The Impact of a Focused Professional Development Project on the Practices and

Career Paths of Early Childhood Teachers

by

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved September 2011 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

December 2011

ABSTRACT

Early childhood education (ECE) teacher professional development refers to the various modalities of providing new and or additional content knowledge to the teachers who work with children birth to five. The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of an Arizona United Way-administered intervention project designed to provide focused professional development activities to 15 ECE teachers at seven high-need, center-based early care and education settings. Specifically, this study determined if these interventions influenced the teachers to undertake formative career path changes such as college coursework. In addition, the study also sought to understand the views, beliefs, and attitudes of these ECE teachers and if/how their perspectives influenced their educational career paths. Data were gathered through the triangulated use of participants' responses to a survey, face-to-face interviews, and a focus group. Findings demonstrate that the teachers understand that professional development, such as college coursework, can increase a person's knowledge on a given topic or field of study, but that they feel qualified to be a teacher for children birth to five even though 12 of the 15 teachers do not hold an AA/AAS or BA/BS degree in any area of study. Further, the teachers suggested that if they were to earn a degree it would most likely be in another field of study beside education. These responses provide another reason professional development efforts to encourage ECE teachers to seek degrees in the field of education may be failing. If ECE teachers wanted to invest time, energy and funds they would acquire a degree, which provided more financial reward and professional respect.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express sincere appreciation to my committee, who patiently provided me with their support, guidance, and expertise. Dr. Mary Romero and Dr. Gustavo Fischman joined me at the beginning of this long journey and consistently challenged me to think deeper, providing wise words of caution about the necessity to stay focused. Dr. Michael Kelley, my committee Chair, counseled me to never lose sight of the purpose of my study and challenged me to keep my study *real*. Dr. Billie Enz, provided me with the sense of who I am, instilled in me the belief that I could complete this study, and patiently but firmly pushed me to write, write, write. She helped me to bring the voices of the women in my study to the forefront, where they could stand in a place of honor and respect, and for that I am truly grateful.

To my children, Christopher and Aspen, whom I love more than I can express, thank you for your belief in me: I realize that I have been attending college for more than half of your lives. I have not forgotten the hours we all spent in our home office, each doing various forms of school-related work, purposely gathered to spend time together. I recall the many times I have said the words, "I can't; I need to work on my dissertation", and I hope that you have come to realize the passion I have for my work and that it is truly difficult to separate my passion from the fabric of who I am. You have touched my heart with your undying belief in me and your acceptance of what drives me to seek additional knowledge. You are my anchors in the midst of much chaos!

Words cannot express the gratitude I have for a very special individual in my life who tirelessly listened to me explain my study and provided me with never-ending love and support. Your belief in me inspired me to complete this project.

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# OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

## Introduction

Over the past three decades, participation in center-based preschool programs has become much more common, with approximately 60% of age-eligible children attending (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). Preschool programs have demonstrated positive effects on children's learning and development, but effects vary in size and persistence (i.e., long-term effect on the child) by programming variables, including time (i.e., half day versus full day), curriculum focus, and teacher education and experience (Barnett, 2008).

Among these variables, the factor most predictive and impactful appears to be *teacher education* (TE): As Bowman, Donovan, and Burns (2000) stated, it is necessary to increase the skills and knowledge of educators in order to see gains in student achievement (p. iv; Kagan, Little, & Frelow, 2003). Consistently, research studies show that "children benefit, socially, emotionally, and academically when teachers have a college degree and some background in early childhood education" (NIEER p. 1), yet as recently as 2004, less than one-third of Arizona's early education teachers in center-based programs were college graduates (Children's Action Alliance, 2005). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore how the beliefs, views, and attitudes of the teacher impact her interest in the ongoing participation in college courses or in degree seeking activities.

**A Prepared Teaching Force**

Although many research studies document the importance of professional learning for early childhood teachers working with children from birth to age five, few investigations exist on the beliefs and perceptions of early childhood teachers that may act as barriers to enrolling and completing college coursework (Bowman et al., 2000; Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study Team, 1999; NICHD, 2005).

As new standards, legislation, and testing have become standardized across the nation, greater attention has been given to the role teacher's play in student achievement (National Education Goals Panel, 1998). In particular, the educational level of the teacher has been identified as a key variable to improving the quality of the early learning environment and the student achievement levels (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Darling-Hammond, Berry & Thoreson, 2001; Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002; Nye, Konstantopoulos & Hedges, 2004).

Bachelor's degrees and certification are required of public school teachers in the United States (U.S.), but, for teachersof children younger than age five,  TE is limited to one-day workshops that frequently prove to be "disconnected from deep issues of curriculum and learning, are fragmented and noncumulative" (Ball & Cohen, 1999, p. 4). Research has shown that such approaches to professional development (PD) do little to improve teachers' practice; and that teachers have experienced professional development that is all too often not relevant to their individual or classroom needs (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001).

Beyond PD, teachers' effectiveness also appears to be related to their individual views about the purpose of preschool (McMullen & Alat, 2002; Pajares, 1992). A more complete understanding of how a teacher is processing and then applying new knowledge to her or his individually constructed practice and to her or his own internal schema of intrinsic beliefs is important to effectively impact the classroom environment As Lara-Cinisomo et al. (2009) stated,

> teacher training and type of program are not the sole determinants of classroom quality; teacher beliefs about what children should experience and know play an important role in the type of classroom experience children have and, ultimately, in classroom quality. (p. 2)

**Gender Influence and Teacher Role**

Although the majority of research on PD is focused on teachers in the K-12 system, the impact of such research drifts into the field of Early Childhood Education (ECE). Standards of practice, TE, use of curriculum and cultural views recognized as quality benchmarks within the K-12 educational system influence the teaching practices and learning activities of the early childhood classroom. Similarly historical constructs related to the profession of teaching have identified the female as the preferred and "natural" gender to teach children. These constructs only served to further validate the belief that women are biologically predisposed for certain family and career roles. With 95-97% (F. Kipnis, personal communication, May 31, 2011) of early childhood teachers being female, the

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views held by the public about teachers in general have created a public space that places a women teacher in a position of being defined and the value of their work viewed through a very patriarchal lens.

> If elementary school teaching is culturally constructed as domestic, or as a job for women, then it can be criticized, controlled, and organized as women's work and can come from both women and men, but it is anchored in a gendered understanding that dismisses, discounts, or takes authority over women's work. (Biklen, 1995, p. 2)

Sadly, few research studies have focused on issues of gender and the relationship of such to the classroom practices of teachers (Tuominen, 2003).

The field of ECE is predominantly staffed by women and "child care teaching is recognized as a feminized profession" (Kim & Reifel, 2010, p. 229). The disproportionate percentage of women working in the field of ECE creates an opportunity for an inaccurate comparison and measurement of indicators and outcomes related to interest, access, and sustainability related to PD as society has created cultural constructs related to gender and selection of professions. Noted by Biklen (1995), "conversations, behavior, etc. is gendered when particular socially or culturally shared understandings about relationships between men and women inform it" (p. 2). That is, society has a practice of characterizing males and females with labels that have a direct relationship to each other (e.g., a woman, in comparison to a man, is capable of nurturance and caring).

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A number of social scientists examining women teachers have "compared their values, roles and actions to social theories and teaching careers of men. They spoke about them as though they were objects and their common discourse used to describe women's work was done in comparison to a gendered normative model" (Biklen, 1995, p. 7).

Society has created and defined many values and ideologies that have attached themselves to the care of children younger than age five, with a "popular perception that anyone –or at least any woman – can do it" (Nelson, 2001, p. 5). Many of the shared values are exhibited in comments s such as the *care and education of young children is no more than babysitting or its woman's work or the care of a child should be left to the family, aka "mother."* Often, the skill of caring for a child aged birth to five is viewed as monitoring only the child's physical safety with the care needed to provide opportunities for positive cognitive, social, and emotional developmental needs of the child going virtually unrecognized as a skill (Nelson, 2001, p. 5).

**Understanding the Challenges of the Early Childhood Teacher**

As more accountability measures have been implemented in the K-12 system and education reform has raised the dialogue about the importance of a teachers educational level, subject content knowledge, and teaching pedagogy, the public along with educators have begun to look at the types of experiences children have had prior to entry into kindergarten or first grade. There has been recognition by educators in both the K-12 system and in ECE about the important role the early childhood teachers play in the cognitive and social emotional

development of the child. With this recognition there have been local and national initiatives created to improve the educational level of the teacher. Efforts include needs-based PD, improved access to college coursework, and the placement of a coach into the classroom to assist the teacher with the transfer of new knowledge into classroom application.

In addition to federal and state governments initiatives designed to create and improve professional development for teachers, philanthropic giving has played a major role in funding early childhood teacher professional development projects. Philanthropic organizations whose funding portfolio includes the PD of early childhood teachers are interested in testing whether their investments have contributed to the increased quality of the learning environment for the child and if their funding has influenced the career-path options for the participating early childhood teachers.

Over the course of more than two decades PD projects offering various modalities for access to college coursework and a classroom coach have been funded by a number of sources, including philanthropy. Unfortunately, there has been little to no success in identifying the key mix of elements that will engage the early childhood teacher in such a way that she or he continues with college coursework that culminates with the earning of a degree or continues to implement new teaching practices gained through their involvement in the PD project. This has created a high level of interest in the field of philanthropy to fund projects that include PD practices that will provide long-term impact for their financial investments.

## Purpose of the Study

This study is part of a larger Arizona United Way- and Arizona Education Foundation-funded project designed to provide focused PD activities to seven high-need, center-based early care and education settings and their personnel. Specifically, the project assessed whether specific interventions, including tuition assistance, baseline assessments of classroom practices, and individualized coaching, positively affected classroom practices of 15 early childhood teachers.

The purpose of the project was to "connect individuals participating in the program to early childhood professional development opportunities that will develop their professional skills and enhance the quality of services that they provide to children and their families" (Nash, unpublished document, 2010, p. 1). The focus of this study was to determine whether these interventions influenced the early childhood teacher to undertake formative career path changes, such as college coursework. This study also sought to understand whether and how the teachers' beliefs and attitudes regarding their roles as a woman, mother, and teacher influenced their educational career paths.

Whereas some researchers have focused on the topic of early childhood educators beliefs about key preschool classroom experiences (Lara-Cinisomo, Fuligni, Daugherty, Howes, Karoly, 2009) and others on the beliefs and practices of early childhood and elementary education teachers (Fang, 1996; File & Gullo, 2002), few have explored how the beliefs and attitudes of the teacher influence interest in the ongoing participation in undergraduate college courses or in

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enrolling in other professional development activities designed to improve their classroom teaching practices.

## Need for the Study

Investments and interventions for improving the quality of the learning environment, especially around early childhood teachers'/knowledge and skills, can provide gains in the cognitive and social emotional development of the young child (Whitebrook, Sakai, Gerber, & Howes, 2001). The acknowledgment of the important role of the teacher in the delivery of high-quality ECE has led a number of community based organizations such as United Way agencies, First Things First, and philanthropic entities to offer professional development projects to the early childhood teacher. Despite this, limited work exists which considers the teacher's beliefs and attitudes and the potential impact of such variables on her or his career development. Although some progress has been made in identifying factors that have been found to influence the philosophical beliefs adopted by caregivers and teachers, the research has predominantly focused on teachers working with children in the first, second, and third grades (Buchanan, Burts, Bidner, White, & Charlesworth, 1998).

Indicators and measurements of programmatic success employed by philanthropy to assess the utility of investments in teacher professional development projects and programs are frequently based on the number of courses in which a teacher enrolls and successfully completes. In addition there is a high level of interest by philanthropic foundations to assess the sustainability level of a project by analyzing data that indicates whether there is continuation of

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the teachers' participation in college courses post grant cycle; however; there is little inquiry into or measurement of the impact of the complexities of individual variables beyond demographics that contribute to the teachers' desire to continue with college coursework or the teacher continuing to use new teaching strategies in the classroom.

## Problem under Research and Research Questions

Acknowledging that ECE is a feminized profession (Kim and Reifel, 2010, p. 229) and that occupations predominantly held by women have often faced professional status barriers has led me to explore the subject of early childhood teachers' beliefs and attitudes and the impact these views may have upon the participants and their professional choices. The field of ECE has not only struggled with promoting the value of education before kindergarten, but it has had to battle divisiveness among its elementary colleagues who often question the role of nurturance and care versus education. Research studies have been conducted that explore teachers' attitudes and beliefs, but few provide insight into other issues such as gender as the studies have focused on the teachers' pedagogical practices.

The present study determined the outcomes of a focused PD project: I looked at how/if a specific set of PD elements influenced the quality of the early childhood teacher classroom practices. I also examined the impact of individualized PD intervention on enhanced educational levels (e.g., Child Development Associates certificate, an AA/AAS or BA/BS degree). A survey, interviews, and focus group questions were used to collect information about the

teachers' beliefs and attitudes related to how they defined themselves as a teacher, their relationships with co-workers, and their perceptions of their role as defined by their beliefs and attitudes as a woman and mother. How the teachers' beliefs about the skills and attributes of being a woman or mother contribute to the continuation of new classroom teaching practices and the pursuit of a college degree pose the following questions for exploration.

1. How did focused PD activities impact the classroom practices of center-based teachers as measured by

   A. The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), or

   B. The Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS)?

2. How did focused PD influence teachers' career path choices?

3. What were the factors that impacted the participant's engagement in continuing education?

## Significance of the Study

This study has the opportunity to reveal challenges that non-traditional early childhood teachers experience when provided focused PD intervention. The goal of most funding agencies is to improve the quality of an educational environment by increasing the knowledge and educational level of the teacher through PD projects that create the opportunity for the teacher to access college coursework at the postsecondary undergraduate level (i.e., Associate's Degrees,

Bachelor's Degrees). Unfortunately, upon completion of the intervention project, many participants do not continue their education (Nash, unpublished document, 2010). Thus to craft a better intervention program, the funders require a better appreciation of how the beliefs and attitudes of the early childhood teacher affect her participation in enrolling, maintaining, and completing college coursework. One major projected outcome of this study is to identify ways to craft sustainable educational career pathways for non-traditional early childhood teachers such that the children in their care are more likely to receive a high-quality education.

## Definitions of Terms

For clarification of how the following terminology is used throughout this study, I have provided definitions to assist with clarification and general understanding:

> *Early learning environment*: The space in which a teacher and child interact in a formal way to provide care and teaching, it meets the developmental needs of the children and provides meaning through the arrangements and objects available;

> *Developmentally appropriate practice*: A framework of principles and guidelines for best practice in the care and education of young children, birth through age eight, it is grounded both in the research on how young children optimally develop and learn and in what is known about education effectiveness (NAEYC, 2009);

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*Environmental Rating Scales (ERS)*: Observational assessment tools used to evaluate the quality of early childhood programs;

*Intervention*: A set of techniques and strategies to produce a different outcome;

*Coach*: A coach focuses on the individual, her or his career, and support for individual growth and maturity; the coach might also be job-focused and performance-oriented;

*Non-traditional Student*: In contrast to the traditional students' demands on her time, the non-traditional students' demands are multiplied by a multitude of outside forces, because these individuals are typically older, starting college later, are parents, and need to maintain full-time employment (Horn & Carroll, 1996).

*Positivist*:  I do not believe I use this in the document, so I suggest it be deleted.

*Professional Development (PD)*: A series of strategies, interventions, and learning experiences designed to improve the environment or capacity of an individual related to her or his field of employment;

*Rater Reliability*: The degree of agreement between individuals who are evaluating or judging performance according to specific coding criteria;

*Teacher*: Individuals responsible for imparting knowledge and values to others, not reserved for the more formal usage which commonly indicates an individual who is employed formally to *teach* academic subject matter;

*Tool*: For the purposes of this study, a device, such as an assessment that contributes benchmarks or indicators, to measure particular phenomena;

*Workshop*: A convening, wherein information related to a particular professional field is exchanged with those working in the field and in which hours of delivery and venue can vary greatly; usually no formal certificate or degree is the outcome of such a convening;

*Validity*: The degree to which a tool or study accurately assesses the specific concept that an observer or researcher is attempting to measure.

## Study Limitations

Criteria for participation in this study were based on the teachers' participation in the research project implemented by an Arizona United Way and funded in collaboration with an Arizona Education Foundation of which the researcher is an employee. The Foundation measures project efficacy with a specific set of required indicators and outcomes that may not positively contribute to a project's sustainability. Participants' responses may have been influenced by the reality that an organization with which I am involved has contributed funding

toward the initial professional development project. The mitigating circumstances are that the funding for the project was in the form of an endowment to the United Way; therefore, the success or demise of the project in no way affects the continuation of the funding. In addition, I had no contact with the participants prior to the initial meeting, wherein the questionnaires were left with the participants and the purpose of the study was shared.

There is also a possibility that the teachers provided misleading or false responses because they were asked to share beliefs and attitudes about themselves and the early childhood profession with an unfamiliar individual. Again, I included the project coach in all interviews and focus group with the expressed permission of each teacher participant to minimize any reticence in sharing such information with me.

The sample size of 15 is small, which limits the findings from the study data to this set of women. There is a need to conduct additional research with a broader and more varied number of participants that include variables such as culture, race, gender, and geographic location.

The restricted time frame of the study is another limitation. Interview data was gathered within a three-month period. In addition, the study involved *one-time* interviews. A longer time frame for data collection may have provided me with a sense that time was not so compressed and if of interest, follow-up interviews could have been conducted with the participants to further question their responses.

**Chapter Summary**

The initial goals and objectives of a given PD project are commonly negotiated between the provider and the administration of the early childhood programs with little to no input from the direct population of the study. The present study was developed to hear the voices of the participants to determine their points of view and to determine how PD projects could be delivered to allow for greater numbers of program completion. This interpretive study, set in grounded theory, used a survey, interviews, and a focus group discussion to ask the teacher about her beliefs and attitudes and the role she plays as a teacher of young children. This method was chosen as a means to engage the teacher and add her voice to the various reasons that she may or may not continue on the pathway of college coursework and ultimately a degree.

# CHAPTER 2

# REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

## Introduction

This chapter provides a brief historical perspective and background of the development of ECE as a separate area of study from Elementary Education. This is accomplished through the summarization of relevant literature and research. The first section briefly examines the continuum of the debate about ECE teacher qualifications and role of women as ECE providers. The second section reviews feminist theory and the implications of such for the early childhood teacher. Finally, the third section reviews research studies that relate to the current investigation.

### The Nature of Early Childhood Education

The ongoing national and local discussions about education and the need for education reform to improve student outcomes seldom include children younger than kindergarten, the centers and homes that are the settings for the delivery of activities related to education and care, or the teachers that work with children aged birth to five. This may be the result of a lack of understanding about the educational services and programs available to children younger than age 6 or the perception that these programs lack value in providing children with foundation skills needed to be successful in school. Another issue may be a realization that the differences between ECE and the K-12 system are many (see Appendix A).

The field of ECE in the U.S. can best be described as providing services that are inconsistent and fragmented. "There is no consistency across states or even within states regarding the method of funding for programs or how they are regulated, monitored, or improved" (Kagan, Kauerz, & Tarrant, 2008, p.7). There is also no agreement on what type of services should be provided, for how long, by whom, in what setting, for what age and whether the learning environment is structured to be more social emotional, educational or a combination.

Currently, ECE largely operates as a series of small businesses. Some facilities are family operated endeavors, others are owned by corporations and investment companies, and others have been purchased for individual investments and tax relief purposes. The focus of the present study is on center-based early childhood programs, but there is a cadre of other settings in which services to children are provided on a daily basis; family, friend, and neighbor care, religious institutions, homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters, and preschool programs on school district campuses.

ECE is an institution that operates at the intersection of the public and private sectors and as such is part of a market (Kagan et al., 2008; Morgan, 2005). In addressing the hiring and tenure of the field's teaching staff, a reference to market operation is made. "A healthy market, if faced with a limited pool of qualified personnel would increase compensation, but the early childhood field owners and operators of center-based programs, respond to labor shortages by hiring from a virtually unlimited pool of under- or unqualified teachers" (Kagan et al., 2008 p.8 ). At this point, I differ from the lexicon of Kagan and others who

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describe the teacher practitioners employed in early childhood center-based programs as under or unqualified. The question is under-or unqualified when compared to what criteria, teachers in the K-12 system? If so, is this necessarily a negative? When the teacher/caregiver qualifications of most states are reviewed, the finding is that the teachers ARE qualified and that they *do* meet the minimal qualifications for employment in the field. So how did we create job descriptions used to hire thousands of teachers and at the same time take up a public outcry that the teacher/caregiver pool is under-or unqualified as teachers? What message are we giving the teachers currently employed – that they just do not measure up?

**Ideologies**

**Gender**. Deeply held values related to family, women, wife, mother are applied to the field of ECE, directly impacting the teachers and the services they offer. Common discourse of our leaders and policymakers is that the home, inclusive of mother, wife, child(ren) is sacrosanct and that regulating or funding ECE programs is antithetical to the privacy of the family. Following that train of thought for a moment, the association of caregiving, and the recognition of mother as "the first teacher" conjures the all too common cry of ECE is nothing more than babysitting for which professional skills and wages are not deemed necessary or appropriate (Kagan et al., 2008 p.8).

