. Another experience is that we had parents sign up sheet to bring snack for a Valentine’s party. One parent signed for cup cakes, but on the other day she came back and asked me what cup cakes are. I explained a little bit and found a picture of cup cakes to show her. (Kate)

According to their experiences, teachers had an active role in their relationship with parents from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Teachers considered themselves as facilitators, friends, and guides to the parents. Some descriptions below illustrate their roles in their relationships with the parents.

We have been collaborating well. I think we are like friends and they [these parents] taught me many things about their cultures. (Tina)

Most families ask me to help the children with their English language and I gladly do. I help the children find the words they need to communicate with their teachers and peers.

Sometimes I feel like I am facilitating conversation between parents as well. Most of the fathers in my class speak more and better English than the mothers, so sometimes I need to wait and ask a dad to explain what I said to a mom. For example, I went to the child, X's home for home visit. The dad spoke fluent English, but the mom just sat there and smiled. I felt so bad that the mom just sat there and watched us and smiled, just because she did not speak English. So I asked the dad to translate for me of what I said to the mom. I was sure she had ideas and questions of what we talked about. (Olivia)

I think my role for some parents is [that of a] teacher. We were doing potty training and parents learned how to do it too by working together with me. So in that sense, I am a teacher for them as well as their children. (Mary).

Regarding the meanings of their relationships with parents to teachers, in general, teachers opined that a good relationship with the parents make easier for them work together in helping these children learn. At the same time, it helps them learn different cultures and languages. The following examples illustrate teachers' opinion to the good relationships with the parents.

My relationships with these parents are good and open. They helped me to create posters of numbers in their languages and came to the class to teach children. I did not know how to say numbers in their languages before and I knew some of them. (Tina)

The relationships I have with one of these parents is too open, I have know the parents

since their child was in the day care. I can even joke with them. One example is that I could directly ask the mother if her child is wearing underwear to school today when the child was potty trained. If the child wore a diaper instead of underwear, I could ask the mother what happened. We could laugh about it together. (Mary)

After reviewing stories and descriptions that illustrate the theme of teachers' relationships with parents, I present my interpretations and reflection upon the theme below.

Interpretations and reflection on the teacher-parent relationships

The teachers' accounts clearly suggest that their relationships with these parents are open and good when the parents cooperate with and respect the teachers. The teachers refined a relationship as "good" when they perceived a commonality of goals with the parents and when the parents respected them. On the contrary, the relationships were deemed challenging when these parents had different ideas of parenting, concerning aspired by their own cultures and expressible in their native languages. This challenging situation was harder and took a longer time to build up good and open relationships. Good, collaborative relationships with parents are more meaningful as it was easier to work with the children because of the cooperation. Of course, a cooperative relationship entailed a good working relationship with the parents, and not just with the children.

Notable also from the accounts I have received and my direct observations is the

pro-active nature of the teachers' relationships with these parents. These teachers showed their enthusiasm and consideration to the parents by talking to them about their goals for the children and the means to achieve them. The teachers also deeply care about the parents' own linguistic deficiencies, and they attempted to learn about their cultures.

I also reflected on what I learned from teachers' relationships with these parents. Teachers' stories really touched me because of how much they care for these parents and children. As a parent from another country, one important thing that I have learned from this study is that close collaboration between teachers and parents is the key to building a good progressive relationship; collaboration itself however, require openness. As an international parent, then, the prospect of improving my relationship with my child's teachers for the sake for improving the child himself motivates me to continue this kind of research in the future. It not only motivates me to research what parents' experiences with teachers are in the future, but also motivates me to take parents' different backgrounds into account, such as their views of teachers' roles in their cultures or their English ability.

I could relate to the teachers' stories in that I had experiences in both roles, as a preschool teacher and as an international parent. As well, my professional background and English allowed me work with these teachers comfortable and meaningfully. I believe that parents whose background is similar to mine are likely to be comfortably working with these teachers,

but what about those immigrant parents who do not speak or understand English; How do they work with teachers and show their voices in building relationships together? (A researcher's journal, 03/17/05)

Common Resources

My interviews with the teachers revealed that their key sources of input and assistance included these children's parents, libraries, books, college classes, videos, trainings in day care centers, conferences, the *Internet* and fellow teachers' experiences too. Based on their experiences of finding resources to work with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, three sub themes of common resources emerged from teachers' descriptions. Three themes are: (1) most helpful resources, (2) lack of resources, and (3) interests in the resources. I will use figure 7 to present this fifth major theme and its sub themes.

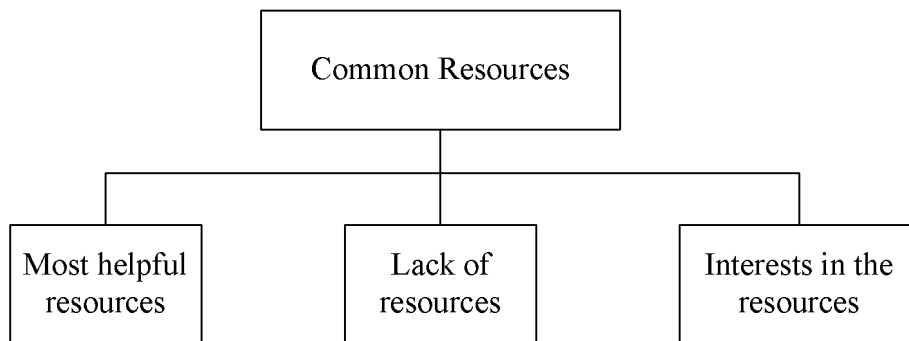


Figure 7. The fifth major theme and its sub themes

According to teachers' experiences, most helpful resources are parents, fellow teachers' experiences, and the *Internet*. The parents are the first hand resources to teachers. For example,

Mary and Renee found out from a mother the reason why one child needed to wear a belt around his belly. They also learned how to say children's words for potty training from their parents. Olivia and Ben were also informed by a parent that his child can not touch a dog in their culture, especially dogs' saliva. Tina and Kate obtained resources and help from parents, such as parents' assistances in preparing posters of numbers in their languages.

Another resource, fellow teachers' experiences, is helpful for teachers in working with these children. The teachers feel as though they have been "in the same boat" after sharing their experiences with other teachers. They also learn from each other different ideas for curriculum or strategies of working with these children. Above all, the teachers benefit emotionally from sharing their individual experiences with each other and turning their working relationship into a collaborative one. For instance, Kate said that she felt better after talking to other teachers about her down time with children struggling with English. Mary pointed out that she learned from s child's previous teachers how to build relationships with the child and his parents. The *Internet* is another useful tool for teachers to understand different cultures. Some of the teachers mentioned that they used the *Internet* to find more information about the children's cultures or the location of their countries. They also use the *Internet* to search for ideas for activities suitable for introducing different cultures to children.

The interviewees reported to have beneficial help from libraries, books, videos or training

sessions at day care centers. Teachers go to libraries to search children books about cultural diversity. Olivia noted, for example, that a book, *The Hundred Languages of Children*, helped her in interacting with and planning activities for these children. Teachers in the Day Care and Development Center 1 watched videos in the training meetings every month. In the training meeting, teachers discuss e problems they encountered in class and explore the possible solutions. Renee recalled that one video they watched before is related to food from diverse cultures and the video introduced teachers ways in which to incorporate these foods into the curriculum.

The teachers in this study indicated that there are not enough resources in conferences or enough college class in settings with children form diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Mary pointed out there was only one course offered on multicultural education in a local community college, and the same course is offered every year. Kate and Tina observed that the seminars in a local conference they attended did not provide any specific session or presentation on working with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Kate and Renee felt that there was lack of systematic resources for teachers particularly on work with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Kate wished there was more information available on potty training in different cultures and some of the information could be translated into parent's languages so that they will understand how Americans potty train

young children as well.

The teachers also indicated what they would like to learn more in the future if they had the resources and a chance to work with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

They pointed out additional thoughts about sharing experiences with fellow teachers. Mary

said that she would like to know more about other teachers' experiences working with these

children and about what does or does not work in a class with diversity. Renee expressed her

interest in learning about how to communicate better with children from other people's

experiences working with these children. Tina said that she would like to read successful

stories relating to these children in this country. Kate expressed her interest in attending a panel

on this issue that invited both parents and teachers to share their experiences relating to

children's education and to discuss ways to work together. Ben also wished to hear from

parents their ideas regarding parenting in their own cultures and to explore ways through which

teachers could collaborate better with them in order to facilitate their children's learning. He

also mentioned that he would be interested in hearing from these children when they grew up.

These children are invited to talk about their experiences in learning two languages in a class

with diversity. Olivia expressed that she would be interested in other teachers' experiences, in

different approaches for interaction, and about how to introduce diverse cultures within a

classroom environment. For examples, believing that her center lacks a sufficient number of

children's books involving themes in diversity, she wished that there were more publications on those issues. Therefore, she would like to learn more about children's books related to the topic of diversity.

Again, after reviewing these sub themes and stories to illustrate them, my interpretations and reflection are presented below.

Interpretations and reflection on common resources

Teachers acquired resources on working with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds from many places, but their experiences indicate that parents and other teachers are the best resources. Teachers gained more understanding of these children and their cultures from parents, and this resource is first hand. Teachers also learned from other teachers' experiences regarding what helps in working with children from diverse backgrounds.

Teachers' expectations for resources that they may acquire in the future included more classes or workshops in seminars about teaching young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, particularly other teachers' stories or different perspectives in helping young children from these backgrounds. Some of them also hoped that they would have chances to hear parents and children's experiences as well.

This conversation about resources for teaching young children from these backgrounds provided another learning opportunity for me. I learned about some resources that I did not use

before, such as the *Internet*, and I learned about teachers' hopes and interests in other resources they may acquire in the future. It was such a valuable opportunity that teachers voice their interests and hopes through the interviews. I felt grateful that they were willing to share their suggestions and the suggestions motivated me to consider them as implications for practice in the future.

It seems that human beings are the best resources in teachers' experiences; more specifically, experiences of human beings can be a powerful support in learning. The most helpful resources for teachers have been parents and other teachers. I experienced this, too, from interviewing teachers; they really helped me significantly in understanding teachers' experiences working with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and simulate me to consider what other things I could research and do to contribute to the well-being of teachers, children, and parent from these backgrounds. One thought that I developed is to invite these teachers to a class or conference workshop to share their experiences and empower them to share their voices and experiences (A researcher's journal, 03/21/05)

Summary

After reviewing the themes above, I summarized the findings in this paragraph and attached a table that showed the descriptions and quotes I used in this chapter (see the table 4).

Five major themes emerged from teachers' experiences in this study: (a) types of teachers' experiences working with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (b) the interaction between experiences (c) their relationships with children (d) their relationships with parents, and (e) common resources. Under the types of experiences working with these children, four sub themes emerged: (1) learning experiences. (2) challenging experiences, (3) interesting experiences, and (4) fulfilling experiences. Under the theme, the interaction between experiences and changes in teaching strategies and self-perception, there were two sub themes: (1) influences of the past experiences or values on the current experiences (2) influence of the current experiences on changes in the self as multicultural teachers. Under the theme of their relationships with children, three sub themes emerged: (1) closer relationships (2) roles in the relationships and (3) meanings of the relationships to teachers. Under the theme of their relationships with parents, there themes emerged: (1) good and collaborative relationships (2) roles in the relationships (3) meanings of the relationships to teachers. Under the theme, common resources, there were three sub themes: (1) most helpful resources (2) lack of resources, and (3) interests in resources.

Table 4

Descriptions and Quotes Presented in Chapter Four

Themes/Sub themes	Sources of Data		
	Interviews	Observations	Artifacts
Theme 1: Types of Experiences			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub theme: Learning experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Story of differences in potty training (Mary) *Story of a boy's custom (Renee) *Story of learning numbers in different languages (Tina & Kate) * Story of different status for men and women (Olivia) * Story of reinforcing new words (Kate) *Story of guessing children's words (Olivia) *Story of using music (Ben) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Slow down speed of talking * Repeat words * Use gestures, sign language or body movement *Say a word and showing an object or symbol at the same time *Give these children words *Partner these children with older children who speak English * Guess children's words from context *Reinforce new words *Use music or art activities *Collaborate with parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Numbers in different languages posters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub theme: Challenging experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Story of potty train (Renee) * Story of a girl's scream (Mary) *Story of children's communication and learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Communicate with these children (Ben) * Teach a child color and shape (Mary) 	

Themes/Sub themes	Sources of Data		
	Interviews	Observations	Artifacts
	English (Kate, Mary, Renee) * Story of parents' different ideas (Kate, Mary, Renee) * Story of respect (Tina, Olivia) * Story of different status for men and women (Olivia)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub theme: Interesting experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Story of a cake for Ramadah (Ben) * Story of an interesting classroom (Kate) * Story of curiosity (Olivia) * Story of two languages and two cultures (Kate, Olivia) 		A gift that symbolized embracing two cultures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub theme: Fulfilling experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Story of stop crying (Renee) * Story of self-help (Mary) * Children said I like you. (Olivia) 	Children said "I like you" and were around the teacher (Ben).	
Theme 2: The Interactions among Experiences and Changes in Teaching Strategies and Self-perception			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub theme: Influences of past experiences or values on current experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Expectations for children (Mary) * Respect to parents (Mary) * Care for these children 		

Themes/Sub themes	Sources of Data		
	Interviews	Observations	Artifacts
	(Renee) *Motivation to work with these children *Interaction with the children (Tina) *Help children to show their self- expressions (Olivia) * Ideas of education (Ben)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub theme: Influences of current experiences on changes in the self as multicultural teachers 	* Keep learning (Renee) *Stimulations to form ideas (Kate) *Become a better teacher (Tina) *Add cultural learning in curriculum (Ben) *Anti racism and anti-stereotyping (Olivia)		
Theme 3: The Teachers' Relationships with These Children			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub theme: Closer relationships 	* Close to these children (Mary) *Find children's needs and help (Ben, Olivia)	* Communicate with these children (Ben) * Teach a child color and shape (Mary)	

Themes/Sub themes	Sources of Data		
	Interviews	Observations	Artifacts
	* Children asked for help (Ben)		
• Sub theme: Roles in the relationships	* Close to these children (Mary) *Find children’s needs and help (Ben, Olivia) * Children asked for help (Ben)	* Communicate with these children (Ben) * Teacher a child color and shape (Mary)	
• Sub theme: Meaning of the relationships to teachers	* Children Stop crying (Renee) *Children say “I like you”.(Ben) *Learn different cultures (Mary)		
Theme 4: The Teachers’ Relationships with These Parents			
• Sub theme: Good and cooperative relationships	*Work with a mother (Mary) *Celebration and help from parents(Olivia) *Explanations to parents (Kate)	*Conversation with the mother (Mary)	
• Sub theme: Roles in the relationships	*Collaboration (Tina) *Facilitating conversations (Olivia) *Teach potty train (Mary)		

Themes/Sub themes	Sources of Data		
	Interviews	Observations	Artifacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub theme: Meanings of the relationships to teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Work together learning diversity (Tina) *Work together to help the child (Mary) 		
Theme 5: Common Resources			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub theme: Most helpful resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Learn from parents (Mary, Renee, Olivia, Ben) *Learn from other teachers (Kate, Mary) 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub theme: Lack of resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Same course every year (Mary) *Seminars and workshops (Tina, Kate) *A resource system (Renee, Kate) 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub theme: Interests in resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Other teachers' experiences (Mary, Renee, Olivia) * Parents' experiences (Kate, Ben) *Children's experiences and stories (Tina, Ben) 		

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of teachers who work with toddlers and preschoolers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The study was conducted in a university town in southwestern Virginia. Young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds were defined for this study as ones whose first language was not English and whose parents were from countries other than the United States. I decided to use a phenomenological research method because the purpose of my study was to learn about and illuminate teachers' experiences in working with these young children. My goal was to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' experiences throughout their process of working with these children and their families.

After carefully listening to six teachers' experiences in working with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the Day Care and Development Center 1 and 2, five themes focusing on their experiences emerged, and I developed conclusions concerning what these findings could suggest for future research and practice. In this chapter, I review and discuss the findings, and suggest implications for future research and practice. The discussion is framed by related content and comparisons with previous research, theoretical foundations, and my own field notes and journals. I also acknowledge the effects from my multiple roles as

a researcher, a preschool teacher, and an international student, and mother. Throughout the study, I recalled my own experiences and reflected on the stories that I heard from teachers. I would be leaving a gap in this study if I did not bring up the powerful effect that those participants' lives and my own experiences in this multicultural society had on the meanings that I derived from the data.