**Teacher knowledge**. Within the field of ECE there is no agreement on the pedagogical approach for early childhood teachers or the level of skills and knowledge a teacher within the field needs to be an effective ECE teacher.

The field continues to debate whether all teachers, across both the

public and private sectors, can and should have the same entry

requirements. In addition, there is little agreement on precisely

what those requirements should be, with many advocating the need

of a four year degree and others taking the position that a two year

degree is sufficient. (Kagan et al., 2008, p. 8)

The topic of what is the minimum level of knowledge is also debated,

causing various professionals to side with certification, bundling of workshop

hours, and miscellaneous college credits in a field related to ECE. Related

questions about whether quality teaching is best achieved via rigorous teacher

entry requirements such as pre-professional assessments and experience. Who

would be best to provide the teacher with experience and classroom teaching

continues to be debated. Each state has their own version of teacher requirements

as well as state regulations related to PD. Differences in compensation packages

and working conditions, such as benefits and the value of the teachers to society

are enormous.

Ideological disagreements about Early Childhood Education, then,

range from the belief that it is inappropriate to the belief that it is

essential. For those who believe it important or essential, ideology

(increasingly supported by data) fuels debate on the exact nature

and preparation that is necessary for the Early Childhood

Workforce. (Kagan et al., 2008, p. 9)

The dominant discourses surrounding the views of childhood and education have led to an increase in initiatives created to improve the educational knowledge of the early childhood teacher. The majority of early childhood professionals that advocate for only degreed teachers to work with our youngest children indirectly label the teachers who have limited education or no degree and are currently working in the field as "under-or unqualified." Debates about the value and appropriateness of care and educational services for children younger than six commonly include value statements related to women and an "appropriate mother is one of an unselfish nurturer" (Hays, 2006, p. 167). The outcome of such public discourse and legislative action is that children younger than age six should be cared for by the family and that government intervention, whether that be funding or regulation, should be at a minimum if not nonexistent.

**Brief Historical Overview of Teacher Education**

Beginning with the history of TE just prior to the American Revolution, males were sought out to be the schoolmasters of the time. In the colonial era, teaching was often something "young women did at home and young men did between the end of college and the beginning of what they perceived as their real careers" (Fraser, 2007, p. 10).

> Well into the 19th century the assumption was that teaching did not need an apprenticeship or other professional preparation – these college students and graduates believed they already knew how to teach, after all they had been students themselves and had watched others do it. (Fraser, 2007, p. 12)

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The colleges that began after the American Revolution primarily admitted white males, but beginning in the 1830s, colleges such as Oberlin and Antioch began to admit a limited number of women (Fraser, 2007, p. 12).

**Dame schools**. In New England, during the early 1800s, the entrance of women into the role of teaching began in informal schools labeled *Dame Schools*, named due to the gender of the teacher. These schools met in the homes of the women who ran them and offered the basic tenants of literacy to women and males – "and based as they were in homes, the schools seemed like a simple extension of women's maternal sphere" (Fraser, 2007, p. 20).

**Nursery schools**. The advent of the nursery schools followed the Dame schools. Many of the originators of the nursery school movement came from fields other than nursery education, such as social work, home economics, nursing, psychology, and kindergarten-primary education, all with a focus toward what was/is to be female attributes.

**Formal preparation**. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the requirements for entry into teaching were modest: new teachers had to persuade a local school board of their moral character, and in some districts, pass a test of their general knowledge. In 1834, Pennsylvania became the first state to require future teachers to pass a test of reading, writing, and arithmetic. By 1867, most states required teachers to pass a locally administered test to get a state certificate, which usually included not only the basic skills, but also U.S. history, geography, spelling, and grammar. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, some states like New York, subsidized private academies to prepare teachers for its

schools. The discussion of TE began with older aged students interested in attending the Academies, Colleges, or Universities of the era and eventually moved into the imparting of knowledge to younger children, but did not include children younger than age six (Kauchak, Eggen, & Carter, 2002).

**Teaching evolves into a profession**. During the 1930s, school superintendents from a variety of east coast school districts and other U.S. Cities believed there was a need to enhance the teaching curriculum used to prepare teachers. Their conversations led to the length of teacher preparation programs being changed from a two- year program to a four-year postsecondary program that culminated in the baccalaureate degree and a teaching license simultaneously. During this period of discourse, teaching became one of a number of options for a college student to explore and in general there was less attention paid to the rigor of the coursework delivered to the pre-service student. Sadly, this shift of course rigor was accompanied by the public's perception that teaching, which was becoming more of a women's occupation, was a career choice that did not come with a great deal of public respect or command a high-level of pay compared with the other fields of study offered by the same college (Enz, Bergeron, Wolfe, 2006).

**Kindergarten movement**. During the movement to improve upon and create college-level programs to prepare teachers in general, another group focused on the preparation for teachers interested in teaching kindergarten aged children. The movement's purpose focused on the theoretical construct of learning through play. The stated purpose of the kindergarten movement at that

time was to improve the lives of immigrants and to improve the daily lives of poor children and working class families created by industrialization. The education of the individuals interested in becoming kindergarten teachers took place in new schools that had previously been created by the education reformers. Many of these schools exist today as private colleges; Wheelock College in Boston, derived from Lucy Wheelock's school and Lucy Sprague Mitchell influenced by Maria Montessori, launched Bank Street College and are lauded for their curriculum in ECE (Kauchak, Eggen, & Carter, 2002).

## Teacher Qualifications

As teaching became recognized as a profession, emphasis was placed on the level of education needed to teach children. At the time of a 1930's report entitled the *National Survey* not a single state required a college degree for elementary teachers, but by the 1960s just about every state in the U.S required a college degree to teach. Simultaneously, schools created for the sole purpose of providing an education to teachers evolved into offering broader fields of study and teacher preparation was also included at the universities and by the 1950s states had enacted legislation requiring that every new teacher possess a college degree (Armstrong, Henson, Savage, 2001).

The importance of the teacher's skills and knowledge remains an important discussion of today's education reform discourse. "Parents have long known and researchers have confirmed that a child's teacher can make a bigger difference to his or her educational success than most other school variables" (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 18). Sadly, schools of education have been slow to

the changing demands of society, graduating teachers ill prepared for the population of students they will be teaching and slow to remove barriers that may prohibit brighter students from pursuing teaching as a profession. The educational debate, not inclusive of ECE, goes beyond the acknowledgement that a teacher of children in grades K-12 must have a degree to work in the field of education. Research studies have collected data that identifies specific aspects of teacher qualifications that have been found to have a relationship to student achievement:

> (a) general academic and verbal ability,
>
> (b) subject matter knowledge,
>
> (c) knowledge about teaching and learning as reflected in TE courses or preparation experience,
>
> (d) teaching experience, and
>
> (e) the combined set of qualifications measured by teacher certification. (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 21)

This information is significant in that it places emphasis on whether the teacher can teach versus the mere possession of a degree in education combined with a teaching certificate.

This idea is not new as Horace Mann (1796-1859) was instrumental in introducing teacher training through the creation of normal schools. He recognized the need to improve the curriculum for the pre-service students by increasing the rigor of the courses offered. Mann believed that a major obstacle to the success of elementary schools was the limited knowledge and preparation of

the teacher (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000, pp. 191, 197). He also believed the best

choice for a teacher electing to work with children fell to gender

> believing that women more so than men should be the preferred
>
> choice for working with children in the earlier grades as "women
>
> were better suited by nature to educate and guide young children,
>
> possessing a disposition more in harmony with young children
>
> who need kindness and not force. (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000, p.
>
> 199)

### Teaching as a Woman's Role

The view of teaching as a woman's profession has evolved over the last

one hundred years. The westernized construct of *childhood* as natural and

requiring a unique education paralleled the emerging discourse of "teaching as

women's' true profession" (Kaufman, 1984).

The debate over the role of women in the business of caring for and

educating young children took shape in the early 1900s. The discourses included

the questioning of the meaning of *mother* and whether being a mother meant that

a woman was endowed with a natural propensity for providing care to young

children. Women reformers in the beginning of the 1900's, Caroline Pratt,

Henrietta Rodman, and Crystal Eastman proposed a different but radical

alternative to the popular view that all women equaled good mothers and all

mothers nurture. They proposed instead, that not all women had the special skills

or desire to mother therefore the concept of professional mothers was born

(Goldstein, 1998).

The concept of professionalizing motherhood was key to the development of ECE at the turn of the century (Hendry, 2008). It is also the focus of the work of early childhood educator Elizabeth Harrison whose term *scientific motherhood* functioned to disrupt the biological determinism of motherhood (Munro, 1998).

Walkerdine (1990) speculates that "women teachers became caught, trapped inside a concept of nurturance which held them responsible for the freeing of each little individual, and therefore for the management of an idealist dream, an impossible fiction" (p. 19). The alignment of teacher to mother emerged as a form of a social construct early in the education of women. Women teachers were relegated to interactions that mirrored the predominate view of mother which was/is guiding, caring, nurturing, with minimal recognition or acknowledgement of a mother as a facilitator of learning whose primary role was passive (Hendry, 2008, p. 3).

The kindergarten movement provided a way for women educators to enter the public education a realm previously reserved for men, but "their work was shaped by complex and contradictory gendered and radicalized discourse" (Hendry, 2008, p.3). The emergence of women as caregivers, and at times recognized as teachers, eventually drifted into the care and education of children younger than age six.

### Early Childhood Education: Birth to Age Five

The field of ECE began more as an answer to a societal need than the recognition of a child's capabilities to engage and embrace new learning prior to age six. Primarily, the initial offering of services for young children began as a

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way to provide shelter to children who had been abandoned and as a safe haven for children of working parents, oft times single mothers. The need for such services was recognized and delivered throughout the past four hundred years by charitable or religious institutions, by family, friends, neighbors, and more recently by for profit centers, and federal and state funded programs. As the historical timeline progresses into the twentieth century, workforce and welfare issues began to dominate and dictate public perception, and public policies and ideologies heavily influenced the value and appropriateness of educating and caring for our youngest children.

> As nursery schools were descendants of infant schools that had moved from serving only poor children to serving the middle class as well, day care remained something enacted for the poor, focusing more on custody, cleanliness, and nourishment more than on education. (Youcha, 1995 p. 322)

For decades, the field of early childhood, birth to five, has been seen as a lever to combat some social ill rather than standing on its own merits such as offering strong cognitive and social emotional development for the child. Therefore it is not surprising that differing schools of thought impacting the delivery system for children birth to five have emerged, melded, been redefined, and segmented from the public educational system. Values related to family, women, mothers, gendered roles and responsibilities, and the merits of capitalism have contributed to the current evolution and delivery mechanism known as ECE in the U.S.

As frequently done by entities or individuals attempting to valiantly find their footing and establish the validity of their views and chosen profession, early childhood professionals have fractionalized the conversation about the early childhood field into pedagogical silos, care/nurture, educational, or a hybrid of the two. Although attempts to acknowledge the importance of care/nurture under the rubric of the social emotional domain have been made, the majority of public discourse and degreed programs espouse the importance of delivering educational content to children aged birth to five. Hence the quality of the teacher role has been elevated to a degreed professional bestowing upon the field and those that work within the field the title of professional (Isenberg & Jalongo, 1997).

**Early Childhood Education Philosophies and Policies**

The practices and critical elements of Early Childhood Teacher Education, as we know today, originated through the adoption of thoughts, ideologies, and practices of a number of early social reformists, most notably Friedrich Froebel. Many of these ideologies and practices centered on the mother and labeled her as the individual responsible or best suited to provide the education for the young child. Lascarides & Hinitz (2000) share that dating back to antiquity, the family structure provided the child with her or his first entrée into education and it was primarily the women, most notably the mothers who were responsible for teaching the children, especially the child age two and younger (pp. 3, 40).

Different constructs of childhood have come in and out of favor depending on societal needs of the time including labor needs, popular cultural, the dominant religious, and reigning political views. These evolving societal issues have greatly

impacted the field of education. ECE employs Piaget's ages and stages which simplistically stated bases the appropriateness of certain activities on a child's age and her or his observed capabilities. The education of early childhood teachers is in many ways analogous to the practices espoused by professionals regarding the education of children ages birth to five. Many of the unknown number of employed Arizona early childhood teachers do not possess college degrees and many have not had the opportunity to accumulate more than 6-9 college credits related to ECE. Our delivery of PD and offer of support when enrolling in college coursework would be best if it modeled the very principals lauded by the early childhood theorist, Piaget. Our approach to early childhood PD is often not done through the assessment of a teacher's individual developmental stage. It is most often presented as a one model fits all, sadly and frequently resulting in very few teachers successfully attaining a degree.

Throughout history, the education of the child, including who should teach the child as well as the appropriate pedagogical style have been topics of debate and discussion. The preparation of individuals to be educators has been of historical interest notably from the settlement of Sparta in 600 B.C. (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000, p. 4).

As early as 1500s, Comenius believed that teachers should understand how a child's mind develops (Nutbrown, Clough, & Selbie, 2008, p. 23). Since he believed that education of the child began at birth, he viewed the mother as the natural choice for the teaching role (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000, p. 40).

The theoretical approaches of ECE have been designed to align to conceptual beliefs of childhood. According to Morgan (2007), "Comenius' contributions to what is known as *Early Childhood Education Theory* today can be observed in the works and influences of Jean Piaget, Maria Montessori, Urie Bronfenbrenner, Erik Erikson, Sigmund Freud, and John Dewey" (p.6).

Moving into the years of Friedrich Froebel, the focus on the child and the concepts initially identified by Pestalozzi, such as a balanced and graduated education remained the priority focus. Froebel believed women were his natural allies and along with his forefathers "recognized women as the natural educators of children" (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000, p. 99).

Margarethe Schurz, a student of Froebel, focused on a curriculum for kindergarten that positioned the teacher in a role that aligned with many traits and characteristics of a mother, affection, trust, and cooperation (Morgan, 2007, p. 28).

The subject of what should be taught to young children and how teaching should look in the classroom has been the subject of many research studies and has provided various pathways to an ECE degree. A key contributor to the field of ECE, especially the teaching practices and tenants of quality learning environments was Jean Piaget. One fundamental tenant of Piaget's during the time he spent on honing tests of reasoning, was his "observations of how learners think, rather than what learners think, creating the conflict at the very foundation of today's siloed approach of educators differentiating Early Childhood Education and elementary education" (Morgan, 2007, pp. 64-65).

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His developmental theory gained prominence when it was directly applied to the curriculum and the instruction for early childhood educators.

Another prominent figure in the development of pedagogical approaches to early childhood learning is Maria Montessori (1870-1952). Montessori believed that a teacher's role was not to interfere with how a child individually explores her or his surroundings and how she or he gains knowledge, but it was to support the child's development through the observation of the needs of each child (Peltzman, 1998, p. 83).

Similar to Froebel, Montessori believed the teacher's role was to guide the child and her philosophical views of sound teaching methodology "included the belief that learning happens through doing and that learners needed to remain independent in their actions" (Nutbrown et al. 2008, pp. 49-50).

Throughout history to the present day, debates as to who is the best caregiver frequently resort to the woman and even more specifically the *mother* being identified as the appropriate caregiver. The founder of our modern day kindergarten, Friedrich Froebel, believed women were his natural allies as he believed that women were natural educators and that this type of 'woman's work' was the "essential link in the chain of human life" (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000, p. 99).

**Public Policies**

In 1965, the federal government initiated a program known as Head Start to combat issues related to an increase in family poverty. This program included a comprehensive approach to the child care needs of the poor that provided

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education to three- and four-year-olds, nutrition, social, dental, and medical services to the children and their family. The program was designed to reduce generational poverty by providing the youngest children in families of low socioeconomic status with educational opportunities (Morgan, 2007, p. 95).

With the additional social services offered, some members of the public perceived the program more as a "social engineering" program versus a preschool educational program (Morgan, 2007, p. 95). Many ideas that influenced Head Start were taken from philosophies and practices of kindergartens and nursery schools from the early 1900s (Morgan, 2007, p. 96).

In 1995, Early Head Start was introduced as a companion to the Head Start program. The focus of Early Head Start was on the younger children birth to age three and to provide comprehensive services to pregnant women and their babies, and other children until they were of age to transfer into the Head Start Program (Early Head Start National Resource Center, 2011, p. 1).

As support for ECE grew, funding was provided by some states for preschool programs that were located and operated on school district campuses. National movements such as Pre-K Now are charged with assisting national and state leaders and the public in the design and implementation of sound, research-based policies that support voluntary access to high-quality pre-kindergarten for all three- and four-year-old children in this nation. In January 2009, Pre-K Now became a part of the Pew Center on the States, a division of the Trusts that identifies and advances state policy solutions.

**Early Childhood Education Teacher Professional Development**

**Barriers to a Standardized Professional Development Program**

Despite evidence linking teacher qualification with quality, efforts to increase the level of teacher knowledge and skills face several issues. First there is a wide variation in the educational backgrounds of teachers in the field of ECE. Fifty states require Kindergarten teachers to have a minimum of a Bachelor's degree while there are only 18 states that require any level of pre-service education for teachers in community-based ECE settings (Ackerman, 2004). Second, many teachers desirous of improving their educational level of knowledge are most likely to be non-traditional students who have to balance family and full-time employment obligations along with the challenges of time and financial concerns when returning to college to pursue a degree, making it difficult for these students to find the time to complete coursework. Third, is the "inadequate salary and benefits offered to early childhood teachers that creates another barrier to enrolling in professional development opportunities such as college coursework" (Ryan & Ackerman, 2004, p. 2). Finally, is the fact that most birth to age five teachers have met the specified job qualifications required at their place of employment, which most likely does not require certification. These contradictions in expectation create confusion for the teacher who assumes she is qualified to teach young children, birth to age five.

**Requirements in the State of Arizona**

The teachers working in Arizona's early childhood centers must meet the following criteria as stated in the Arizona Department of Health Department

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Office of Child Care Licensure Rules and Regulations document: A teacher-caregiver is 18 years of age or older and provides the licensee with documentation of one of the following: (a) Six months of child care experience and a high school diploma or high school equivalency diploma *or* at least 12 credit hours from an accredited college or university, including at least six credit hours in early childhood, child development, or a closely-related field; and (b) Associate or Bachelor degree from an accredited college or university in early childhood, child development, or a closely-related field *or* the National Administrator Credential, Child Development Associate credential or the Certified Childcare Professional credential.

In addition, to receive a license for operation a child care center does not need to hire individuals that have attained any precertification. The only educational requirement is that the teacher/caregiver understands and agrees to participate in 18 hours of *training* within the first year of hire.

Current public discourse around the educational requirements and salaries of early childhood teachers, who work in programs providing learning opportunities for children birth to age five, default to a counterintuitive conversation about the need to maintain low educational standards for teachers of children aged birth to five as a means to keeping the parent tuition lower and limiting the possibility of a widening chasm of higher quality care for parents who can afford to pay more versus the quality of a program that parents of a lower socioeconomic status can access.

Other reasons for not seriously promoting the virtues of a degree for all early childhood teachers is that with more education comes the expectation of higher wages. In ECE, the primary payer for services is the parent. Many parents cannot afford to pay $14,500 per year to enroll their child in a high-quality learning environment. Without the prospect of higher wages, two scenarios are likely to occur, (a) the teacher will complete her degree and exit the field to join the K-12 workforce, or (b) the teacher has limited interest in pursuing a degree as wages are not likely to be commensurate with her educational level.

Promoting the value of a college degree for all early childhood teachers needs to be examined closely as the requirement for a higher level of formal education without valid resources, to support the women may ultimately displace a significant number of them from the early childhood workforce. This unintended consequence would place many women into a cash assistance position and also remove many early childhood practitioners from the classrooms.

**Educating the Early Childhood Workforce**

Since the early 1900s, ECE has become a policy issue that is held up and gazed upon to solve a number of social ills. In light of that policy focus, issues addressing the early childhood workforce continue to gain attention and the push to have a better educated early childhood workforce provides leverage for acknowledging early childhood teachers as professionals (Moss, 2006).

The quality of the early childhood learning environment and level of TE has been and is inextricably intertwined in the field of early childhood.

As noted by Bowman et al., (2000), children who have been taught by teachers with a bachelor's degree along with specialized child development training  are better prepared cognitively and social and emotionally than children who have been in classrooms where teachers only posses minimal levels of education.

Unfortunately, there is a dearth of degreed early childhood teachers leading the classrooms of our youngest children. Saluja, Early, and Clifford (2002, p. 1) estimate that slightly less than 50% of the 284, 277 preschool teachers in the U.S. have a bachelor's degree and very few have ECE credentials. And while, there are federal and local efforts underway to improve the educational status of early childhood teachers, few research studies have focused on creating a system that addresses the needs of the non-traditional student (Lobman et al., 2005).

According to Lobman et al., (2005), early childhood TE programs "have historically focused on child development and the application of child development principles to curriculum and teaching with the current policy expectation that preschools will become a part of formal schooling creating further demands" (p. 2). Although standards for enhancing the existing teacher preparation programs are recognized as important there exists relatively few studies that assess the classroom activities and teaching practices of early childhood programs within the colleges of education, (Lobman et al., 2005, p. 2).