Overview of Findings

Five major themes emerged from teachers' experiences in this study: (a) types of teachers' experiences working with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, (b) the interaction among experiences and changes in teaching strategies and self-perception, (c) teachers' relationships with children, (d) teachers' relationships with families, and (e) common resources for teachers. Under the types of experiences working with these children, four sub themes emerged: (1) learning experiences, (2) challenging experiences, (3) interesting experiences, and (4) fulfilling experiences. Under the theme of interaction among experiences and changes in teaching strategies and in their self-perception, there were two sub themes: (1) the influences of the past experiences or values on the current experiences and (2) the influence of the current experiences on changes in the self as multicultural teachers. Under the theme of relationships with children, three sub themes emerged: (1) closer relationships, (2) roles in the

relationships, and (3) meanings of the relationships to teachers. Under the theme of their relationships with parents, three themes emerged: (1) good and collaborative relationships, (2) roles in the relationships, and (3) meanings of the relationships to teachers. Under the theme, common resources, there were three sub themes: (1) most helpful resources, (2) lack of resources, and (3) interests in resources.

In various types of teachers' experiences, the four common experiences were learning, challenging, interesting, and fulfilling. Teachers stressed extensively that the experiences with these children provided opportunities for continuous learning. They learned about different cultures, ways to communicate with children when they do not speak or understand English, and they learned from the experiences with peer teachers. There were challenging moments for teachers, such as trying with intensity to communicate with these children, finding children's needs and interests, and working with parents who have different cultures and ideas. Even though teachers encountered challenging experiences, they deemed that those experiences also brought interesting moments. Teachers indicated that working with these children was interesting because they had opportunities that offered them knowledge about cultural differences in the world. Some of the discoveries that teachers called "interesting" were: (a) seeing diverse cultures in this world, (b) learning about diversity in cultural practices and foreign languages, (c) finding these children and their families bilingual and bicultural, and (d)

seeing families adopt two cultures. More importantly, the experiences were fulfilling for teachers, because they witnessed the progression of these children after spending time with them and trying hard to build relationships, to understand them, and to help them learn.

In the interaction among teachers' experiences and changes, the changes included curriculum modifications as well as changes in personal or professional attributes. Two sub themes emerged in regard to experiences. These included (1) the influences of the past experiences or values on current experiences and (2) the influence of the current experiences on changes in the self as multicultural teachers.

I also found that being reflective takes time and requires language as a tool. This experience that I had with teachers during the interviewing process was congruent with Vygotsky's (1978) ideas about the role of language in the development of thought. One of these ideas is that knowledge is constructed as the result of language use. Through these interviews, teachers had opportunities to use words to describe their experiences and to reflect on the interactions among these experiences. One teacher also wrote down what she thought after going home and brought the notes to share with me.

Three sub themes emerged under the major theme of teachers' relationships with these children: (1) closeness of the relationships, (2) roles in the relationships, and (3) meanings of the relationships to teachers. Teachers reflected that they felt closer to these children than to

native English speaking children, because they had been trying extensively to understand children's needs and interests, and to build relationships with them. Teachers have found that these children have strong and close relationships with them as well. These children stay in close proximity to the teachers and often ask for or indicate a need for assistance. Roles that teachers described for themselves in the relationships with these children were "protector", "interpreter", "advocate", "facilitator", and "emotional supporter". Teacher-child relationships play a significant role in several areas of early childhood development (de Kruif, McWilliam, Ridley, & Wakely, 2000; Howes & Smith, 1995; Pianta, Nimetz, & Bennett 1997), but I found that teachers' roles are profoundly important in emotional, social and language development for these children when they are learning a new language and a new culture.

Another finding related to teacher-child relationships was the meanings teachers made of these relationships. Teachers said that they learned about these children and children's home cultures by building congenial relationships with the children and their parents. This exemplifies Dewey's (1961) views that learning is a reciprocal and collaborative process. The process of forming relationships among these children and the teachers had brought to the teachers a strong sense of teaching and learning. Meanwhile, by building the relationships with these children, teachers encountered continuous learning as well as interesting and fulfilling experiences.

Three sub themes under the theme of teachers' relationships with parents from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds are: (1) good and collaborative relationships, (2) roles in the relationships, and (3) meanings of the relationships to teachers. Teachers reported that their relationships are open and good, perhaps because they had taken time at the beginning to build relationships with parents from diverse backgrounds. The interviewees were encouraged to explain and describe more about what good relationships are like, and they talked about what constitutes good collaboration between teachers and parents. Good collaboration, according to the teachers, includes good communication, sharing cultural differences to help children from these backgrounds, and having parents volunteer in class to introduce parts of their cultures. The teachers also mentioned the commonality of interests among the parents and the teachers in relationship to the children as the foundation for good collaboration.

The theme of teachers' relationships with these parents was described as open and positive. The teachers' accounts clearly suggested that their relationships with these parents are open and positive when the parents cooperate with and respect the teachers. The teachers defined a relationship as "good" when they perceived a commonality of goals with the parents and when the parents respected them. On the contrary, the relationships were deemed challenging when these parents had different ideas on parenting, as inspired by their own cultures and expressible only in their native languages. This challenging situation created a

more difficult environment for fostering open and good relationships. Positive and collaborative relationships with parents were more meaningful as it was easier to work with the children because of the cooperation. Of course, a cooperative relationship by default entailed a good working relationship with the parents, as well as with the children.

Based on their experiences, teachers described their roles in relationships with parents from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. They perceived that they had an active role in their relationships with these parents. Teachers considered themselves “facilitators”, “friends”, and “guides” for the parents. Regarding the teachers perceived meanings of their relationships with parents, in general, they opined that good relationships with the parents helps these children learn cognitive skills and simultaneously teaches them about different cultures and languages.

Under the theme, common resources, there were three sub themes: (1) most helpful resources, (2) lack of resources, and (3) interests in resources. Teachers gained resources for working with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds from many sources, but wisdom garnered from parents and other teachers are the best resources. Teachers also learned from other teachers’ experiences regarding what helps in working with children from diverse backgrounds.

Teachers’ expectations for resources that they may acquire in the future include more

classes, workshops, and seminars about teaching young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Particularly, they want to hear other teachers' stories and different perspectives. Teachers indicated that they wished there were more conferences or classes about teaching in diverse settings. Some of them also hoped that they would have opportunities to hear the parents and children's perceptions as well.

Discussion

In this section, I present my conclusions and inferences. The following discussion relating to the teachers' experiences with these children were based on my research questions and reflections.

Conclusion one: Concerns about language learning

I told parents whose children are learning English what new words we are learning today and they can follow up at home if they are willing to do that.

(Kate, A preschool teacher)

First, I inferred that language, especially children learning and using English, was a central issue in teachers' experiences with these children. As such, I found that in the teachers' common experiences, language and communication have played major roles in their experiences. In learning experiences, the teachers reflected that they acquired some different

languages cues and other methods of communication with these children. In reference to the theme of challenging experiences, communications between the teachers and children, and children's English learning are teachers' primary concerns. The teachers expressed interests in learning children's language and in seeing the blending of two cultures in these children and families. Teachers reflected that it was rewarding and fulfilling to see these children being able to communicate their needs in English or use words for self-expression. According to Vygotsky's social-cultural learning theory (1978), cognition is a profoundly social phenomenon. He also regarded language as a critical bridge between the social world and individual mentality. His focus on language tools and collaborations among adults and children has inspired educators to examine contexts and processes in early childhood classrooms. Based on this socio-cultural learning theory, I concluded that it is understandable that teachers' primary focus was on the language use in their experiences with these children. I concluded that the teachers in this study were extremely anxious about whether children were able to use English, although they did not use the term "anxious" in the interviews. However, they did use words such as "hard," "difficult," and "frustrating." Saracho and Spodek (1995) stated that teachers need to appreciate and learn differences in communicative strategies and understand both the linguistic and ethnographic sides of speech behaviors in order to become responsive teachers of these children. On the other hand, Costa, McPhail, Smith and Brisk (2005) found that "most

teachers have received little preparation in how to educate English language learner” (p.104).

Based on their findings, they suggested that teacher education programs could add curriculum goals on English as a second language to increase teachers’ confidence and knowledge for teaching in a multicultural and multilingual class.

Conclusion two: Possible factors and stories of teachers’ various types of experiences with these children

I wanted to tell the child [who did not understand English] something, let him know that it was not ok to pee in his pants when we started his potty training...it was discouraging for me.

(Renee, A toddler teacher)

Teaching these children over the years has helped me to learn specific things people do differently in different cultures, particularly [in relation to] potty training for toddlers.

(Mary, A toddler teacher)

Based on the findings of this study, teachers’ challenging experiences might have originated from (a) lack of knowledge of these children’s cultures, (b) lack of resources, (c) lack of strategies for communications, (d) respect and collaborations from parents, and having (d) conflicts between the ideas of assimilation and pluralism, and possibly (d) the pressure to

find “quick-fix” solution to problems, which may be a cultural phenomenon. Likewise, in Johnson, Lee and Templeton’s study (2003), they discussed similar challenges in the early childhood education environment, which particularly were caused by cultural and linguistic diversity. Nevertheless, my study provided additional detailed stories to reflect possible explanations for teachers’ challenging experiences.

Many stories of teachers’ continuous learning, interesting encounters and rewarding experiences were found and presented in this study along with their challenging encounters. I concluded that teachers gained many positive experiences while simultaneously facing challenges in working with these children and families. These positive experiences also provided their inspiration and desire to work with these children. The factors that generate teachers’ positive experiences, such as learning new skills or cultures, and having interesting and rewarding experiences might be derived from the teachers’ caring dispositions to these children, passion and openness to diversity, and commitment to human equality. Of course, their previous exposures in diversity, personal stance toward diversity, and support from peer teachers might lead them to have positive experiences working with these children. Garmon (2004) reported similarly that there were three dispositional factors which play critical roles in positive multicultural development: (a) openness to diversity, (b) self-awareness, and (c) commitment to social justice. There were another three experiential factors which included (a)

intercultural experiences, (b) support group experiences, and (c) educational experiences.

Conclusion three: Images of teachers

I really hope that these children are able to use words to defend themselves and express their needs. Therefore, from my past experience teaching these children and my values toward equality, I think it is important to teach them two first English words: “help” and “stop.”

(Mary, A preschool teacher)

I concluded that teachers’ experiences with these children corresponded Dewey’s image of teachers, which is that teachers have to obtain the “attitude and skills” (Writh, 1966, p. 54) for teaching students. Teaching these children would allow teachers to continue learning about teaching. Working with these children provides the opportunity and stimulation for teachers to reflect on and learn from the experiences, such as what different values or cultures they hold, how these affect teaching strategies and personal lives, and what does or does not work in interacting with these children. Their experiences reinforce the concept that teachers are scholars and students of the learning process. Their experiences also strengthen Dewey’s idea of education, which is life itself. Life in schools and the United States currently is rich with diversity. Teachers’ continuous experiences with these children from diverse backgrounds not

only brings them various types of experiences, but also produces continuous learning opportunities to explore cultural and linguistic diversity beyond one's own culture of origin. Morales (2000) indicated a conclusion about teachers' experiences with diversity by saying that, "learning and appreciating cultural diversity needs to begin with the teacher's knowledge about his or her own culture, personal biases, and understanding of the children in the classroom" (p. 9).

Conclusion four: Time and opportunity for reflection and conversation

I can not think of an example right now off top my head, I need to think about it and come back to tell you later.

(Tina, A preschool teacher)

From this study, I also concluded that teachers need time and opportunities to reflect on their interaction among experiences and changes in their own values, beliefs, and behaviors. Rust (1999) stated that conversation and story telling sustain teacher learning and inquiry. The teachers in the study were able to articulate their values. They revisited their experiences and described changes that were influenced by previous experiences. However, during the interviews, many of them asked me to come back to this reflection later because they needed time to think about these topics. I also found that my role as a researcher helped the teachers to

reflect on the relationship between their experiences and changes in their own beliefs and teaching practices. This is congruent with Weisman and Garza's study (2002) which suggested that continuing reflections guided by mentors or instructors can help teachers to make significant changes.

Conclusion five: The teachers' meaning making in the relationships with these children

We are trying to figure out what a child said, because he does not speak a lot of English.

One day when I heard her telling me in English that she likes me, I felt so happy and

fulfilled that we have built our relationship.

(Olivia, A preschool teacher)

The fifth conclusion from the present study is that the meaning of close relationships with these children is constructive to the teachers. In this study, the findings that showed teachers' making sense of the relationships with these children filled the lack of understanding of the contributions of the relationship to teachers in previous studies (de Kruif, McWilliam, Ridley & Wakely, 2000; Howes & Smith, 1995, Pianta, Nimetz & Bennett, 1997). The teachers reflected that they feel closer to these children than to native English speaker children because they had invested personal energy in trying to understand children's needs and interests. These children also maintained close proximity to them and frequently indicated the need for help.

This observation corroborates a finding by Irvine (2003) who stated that students from culturally diverse backgrounds are more often dependent on teachers than are their classmates who represent a cultural majority. Through interaction and building relationships with these children, the teachers in this study learned more about the children and their home cultures and learned what helped in their interactions. The process not only led them into new learning experiences, but also into interesting and rewarding ones. This illustrates Dewey's (1961) views of teaching and learning, as a reciprocal and collaborative process. The relationship formations between these children and teachers had brought the teachers a strong sense of teaching and learning as evidenced by the fact that the teachers stated that they become better teachers from working with these children because they learned to respect cultural differences and to generate thoughtful considerations for meeting different individual needs.

The roles that teachers identified in the relationships with these children also revealed the teachers' commitment to social justice and to tender care for these children. The roles in the relationships that the teachers mentioned were "protector", "advocate", "interpreter", "facilitator", and "emotional supporter" All of these roles are crucial in the process of promoting social justice. Garmon (2004) defined "a sense of social justice as a commitment to equity and equality for all people in society" (p. 206). The teachers claimed that they felt they need to help these children who do not speak English to defend themselves and express their

needs. The meaning making of their roles in the relationships also demonstrated that the teachers had “cultural caring” and “built a learning community” (Gay, 2002, p. 109).

Gay (2002) stated that teachers of children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds need to know the use of “cultural scaffolding” in teaching these children (p. 109). Cultural scaffolding occurs when teachers care about these students’ ethnic backgrounds, and emotional and academic needs. Then teachers are able to transcendence this understanding and care into interaction with and curriculum for the children.

Conclusion six: The teachers’ meaning making in the relationships with the parents

I told a parent that I respect your culture, but when your son comes to our school, he needs to respect our culture too. [Just because he might not listen to women in his culture, but when he comes to school, he has to listen to women teachers]

(Olivia, A preschool teacher)

On a crowded planet there is one future for all, or no future for any. The common future of humanity cannot be diverse without co-ordination, nor can it be united without diversity

(Laszlo, 1993, p. 203)

Another conclusion is focused on the idea of “give and take” or social reciprocity in teachers’ relationships with parents from backgrounds that were different from their own. The

meanings that teachers made from the relationships with parents not only made it easier to work with these children, but also enabled them to obtain respect from parents for their own values and cultures. I found that the teachers had been trying hard to understand the parents' and children's cultures and how to work with them, so parents' respect for teachers as well as their collaboration and learning about American cultures was an essential element of building good relationships with teachers. The complexity of social and cultural reciprocity was highlighted by Yang and McMullen (2003) who stated that the relationships between American teachers and parents from these backgrounds are "highly complex and must be interactive, involving openness and understanding by each party" (p. 13).

Positive, collaborative relationships with parents were meaningful to the teachers in this study, and it was easier to work with the children because of the cooperation. Of course, a cooperative relationship entails a good working relationship with the parents, and not just with the children. Yang and McMullen (2003) suggested that cooperation and communication between American teachers and parents from other countries must be "used to foster the coming together of the teacher and parents around their mutual goals of helping the child achieve positive growth, development, and learning outcomes" (p. 13).

In terms of communication between the teachers and the parents in this study, the teachers found that their communication with these parents seemed good, perhaps because most of these

parents in the two research sites were international students or scholars from Virginia Tech and who spoke English comfortably or fluently. It is my inference that the parents' English skills may be one of the influential keys to their openness and communication with teachers. Studies by Lahman and Park (2004) and Yang and McMullen (2003) suggested that communication between teachers and these parents was hard and the cooperative relationship was slow to be built if the parents do not speak English fluently or comfortably.

Conclusion seven: Resources for the teachers to work with these children

I would like to hear not only teachers' experiences working with these children, but also maybe parents' and children's experiences.

(Ben, A preschool teacher)

The university is wider than our views of it.