The field of ECE tends to divide the workforce dependent upon the setting of an early childhood program. Those programs operating within a school district require qualifications for the teaching staff aligned with other classified school

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personnel, whereas early childhood programs, paid for primarily by parent tuition, tend to have the most lax of requirements for teacher qualifications. This can contribute to a two-tiered system of care, depending on one's view of the importance and influence an early childhood degree plays in the deliverance of quality.

Elements of ideology related to the early childhood worker contribute to various discourses related to teacher PD. Of interest is an ideology mentioned by Moss (2006), where the worker is viewed as a substitute mother common in the professions that provide care and nurture. Singer (1993) mentioned this description of the worker as a substitute mother to be especially prevalent in the early childhood field where the belief that mother care is needed to create healthy development of the child and if the mother is not available the role of the stand in needs to align to that of a mother.

Over the course of decades, research has continuously documented the positive effects of high-quality early childhood programs and their impact on a child's development. One key variable in creating a high-quality early childhood program is teacher PD, but more importantly the effectiveness of that teacher in conveying knowledge and social and emotional support to the student (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). According to Chen and Chang (2006) "to be effective, early childhood teachers must develop specialized knowledge, skills, and practices and to sustain the effectiveness high-quality in-service professional development should be provided" (p. 1).

The delivery of and access to PD is fraught with difficulties and barriers. Access to PD is problematic for the teacher as her employer will not always provide work release time to attend conferences, workshops, or college courses. The times of day that PD is offered can be a barrier if not offered in the evening or on the weekend. Many times, the only type of PD accessible is a workshop which results in numerous clock hours of training, but the hours do not convert into college credit hours.

The committee on Early Childhood Pedagogy reported that "professional development for early childhood teachers is limited, inconsistent, and fragmented" (Bowman et al., 2000). According to Chen and Chang (2006),

> inconsistency refers to differences of how professional development is offered and what is included, for instance; subject matter, length of project, and the teaching ability of the program coordinator. In addition, teachers are often engaged in a variety of professional development programs that do not build on or link to prior learning experiences, leaving the teacher with numerous hours of seat time but no progress to an AA/AAS or BA/BS degree. (p. 1)

**Models of Professional Development**

Maxwell, Field, and Clifford (2006) provided a common description of professional development that includes three components: education, training, and credentialing.

**Education**. Education is defined as the professional development activities that occur within a formal education system and range from a high school diploma to a graduate degree. Kagan, et.al (2008) further defines formal education as the amount of credit-bearing coursework a teacher has completed at an accredited education institute which includes colleges and universities. "Formal education does not always include studies related to child development and ECE, but when it does is commonly referred to as formal education with ECE content.

**Training**. Training is defined as the professional development activities that occur outside the formal education system that do not lead to a degree and may be referred to as in-service or informal training. This generally refers to all types of PD that does not lead to a degree or certification. The venue and method of delivery can include an onsite or offsite workshop, conferences, seminars, webinars with no specific identification of indicators that would assess the assimilation of knowledge (Kagan et al., 2008).

**Credential**. Credential does not fall into either the education or training category because the organizations that grant credentials are typically not the same ones that provide the requisite knowledge. Many times the terminology is mixed and inconsistently used. Kagan et al. (2008) suggests a credential verifies a

> person's completion of a set of requirements necessary to perform a specified function or role. Used broadly it includes various types of certificates and licenses; the mostly widely recognized is the Child Development Associate. While this certificate is widely

available, only a few states require teachers in early childhood

programs to have this certification to be employed. (p. 29)

**Coaching**. One variation on traditional PD is coaching which is a process

that provides the teacher with a coach to assist her in the implementation of new

teaching (Hanft, Rush, Shelden (2004, p. 1). Coaching is increasingly used as a

strategy to help teachers apply new theoretical knowledge to their classroom

practices. The United Way Professional Development Project (PD project) used

as the foundation for this study incorporated the use of a coach and, as such, the

coach is included in the data collection.

## Teaching Practices

As previously noted, the availability of a uniform curriculum across states,

within states, and within programs does not exist. Even an agreed-upon definition

and use of the term is nonexistent. The National Association for the Education of

Young Children has developed standards for the preparation of early childhood

professionals, but they are not required to be implemented in all early childhood

programs and setting. The standards designed to promote positive early childhood

teacher PD include: (a) the ability to connect with children and families, (b) to use

approaches to learning that incorporate developmentally appropriate practice, (c)

have an understanding of subject content knowledge in early education, and (d)

build meaningful curriculum (NAEYC, 2001).

A broad definition of curriculum produces difficulties for teachers because

it lacks specificity in teachers' and children's knowledge which can produce

teaching practices that are not clear in content or purpose (Hedges & Cullen, p.

67). But how the early childhood teacher constructs her practice depends on her beliefs about herself, the children, the profession, and her surroundings. As Brownell and Pajares (1999) and Pajares (1992) note, "the beliefs of teachers influence their teaching style, which ultimately impacts how curriculum is used in the classroom to teach children" ( p. 1). Therefore, it is difficult to discuss teacher PD as a separate entity in the sea of early childhood philosophy, just as it is difficult to parse out unique traits in ECE without acknowledging the influence of the westernized construct of *childhood*. As seen from the thousands of years of ongoing discussions about the thoughts, capabilities, usefulness, and education of young children we have divergent views of how best to interact or not with young children – we have adorned them, imprisoned them, used them as cheap laborers, minimized their capabilities, analyzed them, researched them, and most recently we have been effective in solidifying beliefs, reaffirmed through media and our current system of education that children are a commodity. These *little widgets*, if prodded, tested, and scripted, will ultimately become our next *worker bees* designed to support and propel our nation's economy to higher trajectories of success and power.

Within each era/genre of history, the acceptance of educational teachings for our youngest children varies based on the current economic issues and workforce needs of the time (Hedges & Cullen, 2005; Cannella, 1997; Dahlberg et al, 1999). These conversations about teacher quality and performance are abundant when discussing K-12 and higher education, but much more silent for ECE. In our quest to find the perfect solution we fail to question the impact of our

stated indicators on those who teach/care for young children. These indicators frequently include such topics as: who should teach – including gender, race, culture primary language; the qualifications of such an individual, and taking into account that 95% of early childhood teachers are women, what impact has the discourse about early childhood teacher qualifications had on the broader conversations about women, mothers, women workforce, and children?

## Cultural Contexts

The field of early childhood is disproportionately staffed by women who frequently became employed in the field through no purposeful intent of their own. The lack of significant pre-qualification requirements for employment makes the entry into this line of work relatively easy.

Women working in early childhood programs face a myriad of indignities and challenges everyday because they essentially work behind closed doors – doors that few want to open as it would be like opening the proverbial Pandora's Box – domestic violence, patriarchal views, nuclear and extended family issues, financial, health, transportation, language, depression, owner/director abuse. Perhaps like domestic workers, early childhood teachers suffer a similar indignity such as not being considered as providing a professional service and therefore having little access to common employment standards such as a wage commensurate with their service, health and vacation benefits and a general respect for their skills. Their employment often takes on an informal approach by the center director, parents, and the community in general. As women are the predominant gender employed in the field, the dominant discourse of westernized

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views of childhood and mothering rise to the top and the value of the teacher for guiding, teaching, and nurturing the social emotional development of our young children is dismissed as if *anyone* can tend to our children. We have created a paradox, a push and pull view of children. One view is that children are fragile and are our most precious resource with the counterview being anyone can raise them – we do not need to provide educational services to adults to successfully raise a child.

Political rhetoric espouses the view that parents should be responsible for the care of their children prior to public school kindergarten admission. This view while utilizing the term *parent* really means woman/mother, defaulting again to the woman as the caregiver through attributes apparently bestowed upon her through gender.

**Caring**

Caring, according to Noddings (1984), requires two components: the cared-for and caregiver. Caregiving is not one-sided, but essentially a circle that begins with an interest in someone that grows into a caring relationship; however, if the relationship ends there, the process is incomplete. Noddings (1984) defined a caregiving relationship as one that requires the caregiver to also be the recipient, or to become the cared-for, completing the circle of caring (pp. 48-49). Within this circle, the caregiver must exhibit engrossment and motivational displacement and the cared-for must exhibit some form of reciprocity (Noddings, 1984, p.78). Engrossment allows for the caregiver to understand the position of another, and motivational displacement occurs when the one-caring is motivated by the needs

of the cared-for versus the needs of the one caring (Noddings, 1984, p. 17). When the cared-for recognizes the actions of the one caring, the circle of caring is complete (Noddings, 1984, pp. 17, 33).

Caring can be taxing, but there are behaviors or customs noted by society that prevent the one-caring from forever giving, but if there is no deviation from the constant and actions are only performed according to rule, then the one-caring is not really caring. The burdens of care are greatly reduced when the cared-for reciprocates with actions that show delight and recognition (Noddings, 1984, p. 52). Caregiving has long been defined as *woman's work*. Carework can embody and embolden natural caring while simultaneously being a venue of contention. Is caregiving a continuation of society's expectation that women are responsible for the majority of care labor or is it representative of the casting of females in various roles and responsibilities that have heightened the female's capacity for empathy (p. 67)?

Noddings (2010) differentiated caring as "the fundamental concept in the ethic of care and "caregiving as the set of activities associated with an occupation or form of work. There is a difference between caregiving influenced by maternal instincts and natural caring in the context of mothering. In the latter, virtues such as kindness, patience, and responsibility become more visible (p. 73).

An ethic of care is extremely valuable to the caregiving field as it focuses on the quality of the caring relationship (Noddings, 2010, p. 74). The caregiving field can certainly be categorized as labor, but when individuals do something for another, they gain something in return, which makes the work of caregiving much

easier and less like "labor" (Noddings, 2010, p. 74).  For example, when a teacher

feeds an infant and the child responds by smiling at or patting the teacher's hand,

the teacher smiles and feels appreciated. Both individuals in this relationship feel

cared for and supported.

Often, the field of caregiving is somewhat invisible or unrecognized in

value by society and involves lack of payment for labor that can range from

morning to night. It is widely recognized that women earn less than men doing the

same work, but if they have chosen to work in one of the caring professions, they

earn considerably less than men (Noddings, 2010, p. 75).

Societal values and views have long accepted the *naturalness* of women

working in occupations that align to homemaking and childrearing. Noddings

(2010) recognizes that subordination aggravates that tendency. It is subordination,

and not the nature of the work, which results in lower pay and limited

occupational prestige, with particular attention to how close a woman's work is to

tasks and skills identified as *mothering* the lower its worth in our society

(Noddings, 2010, p. 76). The empathic capacities of women often lead women to

consider the welfare of others over their own, leading to few women speaking up

for themselves (Noddings, 2010, p. 76).

There is a difference between relying on principles and relying on caring

(Noddings, 1984). Relying on principles tends to be the approach of the male or

father figure and includes justification and fairness, whereas the female or mother

relies on feelings and personal impressions rather than principles (pp. 1-3).

Natural caring can be equated to producing the sense of what is *good*, whereas

ethical caring is a combination of natural caring that includes our memories of caring and being cared for. Noddings also differentiated between natural and ethical caring, describing the distinction as an *I want* versus an *I must*. When the action is in response to someone who needs a showing of caring, Noddings described this to be natural caring. In contrast, when a person is required to care for someone because they feel they "must" do so, that is ethical caring (Noddings 1984, pp. 81-83).

Various virtues are associated with care. One associated with females is "sympathetic attention" (Noddings, 1984, p. 174). According to Noddings (2010), sympathetic attention comes from maternal instinct and thereby carries an "evolutionary stamp of approval", but it involves skills that can be developed to a high level of competence (p. 174). "Sympathetic attention requires commitment, commitment to keep open the channels from perception to feeling to motivational displacement and guides two other great maternal interests identified by Sara Ruddick: fostering growth and shaping an acceptable child" (Noddings, 2010, pp. 175-176). One of the most valuable contributions of an ethic of care to the occupation of caregiving is its concentration on the quality of the caring relation. In providing care we are doing something for another, but because this tends to be relational, the person providing the care benefits as well (Noddings 2010, p. 74).

Placing caring within the frame of ethics calls for critical thinking. Contrary to the idea that caring is warm and fuzzy, ethical caring requires "a high degree of skill in critical thinking" (Noddings, 2010, p. 243). Educators under the

guidance of caring must nurture the ethical ideals of those with whom they come

in contact (Noddings 1984, pp. 49).

## Feminist Theory

Feminist theory was used as a frame to interpret the teachers' responses

related to their role as a teacher, interest in PD, and to explore the data on *mother*,

*care/nurture*, and *teacher*. Additionally, the use of feminist theory allows for

exploration of how the teachers' role with their family and their home

environment contribute to their actions, motives, values, beliefs, of PD and their

ability to achieve certification and or a degree in their field of study.

In the U.S. the field of ECE ranges from birth through age eight and

includes the fields of child care (both center-based and home-based), of which the

majority of the women responsible for providing care and education to children

are non-degreed. The lack of college degrees is in direct contrast to the teachers

employed in grades Kindergarten through Third. Feminist perspectives rarely

enter into the discourse about professionalizing the field of ECE and as De Lair

and Erwin (2000) state, "One would be hard-pressed to find feminist ideas or

writings in any of the more widely disseminated professional journals in the U.S."

(p. 154).

Feminist theory, whether defined by an era or in terms of different

orientations, such as liberal, radical, and Marxist/socialist or cultural embraces

multiple approaches to application. As noted in Beasley (1999)

> Clarifying the meaning of feminism is often done through the
>
> iteration of a variety of concise definitions, some dictionary-based.

Using such definitions, albeit in the form of brief statements, can

appear to simplify a messy field or theoretical construct, but as

feminist researchers state, feminist thought contains many tendrils

that intertwine. (p. 26)

During the 1960s and 1970s feminist thought was comprised of concise

definitions that depicted a way of thinking that assumed women were being

treated incorrectly by society, focusing on terminology such as victimization,

equality, subordination and oppression. For other feminist theorists such as bell

hooks, feminism comes with a definite political agenda and she cautioned that by

using an "anything goes approach" makes the term feminism practically

meaningless (hooks 2000, p. 17).

**Brief Description of Feminisms**

  **Liberal feminism**. Liberal Feminism is the most widely recognized form

of feminist thought. The women's right movements and public discourse about

women entering the public space versus the private or family space is embedded

in this approach. Women who align with this form of feminism share the implicit

values of individualisms. It focuses on reform of society rather than revolutionary

change.

  **Radical feminism**. This approach rejects the liberal notion of creating a

space for women in the activities commonly labeled as *male* and acknowledges

and values *womanhood*. Instead, radical feminists analyze the oppression of

women in a social order dominated by men. The distinguishing characteristic is

that their oppression is due to gender and not as members of other groups such as

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their social class. In other words, women are oppressed because of their sex.

Included in the radical feminist approach is the acknowledgement and belief that

forms of power, such as patriarchy exist. This form of power is often equated to

sexual oppression and the outcome of such is that men benefit the most when

unrecognized systemic forms of power remain unquestioned; however, this

approach emphasizes the positive attributes of femininity. The areas of focus

include ideas, attitudes and cultural patterns dominant in society (Beasley 1999).

**Marxist/Socialist feminism**. Marxist/socialist feminism has had a

significant influence in psychoanalytic and postmodern/poststructuralist

feminisms, but it has moved from a position of favor over the last decade.

Socialist feminisms have replaced the pure *Marxist* approaches addressing such

issues as women in the workplace. *Socialist feminism* focuses upon both the

public and private spheres of a woman's life and argues that liberation can only be

achieved by working to end both the economic and cultural sources of women's

oppression.

**Psychoanalytic feminist theories**. Psychoanalytic feminist theories– have

an interest in the issue of difference in relation to the sexes. They explore the

notion of *women as other than men*. As Beasley (1999) notes this approach

includes a major theme taken from, Freudian feminism which is the "psychology

and the development of sexually specific personalities in the framing of male

dominance by analyzing the impact of women's responsibility for mothering" (p.

65).

**Cultural feminism**. Cultural feminism focuses on specific characteristic traits of women that are related to caring, nurturing, and interconnectedness (Donovan, 1992). Cultural feminists acknowledge the value of these socialized traits. Caring is one such trait commonly associated with teaching. "Women's work as teachers is relational in nature and is highly dependent on individual skills" (Noddings, 1984).

The feminist theory that resonates with the focus of the study is cultural feminism. This very brief synopsis of cultural feminism is to provide a frame for analyzing and interpreting the data collected from the women teachers. It is not meant to be a comprehensive overview of the theory. Cultural feminism goes beyond the

> fundamentally rationalist and legalistic focus of Enlightenment liberal theory and instead of focusing on political change, feminists aligning with these ideas look for a broader cultural transformation. There is continued recognition of the importance of critical thinking and self-development, but they also stress the role of the nonrational, the intuitive, and often the collective side of life. Instead of emphasizing the similarities between men and women they often stress the differences, ultimately affirming that feminine qualities may be a source of individual strength and pride and a fount of public regeneration. These feminists imagined alternatives to institutions the liberal theorists left more or less intact, religions, marriage, and the home. (Donovan, 1985, p. 47)

Cultural feminism, as defined by Alcoff (1988),

> is the ideology of a female nature or female essence reappropriated
> by feminists themselves in an effort to revalidate undervalued
> female attributes. Cultural feminist politics revolve around creating
> and maintaining a healthy environment free of masculinist values.
> Theorists Mary Daly and Adrienne Reich are influential in
> advocating this position and in breaking from the trend toward
> androgyny and the minimizing of gender difference that was
> popular among feminists in the early seventies, both Daly and Rich
> argue for a returned focus on femaleness. (p. 406)

## Related Research

Research from the past two decades has documented that teacher
qualifications significantly affect the quality of care and education provided to
young children (Bowman et al., 2000; Lazar, Darlington, Murray, Royce, &
Snipper, 1982, Whitebook, Sakai, Gerber, & Howes, 2001) and that higher
qualifications in preschool children's caregivers and teachers contributed to more
positive short- and long-term outcomes for these children (Kontos & Wilcox-
Herzog, 1997, 2001). Further, connection of the teacher's knowledge and
educational level has been associated with the quality of learning activities
provided in the classroom (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1989). Most studies
have focused on teachers in the elementary school setting (Biklen, 1995; Nias,
1989). Kim and Reifel (2010) noted that those that have explored issues of early
childhood teachers use gendered perspectives. But no known study has focused on

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the teachers'/practitioners' own beliefs and attitudes of who they are as a woman, mother, wife, teacher and how these perceptions impact their interest and participation in PD. "Research on child care teachers is relatively scarce and research that listens to child care teachers' voices about the ways their work is gendered is particularly rare" (Kim & Reifel, 2010, p. 230).

Researchers have questioned how best to understand public school teacher behaviors which differs from studies interested in the ways teachers think by focusing on the ways that teachers believe. "This view is based on the premise that beliefs are the best indicators of the decisions individuals make throughout their lives" (Pajares, 1992, p. 307).

To date, much of the research about teacher's beliefs and attitudes focus on teacher's classroom teaching practices, the majority of which is K-12 focused. Research findings show that many of the teachers bring with them considerable formal knowledge of learning and teaching processes and of psychological concepts related to classroom learning and teaching gained during pre-service and in-service education programs. Studies that have focused on early childhood programs have also focused on the link between academic experience and children's learning. The majority of Arizona early childhood teachers, approximately 67% do not have a college degree and therefore their individually held beliefs and attitudes about classroom activities have been obtained for the most part through inconsistent workshops on varied topics and from elsewhere, such as societal constructs of child rearing (Arizona Community Foundation, 2008).

Chen and Chang (2006) conducted a study that investigated the implementation of the *Whole Teacher* approach to early childhood PD to determine if specific methods of delivering PD produced a positive and lasting outcome in the quality of teaching and classroom environment. The program design focused on technology using the whole teacher approach with the underlying premise being that teacher attitudes, skills, and practices are interrelated. To test the premise, Chen and Chang measured the degree to which these variables were associated among 175 Head Start teachers in the Early Childhood Department of the Chicago Public schools. Half of the teachers participated in the technology program, the other half did not. To test their assertion, participants and non- participants were asked to evaluate technology and specific attitudes, skills, and practices at the end of the programs. The results indicated a strong common factor among responses to five of the eight attitude questions.

Their assumption was that the practice of developing the whole child, based on contemporary child development theories and research could be applied to PD for the teachers. The program design included the teachers' attitudes, their knowledge and skills, and classroom practices. By not focusing exclusively on knowledge and skills as many inservice workshops do, the *whole teacher* approach targeted multiple dimensions of teacher development including the promotion of attitudes and classroom practices (Chen & Chang, 2006, p. 3).

In the workshop delivery model, an expert delivers knowledge on a particular topic to a large group within a defined period of time and teachers'

attitudes toward the topic are not deemed relevant (Chen & Chang, 2006, p. 9).

There usually is no opportunity for the teacher to practice the newly gained

knowledge.

According to Chen and Chang (2006), there may be several reasons why

attitudes are not of concern in many PD programs. Parajes (1992) has noted that

> When researchers speak of teachers beliefs they seldom refer to the
>
> teachers general belief system of which educational beliefs are but
>
> a part. Constructs of educational beliefs are broad and
>
> encompassing and for research are too diffuse, ungainly, and
>
> difficult to operationalize. (Parajes, 1992, p. 316)

"Knowledge and skills are relatively explicit and easy to measure; attitudes are

implicit and difficult to articulate" (Chen & Chang, 2005, p. 9). In the study

conducted by Chen and Chang (2006), they found that there was a high

association of attitudes and skills in both program participant and non-participant

groups suggesting that gaining confidence plays a central role in increasing

proficiency in their study topic, technology.

In another study, Wilcox-Herzog (2002) examined the link between

beliefs and behaviors for early childhood teachers. The participants in her study

were 47 early childhood educators, primarily women. Wilcox-Herzog's (2002)

methodology includes a self-report questionnaire which was used to measure

teaching beliefs. In referencing prior research studies, Wilcox-Herzog (2002)

notes that "scholars interested in the attitude-behavior relationships assert this

lack of clarity is due to the fact that researchers often fail to account for factors

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that potentially influence the link between beliefs and actions" (Wilcox-Herzog, 2003, p. 83). The results of Wilcox-Herzog's (2002) study showed that for her group of teachers there was no relationship between teachers' beliefs and their actions, which is consistent with previous research findings.

Five seminal studies are mentioned in the field of ECE. These include: The Carolina Abecedarian Project, The High Scope Perry Preschool Study, The Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study in Child Care Centers, the National Institute of Child Health & Human Development, (NICHD), Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development and the National Child Care Staffing Study. None of these studies focus solely on the relationship of teacher PD to a quality learning environment nor do they hope to assess the teachers' level of engagement in PD, but instead address the relationship of child care experiences to developmental outcomes.

*The Carolina Abecedarian Project* was a scientific study conducted by the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to assess potential benefits for ECE for poor children. The study included four cohorts of individuals, born between 1972 and 1977 which were randomly assigned as infants to either the early educational intervention group or the control group. The study provided children from low-income families with full-time high-quality educational intervention in a child care setting from infancy through age five.

The educational activities consisted of games incorporated into the child's day and the activities focused on social, emotional, and cognitive areas of

development but gave particular emphasis to language. The young adult findings from this study demonstrate that long-lasting benefits were associated with the early childhood program (Ramey et al., 1972).

*The High Scope Perry Preschool Study* examined the lives of 123 African Americans born in to poverty and at high risk of failing in school. From 1962-1967, children aged 3 and 4 were randomly divided into a program group that received a high-quality preschool program based on HighScope's participatory learning approach and a comparison group who received no preschool program. In the study's most recent phase 97% of the study participants still living were interviewed at age 40 and additional data were gathered from the subject school, social services, and arrest records. The study found that adults at age 40 who had the preschool program had higher earnings, were more likely to hold a job, had committed fewer crimes, and were more likely to have graduated from high school than adults who did not have preschool (Schweinhart et al., 2005).

*The Study of Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers* was conducted by a group of respected academic researchers in the mid-1990s and was the largest piece of child care research conducted in the decade. The study examines the relationships between the cost and quality of early childhood care and education programs and developmental outcomes for children enrolled in the child care centers in the four states of California, Colorado, Connecticut, and North Carolina. Within each state a stratified random sample of approximately 100 centers was culled from state licensing lists. Cost data were collected at the center level. A preschool classroom and infant/toddler classroom (or two

preschool or mixed classrooms where no infant/toddler classrooms existed) were randomly selected to represent each program and observed (The Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study, Final Report, 2000).

*The National Institute of Child Health & Human Development (NICHD) Study* which began in 1991 has followed the development of children from the time they were one month of age. It has been conducted in four phases based on the ages of the children. Based on the changing dynamics of the workforce NICHD began their longitudinal study to collect information about non-maternal child care in its many forms, and about the families who do and do not use such type of care. The study began with 1,364 participants and was the largest, most comprehensive study of children and the environments in which they develop. The study is now in its twentieth year and continues to provide evidence-based data about children, their outcomes, and the environments in which they develop from child care through to ninth grade (NICHD, 2005).

*The National Child Care Staffing Study (NCCSS) Howes, Phillips, and Whitebook, 1992)* examined the quality of care in 227 child care centers, randomly selected from five U.S. metropolitan areas. Similar to previous studies, this study found teachers' education was strongly related to positive interactions with children at the classroom level (Whitebook, 2003).

Research articles on the topic of teacher beliefs acknowledge that there is a lack of attention to the study of individuals' beliefs. Parajes (1992) posits that this may be due to the fact that the construct does not lend itself easily to empirical investigation and is difficult to define (p. 307). Moreover the research is

focused on beliefs about teaching or teaching certain subjects versus the teacher's perceptions and beliefs about his or her own perception of their innate abilities to teach.

Research into the topic of teachers' beliefs did find in-depth reviews of the literature related to teacher beliefs, attitudes, and expectations. The focus of these studies included varying populations of teachers such as pre-service, subject content area, settings, instructional change, curriculum, and various theoretical constructs, to name a few. A consistent theme seen in the literature reviews about teacher's beliefs is that changing them is a "confusing and messy construct" (Parajes, 1992, p. 307).

Ceglowski (1994) conducted a qualitative study that incorporated a feminist framework to explore how salary policies were established and how these policies affect early childhood teachers' decisions to stay with a Head Start program (p. 372). This approximately year-long study included interviews of various administrative personnel as well as early childhood teachers. Her findings showed that women's socioeconomic class, defined by their family income, affects how they view their work and their salaries (Ceglowski, 1994, p. 381). The teachers "discussed the value of their work in terms of their salaries and because of the low wages, argued that society devalues Head Start teaching" (Ceglowski, 1994, p. 381). Ceglowski questioned "why caring for young children is described rhetorically as important work but in the lives of the Head Start teachers, income and benefits were low?" She noted that

if women's work of caring for and nurturing continues to be

devalued, then one would expect that the work of Head Start

teachers will receive little attention, yet the mission of Head Start,

to "educate" young impoverished children is considered an early

childhood priority, thus, society supports the program's mission

but does not address the salary and working conditions of the

women who work in Head Start. (p. 383)

The women in Ceglowski's (1994) study agreed that "caring is critical to their

work and sense of self and that it is necessary to examine how this dominant

caring discourse simultaneously influences women's teaching and the

administrative beliefs that shape institutional salary policy" (pp. 383-384).

Kim and Reifel (2010) conducted a study that "explored how child care

teachers conceptualize their work and practices as gendered" (p. 231). In relation

to the teachers' conceptualizations of their experiences they researched how the

perceived practice is connected or not connected to the larger issues of gendered

teaching, rooted in culturally pervasive beliefs about child care works.

Specifically they asked, "How do child care teachers perceive their work as

women's work? How do they construct child care work" (Kim & Reifel, 2010, p.

231)?

The study participants were two child care teachers employed in center-

based child care programs located in a large city in the southwestern U.S. One of

the teachers worked with four-year-old children and the other worked with six

infants. Neither of the teachers held a degree in ECE, the teacher working with the

four year olds had a Masters Degree in a non-related area and the remaining teacher had a high school diploma and was working toward completing her Child Development Associates Certificate.

The data were collected through interviews which included questions about their work with children, parent, and colleagues. Teachers' accounts showed how their work was related to themselves as women and as mothers of their own children. They often recalled feelings that they serve as replacements for the mothers of the children they were working with. The interview data used in this study was part of the data collected for a larger study of the two child care teachers' perception of their works. The interview questions for the most recent study were developed based on previous interview questions that asked about the child care teachers' perceptions of their work in general.

The data revealed major themes that emerged from the teachers' descriptions of their work as women's work. The first was that the teachers viewed themselves as *biologically essentialized*, believing that women have natural instincts of caring and nurturing. Second, the teachers recognized the advantages and disadvantages of being female. The advantages were associated with how the dominate gendered view of a teacher is that of a woman and simply being female is beneficial when. "It is a profession in which you are valued because you're a woman (Kim & Reifel, 2010, p. 234). Kim and Reifel (2010) stated that for "women teachers who are believed to have greater nurturing capacity as caregiver and as mother figures, it is easier for them to be teacher of younger children than it is for men" (p. 234). Conversely, the disadvantages are

directly associated with this perception, but placed the teachers in a position of being devalued as a professional.

> While these cultural assumptions lead women teachers to a wider-open door for child care teaching, this placed teachers in a devalued position in the broader teaching profession. The advantages of women teachers are limited and restricted to when the students being taught are young. (Kim & Reifel, 2010, pp. 234-240)

The teachers acknowledged that teaching young children is often seen as inappropriate for men who may falsely be viewed as a "pedophile" or as a source of molestation in this culture (Kim & Reifel, 2010, p. 235-236).

The teachers also expressed that it is not unusual for them to be seen as babysitters and by just being a woman it may be reason enough to be viewed as qualified to be a child care teacher. The public does not see the need for training or for better salaries (Kim & Reifel, 2010, p. 236).

For the two teachers in the study, their work as a child care teacher did not align with mothering. One of the teachers felt that being a teacher required more patience, a degree of playfulness which was not something she was able to do with her own children. The other teacher expressed ideas about the difference in bonding versus a social relationship. She believed the teachers' role was to socialize the children which she separated from the role of a mother (Kim & Reifel, 2010, p. 238).

Cinisimo, Fuligni, Daugherty, Howes, and Karoly (2009) conducted a qualitative study of early childhood educators' beliefs about key classroom experiences. The study was conducted to address the gaps in the literature by conducting focus group interviews with private, public and family based child care program staff serving low income children in Los Angeles County. The desire was to answer two specific questions: First in preparing a child for kindergarten what types of early learning experiences do early childhood educators believe to be important and second how do teacher belief systems about what constitutes important experience vary within and across early childhood learning settings. The results of the qualitative data analyses revealed there were types of preschool classroom experiences that participants believed to be important when working with children who are getting ready for kindergarten: (a) type of teacher-child interaction (b) children's learning environment and (c) types of learning opportunities.

Their findings supported their initial hypothesis "that participants would emphasize the importance of independent child activities including play and type of interactions between teacher and child in enforcing key lessons taught." The second hypothesis "speculated that center-based programs would differ from family-based programs in that center-based educators would place more importance on a more structured teacher-driven environment and family-based educators would highlight unstructured, child-driven practices, but the results did not confirm this hypothesis."

Included among a number of possible explanations for this outcome, was that the variation in children's experience may be a result of teacher training in ECE. "The family-based providers participated in a network of providers who have access to workshops on how to interact with children. The center-based educator must take courses at a local college or university to gain additional early childhood training. The recommendation was that future studies should collect information on all types of education and ongoing PD among staff. This study only collected information on the highest level of education, but they did not have data on the participants' "ongoing professional development" (Cinisomo et al., (2009 pp. 1-16)

## Chapter Summary

Educational philosophies, as seen throughout history, vary widely. Educating the young child was not viewed by our earliest philosophers as something reserved for the older child, but included the younger child as well. The woman's role as the purveyor of such knowledge was the accepted standard embraced by our earliest theorists. As the noted philosophers and reformers changed, so too did the views about educating our youngest children. The initial acceptance of providing education or educational learning environments to children birth to five, over the span of decades lost favor and a discourse on the appropriateness of caring for and educating the young child gained prominence.

Our reservations about acknowledging that care/nurturing has a valid place in ECE and the incorporation of such within ECE degree programs does not mean that we are ascribing that trait to be female. This positioning of education

and care has created national dialogue about the merits of education versus experience and has contributed to experts in the field of ECE attempting to validate the current workforce by aligning its message, of curriculum, standards, outcomes, and pedagogy to teachers working in elementary education.

The research regarding early childhood teacher PD has provided limited information regarding reasons for teachers to engage in PD that leads to a degree. Studies acknowledge the correlation of TE to the quality of an early learning environment, but the outcome measures are mostly structural looking at ratios, environment, turnover, or salary (Bowman et al., 2000; Lazar, Darlington, Murray, Royce, & Snipper, 1982, Whitebook, Sakai, Gerber, & Howes, 2001). The existing studies, including the study conducted by Kim and Reifel (2010), approach teachers' beliefs as they relate to child care work versus their interest and desire to pursue a higher degree.

Research has indicated that inquiring into the beliefs of individuals is a messy construct (Parajes, 1992, p. 307) and that feminist theories of cultural feminism, societal views of women, teaching as a profession, and the valuing or not of care greatly impact the perceptions of women working with young children (Ceglowski, 1994).

The need for PD of teachers has been validated, but whether the teachers actually internalize that need or just blindly bare false witness to the importance of it is not clear. The question remains, why do so many projects, programs, initiatives related to early childhood teacher PD begin and end without much

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evidence of sustainability among the participants and replicability of the project which would attest to its success?

Research on the beliefs, values, and attitudes of early childhood teachers is for the most part non-existent and provides little insight into how they internalized perceptions of the qualifications they bring to their job or impact their interest and desire in proceeding with PD that leads to a certificate or a degree.

Throughout the course of history the field of ECE became a choice of employment for many women, some interested in socializing with others, providing charitable acts, providing wayward women with a means to right their ways through entering the workforce and therefore needing to seek assistance in caring for their child. All interests have contributed to the system of ECE. A system that has reinvented itself throughout the years, but due to the many social discourses, has emerged as predominantly women and of such low socioeconomic status that they are income eligible for cash assistance programs.

As a society with limited reflective thinking about its views of gender and the roles assigned to gender; women, mothers by default, were labeled as the nurturers and along with that came careers that matched. One dominant view is that the ability to care for a child can fall to anyone that is anyone who is a woman without the need for formal education. Instead of acknowledging the limitations of such an ideology, we have perpetuated the belief that to nurture another human is an extension of being female.

The adult learners in the field of ECE, leave a family to work within an early childhood program, a family laden with its own ideologies, gender-based

roles and responsibilities, and perhaps patriarchal overtones. They bring to the

table knowledge – knowledge from their home and community and with it many

preconceived notions of education and their abilities to be successful within the

field of ECE.

# CHAPTER 3

## METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes a review of the purpose of the study and a restatement of research questions. In addition, I discuss details regarding the research design, research methods, sample selection, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures.

### Background and Study Context

The PD project was designed by an Arizona United Way and an Arizona Foundation to inform best practices and to explore emerging practices in early childhood PD through the delivery and evaluation of a high-quality professional development program to child care centers in Maricopa County (Nash, 2010). The year-long United Way PD project (2009-2010) enrolled and provided PD to seven child care centers, seeking the participation of one infant-toddler teacher, one preschool teacher, and one director from each site. At one center location the director also taught a preschool classroom and participated in the project as both a teacher and a director. If an infant/toddler teacher was not present, at one of the seven selected centers, the PD project Program Manager enrolled a second teacher of preschool-age children.

The initial criterion used for the selection of the early childhood programs/centers participating in the PD project was geographic location. The selected locations comprised four of the eight Regional Partnership Council areas identified by the Early Childhood and Health Board, known as First Things First (FTF). The four regions, Maricopa NE, Maricopa SE, Maricopa SW, and

Maricopa NW, were selected in part because they have either no or a limited

overlay of services and resources being delivered to early childhood programs

within their regional partnership geographic boundaries. Additionally, the centers,

directors, and teachers were selected based on the high poverty status of families

and low educational levels of the teachers.

Each teacher or director received up to $750.00 in tuition, as well as

incentives to offset some of the costs of mileage and child/elderly care. The center

received up to $1,500.00 in supplies/equipment/materials to offset the cost of

implementing the new activities. The program model included five phases:

identification, pre-assessment, plan development, coaching, and post-assessment.

The community partners during the initial year of the project included: (a) a

program manager responsible for designing and managing all organizational

pieces of the project as well as administering assessments; (b) an education coach,

represented by a local community college employee who was responsible for

working with participants to create an education plan and to facilitate the delivery

of coursework in a manner that allowed for customization to the project and to the

project participant; and (c) the PD coach who was responsible for providing

regular coaching and quality improvement strategies to the center directors and

teachers.

## Study Participants

Purposeful sampling was utilized in this study. Participants and early

childhood sites were purposely pre-selected as they had been involved in the year-

long United Way PD project. I have been employed in various positions focused

on ECE for the past 23 years and I "relied on experience and insight to select a sample" (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 135). The participants included 15 women early childhood teachers who care for children aged infant through age five, with their own ages ranging from the early 20s through the late 50s, who teach in seven center-based programs in very high-need areas of Phoenix, Arizona; two instructors employed at the community college contracted by a United Way in Arizona to provide college coursework to the project participants; and one coach assigned to work individually with the teachers in their classrooms. The directors, with the exception of one who functioned as both a director and teacher, were not included in the sample as they were not primarily responsible for the classroom environment or the classroom activities. I had not sought to limit gender to women, but as the field of ECE employs 95 to 97% women practitioners (F. Kipnis, personal communication, March 31, 2011), and the participants were pre-selected from the United Way PD project, this outcome was likely.

## Research Design

### Methods of Answering Research Question 1

For each of the research questions, I review the procedures and instruments used to collect the data and include supporting research for the choice of research tool. To investigate how focused PD activities affect the classroom practices of center-based teachers, as measured by the ECERS or ITERS (i.e., Research Question 1), I used the pre- and post-ERS scores of the ECERS-R and

the ITERS-R, which were conducted by the United Way PD project Program

Manager.

The quality of children's early care environments is associated with their

academic and cognitive outcomes (Sammons et al., 2003). Studies continually

inform the public about the positive attributes of having a more knowledgeable

workforce employed in the field of ECE. The education of the early childhood

teacher has been shown to have a direct impact on the level of quality in an early

childhood program, which, in turn, relates to how a program is structured (Dwyer,

Chait, & McKee, 2000; Zaslow, Calkins, & Halle, 2000).

*High-quality learning environments* provide children with three basic

needs: protection of their health and safety, the promotion of developing positive

relationships, and opportunities for stimulation and learning through experiences

(Clifford, Reszka, & Rossbach, 2010, p. 2). These, along with selected

characteristics of a program (e.g., the setting, the equipment), are assessed within

a validated early childhood assessment tool known as an ERS. Within the field of

ECE, there are four ERSs, each designed for a different segment of the early

childhood field: Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ITERS-

R), Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale – Revised (FCCERS-R), School

Aged Environment Rating Scale (SACERS), and the Early Childhood

Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R). Each scale contains items

assessing the physical environment, basic care of children, curriculum,

interactions, schedule and program structure, and parent and staff needs and was

designed to assist early childhood professionals in examining early childhood

environments to make improvements in the provisions for young children.

The most widely used of the ERSs is the ECERS-R, which assesses the

quality of preschool group programs for two- to five-year-olds. Items are

organized into seven subscales that the assessor uses during observation,

including (a) Individual Care Routines, (b) Furnishings and Displays for Children,

(c) Language-Reasoning Experiences, (d) Fine and Gross Motor Activities, (e)

Creative Activities, (f) Social Development, and (g) Adult Needs.

The scale used to assess infant/toddler classrooms is the ITERS-R which

assesses the quality of the learning environment for children aged birth to two and

a half years. Similar to the ECERS-R, the ITERS-R organizes the designated

items for review into seven subscales which include (a) Space and Furnishings,

(b) Personal Care Routines, (c) Listening and Talking, (d) Activities, (e)

Interaction, (f) Program Structure, and (g) Parents and Staff. The ERSs have a

long history of use in research projects.

> The original ECERS was used in large, national studies such as the
> Head Start FACES study which included over 400 classrooms in
> the U.S. In addition, the ECERS and ITERS were used as the
> comprehensive quality measures in the National Child Care
> Staffing Study (Whitebook, 1989) and the Cost, Quality, and Child
> Outcomes Study (1995), the major studies of their time …. The
> ECERS-R has been used in major studies including the Early Head
> Start Study, Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey

(FACES 2003), Georgia Early Care Study (GECS), More at Four

(MAF) Evaluation in North Carolina, National Center for Early

Development and Learning (NCEDL), Study of Early Child Care

and Youth Development (NICHD SECCYD), and the Preschool

Curriculum Evaluation Research Program (PCER). (Clifford et al.,

2010, p. 4)

In addition to the use of the scales in research activities, the scales are used for

self-assessment by center staff, preparation for accreditation, and voluntary

improvement efforts, such as the activities within the United Way PD project.

The internal consistency of the ERSs is generally assessed at the subscale

and total scale level. Each subscale of the instrument is intended to measure a

specific aspect of quality, whereas the total scale is an indicator of the

comprehensive quality of a learning environment (Clifford et al., 2010, p. 8).

All of the Environmental Rating Scales were developed in close

collaboration with realistic field-based sites, and have been used in

numerous research studies that assess the reliability of the scores.

There are several important types of reliability that are relevant to

the Environmental Rating Scales including: test-retest reliability,

internal consistency, and interrater reliability. (Clifford et al., 2010,

p.7)

Within the United Way PD project, the focus was on interrater reliability. To

become knowledgeable in the use of the ERSs and to attain interrater reliability,

the United Way PD project Program Manager participated in a three-day training with the authors of the tool.