(Thoreau, 1854)

The seventh conclusion for this study focuses on resources for the teachers when designing learning activities for and interaction with young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. I learned that the teachers often experimented with various strategies and resources. This study also exemplified and filled the needs for understanding teachers' experiences with strategies and resources that were not reflected in previous studies (Sleeter & Grants, 1999; Tabors, 1997). Moreover, my study suggested resources that teacher educators

could prepare in the future. It additionally showed that the teachers were trying to expand their world when working with these children. The future research related to preparing teachers for classes with cultural and linguistic diversity could provide (a) current teachers' both positive and challenging experiences working with these children, (b) the reflections and changes brought from these experiences, (c) voices and experiences from these parents, and (d) the children's experiences of being in a preschool or kindergarten with cultural and linguistic diversity.

Personal Reflection: A Lesson Learned

I love and care about these children; it has been the greatest reward for me being a teacher who is able to see these children feel comfortable and learn in a classroom.

(Renee, A toddler teacher)

Love is the spirit of life unto the adorned body of mankind, the establisher of true civilization in this mortal world, and the shedder of imperishable glory upon every high-aiming race and nation.

(`Abdu'l-Bahá, 1982)

After interviewing the teachers, analyzing data, and forming themes and conclusions, this process led me to realize an important essence underlying these teachers' experiences and interactions with the children of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds is love. Love

enabled the teachers to care about the children's needs and interests. It also became a strong driving for teachers to demonstrate love through their actions. It brought teachers hope to see the children learning and progressing. For example, the teachers tried numerous strategies for understanding these children, even though they speak different languages and grew up with different values, attitudes and behaviors. The teachers were open to cultural diversity, and to learning from these children and families. Many other researchers (Gay, 2002; Irvine, 2003; McAllister & Irvine, 2002) claimed that love is an essential element for teachers to become responsive to culturally and linguistically diverse students. On the other hand, Garmon (2004) pointed out that "the love-is-enough" requirement to be a teacher of students from diverse backgrounds was a misconception that seemed widespread among student teachers. Irvine (2003) wrote that teachers must (a) be culturally sensitive, (b) view teaching as a calling, (c) have sense of identity with their students, and (d) care about their students deeply, in order to be effective in today's diverse schools. As Irvine (2003) noted, "the content of knowledge and pedagogical skills are not sufficient" for being a competent teacher of these students (p. 40). Additionally, McAllister and Irvine (2003) suggested that love and care led teachers to maintain "positive interactions with their students, supportive classroom climates, and student centered pedagogy" (p. 442). Accordingly, I learned that teachers' love for people, and particularly for these children is an essential factor influencing teachers' day to day behaviors.

More importantly, I believe that the spirit of love prevailing among the teachers in this study should be recognized in order to inspire other teachers and researchers. In response to this lesson learned through my own reflection, I would also like to use verses from the *Holy Bible*, “It always protect, always trusts, always hope, always perseveres; Love never fails” (1 Corinthians 13; 7-8).

Implications for Future Research

According to the findings in the present study, there are many directions that researchers could pursue in the future. For instance, researchers may want to continue exploring teachers’ own learning experiences, particularly in terms of teachers’ understanding of children’s second language learning. How could the research or theories on second language learning help teachers who work with young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds? How do teachers’ interactions and relationships influence these children’s second language development? Researchers could also continue investigating how these positive, learning, interesting and rewarding, experiences help teachers to build confidence and competences.

Teachers would likely benefit from time and opportunities to reflect with a mentor on their experiences in teaching diverse children. Researchers evaluate models of training for multicultural educators. Moreover, attention is needed on how day care administrators might

provide teachers with time and opportunities for reflection on and documentation of changes in self-perceptions of themselves as teachers. Researchers could use a case study approach to examine details of day care environments or training sessions that support teachers' self-reflection and documentation of changes. A bounded system such as a process, activities, events or programs related to their interaction with these children could be studied in the research with the goal of illuminating features of supportive environments. Creswell (1998) stated that "the bounded system is the case being studied" (p. 61). Researchers could also conduct comparative case studies of two or more centers to find what helps and supports teachers to conduct reflections and to document their growth in teaching young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. An action research study could be used to find out what could be improved in a day care center in order to support teachers' reflective activities. This seems appropriate since action research is motivated by a quest to improve and understand the world by changing it and learning how to improve it (Stringer, 1999).

Researchers in the future may want to study international parents' experiences in working with teachers in the United States. What are the parents' experiences in working with teachers of their children? How do parents perceive about their relationships with teachers and their own roles in the relationships? What meanings do they make from their relationships with teachers? What are some ways for parents to share their voices with these teachers when

confronting diverse ideas caused from cultural differences with teachers? Research on about parents' experiences might bring a more detailed understanding of parents and teachers' experiences working together and could suggest strategies for collaboration or communications in a class of cultural and linguistic diversity.

Another recommendation for future research would be to investigate details of the major themes or sub themes uncovered in this study by conducting case study research with teachers or parents. Further, one could conduct survey research with larger samples and analyze it through quantitative methods. In addition, researchers may want to follow up the study with teachers in other geographical areas to understand whether their experiences are similar or different.

Implications for Practice

On the basis of my findings, the most helpful resources for teachers working with these diverse children included consulting parents and sharing experiences with other teachers. The teachers also reflected that there was lack of professional resource development in seminars or courses related to teaching in diverse cultural and linguistic settings. Therefore, teacher educators may want to design courses or conduct workshops about teachers' experiences or these parents' experiences. It could be a panel style that has both teachers and parents sharing

their experiences with participants in a workshop. Teachers could share, not only what they have done in their classrooms regarding their challenging experiences, but also their interesting, learning, and fulfilling stories. Furthermore, teachers might share their reflections about how the process transformed them as persons or assisted them in working with these children and parents. For example, Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, and Stephens (2003) discussed the transformation self, which means “a process in which development occurs as a result of the goals, motives, values and beliefs a person brings to a situation and the social influences she experiences once in that situation” (p. 115). Parents in a workshop might discuss their experiences with teachers’ and share their cultural values in raising or teaching a child. Finally, the presenters of workshops or seminars in conferences or courses for teachers of young children might be encouraged to share knowledge on young children’s second language learning. Moreover, instructors in higher education could provide social service learning courses on this topic in workshops for preservice teachers or college students in order to educate them to “function well in a diverse society” (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003, p. 50) and develop their senses of moral and civic understanding. Colby et al. further explained that “service-learning courses are especially well suited to heightening cultural awareness because they often place students in communities that are very different from any they have experienced before and follow the service experiences with reflections on the

encounters through structured discussion with professors and fellow students” (p. 85).

Another recommendation for practice is that teacher educators who are preparing workshops on teaching children of diverse backgrounds could apply my interview questions for teachers to reflect upon or discuss. Reflecting upon these questions should stimulate teachers to revisit their past experiences and personal changes, and to share experiences with colleagues. A trainer in a day care center, such as an administrator or a supervisor, could play a mentoring role to help teachers of English language learners to reflect upon their experiences.

In addition, educators of young children or researchers who are conducting similar studies might want to share their suggestions or research findings on websites that teachers will be able to access, thus creating a helpful resource for teachers. Teachers may be able to share their experiences and converse with other teachers on multicultural teaching experiences. The researchers and teachers who work with children and families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds might use an *Internet* chat room to share stories about their spirit of love and how it is translated into teaching practices.

Final Remarks

The multilingual, multicultural classroom is an American reality in the 21st century.

(Costa, McPhail, Smith & Brisk, 2005, p. 116)

All in all, this study contributed to the existing research in multicultural education of young children by examining and highlighting teachers' experiences in working with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The study provided participants an opportunity to reflect upon their experiences and to share them with others. It also demonstrated the teachers' continuous learning through experiences working with these children. The teachers learned different ways and searched for various resources constantly in order to communicate and work with these children. In addition, the findings indicated not only teachers' challenging experiences, but also positive experiences. The findings of the teachers' meaning making of their relationships with these children and parents also filled the lack of previous studies. More importantly, in the future, teachers can benefit from reading the study and be inspired to share their stories with colleagues. One aim of the present study was to bring more love, mutual understanding, and collaboration among teachers, educators and parents from these backgrounds in a multicultural classroom by sharing stories, experiences, and reflections. I believe that there is much more to know about people's experiences in a multicultural society and a school, and much more to discuss from these experiences.

I, as a researcher with multiple roles in this multicultural society, have learned from teachers' experiences in this study. I realized that love and care to these children were prevailing among the teachers and love was an essential element underlined teachers' various

types of experiences. By conducting this study, I was also able to contribute to the body of research in early childhood education where my passion and commitment lies. The study also enabled me to help other teachers, children, and parents from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds for whom I care heartily. The findings of this study, stories of teachers and parents from similar research studies, and future research related to this topic should be disseminated and shared with researchers, teachers of young children, and families from diverse backgrounds. Such studies and stories will bring recommendations to not only the research, but also to the practice of early childhood education. Moreover, these studies and stories will further help promote “participation in a pluralist and multicultural society and a world that extends beyond the boundaries of the United States” (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont & Stephens, 2003, p. 51).