To analyze the data in reference to Research Question 1, I used pre- and post-assessment scores, collected by the Program Manager for the United Way PD project, for each subscale of the ECERS-R and the ITERS-R, collected at the beginning (August 2009) and at the end (July 2010) of the United Way PD project interventions. I computed the mean effect size of the pre- and post-ECERS-R by determining the mean difference between two variables (pre- and post- scores) and then expressing that difference in standard deviation units. I calculated similar values from the raw data collected by the United Way PD project Program Manager and compared my results with the analysis of an independent evaluator hired to assess the quantitative data collected in the United Way PD project as the basis for her interpretation of changes to the classroom environment and the teachers' classroom practices.

**Methods of Answering Research Question 2**

To examine how focused PD influenced teachers' past and present career choices (i.e., Research Question 2), I provided the 15 teachers with a semi-structured survey and conducted interviews with the 15 teachers, the two representatives from the institute of higher education (IHE), and the one coach. The 90-minute interviews were conducted over a 60-day period in February and March 2011. In addition, a focus group of the teachers was conducted at the conclusion of the individual interviews. All interviews and the focus group were audio-taped and sent out for transcription to Landmark Associates, Inc.

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I developed and administered the written survey (see Appendix B), which includes Likert-scaled and open-ended statements, to the teacher participants utilizing the work of Early and Winton (2001); Horm-Wingerd, Hyson, and Karp (2000); and Isenberg (2000). The survey tool protocol included statements about the pre-existing beliefs and attitudes of early childhood teachers regarding focused PD and about teaching and mothering. In addition the tool collected the teachers' perceptions of the professional development delivered by the institution of higher education, and their feelings about the project coach. The survey also provided the participant with a context of the research study and gave me another method to compare data and triangulate the data.

Additionally, the written survey tool provided me with written data to compare to the comments shared during the interview process. This permitted me to delve deeper by seeking to find out "What are the basic social processes and social psychological processes" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 20)? The survey, along with the interviews and the focus group, provided me with the opportunity to triangulate the data by "the confirmation of two or more measurement processes, the uncertainty of the interpretation is greatly reduced" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 306).

The use of interviews in qualitative research has long been a useful data-gathering method. Structure and depth of the interview dictates the level of exploration of a particular subject. "The in-depth nature of an intensive interview fosters eliciting each participant's interpretation of his or her experience" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 25). The interviewer listens, sensitive to the information

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shared by the participant and maintains the conversation through a certain level of trust-building. The interview process for this study was designed using semi-structured focused questions. The use of a semi-structured, but conversational, interview process allows for the exploration of beneath the surface experiences, adjustments in the pace, and ability to return to an earlier point. This process vastly supports allowing the speaker to direct conversational flow and to hear the story in the participant's terms versus the researcher's recapping it at a later point in time (Charmaz 2006, p. 26).

The written interview protocol helped to guide the conversation and provided consistency among the participants. Although the questions created a structured type of discourse, I extended questioning and sharing of any new topics that arose during the course of the interview process.

**Methods of Answering Research Question 3**

To examine what barriers affect career path participation and sustainability (i.e., Research Question 3), I used the same survey described above, distributed to each of the 15 teacher participants. In addition, to answer Research Question 3 the data from the focus group, the interviews of the teachers, the two instructors from the IHE, and the coach were also included in the data collection process using the timeline described for Research Question 2.

Grounded theory provided me with relevant predictions, interpretations, and applications. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) stated in their seminal text, the process allowed me to "discover theory from the data" (p. 1). In addition, I could see the data in fresh ways, exploring ideas about the data through analysis and

reporting. The methods of grounded theory include systematic but flexible

guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories

grounded in the data themselves and the data form the foundation of theory and

the analysis of the data generates the concepts constructed (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2).

Charmaz (2006) noted that Glaser and Strauss' description of grounded theory

marries two contrasting and competing traditions in sociology representative of its

originators: (a) Columbia University *positivism* (Glaser) and (b) Chicago school

*pragmatism* (Strauss) and *field research* (Charmaz, 2006, p. 6). Charmaz's (2006)

view of grounded theory includes a set of principles and practices not as

prescriptions or packages (p. 9). She elevated the inclusion of flexible guidelines,

not methodological rules, recipes, and requirements, which differs from the

approach outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967). This research study more closely

utilizes Charmaz's elements of grounded theory.

Charmaz's interpretation of grounded theory builds on Glaser and Strauss

and Corbin and Strauss's version of the method, but has she has moved her focus

away from the positivism. Charmaz (2006) contended that researchers can "use

basic grounded theory guidelines such as coding, memo-writing, and sampling for

theory development, and comparative methods which for the most part are

neutral" (p. 9). Grounded theory cites specific steps to follow within the context

of the research, and researchers can use these in nuanced ways to adjust to their

area of focus. Charmaz (2009) contended that the difference between her

approach and Glaser and Strauss's and Corbin and Strauss's is the idea that "how

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researchers use guidelines is not neutral; nor are the assumptions they bring to their research and enact during the process" (p. 9).

Unlike the authors of classic grounded theory texts and articles, Charmaz (2006) assumed the neither data nor theories are discovered, but are part of the world under study and the data collected. Individuals construct our grounded theories though their past and present involvements and interactions with other individuals, perspectives, and research practices.

Charmaz's diversion from Glaser and Strauss's and Corbin and Strauss's, though slight, is a nuance that resonated with me individually and aligned to the interpretive nature of this study that not only looks at the beliefs and attitudes of the participants, but critically explores feminist theoretical approaches, and society's cultural artifacts. Grounded theorys incorporating an interpretive portrayal was used to collect and analyze the data. The research process in this study was not linear, but circular and tangled at times, with the ideas that initially came to light early on evolving and necessitating different thinking and analysis.

## Procedure

### Interviews

**Teacher participants.** The project coach arranged a meeting time for me with each teacher in person at the early childhood program site. During this initial meeting I introduced myself, identified my current place of employment and shared the purpose of my research. At this time a letter of introduction, informed consent and the survey with Likert scales and open-ended questions (see Appendices C, D, and E) were given to the teacher participant. I told the

participant that I would collect the survey at the time of the initial one-to-one interview. To minimize the effect of insider/outsider perception and maximize the sharing of individual and sensitive responses, I included the coach who had worked with the participants during the funded United Way PD project, in all of the teacher interviews. The coach engaged participants in conversation to reduce anxiety and provide an easier transition into the interview subject matter.

**Institute of higher education participants.** I phoned the two employees of the institution of higher education contracted by the United Way to provide college coursework and educational pathway information to the teachers in this project. I explained the study purpose and asked whether each of them was willing to be interviewed by me. These individuals did not complete a survey or participate in the focus group. I independently conducted the interviews of the two instructors from the IHE using a series of questions to provide for consistency between the two interviews (see Appendix F). The interviews of the two representatives of the higher education institute took place within each of their offices at a date and time convenient to both. The purpose of these interviews was to collect the two instructor's perspectives about what barriers and limitations, if any, existed on the part of the teacher and at the IHE that could directly influence the teachers' success in completing the selected coursework and continuing to enroll in college classes.

**Coach participant.** The interview with the coach employed the same tool design used with the teachers and instructors at the IHE (see Appendix G). The interview of the coach took place at her home, at her request. The purpose of this

interview was gain further insight into the beliefs and attitudes of the teachers, to

hear the coach's thoughts as to what elements of the United PD project were the

most influential, and what were her thoughts about the design of the PD project,

including the delivery of undergraduate coursework from the IHE.

**Focus Group**

In addition to conducting interviews, I convened a focus group for the 15

teachers in the evening hours. Eight of the 15 teacher participants attended. The

focus group was conducted at the completion of all the teacher interviews for the

purpose of observing the collective interaction of the teacher participants and

employed the use of a script that served to guide the conversation (see Appendix

H).

My desire to use this method of data collection was to allow for

individuals who were self-conscious during the one-to-one interview process to

provide information. Care was given so that all participants were provided the

opportunity to speak. The focus group conversation was also audio-taped and sent

to Landmark Associates, Inc. The transcriptions contained the entirety of the

interview and focus group conversations.

**Coding**

Upon receipt of the transcribed focus group and audio interviews, I read

each transcription in its entirety and noted common themes and descriptive

terminology. From this initial review, I began entering codes (i.e., open coding:

Glaser & Strauss, 1967; and In Vivo coding: Charmaz, 2006, pp. 55-56) into

software (NVIVO9) utilized to facilitate the collection of qualitative data (see

Appendix I). The open coding process produced broad categorical headings that allowed sections of the interviews and the focus group to be copied and pasted beneath each entry. The second phase of this process occurred as I recognized that the some of the open codes were too broad and there was the need to create subcategories. Thus, I assigned axial codes (see Appendix J; Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The same process identified above; copying and pasting of transcribed text took place.

During the review of the 18 interviews (i.e., 15 teachers, 2 instructors from the IHE, and 1 coach) and the focus group transcriptions, I noted common themes and frequency of views and values attached to words, such as *professional development*, *mother*, *teacher/teaching*, *care*, and *nurture*. These initial notations culminated into the first entries of open codes. After I had read all transcribed audio recordings and entered the initial very broad open codes, I reread each transcript and began to enter additional open codes using common suggestions for coding, such as "remain open, stay close to the data, keep your codes simple and precise, construct short codes, preserve action, compare data with data, move quickly through the data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 49).

During the open coding process, I recognized the need to begin to differentiate broad open codes frequently appearing in the majority of the transcripts. At this time I devised axial (Glaser & Strauss, 1967 codes. The constant comparative method was employed by comparing the data in each transcript with other transcripts and to data collected through the use of other tools. The constant comparative method of joint coding and analysis is used to

"generate theory more systematically than allowed by only using explicit coding and then analytic procedures" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 102). The next step was to begin to transcribe the copies and I pasted text within each of the codes beginning with the most heavily populated codes. From this process I began to analyze the data for common themes, number of like responses and began to "apply new thinking to the material in ways that differed from the research participants' interpretations" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 55).

### Internal and External Validity, Reliability, Objectivity

Lincoln and Guba asked, "How can a researcher persuade his or her or his audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of" *(*Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290)? Quantitative, positivist researchers have traditionally used four categories to address issues of truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality; these comprise internal validity. *Internal validity* is the extent to which variations in an outcome variable can be attributed to controlled variation in an independent variable, whereas *external validity* is the cause and effect of a particular situation. *Reliability* is recognized as a critical precondition for validity. *Objectivity* refers to an experience shared by a number of participants, rather than an individual experience (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 290-293). The terms used in a qualitative study that replace those used in a positivist study approach are "credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 300).

*Triangulation* is a research technique used to validate data through the cross verification of multiple sources. For this study, the use of questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews were triangulated. In addition, I asked an independent consultant to provide his perspective on the analysis of the data collected from this study. The use of triangulation and an additional reviewer of the data analysis served as alternatives to the criteria commonly used in a quantitative study, such as reliability and validity. The use of this strategy provided a method for me to address my own intrinsic biases and reduce the chances of problems that could arise if using a single method to collect data and a single-theory study. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) triangulation is a method of improving the probability that findings and interpretations will be found credible, (p. 305).

## Data Analysis

The data were analyzed within the framed focus of the study, beliefs and attitudes of early childhood teachers regarding a focused PD project and their intentions to continue college going coursework. Each participant's interview was transcribed verbatim, using an outside transcription service. Summaries of each interview were reviewed for themes by me and analyzed using a constant comparative method (Glazer & Strauss, 1967, p. 102). This process allowed me to review data while jointly coding and analyzing and to create comparisons between new and prior data, noting similarities and peculiarities and to generate theories and integrate new plausible theoretical data. This process of continuing analyzing the data was ongoing throughout the data collection cycle.

I employed the four stages of constant comparative methodology as outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967), which include comparing findings to each category, integrating categories, delimiting the theory, and writing the theory. Although the process consistently built on prior stages, all data culminated in a final theory. The steps of analysis included looking for commonalities and at times produced a very *web-like* thought process.

Coding of the data, interviews, and focus group began with a review of the transcribed audio-recordings of these proceedings. Initially I devised broad or open coding, which created large categorical representations, followed by a review and comparison of the data, with over 75% of the larger categories transformed into subsets. This initial line-by-line coding was followed by focused coding which was more selective. This process enabled me to synthesize and explain larger segments of data (Charmaz, 2006). Through review of the data, new themes emerged, at times challenging my preconceived beliefs about the subject area.

Axial coding was used to relate categories to subcategories or subsets. This type of coding is not separate from open coding, but provides a strategy to break apart the data and put it back together (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 198). Summaries of the coding categories were developed, and notations of the meaning of each category and its relationship to the topic area of the research were defined, providing the beginning of a narrative that ultimately became integrated into findings.

In this project, I was interested in learning/understanding the participants'

beliefs and attitudes about PD. The elements of grounded theory provided me

with the opportunity to be flexible in developing an emerging theory, and also

with the latitude to be critical in the analysis of the data. This year-long, mixed-

methods study incorporated both quantitative (i.e., ERS scores) and qualitative

(i.e., survey questionnaires, interviews and a focus group) data.

Participants were active in ensuring that the categories that emerged from

the surveys and focus groups were representative of their knowledge and

experiences. The qualitative insights were examined using feminist theories as a

lens to understand the beliefs, practices, and college-going experiences of the

women ECE teachers.

### Biases and Recognition of Subjectivity

I recognized the assumptions and beliefs I brought to this research and

sought expertise of the United Way PD project's coach to identify presuppositions

and biases. In addition, triangulation of data and member-checking were used to

minimize any biases. To reduce the amount of bias, I did a thorough review of the

relevant literature and identified how the literature influenced my thinking.

Throughout my career, I have been influenced by policy, projects, conversations,

and colleagues on the subject of the research that led to the conceptualization of

the research project. In addition, I have shared my preliminary hunches and the

need to change my thinking based on the analysis of the data using comparative

analysis and member checks. At all times, I sought to remain open to the results

of the data and struggled with the implications for upsetting current theoretical

frameworks, but I utilized the project coach and an education consultant to check learnings.

In preparing for the interview process, I reviewed potential ethical issues and drafted and disseminated informed consent forms, but I was unprepared for the influx of empathy from the teacher participants toward me regarding their shared interest in the topic, the desire for me to be successful, their feeling of responsibility for sharing relevant and meaningful information, and the time constraints of the overall project.

<p style="text-align:center"><strong>Participants, Consent, and Confidentiality</strong></p>

The participants in this study discussed their beliefs and attitudes regarding the meaning of teachers, teaching, education, school readiness, and PD for teachers of children aged birth through age five. It is possible that by sharing their views, beliefs, and philosophies they may find that they have strong emotions that they have not previously recognized or articulated. The language on the consent forms, questionnaires, and on interview materials stated that participants need only answer items they could comfortably answer and that interviews could be stopped at any time.

Approval for the inclusion of human subjects in this study was obtained through the Institutional Review Board at Arizona State University (see Appendix K). Informed consent forms were signed by all participants. Because of the desire for confidentiality, codes were used in transcription and member-checking processes. Codes were also used when draft portions of the study were read for accuracy, and for triangulation purposes. No actual names were used in the final

document. Information letters and informed consent documents were provided to the each participant. The 18 consent forms were all signed prior to the interview process. Consent was also verified verbally at the time of the one-to-one interview.

## Chapter Summary

This study explored the beliefs and attitudes of the teachers regarding the need for participation in a focused PD project and their desire to continue with college coursework once the project cycle was complete. In addition the study sought to gain the perceptions of the employees of the higher education institute that provided the college coursework and the project coach regarding the teachers reasons for engaging in focused PD; college coursework. The early childhood teachers met the criteria for purposeful sampling by being employed in early childhood programs that have little to no access to PD interventions and by also participating in a year-long focused PD project.

Pre- and post-treatment data depicting the classroom practices of each teacher was collected quantitatively through the use of rater-reliable assessors with knowledge and experience in using the assessment tools known as the Infant/ Toddler ERS, Revised (ITERS- R) and the Early Childhood ERS, Revised (ECERS -R). Each scale has a long history of use in early childhood settings and all have been found to show robust validity and reliability indices (Clifford et al., 2010.

Career pathway data were collected qualitatively from each of the subjects using survey questionnaires, individual interviews, and participation in a

focus group. Grounded theory (1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987) serves as the analytic framework for the qualitative data and the constant comparative method was used to construct and modify the analytic codes and categories from the data in an iterative fashion. In addition, Charmaz (2006) views were used to build upon the analytic framework of Glaser and Strauss, acknowledging that prior perspectives create insight into the data, but rather than seeing the perspectives as truth, I should analyze them as representing one view among many (p. 54). Grounded theory allowed for the development of emergent theories from the data analysis and did not limit the women's voices to a preconceived construct. Member checks with select participants were also employed to assess the integrity of each step of the comparative method.

In addition, the project coach who assisted me through the data collection and participated in the member check processes agreed to be an interviewee; providing her perspective of the United Way PD project and her observations throughout the year-long cycle. The coach was present at the focus group, but was not acting as a participant. Her presence served to provide a familiar face and voice to the conversation for the teachers who were purposive sampled for this project.

## CHAPTER 4

## FINDINGS

The beginning section of this chapter includes an overview of the teacher participants. Next, the chapter includes a review of the findings for all of the research questions by integrating all data sources regarding the impact of the focused professional development project and early childhood teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and views about participating in a focused PD project.

### The Women Who Participated

The 15 women who participated in this research study had been involved in a focused PD project from 2009-2010. This year-long project was implemented by staff employed by an Arizona United Way. The child care centers these women came from were chosen for their location in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. Further these centers had limited knowledge of opportunities to participate in existing quality improvement projects or of possible funding for teacher PD. Implicit in the selection process was the belief that the teachers would need PD in some form to improve their knowledge and teaching pedagogy or provide a quality learning environment for the children in their care.

Overall, the women who work in these centers which are located in neighborhoods of high crime and few resources expressed a positive sense of self-worth even though many faced individual issues during this focused PD project. For instance, three of the women dealt with the incarceration of their husbands, several faced serious financial difficulties, and one teacher dealt with her own child being gravely injured.

On the professional side, the teachers in this study also faced many challenges; one center had a shooting occur in front of the building necessitating the teacher to remove blood from the sidewalk before the morning arrival of the children and their families. Many of the teachers shared that they experienced a lack of respect from the owner of their early childhood center and on more than one occasion the project coach witnessed verbal and emotional abuse exhibited in the form of publicly degrading and yelling at the teacher while she was in the classroom setting. At one site the teachers described how the owner had said of the teachers "if you do not like it then you can leave – you are a dime a dozen." This threat was issued to teachers who had worked in the center for approximately 11 years, and neither made more than $10.50 an hour. When asked how they responded to these types of denigrating comments, one woman captured the feelings of the group when she stated, "We stay because we feel we need to be here for the kids and their families."

The women interviewed by me went over and above their required job obligations to provide a safe and emotionally stable environment for the children in their care. Sometimes this included bending the rules by having the children arrive early and stay later than the contract required. The teachers wore multiple hats at their job site. Due to limited center resources, many of the teachers alternated their classroom responsibilities with overall center operational needs, such as driving the van to take the children to and from public school, serving as receptionist and greeting the parents as they arrived, and working as the cook. Further, each teacher, regardless of their many other duties, was responsible for

sweeping, mopping, and general upkeep of her classroom. In fact, at one of my scheduled interview times, I arrived to find the teacher/director painting the front reception area. Clearly, the teachers in this study were committed to serving the children and families in their centers.

## Impact of Focused Professional Development

The first research question inquired about the impact of the focused PD. The impact on classroom practice was measured by The ECERS for the preschool classrooms. The ITERS assessed the environment for the infant and toddler rooms. Observations were conducted by an early childhood professional who had successfully completed an intensive training and been approved as an objective assessor able to produce validated scores. The ERS tools, ECERS or ITERS measure classroom environment criteria and to a lesser degree teacher/child interactions that have, through research, been shown to be valid indicators of quality (Clifford et al., 2010, p. 4).

Due to the small selected sample size of seven centers and 14 classrooms, impact was measured by effect size using Cohen's $d$ rather than statistical significance. Cohen defined $d$ as defined as the difference between the means, $M_1$ - $M_2$, divided by the standard deviation of either group (Cohen, 1988).

Many statistical studies provide the reader with data in the form of significance; however a significance test does not tell the size of a difference between two measures (i.e., *practical* significance) nor does it allow for an easy comparison of studies. Recognizing these limitations, the American Psychological Association (APA) recommended all published statistical reports also include

effect size (APA, 5<sup>th</sup> edition manual section, 1.10: Results section). Neill (2008) stated,

> When there is no interest in generalizing (e.g., we are only interested in the results for the sample), there is no need for significance testing and in these situations, effect sizes are sufficient and suitable. When examining effects using small sample sizes, significance testing can be misleading and contrary to popular opinion, statistical significance is not a direct indicator of size of effect, but rather it is a function of sample size, effect size, and *p* level. (p. 2)

Table 1 outlines the interpretation of Cohen's *d* effect sizes, which were used in this research study to compare pre- and post-ERS data for each of the classrooms in this focused PD project.

Table 1

Interpretation of Cohen's *d* (Cohen, 1988)

| Cohen's *d* Value | Impact of effect |
| --- | --- |
| +.80 or higher | Large positive impact |
| +.50 to +.79 | Moderate positive impact |
| +.20 to +.49 | Small positive impact |
| -.19 to +.19 | No real impact |
| -.20 to -.49 | Small negative impact |
| -.50 to -.79 | Moderate negative impact |
| -.80 or lower | Large negative impact |
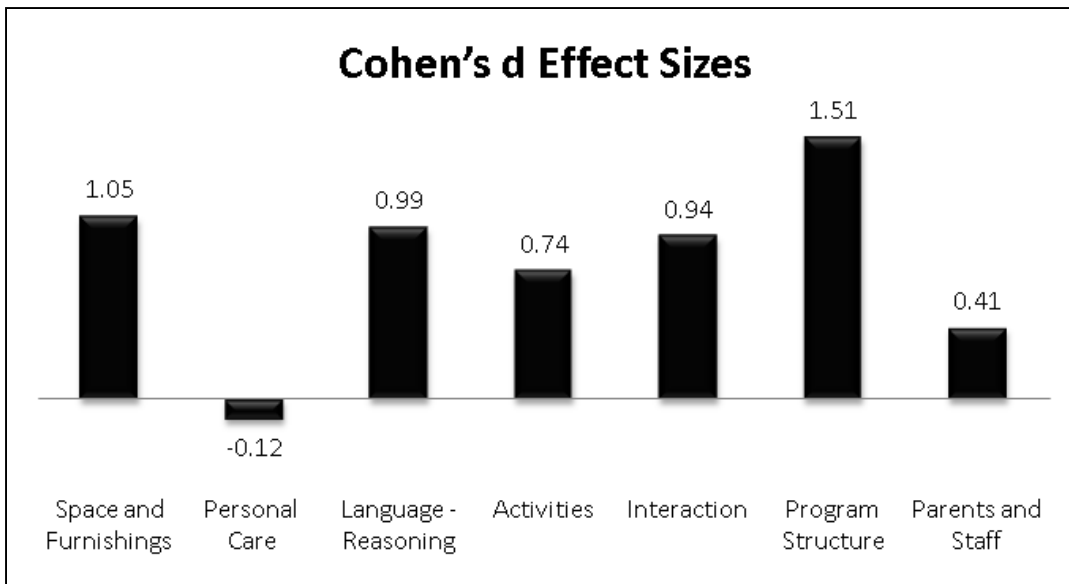
*Figure 1*. ECERS impact result by domain, post-test assessment. Source: Parker, 2011.

The effect sizes for post-test assessment data collected using the ECERS are contained in Figure 1. As shown in Figure 1, there were large positive impacts in the ECERS domains of Space and Furnishings, Language and Reasoning, Interactions, and Program structure, and a moderate gain in Activities. In the area of Parents and Staff the post-test assessment showed a small positive impact. There was no real impact for Personal Care, as indicated by an effect size of -0.12.

The assessment scores show large impacts in the subscales that were most heavily influenced by the change in teaching practices and the instructional guidance provided by the coach. The coach worked individually with the teachers on issues the teacher self-identified as being important to her, versus the ECERS-

R scores. The results show the benefit of coaching efforts that acknowledge the strengths of the teacher along with areas of self-reported improvement can achieve very positive results.
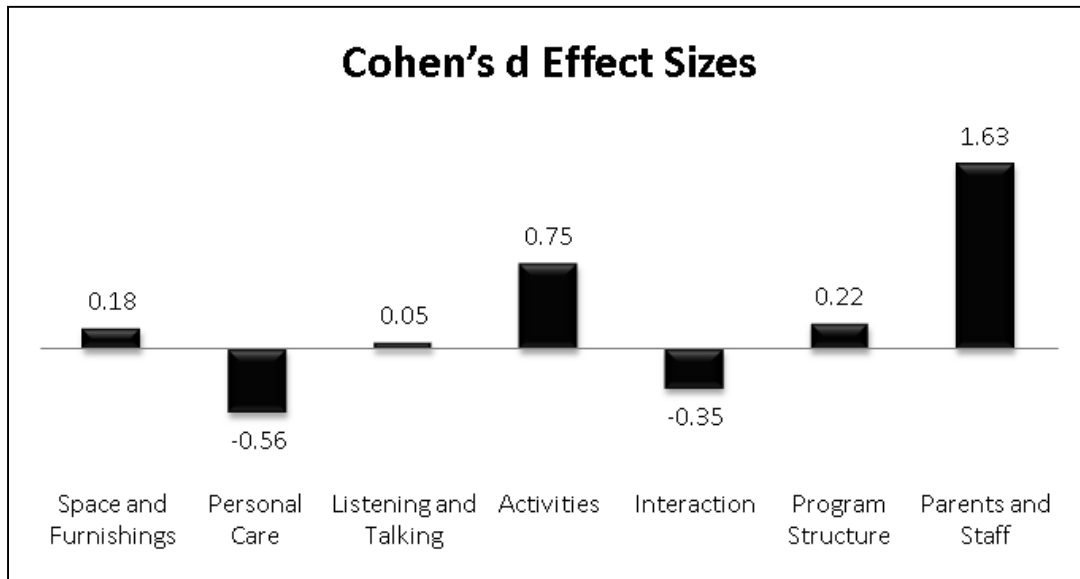


*Figure 2*. ITERS impact result by domain post-test assessment. Source: Parker, 2011.

Figure 2 shows effects sizes of interventions for the classrooms of teachers caring for children below the age of three. Pre- and post-assessment comparisons indicated no real impact in the domain of Space and Furnishings, a moderate negative impact in Personal Care, no real impact for Language-Reasoning, moderate positive impact for Activities, a small negative impact in the domain of Teacher/Child Interaction, a small positive impact in the area of Program Structure, and a large positive impact in the domain of Parents and Staff.

The findings from the two age-based assessment tools indicated the PD interventions of academic opportunity and individualized coaching support had a

greater impact on teachers of older children than younger children. Individual care aspects of the programs were the least impacted for all ages, and the most consistent positive impact across all children was in Activities and in Parents and Staff (Parker, 2011).

Table 2

*Summary Results*

| Measure | Cohen's $d$ | Size and Direction of Impact |
|---|---|---|
| Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS) | $d = .89$ | Large Positive Impact |
| Infant-Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS) | $d = .27$ | Small Positive Impact |

The use of the ERSs was useful in highlighting specific changes to the classroom environment and activities as depicted in effect sizes (see Table 2); however, if the tools had been used as designed to provide an overall classroom rating based on a composite score of the seven domains, the positive impact would not have been significant overall. It is suggested that when providing focused PD, the observer identify the changes related to the domains and subscales that speak to teacher/child interactions separately. The total composite score or rating for each of the classrooms would have been skewed by low scores in the areas of individual care, which deal with health-related issues.

Although the coach had the ITERS/ECERS data to help her develop an individualized PD plan for each teacher, she shared that in delivering the PD she individualized the content and interactions without using the tools as a starting point as her desire was to minimize an immediate deficit approach. Instead the

coach employed a strength-based approach by asking the teacher about her

interests and needs related to activities and pedagogy.

It is also important to note the teachers functioned in environments that

were sparse in furnishings and materials. Although many of these teachers made,

on average, $10.00-$11.00 per hour, they individually purchased materials for

their classrooms so the children would have resources for their activities. As a

benefit to each of the centers for agreeing to participate in this project, a

$1,500.00 stipend was awarded. This funding allowed the teacher, with the

coach's guidance, to purchase supplies for her classroom that paralleled her

individualized PD, college coursework, and the application of such to the

classroom environment. Clearly, the teachers made the most of this investment, as

I also observed during my visits to the centers: Upon receipt of the center-

funding, there were stark contrasts in classroom environments. Teachers who

were study participants had designated learning centers with materials for

different theme-based play activities, in comparison to the other classrooms that

had little to offer in the way of engaging dramatic play centers or other

manipulatives.

### Career Path Influences

Research Question 2 dealt with the impact focused professional

development had on teachers' career path choices. To obtain the answer to this

question as well as demographic information and perspectives of professional

development, ECE, and the focused PD project, I utilized a questionnaire (see

Appendix B). The second source of data was the 90-minute individual interview

conducted with each of the participants. Finally, a third data source was obtained

through the focus group interview session. All three data sources were used to

answer Research Questions 2 and 3.

**Default into the Field**

Fourteen out of 15 women reported in the questionnaire I created that they

did not plan to work in the field of ECE and when I shared this finding with the

teachers in the focus group and during the member check process, they expressed

surprise at this result, as most of them have been working in the field between 5-

15 years. Many just happened to locate a job in early childhood through a friend,

a neighbor, or a parent, and at the age of 16 many become employed and then

never left. They found that the blend of their interactions with the children in their

classroom were similar to that of caring for their own children, and the hours were

flexible enough to provide the opportunity to maintain the primary role of

caregiver and also be paid to work with the children in the early childhood

program. Some of the participants described how they came to work in the field

of ECE this way:

> My mom worked at this very center and I would come to the center
>
> with her and then as I got older I would volunteer at the center. I
>
> even did my internships in the preschool room and I fell in love
>
> with it – I never worked in a day care.

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My mom started working here first and once I turned 18 I wanted a chance to work at the same center. So I began by volunteering and then I was hired on the day I turned 18.

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My mom was working at a child care center and I had just come back from attending college in a city outside of the Phoenix and my mom told me I needed to find a job. One day I was sleeping and my mom called and said, "Guess what? I found you a job!" I have been here five years.

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My nieces and nephews attend this preschool and that's how I found out about it and I applied.

---

I was between jobs and the opportunity presented itself. I was going through job searches and the lady said, Well have you ever considered child care?" I'm like, "Well?" She goes, "With the education that you have right now," because all I had was a high school education, she said, "this might be a good place for you to try. She asked if I like kids and I said, "Yeah, I love kids."

**Experience**

The majority of the participants had worked with a variety of age groups of children: Eighty percent had worked with two- to three-year-olds, 73% had worked with four-year olds, and 66% had worked with five-year-olds. The

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median total number of years of experience in an early childhood program was eight years, and the median of years worked in their current center was five. The median years each teacher had worked in the assigned classroom of intervention was two-years. Table 3 provides an overview of the participants.

Table 3

*Participant Demographics*

| Site | Participant | Age Range | Race/ Ethnicity | Highest Education Completed | | | | |
|------|-------------|-----------|-----------------|-------------|------------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| | | | | High school | Some 2-year college | Child Development Associate Certificate | Associate's Degree of Art/Science | Some 4-year college |
| 1 | 1 | 30s | EA | | X | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 20s | AA | | | | | X |
| 1 | 3 | 30s | AA | | X | | | |
| 2 | 4 | 40s | EA | | X | | | |
| 2 | 5 | 20s | EA | | | | | X |
| 3 | 6 | 20s | EA | | X | | | |
| 3 | 7 | 30s | EA | X | | | | |
| 4 | 8 | 40s | EA | | X | | | |
| 4 | 9 | 40s | EA | | X | | | |
| 5 | 10 | 50s | EA | | X | X | | |
| 5 | 11 | 30s | L | | | | X | |
| 6 | 12 | 20s | EA | | | | X | |
| 6 | 13 | 20s | L | | X | | | |
| 7 | 14 | 20s | EA | | X | | | |
| 7 | 15 | 40s | EA | | | X | X | |

*Note*. AA = African American; EA = European American; L = Latina.

## College Coursework

Fourteen of the 15 teachers had some experience with college coursework, with three of the teachers indicating they had achieved an Associate of Arts degree in a field of study other than early childhood. This finding was unexpected, as the majority of the teachers had been working in this field for almost a decade and had opportunities to attend various conferences, workshops,

and attain certification, such as the Child Development Associate Certificate. Nonetheless, 12 of the 15 teachers had not completed enough college courses to attain a degree. When questioned about their interest in college coursework, 14 teachers could not say with any degree of accuracy how many college credits they currently held. In addition, of the 14 teachers who expressed an interest in continuing with college coursework, 10 teachers did not identify ECE as the degree they would pursue.

## Professional Development

The teachers participated in PD hours totaling more than one week per year (40+ hours). For the year-long focused PD project ($n = 15$), 13 responded that the project was very effective in improving their teaching skills, one responded that it was somewhat effective, and another provided no response. The teachers responded similarly when asked to rank the helpfulness of this project in transferring new knowledge to classroom teaching. The teachers' transfer of skill, as measured by the ECERS and ITERS, again reinforced the positive impact of the project's intervention.

The teachers were asked to define *professional development*. Below are samples of quotes representative of their responses, and Appendix L contains a more complete listing of the participants' comments.

> Continued growth in an area of expertise. There is always room to grow and learn new strategies.

---

Training and education in your chosen field that will enable you to do your job more effectively.

---

Anything that helps me to improve my work performance.

---

Building on the skills I have and gaining new skills. How to become a better teacher and co-worker.

Fourteen teachers affirmatively replied that they had an interest in PD, with one teacher providing no response. The top four reasons listed for their interest in PD were knowledge and skills (14 of 15 participants), change the learning environment in your classroom (14 of 15), improve the learning activities for children in your room (13 of 15), and participate in a quality improvement program (10 of 15).

Although the teachers acknowledged specific reasons as to why they were interested in participating in PD, the majority of responses reflected a perception of *enhancement* to their current teaching practice versus the acquisition of new knowledge that may require different thinking, different actions, and pursuit of a higher education degree. Their stated interest in participating in a PD project was to "improve the learning activities for children in their room." They expressed a desire to use best practices for teaching the children and were excited about the prospect of having access to a coach who would work with them on applying the new knowledge in their classroom environments, but they did not focus on gaining additional college credits for pursuit of a college degree.

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The participants in this study had engaged with the United Way PD project the previous year. One of the goals of this project was to encourage the teachers to continue their educational careers. When asked to rate statements about the need for college coursework, the majority of participants responded that they strongly agreed with the statement "I think that I need college coursework to be a teacher of children birth to five" (11 of 15 participants). The majority strongly disagreed with the statement "I fear that I would not teach the children what they need to know to do well in kindergarten" (10 of 15 participants).

The teachers also shared their own inward conflicts of the need for education. 11 teachers strongly agreed that they needed college coursework, yet 10 of the teachers responded that did not fear they would not prepare the children well for kindergarten. These teachers appeared to have confidence in their current qualifications to prepare a child for school success. Findings were also inconsistent when compared to the teachers' interview comments. During the individual interview, I asked "Do you think that anyone working in early childhood should have a degree in early childhood? Or do you think there's an opportunity for experience to still be enough?" The teachers responded with such comments as,

> I think they have to have both a little bit of education and a little bit of experience. If they don't have the education, I think it would be nice if they can get it. I think that because everybody deserves a chance.

Sooner or later they're [teachers] are gonna have to have CDA's

and I don't wanna come down that road and not have the education

that I need to keep my job.

---

I don't think it's necessary – I think it's beneficial, but I don't

think it's necessary. You don't have to have a degree that's just

something that you individually might like to have, but as long as

you're – I don't know I feel like as long as you're continuing going

to workshops and stuff like that.

During the focus group, a conversation occurred around the use of the

term *teacher* to identify their role and responsibilities in the classroom. During

this discussion they openly discussed that many of them did not have a degree in

education, but they clearly believed they were a *teacher*. They identified their

experience, education (albeit minimal), observation of adults caring for children,

and an extension of mothering as the basis for their current level of knowledge.

Not one of the eight teachers present at the focus group questioned the

appropriateness of using the term *teacher*, despite the fact that none of the group

attendees had a degree that qualified them to teach.

Although the teachers' responses on the questionnaire suggest they felt

that college coursework is important, their responses were contradictory to the

interview comments. This may have resulted because the field of ECE is currently

placing a great deal of emphasis on teachers having a college degree earning and

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education, and the teachers may have been responding in a politically correct fashion.

One of the desired outcomes of the United Way PD project was to create an environment with the appropriate mix of resources that would have instilled in the teacher the desire to continue increasing her level of knowledge, ultimately a college degree. Although the teachers professed their thoughts of the value of college coursework, ultimately they did not continue to pursue a college degree.

## Factors Influencing Degree Attainment

Research regarding minority women's attitudes toward earning degrees often describes the following factors as inhibiting individuals from seeking or completing degrees: confidence in academic abilities, academic skills, family support, financial constraints, transportation issues, time and family obligations. To determine whether and how these factors affected the participants in this study, I utilized responses to the questionnaire, the individual interview, and the focus group interview session. The questionnaire responses clearly demonstrated that the teachers strongly preferred college coursework over other forms of PD (see Tables 4 and 5), when they were asked to rate the following types of PD from the least to the most effective for you to achieve the goal of doing a good job of teaching children in your care.

Table 4

*Participants' Ranked Choices of Professional Development Modalities*

| Modality | First Choice | Second Choice | Third Choice |
|---|---|---|---|
| College coursework | 7 | 3 | 3 |
| Workshop | 4 | 9 | 0 |
| Conference | 3 | 0 | 10 |

*Note*. Two participants chose not to respond to this item.


Table 5

*Participants' Preference of Delivery of Professional Development*

| Item | Strongly disagree | Neutral | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|
| I do not like to take workshops[a] | 7 | 4 | 0 |
| I do not like to take college courses | 13 | 2 | 0 |

[a]Four participants chose not to respond to this item.


The teachers identified their preferred model of PD to be college coursework, yet the majority of the teachers had minimal college credits. Even when college courses were selected, they did not necessarily have an Early Childhood focus. The apparent contradiction between selection and participation could be due to the participants' top-ranked two barriers – cost and time.

Table 6 demonstrates that the teachers reported having confidence in their abilities to successfully complete college coursework and their desire to do so. The responses reflected a desire to enroll in college coursework. Numerous variables affected their ability to participate in this form of PD; however lack of family and spouse support was not a factor for these teachers (see Table 7).

Table 6

*Participants' Perception about Focused Professional Development*

| Item | Strongly disagree | Neutral | Strongly agree | No response |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Prior to the H/V Professional Development Project I did not have the confidence to take college courses to improve my skills in early childhood education. | 12 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| After participating in the H/V Professional Development Project I think I have the ability to take college courses to improve my skills in early childhood education. | 0 | 1 | 13 | 1 |
| After participating in the H/V Professional Development Project I have the confidence to take college courses to improve my skills in early childhood education. | 1 | 4 | 9 | 1 |
| I have no desire to continue taking college coursework. | 11 | 0 | 1 | 3 |

Table 7

*Possible Barriers to Participation and Continuation of College Coursework*

| Item | Strongly disagree | Neutral | Strongly agree | No response |
|------|-------------------|---------|----------------|-------------|
| I do not have the support of my family to take college courses to improve my skills in early childhood education. | 12 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| I think my husband, partner, boyfriend, etc., wants me to take college courses to improve my skills in early childhood education. | 2 | 3 | 8 | 2 |

The comments the teachers shared during their interviews also echoed their

responses on the questionnaire:

My family strongly urges me to continue education.

I have a strong support system, just no financial support.

When I was married, my husband influenced me a lot. He was

supportive in the beginning, but toward the end he wasn't.

That's something I wanna do for myself, and nobody can ever

change my attitude about that ever.

I had hypothesized that issues of domination, subjugation, and power

emanating from the teacher's family (e.g., parent[s], boyfriend, partner, husband,

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children) would be a primary reason as to why teachers did not enroll in or complete college coursework even when made available to them in a focused PD project, but the data did not support this premise. Instead, the issues that most appeared to frustrate the teachers' efforts were finances, family obligations, and career options.

Table 8

*Barriers That Would Prevent College Attendance*

| Barrier | Ranking | Number of Respondents |
|---|---|---|
| Cost | 1 | 13 |
| Time | 2 | 6 |
| Transportation | 3 | 2 |

**Finances**

When I asked teachers to rate the items that inhibited their ability to complete a college degree, they identified cost, time, and transportation as their top three concerns (see Table 8). These scores are further reflected in many of the comments made by the teacher during the one-on-one interview:

Mortgage, finances.

_____

Expense of having children.

_____

Existing loans that may not be in good standing.

_____

The responsibility of taking out loans.

_____

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Do not know how I was gonna pay for classes. I did not know how to go about doing scholarships or anything.

The coach's view about barriers to college coursework included the fact that through PD projects, teachers are encouraged to give of their time and finances to take a college course, at the end they have received very little as a reward more than the individual satisfaction of having a college degree. Most often, there is no change in their job description, no public recognition of the achievement, and minimal, if any, salary increase.

**Family Obligations**

Another theme that emerged as a barrier to pursuing more education was that of family demands and obligation – that only hints at the complexities of life that may prevent a working mother from being able to complete career goals. Teachers commented,

Life. We got kids. Time and effort.

---

I don't really have an interest in going right now until my son gets older.

---

My parents weren't willing to watch my son as much as I needed them to.

---

I mean it's the timeliness with kids and money. Even though the classes on are online, I have to get the kids down and that's around

10:00 and do I really want to start my class at that time and then

get up at 5:00 and start the whole thing over again?

The instructors from the IHE agreed that family life had a negative impact on

some of the teachers' success in taking a course:

They are full-time working people.

---

Some didn't have the support of their families.

---

Some didn't get support from their programs.

---

There really is a disconnect about what this is ultimately going to

do for them if they invest the time?