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Appendix A: University IRB Permission to Conduct Study




Institutional Review Board

Dr. David M. Moore
IRB (Human Subjects) Chair
Assistant Vice President for Research Compliance
CVM Phase II - Duckpond Dr., Blacksburg, VA 24061-0442
Office: 540/231-4991; FAX: 540/231-6033
email: moored@vt.edu

DATE: February 23, 2005

MEMORANDUM

TO: Penny L. Burge ELPS 0302
Cosby Rogers HD 0416
Yuling Su

FROM: David Moore 

SUBJECT: **IRB Amendment Approval:** "Understanding Teachers' Experiences of Teaching Young Children from Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds"
IRB # 04-288

This memo is regarding the above referenced protocol which was previously granted approval by the IRB on June 7, 2004. You subsequently requested permission to amend your approved protocol to include the addition of the listed changes. Since the requested amendment is nonsubstantive in nature, I, as Chair of the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board, have granted approval for requested protocol amendment, effective as of February 23, 2005. The anniversary date will remain the same as the original approval date.

Virginia Tech has an approved Federal Wide Assurance (FWA00000572, exp. 7/20/07) on file with OHRP, and its IRB Registration Number is IRB00000667.

cc: File
Department Reviewer Fred Piercy 0416

Appendix B: The Protocol to Accompany IRB Request
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Title of Project: Understanding Teachers' Experiences with Teaching Young Children from Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds

Investigator(s): Yuling Su, Penny Burge, Ph.D., and Cosby Rogers, Ph.D. (Co-chairs)

Justification of Project

The purpose of this proposed dissertation study is to conduct a qualitative research by using the phenomenological method to understand teachers' experiences of teaching young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the Blacksburg Day Care and Development Center and The Child Development Center for Learning and Research of Virginia Tech. The previous researchers not only addressed the needs of continuing research of developing teachers' competencies in meeting the challenges of diversity in early childhood education, but also advocated using qualitative research methods to identify teachers' experiences. In addition, no previous studies have included a detailed examination of teachers' experiences of teaching young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds together with teachers' reflection on these experiences.

The study will generate stories and thick descriptions of teachers' experiences. It is hoped that by doing so they will inspire others in similar settings to share stories and encourage colleagues when meeting the challenges of cultural and linguistic diversity in early childhood education. This study will also provide an opportunity for participating teachers to reflect upon their values, attitudes and beliefs and how these influence on their experiences. At the same time, it will document how these experiences impact their values and teaching. Moreover, the proposed study will contribute to teacher education by providing information that will be useful in preparing competent and reflective teachers to meet the challenges of cultural and linguistic diversity in early childhood education.

The proposed study will be guided by the following goals: (a) to understand teachers' experiences of teaching young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (b) to discover the influences of these experiences on teachers' attitudes of teaching in a classroom with cultural and linguistic diversity, and on teachers' teaching beliefs and methods (c) to learn the influences of these experiences on teachers' teaching beliefs and methods (d) to find how teachers' own cultural values, attributes, beliefs influence on these experiences (e) to learn how teachers understand these children's needs and build relationships with them and their families (f) to inquiry further teachers' experiences with ideas from previous studies on teaching young

children from these backgrounds.

Procedures

I plan to conduct the proposed study in Blacksburg Day Care (BDC) and Development Center and The Child Development Center for Learning and Research of Virginia Tech (CDCLR) during Virginia Tech spring semester 2005. Four teachers in the BDC and two teachers in the CDCLR will be interviewed about their experiences of working with children from diverse cultural backgrounds. I met with the director of the Blacksburg Day Care and Development Center to introduce my research project and asked for permission of BDC as a research site. The director of BDC already sent me a letter with permission to conduct my proposed research in her center (please see the attached document). I also met with the director of research at CDCLR to introduce my research and asked for permission. After the amendments of my IRB being approved, letters will be sent to teachers inviting them to participate in the study. I would explain the proposed study and consent forms to teachers by meeting with each one of them. This will be an informal opportunity for me to begin to know them and also for teachers to get to know me. During this meeting, teachers will have an opportunity to discuss about her concerns or questions and will be asked to sign the consent form. Teachers will later receive a photocopy of their completed consent form.

After obtaining teachers' consent, interviews of teachers and observations in their classrooms will occur for the duration of three weeks in spring semester 2005. I will conduct semi-structured interviews with each teacher twice a week. Each interview will be approximately 30 minutes. I plan to interview four teachers total in BDC and overall hours of interviews of four teachers for the duration of three weeks will be twelve hours. In general, the topics will be related to their reflection and experiences of teaching young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in classrooms. Particularly, their learning process and challenges from working with these young children, and the influences on their experiences will be addressed. The interview guide will help me in using questions to guide our conversation and to explore teachers' experiences. I will first use the interview guide I to learn more about teachers and their values. Then the interview guide II will be followed up after completing the interviews with the guide I. The interviews will be audiotaped by a digital voice recorder with the participants' permission and then transcribed to be reviewed and analyzed. The goal of the interviews is to understand teachers' experiences in a classroom with cultural and linguistic diversity. I will also conduct at least two hours observation of teachers' interaction with young children in their classrooms twice a week. The tools for data collection will include interviews with teachers, observation, field notes, a researcher's journal, and occasionally photographing to assist collection of information and gain deeper understanding to this topic. Regarding to photographing, the researcher will only take photos of a particular

classroom setting or curriculum materials (such as posters or settings that help children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds or help you and children learn different cultures). The researcher will not take pictures of children and teachers. In addition, the researcher will ask teachers' permissions for photographing the setting or materials and discuss any concern teachers have for photographing. During the study and after the study, the researcher will also send teachers files of the photos that she takes.

Risk and Benefits

There are two minimal risks for teachers in this study. The first one could be that my interpretations of teachers' experiences will not accurately convey their ideas, although one advantage of doing an in-depth interpretive study with one person which lasts for periods of time is that a researcher develops a heightened sense of what is true—an ability to see beyond initial impression (Charmaz, 1995). Therefore, I still need to reduce this risk by collaborating with teachers continually throughout this study. I would share my writings, included field notes, interview transcripts or rough drafts of my paper, to solicit their feedback and make sure that I present accurate information.

The second risk could be my teachers' fear of any harm caused from the study toward their relationships with other staff in the center, or other gatekeepers and parents of children. According to this concern, I will not include personal information that may bring embarrassment to them, and I will not include personal information that teachers ask me to keep off the record. Throughout my work, I will always be cautious to ethical issues and prevent any hurt that possibly resulted from the desire of necessity, relevance and accuracy in the research. I will also take Clandinin and Connelly's suggestion (2001) that the researcher will continuously build caring relationship between the researcher and the participants.

In terms of the benefits for teachers, they will have a chance to experience and voice their growth in teaching young children from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds through this study and become reflective teachers. They will be able to examine how they face or solve the difficulties in teaching. Additionally, they will have an opportunity to explore both their own cultural or teaching values and children's family cultures to better understand children's ways of expression and their actions in teaching of young children from these backgrounds.

Confidentiality/Anonymity

I will not use the center, teachers and their classroom children's real names in my reports in order to protect their privacy and will hold in confidence what they share with me. The data from audiotaping and photos will be stored and locked only in my home. The data will only be used for my dissertation and academic purposes. The permission will need to be acquired from

participants if the data used for other purposes. Only the researcher and the committee members will have access to the data. As well, I will be the only person who transcribes the data. However, my committee members will sometimes read my transcribed data in order to validate or advice my data analysis.

Informed Consent

(Please see attached)

Appendix C: Letter to Teachers Explaining the Study

Dear Teachers,

My name is Yuling Su. I am a PhD student in Child Development at Virginia Tech. I would like to conduct my dissertation study in your classroom. The purpose of this study is to explore your experiences of teaching young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. I am very interested in learning more about you as a person and your genuine experiences with these children. The results of this study will also bring contributions to teacher education of young children in the near future.

What is the benefit of this study?

The benefits of the study will be gaining an understanding of teachers' experiences working with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. I believe this study is an opportunity for your reflection and discoveries of teaching in a classroom with cultural and linguistic diversity and to help other teachers in a similar setting to create a supportive learning environment for young children. Also, you will have me as a volunteer helper in the classroom two mornings a week!!