**Career Options**

The last theme is much more complicated and required the support of the

coach to help to articulate. A majority of the teachers in this study were teaching

in the preschools because it allowed them to use their current job skills and

education requirements to fulfill the job expectations. The teachers were currently

earning a low wage and often received a great deal of disrespect from the owners;

thus, they were apprehensive about completing an education degree. College

degrees may represent other careers options a greater wage and more respect. The

coach commented,

A lot of them [teachers] said they liked what they did, but they

wouldn't necessarily get college coursework or put that effort in

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because they'd want to make a transition to a better wage if they did so.

## Teaching as Mothering

Another way to interpret their response may be by casting teaching children birth to age five as *mothering*. The qualitative data obtained in the individual teacher interviews supported the coach's views that the teachers are working at a job where their qualifications meet the job descriptions qualifications for the position. Qualifications also meet the Arizona Department of Health Services Child Care Licensing Rules, which define a teacher-caregiver in an early childhood classroom as 18 years of age or older and possessing a high school or high school equivalency diploma and six months child care experience (ADHS, Administrative Code and AZ Revised Statutes, Section 9-5-401). Clearly, the teachers in the study felt their life experiences were adequate to prepare them for their role of teacher. From the individual interviews the following was shared:

> I learned by watching and seeing and doing – I learned by imitation.

---

> I think my life experiences through my life and my training comes more into play.

---

> I brought in what my mom showed me and what I learned from school and I also learned here [at center] to because I never worked

in a day care before. I was actually learning as I go and pickin' up things too from my mom.

---

Observation through women in my family and my sisters. I would babysit a lot. So I just think helping them out, being with them, understanding them and showing them things, learning, that's where I learned it.

The statements made by the teachers further suggested that they did not separate mothering from teaching as they brought many of their interactions and experiences from family life into their current position as a teacher in an early childhood classroom. When asked specifically whether they felt the two were different they replied,

No – I don't think so. To be a good parent, you have to be open to teaching your children about everything.

---

No, I think they're the same thing, because I can be a mother and I can be a teacher here, but I'm still a teacher at home.

---

They are similar. Because you still have to teach your child. I still feel like I'm teaching when I'm at home.

The subject of care was closely aligned to the teachers' responses related to mothering and nurturing. The responses below indicate that the teachers felt that teaching was embedded into their actions and interactions of caring. Again,

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the three actions of teaching, nurturing, and caring aligned closely to their beliefs and description of mothering. I asked teachers how they would describe what they did for children: Caring? Teaching? Both? The teachers replied,

> I think it's both. I think caring and teaching because – I think because of where I'm from. I just have a habit of being a mothering-type spirit toward the kids. I feel like any interaction that I have with them is a teaching experience.

---

> I think caring just goes hand-in-hand with that. When you care about what's going on in your kid's life and when you care about what's going on in the world, then you care about teaching your kids about that.

---

> I do both. I give them a caring environment so they feel comfortable coming to the center. I'd say I teach, too, because I'm teaching them like social skills, like interacting, like being a good role model, interacting with their parents, interacting with other staff members in appropriate ways, so they know, and just teach them like problem solving and just how to interact with other people.

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> I think it's the same. They learn love and affection. If you don't teach that to kids when they're babies, if you don't give it to them,

they don't know how to give it someone else. If you don't teach them how to play in that time before they turn one, they don't learn that. It's all together for me.

---

It's more care and nurturing, but you can also teach them things while you're doing it. You don't realize you're teaching them things, but you do.

---

I don't think one can go without the other, because they need the nurturing, and then later they need the educating, so I think they need both.

---

It has to be together. It always has to be together because you want – even if they're young, you have to teach them something, you know?

---

Caring and nurturing is very important, but when you come to like children and you know that they're supposed – not suppose to be learning something but they do need to know to a certain extent, I think it pretty much balances each other out because they need ....
They need the care and the nurture, but they also need to learn. I do

both. I teach them, but they're also getting the nurturing they need also.

---

Now, I think you need to educate them. Before, I wouldn't have thought that. Now, I see that they're learning. Even when they're not learning, they're learning.

---

No, they're pretty much equal because you need both of them.

Hays (1996) described similar responses from the mothers she interviewed:

> Mothers frequently refer to the use of common sense and intuition in raising children – as if no special knowledge were required and as if many of their practices were grounded in some biological instinct, although there is a sense of naturalness connected to such terms, there are many good reasons to believe that mothers are actually referring to learned behaviors. After all, common sense is clearly connected to ideas developed in interaction with other people, and intuition often refers to socially acquired ideas and beliefs that are so deeply held as to seem natural. It is therefore difficult to distinguish a "mother's intuition" from ideas arising from a woman's social roles, a woman's upbringing, and the culture of motherhood. (Hays, 1996, p. 72)

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Mothers use a wide variety of sources on how to raise children. They develop their interpretations based on social circumstances, including both their past and present social positions and cultural background. In sorting through advice, mothers are actively implementing their ideology as is relates to childrearing. This process means that every mother's knowledge of mothering is somewhat unique and idiosyncratic.

The view that mothering can be seen as a series of natural skills, some of which may be learned behavior and constructed through social experiences, and can be extrapolated to the role each of the women participants had as a teacher in an early childhood center. As previously stated, the teacher applied for and accepted a teacher position at the early childhood center. Her qualifications at the time of hire met Arizona Department of Health Licensing Standards and the specifications unique to each center's job description. Her view of her own qualifications, come from her observations of care, nurture, and child rearing as observed in family situations and if a mother her own ideals of raising a child. Thus, earning a college degree to accomplish the goal of becoming a teacher did not appear to motivate the teachers in this study.

## CHAPTER 5

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The majority of teacher PD research is focused on teachers in the K-12 system and the impact of such drifts into the field of early childhood. Kim and Reifel (2010) found that research on teachers' beliefs and thoughts about their practices provided few insights into how teachers perceive gender, because these studies focus mainly on teachers' pedagogical teaching practices (p. 230). Similarly, "the educators who draw upon feminist theories to guide their practice are generally those who work with adult learners" (Goldstein, 1993, p. 1). In addition, little attention has been given to the needs of paid child care providers, the majority of whom are working mothers themselves in need of quality care for their own children, as well as a living wage to support themselves and their families (Tuominen, 2003 p. 13).

A variety of values and ideologies permeates the field of ECE. As in other areas of caring work, a feminized, nurturing ideal dominates official discourses about child care (Colley, 2006, p. 20). We

> enshrine the ideal in measures of quality that are widely used in child care of which personal characteristics of the teacher are included, creating a norm for the kind of person the teacher has to be or to become to succeed in child care .... The emphasis on the traits of warmth, supportive and trusting relationships, and on the emotional development of the child alongside their individual

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attributes, suggest that the deployment of emotion by the teacher

herself is a key part of the job. (Colley, 2006, p. 20)

Values attached to the view that for women the care of children "must be a natural thing, inborn and instinctive – or so the belief goes, with no perceived need for investment in education, training, and skill development" have contributed to the devaluing of the professional attributes demonstrated by the women teachers caring for children, birth to five (Nelson, 2001, p. 5).

The recognition of the important role early childhood teachers play in children's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development has recently become more visible in national policy and funding initiatives. Funding opportunities from the federal and local governments, philanthropies, and other non-profit organizations have focused on improvement of the educational status of teachers in early childhood classrooms. Such initiatives seek to improve the quality of the early childhood classroom and include varying delivery methods of PD opportunities for the teacher, such as on-site workshops, improved access to college coursework, and the placement of a coach into the classroom to assist the teacher with the transfer of new knowledge into classroom application.

These interventions cannot be accomplished without funding for implementation; therefore, philanthropy has a major role in guiding public discourse around what types of PD interventions have an impact and what methods have only shown minimal impact through their choice of programs to be funded. Philanthropic organizations, whose funding portfolio includes the PD of early childhood teachers, are interested in seeing whether their investments have

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contributed to the increased quality of the learning environment for the child and whether their funding has influenced the career-path options of the participating early childhood teachers. With this study, I sought to examine whether specific PD interventions funded by Arizona philanthropic organizations positively influenced the classroom practices or encouraged formative career path changes of 15 early childhood teachers. In addition, I explored beliefs and attitudes that influenced teachers' motivation to undertake college coursework.

## Summary of the Major Findings

The 15 women teachers purposefully preselected for this study were all unique in experience, conversant ability, family situations, personalities, and approaches to teaching; however, they shared a common characteristic – they believed that they possessed the qualifications to work with children birth to five. In addition, they recognized the importance of their jobs – which was to provide children with the foundational skills that would allow them to be successful in future schooling.

### Women's Perceptions of their Work in an Early Childhood Classroom

The 15 teachers who work in the seven centers, many of which are located in communities of high crime and few resources, expressed a strong positive sense of self-worth in relation to their responsibilities and roles as a teacher for children aged birth to five. They perceived themselves as professionals and had a genuine interest in learning more about the field in which they work. All with the exception of one individual openly identifies themselves as a teacher either

through the title they use to describe their role in the classroom or by the activities they prepare and share with the children in their classroom.

The coach observed that the teachers' expectations of what the children were capable of doing at different ages impacted their classroom activities. "It really was something I had to figure out, especially for the younger age groups." The Coach often had to guide teacher's choices of activities to make the activities more developmentally appropriate for younger children. Further the teachers that had children of their own oft times expected more, academically and behaviorally, from the children than the teachers who did not have children. The application of their own parenting style informed their classroom teaching practices.

**Impact of the Focused Professional Development Project on Classroom Practices**

To answer the first question "How did focused PD activities impact the classroom practices of center-based teachers?" the research compared the pre-and post-test scores of two ERSs, the ECERS –R and the ITERS-R. The findings strongly suggest that the cumulative interventions including coursework, coaching, and additional materials, had an impact in changing the classroom environments and the teacher's practices. But due to the lack of teacher choice and direct alignment to the coaching efforts in the classroom the college classes each teacher enrolled in were not identified as the major contributor of change. The coach through her relationship of trust with each teacher and through her strength based approach in guiding new teaching practices had in the teachers' own words the greatest impact: "Always there for you, helpful, and if you needed

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anything they would get if for you, I did not interact with any of the other project partners, I only called the coach. The coach relationship was the best part." Throughout all interviews and the focus group, the greatest impact on their teaching practices was through their interactions with the coach.

**Not a Chosen Profession**

The women shared that they had not intended to seek employment in the field of early childhood education, but through a set of circumstances, such as they knew a friend who mentioned a job opportunity, a parent was working at a child care center, or they were in need of a job and had minimal education and the suggestion was made to explore work at an early childhood center they accepted the position as a teacher of a classroom of young children. Here are some examples of their stories.

> I'm not exactly remembering how I got into child care. Now, I remember, I was working at Dairy Queen and my friend worked at another child care center and she was like, "We need some teachers." She said, "Come and apply for the job. I just turned 16 or 16 ½ so I was like okay, "Hey, I will work with my friend. That would be cool." Well then when I went there it was like the third day and I was all of a sudden alone in a class because the teacher called out. It was a little overwhelming, but not really as overwhelming as I thought. I just kind of did it. I clicked. I knew what I was doing, or what I was supposed to be doing. I wanted to work with my friend and then I loved it.

Another teacher participant expressed:

> Well the opportunity presented itself when I was in between jobs. I had worked at like another company as a receptionist. I was going through job searches and this lady said, "Well, have you ever considered child care?" I'm like, "Well…" She goes, "With the education that you have right now", because all I had was high school education. I had no college education. She said, "This might be a good place for you to try." She said, "Do you like kids?" I said, "Yeah, I love kids."

To answer Research Question 2 I synthesized three data sources – the questionnaire, the interview, and the focus group. This data revealed that the majority of the teachers entered the field and remained in the field by default. Many times the birth of their own children dictated the entry into the field as the desire to be with their own children as much as possible in addition to earning an income drew some of the women to their current employment. By the teachers' own accounts, they recognize that the qualifications for employment as a teacher for children birth to age five are minimal and do not require any form of precertification coursework or proficiency exam to be hired. Many of the teachers began working in an early childhood program in their teens and often this was their first job. As they grew older, everyday life activities that included friends, dating, marriage, finances, and children impacted their decisions to remain working as an early childhood teacher versus pursuing another profession. The identification of what they "wanted to be" in their life was a question that

produced long pauses during the interviews as the teacher appeared to be seriously thinking about her or his dreams and options for the first time. Many times the teachers said they had no plans, but if they were to change professions they would most likely remain in education, but work at a public school.

Another contradictory theme that emerged from the data and was also frequently observed by the coach, was that many of the teachers who had been working in an early childhood classroom for 10+ years said that they were not sure whether working with children birth to five was something they wanted to do, even though they had spent at least a decade working as an early childhood teacher. This coincided with the majority of teachers expressing a desire to improve their financial status. Another sentiment expressed was if they were going to pursue a college education they would want a degree that would pay them more than their current earnings, in other words why commit money, energy and time to earn a degree if the job you would get would pay you little more than your current hourly wage? The project Coach summarized this sentiment:

> I found it fascinating to have someone who'd been working at a program for 10 years and say, "Well, I'm just not really sure if this is what I want to do." Well, I think you're doing it! I think that part of it was that they had been doing it for a number of years and they were thinking, "If I'm going to invest time into education, why am I going to invest time and money into getting and education that's going to pay me the same thing I'm getting paid right now?"

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**Attitudes toward Professional Development**

The teacher's views of PD were often contradictory depending on the method of data collection. Survey responses showed that the majority of the teachers believed they need college coursework to be a teacher for children birth to five, yet few expressed concerns that they may not be able to teach the children what they needed to know to be successful in kindergarten. In fact their survey responses strongly indicated their sense of confidence in their teaching abilities. This theme carried through into the interviews with the majority of teachers responding that it is important to have a little bit of education along with experience. Again, although the teachers carried with them the recognition of the importance of teaching young children, the unspoken understanding was that they were hired with their current qualifications, which for most was college coursework, but no degree.

The times, venues, and modalities of PD offered to teachers accounts for limitations in participation and in sustainability. Flexibility is key to participation and if the participant feels successful with her attempt she is often encouraged to continue, but when projects are designed with the intent of meeting the teacher at her developmental and individual needs and for various reasons the design framework is unable to be delivered, the teacher expressed feelings of "I felt good until I tried and couldn't do it."

The United Way PD project that the teachers had participated in during 2009-2010, included an educational coach who was to meet with the teacher and chart out an educational pathway depicting completed college coursework to date,

desired goals and the identification of the necessary courses to meet those goals. Since the college coursework was delivered via an online university, the teachers completed an assessment of computer literacy. Interestingly very few of the teachers could recall neither what early childhood coursework they had taken in the past nor how many credits they held.

Although the college coursework was to have been individualized (based on prior coursework and age of the children with whom the teacher worked), the teachers described feeling rushed to enroll in a course only to be offered coursework that was not relevant to their age group of children. Program logistics were also problematic, course materials and texts were delivered weeks after the class had begun, and calls placed to the college were met with slow responses. High levels of frustration resulted in the teacher not completing the course or receiving a lower grade that impacted their sense of individual worth. The desire to deliver the tenants of the best practices for PD, based on individualized instruction collided with the reality of dealing with a large infrastructure of policies and procedures within the institution of higher education. Finally, the teacher's were enrolled in ECE coursework and some of the teacher's just did not want to take that type of coursework; their interests were in courses that would give them general education credits allowing them to pursue a degree in an area of a yet to be determined interest.

During the United Way PD project the teachers dealt with internal conflicts of implementing new knowledge and teaching pedagogy in the classroom. Changes made to the classroom structure and the elimination of

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"worksheets", in many centers, produced resistance from the directors and the parents. Parents and directors whose own visions of teaching children to be prepared for kindergarten included "papers" that show the child's work during the time spent at the center and homework that again provides the parents with documentation of the particular classroom teachings.

After the project had completed its cycle and the coach was no longer available, the teachers expressed feelings of vulnerability and uncertainty with the new changes to their classroom and with their newly developed teaching style. Concerns about how they could explain the differences in teaching practices to parents of the children in their classroom so that the parents would have some degree of confidence that their child was learning and would be prepared for kindergarten were frequently expressed by the teachers.

The interventions of the United Way PD project had a mixed impact on the teachers' likelihood of continuing with college courses. A number of teachers said they were interested in taking college courses, but until this project it had just been something they were thinking about and then with the opportunities made available to them through this project, such as funding for tuition, books, and incidentals they took advantage of it. From the teachers' responses in the survey their "confidence" and sense of individual "abilities" was not impacted negatively or positively as the majority of the teachers responded they felt they had the ability to take college courses prior to the project and they felt the same at the completion of the project. The same held true for the topic of "confidence", 12 teachers believed they had the confidence to take college courses prior to the

project and 9 teachers responded that after completing the project they had the confidence to take college courses, with 4 teachers not offering an opinion one way or the other.

Another teacher expressed that she was continuing with college courses, but her comments do not directly correlate to her participation in college classes during the project, but are more the result of her overall involvement with the project and in particular with the coach. She believed that she had changed as a individual, "I'm not the same individual I was at the beginning of this project, I see myself differently." "It doesn't matter if I have support from my husband I believe I can and I am continuing college classes. I want to get my AA and then go on to the university."

**Other Forms of Knowledge**

**Experience**. To answer Research Question 3 I again synthesized three data sources – the questionnaire, the interview, and the focus group. Although the teachers' preferred choice of PD opportunities was college coursework, their top three responses for barriers to attending college were cost, time, and transportation which differs from a study done by Early & Winton (2001) which identified "competing work or family related responsibilities as one of the biggest challenges to increasing the qualifications of Early Childhood Education Teachers" (p. 297). In addition, this study also found that the teachers' views about teaching/caring young children may have actually created the greatest obstacle to career growth. The teachers believed that the skills they brought with them to the job that essentially qualified them to work in a classroom of young

children and function in the role of teacher included experience, time, and education. Although the teachers acknowledge the importance of both education and experience their sense of what was more important fell to experience. The teachers believe that education is important but from their prior experiences they have not seen how the college classes had directly benefited their work in the classroom. They had participated in many PD workshops and it had not helped them change their environment or modify their practice. Additional education also placed an undue burden of guilt on the teachers – in other words teachers had been given the knowledge to know what would be beneficial to the child, but oft times the resources for her classroom are not concomitantly available. The choice the teachers then faced is to forego implementing the teaching practices she had just learned, leave her present center, or leave the field of ECE. Based on those options the teachers focused on what they felt they do well --- to provide a sense of stability to the child's world by remaining at the center, and connecting to the child through the caregiving qualities they have observed in their extended family and in the nurturing and mothering of their own children.

The knowledge gained through experience varied for each teacher, some shared they learned through observation of their mothers' interactions with siblings, their aunts with their cousins, through babysitting or being the caregiver for younger siblings. Others shared they brought with them the knowledge and skills they used with their own children and others shared they learned from working with other teachers, "listening to your heart, it's listening and looking to the children." Teachers also viewed longevity in the field as producing a type of

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learning that was valuable to the teacher in recognizing the needs of individual children and attempting to customize the learning activities to engage all the children in her classroom.

Many expressed feelings that education alone did not make you knowledgeable but for that to occur you needed to understand how to apply it in your classroom environment.

**Mothering**. The teacher's responses in this study aligned to beliefs shared by women in a research study conducted by Sharon Hays in 1996. Ms. Hays interviewed 20 women on the topic of mothering and compiled the data gathered by that study into an analysis of mothering as a historical construct. Hays (1996) states, "while women share a common understanding of appropriate child rearing, the ideas of such can be understood as a combination of three elements all interfering with a woman and her job" (p. 8). The three elements articulated by Hays (1996) are in "contradiction to the ideology of the workplace and the dominant ethos of modern society" (pp. 6-8) and include: (a) the mother as the central caregiver, (b) the mother must put her child's needs above her own; and finally (c) that a comparison of her paid work and her childrearing activities is ludicrous" (Hays, 1996, p. 8). The early childhood teachers identify themselves as the caregiver, believing that they qualify for their current position as they have brought skills learned through the observation of family members caring for children and through the raising of their own children; that she must not take time to pursue her own career interests until her children have grown and that she is willing to work, long term 10+ years at a job that pays around $10.00 per hour.

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The contradictions faced by mothers are, according to Hays (1996), all related to a

> larger contradiction in society as a whole, the strength of the ideology of intensive, nurturing, moral motherhood is in tension with what social theorists such as Weber, Marx, and Engels have identified as the central trends in modern Western culture .... These societal values are the efficient, impersonal, competitive pursuit of self-interested gain above all else. (Hays, 1996, p. 10)

Many feminists, according to Hays (1996), agree as they portray the contemporary family as one in which members calculate the efficiency of various family strategies and compete among themselves for power and materials resources" (p. 11).

The teachers' sense of self that qualified them to work in this profession came from the knowledge gained through observation of their own parents, of other women caregivers such as their aunts, friends, siblings, and through the skills used with their own children. Teachers expressed an understanding of mother and teacher to be similar if not the same versus separate and unique in their defining qualities.

**Caring/Nurturing**. It was difficult for the teachers to separate caring from teaching and when that occurred descriptions of being *a mothering-type spirit* were applied to those types of interactions with the children. Teaching was also intertwined in the teacher's explanations of caring and nurturing with the description of any interaction with the child constituting a teaching moment. It

was difficult for the teacher to separate these elements as most felt that care, nurturing and teaching were one – "if you do not teach the children about love and affection they do not know how to give it to someone else – it 's all together."