About the Study

I will interview you about your experiences of teaching young children and observe your interaction with children from diversity. Observation in the classroom and interviews will occur for the duration of three weeks in VT spring semester 2005. I will conduct at least two hours observation of the interaction with young children in the classroom twice a week. I would also conduct semi-structured interviews, approximately 30 minutes twice a week for three weeks, with you and the conversation will be audio taped and transcribed later. In general, the topics will be related to your reflection of teaching young children from diverse backgrounds in the classroom. In addition, I will audiotape or take pictures of the interaction and conversation between children and teachers sometimes in the classroom.

All the information I gather in the classroom will be kept confidential at all times. I will use pseudonyms or code names in the final reports. My committee members and I will be the only people accessing and reviewing data or information. You are also free to withdraw without explanation from the study anytime. I sincerely hope that you will participate in the study. If you are willing to participate, please sign your name on the consent form (p.3). Please feel free to contact me if you have any other questions regarding the study (yulings@vt.edu or 540-449-6362). Thanks for your time,

Sincerely,

Yuling Su

Appendix D: Consent Forms for Participating Teachers

Title of Project: Understanding Teachers' Experiences with Teaching Young Children from Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds

Investigator(s): Yuling Su, Penny Burge, Ph.D., and Cosby Rogers, Ph.D.

1. Purpose of Project

The purpose of this proposed study is to conduct a qualitative research by using the phenomenological method to understand teachers' experiences of teaching young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the Day Care and Development Center 1 and 2. The previous relevant research not only addressed the needs of continuing research of developing teachers' competence in meeting the challenges of diversity in early childhood education, but also advocated using qualitative research methods to identify teachers' experiences. In addition, no previous studies have included an examination of teachers' experiences of teaching young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in details and teachers' reflection of these experiences.

By using multiple approaches to collect data, such as interviews, field notes, participant observation, audiotaping, and photos, the researcher will be able to triangulate data for building credibility, dependability and conformability of the proposed study. The study will also generate stories of teachers' experiences and thick description of their experiences in order to inspire other teachers who are in the similar setting to share stories with their co-workers and encourage each other when meeting the challenges of cultural and linguistic diversity in early childhood education.

This study will also provide an opportunity for participating teachers to reflect their values, attitudes and beliefs and how these influence on their experiences and at the same time how these experiences bring impact to their values and teaching. Moreover, the proposed study will contribute to teacher education in preparing competent and reflective teachers to meet the challenges of cultural and linguistic diversity in early childhood education.

2. Procedure

Observation in your classroom and interviews with you will occur for the duration of three weeks in Virginia Tech spring semester 2005. The researcher (Yuling) would conduct a semi-structured interview with you twice a week. Each interview will be approximately 30 minutes. In general, the topics will be related to your reflection of teaching young children from diverse backgrounds in classrooms. Particularly, your learning process and challenges from working with these young children, and the influences on your experiences will be

addressed. The researcher will also conduct at least two hours observation of your interactions with children in the classroom twice a week. The tools for data collection will include interviews, observation, field notes, a researcher's journal, and occasionally photographing to assist collection of information and gain deeper understanding to this topic. Regarding to photographing, the researcher will only take photos of a particular classroom setting or curriculum materials (such as posters or settings that help children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds or help you and children learn different cultures). The researcher will not take pictures of children and teachers. In addition, the researcher will ask teachers' permissions for photographing the setting or materials and discuss any concern teachers have for photographing. During the study and after the study, the researcher will also send teachers files of the photos that she takes.

3. Risks

There is no more than minimal risk exists for all participants.

4. Benefits

In terms of the benefits for teachers, you will have a chance to experience and voice your growth in teaching young children from different culture and language backgrounds through this project and become reflective teachers. You will be able to examine how you face or solve the difficulties in teaching. Additionally, you will have an opportunity to explore both your own cultural or teaching values and children's family cultures to better understand children's ways of expression and your actions in teaching of young children from these backgrounds.

5. Confidentiality/Anonymity

The researcher will not use the center, your and classroom children's real names in her reports in order to protect participants' privacy and will hold in confidence what you share with the researcher. The data from audiotaping and photos will be stored and locked only in the researcher's home and computer files. The data will only be used for the researcher's dissertation and academic purposes. The permission will need to be acquired from participants if the data used for other purposes. Only the researcher and the committee members will have access to the data. As well, the researcher will be the only person who transcribes the data. However, her committee members will sometimes read the transcribed data in order to validate or advice her data analysis.

6. Compensation

There is no specific compensation for participation in the study.

7. Freedom to Withdraw

Participants are free to withdraw from this study anytime without penalty.

8. Approval of Research

This research project has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board of Research Involving Human Subject at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, by the Department of Human Development.

IRB Approval Date _06/07/2004__ Approval Expiration Date: _06/07/2005__

9. Participant’s Responsibilities

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study upon signing the form below.

10. Participant’s Permission

I have read and understand the informed consent and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent.

Signature : _____ **Date:** _____

Should I have any questions about this research on its conduct, I may contact:

Yuling Su, Investigator (540) 557-5680

Penny Burge, Ph.D., Faculty Advisor (540) 231-9730

Cosby Rogers, Ph.D., Faculty Advisor (540) 951-2657

David Moore, Ph.D. (540) 231-4991

Chair Institute Review Board

Research Division

Appendix E: Interview Guide I

Dear Teacher:

You will be interviewed individually using the guided interview I and II. This initial interview will help me to know you more and to expand our interviews and discussion in the future. This interview involves an informal interactive process, and utilizes open-ended questions for reflection. **I am interested in learning more about you as a person and your genuine experiences with children from diversity.** If you cannot think of answers for certain questions at this interview time, don't worry about it, we will come back to talk about them in another interview time. Thanks

1. Please tell me three words that describe you (e.g. something you love, something you dislike, something you fear and something you wish for).
2. Please tell me your educational backgrounds and brief working experiences in the field of early childhood education.
3. What were your family's attitudes towards cultural differences? What message did you receive about these differences? How were these messages communicated?
4. Please identify groups to which you belong, tell me as many as possible (e.g., educator, parent, spouse, Virginian, etc.). Why do you choose to identify with these groups? What do these groups suggest to you about what you value?
5. What are some basic ideas that contribute to your current beliefs and values to teaching in a classroom with cultural and linguistic diversity? Could you please give me more examples from your daily actions and interactions with these children that say about what you believe and value?

Appendix F: Interview Guide II

Dear Teacher:

You will be interviewed individually using the guided interview I and II. This interview involves an informal interactive process, and utilizes open-ended comments and questions. The guide allows me to frame a few questions first to survey but remain open to exploring different interests or ideas that you will bring up. The following are open-ended questions I will apply in the study. Thanks.

1. What were your past experiences of working with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds like, if you had these experiences?
2. Describe your interaction with children from diverse backgrounds this week. What strikes you most or what you remember most? And why?
3. Suppose I was your co-teacher or a very good friend, and I chat with you about your feelings when working with these children, what feelings when working with these children will you tell me?
4. What do you think of these current experiences of working with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds? Could you tell me more how these experiences help you learn anything or change your perceptions/ teaching beliefs/curriculum?
5. How do your personal values, stories and past experiences influence what you do in your work with these children and families? How may it restrict or help your

freedom to make choices and take actions to help you move toward greater cultural understanding and sensitivity?

6. Describe your solution or reaction to the negative experience (if any)?
7. Describe your current relationships with these children and their families? What do you think your roles for these children and families?
8. Where or how do you get the resources of teaching young children from these backgrounds?
9. Talk about what else you want to learn about children from diverse backgrounds in the next (following) days.
10. Is there anything you wish to add or discuss that I have not asked?

Appendix G: Interview Questions and Research Questions

Research Questions	Interview Guide I	Interview Guide II
1. What are teachers' experiences of teaching young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds?		(All questions are related to their experiences)
2. What is the influence of the experiences on teachers' attitudes of teaching in a classroom with cultural and linguistic diversity, and on teachers' teaching beliefs and methods?		<p>1. Did you have experiences teaching young children from cultural and linguistic backgrounds before teaching in this class? When? Please describe your general impression of your past experiences?</p> <p>2. Describe your interaction with children from diverse backgrounds this week. What strikes you most or what you remember most? Why?</p> <p>3. Describe your feelings when working with these children? What do you think for these experiences? Do these experiences help you learn anything or change your perceptions/teaching beliefs/curriculum?</p>
3. How do teachers' own cultural values, attributes, beliefs influence these experiences?	1. Please tell me three words that describe you?	8. Do your personal values, stories or past experiences limit what you do in your work with children and families? How

Research Questions	Interview Guide I	Interview Guide II
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="646 260 974 520">2. Please tell me your educational backgrounds and brief working experiences in the field of early childhood education. <li data-bbox="646 583 974 898">3. What were your family's attitudes towards cultural differences? What message did you receive about these differences? How were these message communicated? <li data-bbox="646 951 974 1381">4. Please identify groups to which you belong, tell me as many as possible (e.g., educator, parent, spouse, Virginian, etc.). Why do you choose to identify with these groups? What do these groups suggest to you about what you value? <li data-bbox="646 1434 974 1877">5. What are some basic ideas that contribute to your current beliefs and values to teaching in a classroom with cultural and linguistic diversity? Is there any daily actions and interactions say about what you believe and value? Why do you hold on to these beliefs? 	<p data-bbox="1006 260 1401 478">may it restrict your freedom to make choices and take actions to help you move toward greater cultural understanding and sensitivity?</p>

Research Questions	Interview Guide I	Interview Guide II
<p>4. What are teachers' challenges in teaching and learning in the experiences?</p>	<p>5. What are some basic ideas that contribute to your current beliefs and values to teaching in a classroom with cultural and linguistic diversity? Is there any daily actions and interactions say about what you believe and value? Why do you hold on to these beliefs?</p>	<p>4. What are teachers' challenges in teaching and learning in the experiences?</p> <p>7. Talk about what else you want to learn about children from diverse backgrounds in the next (following) days.</p>
<p>5. How do teachers understand these children's needs and build relationships with them and their families?</p>		<p>5. Describe your current relationships with these children and families? What do you think your roles for these children and families?</p>
<p>6. What are teachers' experiences with ideas from previous studies on teaching young children from these backgrounds? What are the sources of these ideas? Where do they find resources?</p>		<p>6. Where or how you get the resources of teaching young children from these backgrounds?</p>

Appendix H: Coding Schemes

Understanding Teachers' Experiences Working with Children from Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds

Coding Scheme-Phase One

- P: Participants information
- A: Types of experiences
- B: Influences of past experiences and values
- C: Influences of current experiences
- D: Relationships with children and parents
- E: Resources

Coding Scheme-Phase Two

- P: Participant Information
 - P1. Characteristics of participants
 - P2. Working experiences
 - P3. Teaching beliefs
 - P4. Family attitudes toward diversity
- A: Types of Experiences
 - A1. Learning
 - A2. Discouraging, hard and challenging
 - A3. Interesting
 - A4. Fulfilling and rewarding
- B: Interaction between Experiences
 - B1. Past experiences with diversity
 - B2. Values to diversity and teaching these children
 - B3. Influences of past experiences or values
 - B4. Influences of current experiences
- C: Teacher-Child Relationships
 - C1. Description of the relationship

C2. Roles

D: Teacher-Parent Relationships

D1. Description of the relationship

D2. Roles

E: Resources

E1. Common resources

E2. Suggestions for resources

Coding Scheme-Phase Three

P: Participant Information

P1. Characteristics of participants

P2. Working experiences

P3. Teaching beliefs

P4. Family attitudes toward diversity

A: Types of Experiences

A1. Learning

A2 Challenging

A3. Interesting

A4. Fulfilling

B: Interaction among Experiences and Changes in Teaching Strategies and Self-Perceptions

B1. Influences of past experiences or values on current experiences

B2. Influences of current experiences on the changes in the self as multicultural teachers

C: Teachers' Relationships with These Children

C1. Closer relationships

C2. Roles in the relationships

C3. Meaning of the relationships to teachers

D: Teachers' Relationships with These Parents

D1. Good and cooperative relationship

D2. Roles in the relationships

D3. Meaning of the relationships to teachers

E: Common Resources for Teachers

E1. Most helpful resources

E2. Lack of resources

E3. Interests in resources

Vita

Yuling Lianna Su

E-mail: yulings@vt.edu

Website: <http://yulings.tripod.com>

Education

Ph.D. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA

Department of Human Development, Program of Child Development, May 2005

Dissertation: "Understanding teachers' experiences with teaching young children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds"

M.Ed., University of Massachusetts/Amherst, Amherst, MA

School of Education, Program of Early Childhood Education and Development

February 1999

GPA: 3.7 /4.0

B.A., Chinese Culture University, Taipei, Taiwan

Department of English Literature and Language, June 1997

GPA: 3.5/4.0

Relevant Experience

College Teaching

Department of Human Development, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA

- *Teaching Assistant*
- August 2004-December 2004
- Organized and lectured the class of Human Development

Urban College, Boston, MA,

- *Adjunct Instructor*
- Taught "Child Observing and Recording"
- January 2000-December 2000

Research

Department of Human Development, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA

- *Graduate Research Assistant*
- August 2003-May 2004
- Research project “The Termination of Parental Rights for Families Involved in Foster Care”

Supervision, Administration, and Consulting

Child Development Lab, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA

- *Graduate Assistant Coordinator*
- August 2002-May 2003
- Assisted the program coordinator in preparation for accreditation of NAEYC and the program administration

Chinese Church Head Start, Boston, MA

- *Education and Special Education Supervisor*
- August 1999-July 2001
- Trained and supervised teaching staff and volunteers; planned, developed, and managed education services

Jump Start Summer Program, Boston, MA,

- *Mentor teacher*
- July 1999-August 1999
- Provided college students ongoing opportunities to develop and implement curriculum, especially in the area of literacy, and family involvement activities

ABCD Even Start, Boston, MA

- *Program on-site trainer*
- 2000
- Trained teachers and families to prepare literacy activities on site and help them reflected on the experiences of these literacy activities for the city wide literacy fair held by the community action.

Classroom Teaching

Chinese Church Head Start, Boston, MA,

- *Preschool Lead Teacher*
- January 1999-August 1999
- Responsible for an inclusive classroom of 20 children

Fort River Elementary School, Amherst, MA

- *1st Grade Student Teacher*
- September 1998-December 1998

Amherst Public School, Amherst, MA

- *Substitute Teacher*
- September 1998-December 1998

Wildwood Elementary School, Amherst, MA

- *Preschool Student Teacher*
- September 1997-June 1998

Fort River Elementary School, Amherst, MA

- *Preschool Assistant Teacher*
- July 1998-August 1998

Child Development Observation and Research Center, Taipei, Taiwan

- *Student Teacher*
- September 1996-June 1997

Hess language School, Taipei, Taiwan

- *English Teacher*
- January 1995-September 1996

Relevant Courses Work

Curriculum Models of Early Childhood Education

Issues in Children's Literature

Issues of Early Childhood Education

Preschool Methods and Curriculum Seminar

Preschool Practicum, K-3 Pre-Practicum

Leading a Family Friendly Service

Theories of Child Development
Cognitive Development
Parent-Child Interaction
Teaching in Higher Education
Assessment and Observation
Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods

Publications

Su, Y. (2005, May). *Understanding teachers' experiences working with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds*. Poster session presented at the annual research symposium of the Child Development Center for Learning and Research at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA.

Su, Y. (2005). *Understanding teachers' experiences working with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

Su, Y. (2002). Welcome to early childhood education international center. Retrieved May 4, 2005, from <http://yulings.tripod.com>

Caines, G., Su, Y. (2000). *Outcomes of child growth and development course*. Unpublished manuscript, Urban College.

Su, Y. (2000). *Introduction to children's books for Chinese Parents*. Unpublished manuscript, Boston, MA.

Su, Y. (2000) *Boston Chinatown resources guide for teaching young children and working with families*. Unpublished manuscript, Boston, MA.

Awards, Honors and Presentations

Presenter to 2002 VAEYC Conference (Virginia Association for the Education of Young Children)

- Richmond, VA, March 2002
- Presented: Creating a caring and supportive learning environment for non-English speaking children

Presenter to 2001 NAEYC Conference (National Association for the Education of Young Children)

- Anaheim, CA, November 2001
- Presented: Finding resources for teaching young children of Chinese Americans in the United States

Validator of NAEYC Accreditation

- NAEYC, Washington, DC
- October 2000-present

Honor of Outstanding Mentor Teacher

- Jump Start, Boston, MA
- August 1999

Tuition Waiver Scholarship

- University of Massachusetts/Amherst
- January 1998-December 1998