Some of the teachers were able to separate care from teaching but that was based on the age of the child, recognizing the need for more adult intervention at a younger age and allowing the older child to explore more on their own which for the teacher meant less caring and more teaching. In addition, the element of time played a role, if the child was at the center for a full day; the teacher implicitly recognized that her interactions with the child varied depending on the activity, the child's mood, and time of day.

The teachers' actions with the children in their care moved beyond what Noddings (1984) described as *ethical caring*, even though their employment is one of caregiving. Their desire to be there for the child is born out of *I want* versus *I must* and aligns to the attributes Noddings has equated to natural caring. The teachers in the role as the one-caring are part of the circle of caring. When they (i.e., caregivers) care for the children (i.e., the cared-for) they report that they are rewarded with reciprocation from the children, fulfilling the circle of caring and receiving care. This in and of itself may offset some of the challenges of being paid a low hourly wage along with working in a setting by offering a sense of emotional fulfillment and satisfaction for the teacher.

**Teacher**. "I am a teacher now, but if I got my degree I really want to go into actually being at an elementary school as an actual teacher …" (ECE teacher participant). With the exception of one teacher, 14 of the 15 teachers called

themselves *teacher* and truly believed that they were teaching the children without much association to the title of teacher usually used in the context of an individual who has attended a college and graduated with a degree in education and subsequently passed assessments that culminated in their receipt of a teaching certificate. The teachers felt they were the child's teacher because they were teaching the children skills, they spent the most time with the child, and simply they were the teacher.

Uncoupling teaching from that of mothering is difficult for the teachers and that is also demonstrated by mothers when choosing a caregiver for their children. These same thought processes are shared and implemented by the teachers when providing care to children each day. For instance,

> mothers do not want the environment to be overwhelming with too much activity or too big, but they also do not want the content to be boring. Connected to this is the issue of the proper attributes of the paid caregiver with mothers looking for someone who feels comfortable, enjoys what she's doing, who is upbeat, who really likes kids, who would not try to quash the kids' spirit, and of course it is crucial that the caregiver be a loving nurturer. (Hays, 1996, p. 119)

This way of making choices about the appropriate learning environment is easily transferrable to the teachers views of how they relate to the children as the majority of the teachers' shared that their knowledge came from observing other

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mothers and their shared understanding of their own style of parenting with their children.

**Learnings**

> There is so much talk about related to coaching and mentoring and I still do not know the difference between those two words. I think we have so much to learn about it, but when there is so much riding on the evaluation of the job it's hard to have those kinds of honest dialogues. This project felt like we could. It felt like we were really going to say what really works and what doesn't work when we're trying to support individuals with their thinking. It also felt different for me. It might have been my own naiveté where I did not feel like there was going to be whole lot of judgment on the project in term of how much they move on these scales. I did not pay a whole lot of attention to that. (Coach participant)

The women perceived that they were qualified for the position as teacher when they were hired. The fact they did not possess a degree did not deter them from applying for child care positions because they met the state licensing qualifications and the qualification of the position described in the job posting.

Although the teachers' questionnaire responses acknowledged the importance of education, they did not share those same values and views during the interview. When this topic was raised with one of the teachers during member check, she offered the following explanation.

I think the teachers know what the public wants them to say and when answering a questionnaire the choices are in black and white and they seem so permanent, but when you are just talking and you are comfortable and are just sharing your views, the real way a individual thinks comes out as more honest.

Offering PD to the teacher does not match the teacher's beliefs and attitudes of what is doing – a form of mothering, not bonding, but caring, nurturing, and teaching the child. To accomplish this she brings with her the tools of the trade gained through observation and caring activities, such as babysitting or raising one's own child.

If PD is going to be successful the program needs to meet the teacher on her terms, terms including her values and perceptions of her vocation and by continuing to emphasize academic content almost to the exclusion of any coursework that includes the continuing thread of caring, mothering, and nurturing, the teacher perceives she is devalued and immediately disengages from the new learning opportunity. In this study the coach found that it was important to approach the teacher from a position of strength, asking the teacher to identify areas of interest instead of telling the teacher what to do to improve. This helped the teacher realize she had something to offer and that her voice had value. The coach did not make the teachers prove something to her first. "I went in there with the attitude of how can I best support them. I tried to meet the teachers individually and do my work differently for each individual."

The purpose of the use of the ERSs, the ECERS- R and the ITERS-R in
this project was to illustrate whether or not the quality of the early childhood
learning environment shifted due to the PD interventions of the project; however,
the use of the tools created a challenge when attempting to align the tools with the
goals of the United Way PD project.

> "It sometimes felt like we had put in place these tools that did not
> necessarily align nor show the goals that were written in the
> program in terms of professional development, for instance the
> connection between what the teachers were taking in coursework
> and what was happening in the classroom. Some of the early
> childhood teachers never asked to see the results of their pre-
> assessment, it was beyond what they thought was important. They
> were interested in having support to improve the teaching practices
> they self-identified as important to them. (Coach participant)

The United Way PD project was designed to engage the teacher in college
courses relevant to the age of children in her classroom and to provide coaching
support directly in the classroom that would assist the teacher in applying the new
knowledge. The outcome was that many of the teachers just ended up taking early
childhood classes that they had not taken before versus classes that correlated to
their concerns about a specific teaching practice or activity for their classrooms.
This seemed to occur due to the desire to have the teachers on a degree tract
instead of placing them in the courses they expressed interest in taking. "I wasn't
sure that some of the teachers really knew for sure that they wanted to take

college credits and struggled with that" (coach). There was only one PD option made available to the teacher in the project. There was no degree of flexibility, built in to meet the teacher at her level of interest. The limited availability of PD options was as a direct result of the major goal of the project which was to assess if a specific set of PD interventions resulted in increasing the teachers' interest in enrolling in college courses and in continuing with college courses after the PD cycle was completed.

**Unexpected Outcome**

During the conversations with the women they expressed an unexpected outcome gained through experience with this project and in particular through the interactions and time spent with the coach. The support and encouragement they received from the coach contributed to improved self-esteem. They shared comments about their sense of self-worth which has given them the confidence to take more classes, or to not internalized abusive and condescending comments made by their center directors or owners, "It's like we're poo on a shoe and now it's like, whatever, I know I'm better than that. Take it or leave it."

**Lessons Learned: Recommendations for Future Study**

Findings from this study have created a space to have discussions about the delivery model for ECE teacher PD both at the pre-service and in-service level.

In addition, the findings suggest that there is a need/opportunity to consider the women's views about mothering and to better understand how their

views can be integrated into PD to empower women ECE teachers and to encourage their continued participation in college coursework.

The side effect of a lack of sustainable PD places early childhood practitioners working in the field in a position of vulnerability. The basic delivery format of the focused PD project implied that through the year-long intervention of coursework and coaching that the teachers would be able to sustain the new teaching practices following the completion of the project. The reality is that the project interventions were not long enough in time to provide the teacher with the confidence, resources, and program support to cause her to not revert to her prior teaching practices and activities.

*New discourse in the ECE field needs to occur around the constructs of teacher, mother, and childhood that acknowledge the value of what the women bring to the classroom in the way of skills they have gained through their observations of caregiving and mothering*. For ECE teachers to examine their own parenting beliefs and understand how parenting influences their teaching practices, reflection has to happen at the program delivery level. As service providers we need to explore our own beliefs about the value of parenting and the role of mothering and its appropriateness in influencing the teachers' beliefs of their teaching pedagogy and development of their classroom learning activities. To honor the women teachers, we need to reflectively examine our own beliefs and challenge ourselves to include the value of mothering in our teaching and offering of PD to the teachers in the field of ECE.

We cannot continue to offer PD without including mothering. We need to have an awareness of how the teachers' use mothering to relate to children. If we do not acknowledge the strong connection the women teachers have to their skills of mothering we will continue to deliver PD that does not fully resonate with the teachers and leads to limited sustainability, in addition, we are implying that their teaching practices and their own parenting skills are not of value, which in essence calls to question the teachers own self worth.

*Create new ECE curriculums*. The community-based organizations that deliver PD and the institutions of higher education that provide ECE courses to the pre-service student need to approach the women without judgment of their preconceived values of their qualifications and attributes related to mothering. Courses focused on mothering, care/nurturing need to be included in the ECE curriculums.

*Professional development projects need to be longer in implementation*. In the program design we implied to program owners, directors, and teachers that within this year-long period of time there would be sustainable change. In this timeframe we are trying to influence deeply engrained and previously unquestioned teaching practices and the reality is that a year is not long enough to develop the trusting relationships need to address the complicated issues and to implement strategic steps to change.

Quality improvement efforts tend to heavily focus on the teaching practices to the exclusion of the owners responsibility for providing support and resources for the ongoing application of the newly learned strategies. Without the

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owner, director valuing the new PD efforts, the lack of resources will result in a return to prior teaching practices and limited sustainability.

*More time with the coach. Coach did NOT follow the PD script, but customized to honor the teachers, individualized interventions, allowed the teachers to self-select and build trust/relationships*. Often, professional development programs have restricted amounts of time for coaching defined in the program design. This project allowed the coach the flexibility to assess each teacher individually and to provide the amount of classroom support based on her observations and teachable moments.

Coach did not feel constrained by the program design or that she was required to reduce her interactions with the teachers to a sequence of action steps, instead she allowed the teacher to self-reflect and built her coaching interventions upon her observations and the teacher's described needs.

*Adopt a strengths-based approach*. The coach approached each teacher in the classroom and through her interactions with the teacher identified the genuine strengths of her teaching practices. The teacher self-identified her concerns, and collaboratively the coach and teacher examined those concerns, and developed options to improve the teaching practice.

In most instances the teacher self-identified the areas highlighted in the ERS that needed improvement without having to report any shortcomings from their assessment at the initial meeting of the coach and teacher.

*Survey and interviews are showing that the women say what would be expected regarding college courses, teacher knowledge and pedagogy, but their*

*shared perspective of their own abilities were biologically essentialized* (Kim &

Reifel, 2010, p. 229). The women's responses on paper reflected the acceptable

views espoused by the educational community. To be a teacher you need a four-

year degree, but in their interviews the women did not hesitate to share their belief

that they were qualified to do this job and to do it well, because of their

observations and experiences of the skills and interactions attached to *mothering*.

A disconnect exists – the IHE claims it did what it set out to do: offer

individualized instruction to the students; students, however, did not *hear* the

offer of individualized instruction nor do they believe they received it.

**Conclusion**

I had preconceived notions of how women thought of themselves in the

role of teacher and as to why they did not continue with PD once a PD project

finished. The women did not confirm my beliefs and instead turned it upside

down. They do not see themselves as offering less than any other teacher, they

acknowledge the importance of knowledge and college courses, but they

essentially see themselves as qualified for the work they are doing, because they

bring with them skills of mothering, including care, nurturing, and teaching, all

gained through observation of their family, family members, care for other

children, and through on the job experience. Through their responses they have

demonstrated that they are resilient and determined to be there for the children

even though they openly shared their experiences of lack of appreciation within

their own centers and at times comments and actions that were abusive.

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The women's lack of interpreting or viewing how they are working in a position that is framed by male dominance caused me to think differently about this issue. I believed that one of the main reasons that nontraditional women students were not successful in entering college and in continuing in college coursework was due to issues of power, domination, and gendered role specific responsibilities playing out in lack of support from their boyfriend, husband, partner and or in some cases their parent. The data told a different story, the women said they had the support at home and that the reasons they did not attend college were cost, time, and transportation. They also had issues of career choice. Would they pursue an education if they had a choice to working toward a career goal that offered greater compensation? Still the question exists – Are the teachers sharing the reality of their situations or were they unwilling to share such individual parts of their life on a document that recorded their response? Or are they unwilling to admit to themselves that their relationship with their significant other or their parents is not as supportive as they would like it to be? Is this a form of "ideological coercion that causes the teacher to accept individual responsibility for one's social position, but really serves as a means to disguises systematic injustice" (Hays, 1996, p. 165)?

The women's responses on the survey and in the interviews and focus group were expressions of strength and of purpose. They clearly had an understanding of the importance of their work with children and felt they had a positive impact on these children. There was something implicitly understood – almost like a thread of camaraderie that was a constant when in the presence of

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the women. It was a sense of we know who we are and what we do. We recognize that not everyone can care for and educate young children and we know that not just anyone would take this job and stay with the kids, but we stay because we believe in what we do and because of the kids. They recognized that they were not seen as teachers by the society,

> We're just considered glorified babysitters, and you could teach those kids how to you know, talk in 10 different languages, but you're still just a babysitter and you know, you're treated like one. You're treated like you're nothing, really. You're just treated like crap, really. You know? And society views you as that. They do not see you as a real teacher. They do not see you as teaching their children and bringing their children up. And they just see you as a glorified babysitter. (ECE teacher participant)

Yet they stayed. They do not mention a concern with their lack of a degree to do their job not only appropriately but well. One can hardly fault them for seemingly not recognizing that society places a great amount of emphasis on having a degree to work in a classroom as a teacher when the state licensing qualifications for an early childhood teacher only require an individual to be 18 years of age or older and possess a high school or high school equivalency diploma and six months child care experience.

The women feel they are qualified – they felt that on the day they applied for their job and with years of experience they feel it even more so now. They do not discount the need for an education, but the need for resources of funding; time

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and relevancy to their current areas of concern regarding their own teaching practices produce a non-start for the women. They feel they came equipped with the right stuff for their job – they see their role as teacher and a caregiver, roles that by their own definitions and descriptions are difficult to separate from each other and from their versions of being a mother. By their own set of reasoning they do not question whether they are qualified or not to work in a classroom of children ranging in age from birth to five – they know they are.

Through their affiliation with the skill sets of mothering – caring, nurturing, and teaching – they have positioned themselves in a position of power. A different way of viewing the women's work is shared by Hays (1996),

> by emphasizing the social reality of unequal gender relations, this analysis also allows one to recognize that women's self interested attempts to gain status have long focused on ideologies valorizing motherhood precisely because this has become of the few avenues for achieving status left open to women (p. 166).

This view through the use of a feminist lens does not align to the data from the women. To reduce their responses to a level of naiveté would be a major disservice to the women. These 15 women work in early childhood programs perhaps by default, but they stay because they believe there is need for what they bring to their job. They believe they are equipped to do their job and do not see the need to separate the qualities of care, nurturing from that of teaching – all qualities the teachers equated to mothering.

The project was successful in assisting the teachers to enroll in college coursework, but some teachers' efforts were not successful, and they did not complete their course and they have not continued to enroll in college courses.

The project's success was not heavily weighted toward the provision of resources of tuition and book scholarships or of the creation of an educational pathway. It was due to, as reflected in the teachers' own words, the coach. The approach by the coach differed. She did not use the ERS assessment to guide her coaching, she let the Program Coordinator find meaning in those scores, but she did acknowledge the teacher's own requests for support in the classroom, not by pointing out what she did incorrectly, but working side by side with the teacher guiding, supporting, and affirming that the teacher had value not only as an individual, but in the role of an early childhood teacher. The coach individualized her interventions and built a relationship of trust.

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thoughts.

APPENDIX A

COMPARISON OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM RESOURCES TO K-12

PROGRAM RESOURCES

| | Early Childhood | K-12 |
|---|---|---|
| | Parent Pay | Tax-based |
| | No system<br>Small businesses | School<br>Districts/Boards/Administrators |
| | Teachers minimal education | College education with teaching certification |
| | Heavy leveraging of local and federal funding | State plus federal funding |
| | Variety of Settings – homes, churches, community | Setting - school based |
| | Low wages – many times at minimum | Wages – commensurate with education level |
| | No uniform standards, assessments, outcomes | Standards, assessments, and desired outcomes |
| | No particular curriculum | Curriculum |
| | No guarantee program will continue outside of some federal funding for specific programs or parent pay | Guaranteed continuation of school program due to established system and tax based funding. |
| | Department of Health Services Licensing Division only oversees center-based programs and also home programs serving 5-10 children | Department of Education oversees |
| | Limited ability to link to or be identified in national initiatives | Much national focus on improving K-12 |
| | Seen as a tool to allow parents to work | Developed to produce future workforce |
| | Social emotional | Cognitive |
| | No prior experience to teach | Teaching internships |

*Comparison of Early Childhood Programs to K-12* (row label, vertical)

APPENDIX B

SURVEY OF TEACHERS

A survey was crafted to collect the early childhood teacher participants' initial perspectives of PD and the field of ECE. Interview protocol and interview questions were developed based on descriptions offered by (Gay et al., 2009, pp.370-372). The questionnaire was pilot tested with early childhood experts working in various positions within the field of ECE. The purpose of such was to identify shortcomings of the questionnaire. The pilot participants were strongly encouraged to provide me with critical feedback. From the commentary, revisions to the questionnaire and to the interview questions occurred.

The interview questions were shared with colleagues familiar with ECE and with those who have not worked within the field. Revisions to the tool were made to clarify, shorten, and allow for sequential gathering of conversational data. I was particularly sensitive to creating interview questions that explored the participants' views, but did not interrogate and explore my topics while being relevant to the participants' experience (Charmaz, 2006, p. 29).

The goal of this study was not to achieve generalizability as commonly referred to in positivist studies, which at times is arguably not appropriate for qualitative studies. The purpose of this study was not to seek to apply the beliefs and attitudes of the participants across the early childhood teaching profession, but to look at a small sample size that allowed me to examine the data from various perspectives. In-depth descriptions of the teachers' beliefs were thought to be a more essential component of the process, allowing for a more individual understanding of the results that can contribute knowledge to a community rather than a subset of the field of early childhood teachers. Another form of generalization as described by Stake (1995) lends itself more appropriately to this study "naturalistic generalization and its importance due to its embeddedness in the experience of the readers, whether verbalized or not" (p. 86).

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*My name is Karen Ortiz. I am a graduate student at Arizona State University. I also work at H Education Foundation as the VP and Director of Early Childhood Education. For the purposes of this survey, my role is limited to a graduate student. To complete my graduate degree I need to complete a research study. I am asking for your help in learning more about your participation in the H Education/V Teacher Professional Development Model Project. Below are a series of questions that will help me better understand what works in professional development projects and what does not. Your responses will remain completely confidential.*

**Opening**
1.  Do you understand that your participation in this survey is voluntary?
    Yes ___ No___

    If you have questions, please ask the investigator/researcher, Karen Ortiz for clarification.

**Background Information**
2.  Are you a teacher of children whose age is:
    (Mark all that apply)
    Birth _____
    1 yr old ____
    2 yr old____
    2-3 yr old____
    4 yr old____
    5 yr old____

3.  How many years have you worked in early childhood education programs?
    ____Years

4.  How many years have you worked at your center?
    ___Years

5.  How many years have you worked in your current classroom?
    ____Years

6.  What is your current education level?
    High-School___GED___ Some-Community College___ A.A/A.S.___ Some University-level course work___ B.A/B.S.___ Teaching Certificate___ Masters____ Other_____

7.  If you have a degree (e.g., AA, BA, or MA) what year did you receive the degree?
    _____Years

8.  How many credit courses in Early Childhood Education (related to classroom teaching) have you completed?

    None     1     2     3     More than 3

9.  How many hours of professional development on any topic related to early childhood education have you had during the last year (October 2009 through December 2010)?

    None     ½ Day     1 Day     2-3 Days     4-5 Days     >1 Week

10. On a scale of 1 to 10, please rank how effective the H Education Foundation/V Teacher Professional Development Model Project was in improving your teaching skills.

```
1       2       3       4       5       6       7       8       9       10
Not Effective           Somewhat Effective          Very Effective
```

11. On a scale of 1 to 10, please rank how effective this H Education Foundation/VTeacher Professional Development Model Project was in helping you use the new knowledge from this project to improve your classroom teaching.

```
1       2       3       4       5       6       7       8       9       10
Not Effective           Somewhat Effective          Very Effective
```

**Attitudes**

12. What is professional development?

13. Are you interested in professional development?
    Yes___ No___

14. If so, is your interest to improve: (Please mark all that apply)
    Your knowledge and skills___
    Change the learning environment in your classroom___
    Improve the learning activities for children in your room___
    Align with early childhood learning standards___
    Pursue accreditation___
    Participate in a quality improvement program___
    Do it for myself ___
    Show my family what I can do___

15. If you are interested in participating in a professional development plan are there opportunities for you to attend a workshop, conference, enroll in college coursework
    Yes ___
    No____

**(Please circle ONE number that best describes your experience)**

16. I feel very confident when I set up the design of my classroom.

```
1       2       3       4       5       6       7       8       9       10
Strongly disagree           Neutral             Strongly agree
```

17. I feel comfortable creating activities that allow the children to engage in conversations.

```
1       2       3       4       5       6       7       8       9       10
Strongly disagree           Neutral             Strongly agree
```

18. I feel comfortable teaching literacy to young children.

```
1       2       3       4       5       6       7       8       9       10
Strongly disagree           Neutral             Strongly agree
```

19. I feel comfortable sharing my classroom practices with other teachers.

```
1       2       3       4       5       6       7       8       9       10
Strongly disagree           Neutral             Strongly agree
```

20. I feel comfortable sharing what I need for my classroom with the center director.

```
1       2       3       4       5       6       7       8       9       10
Strongly disagree           Neutral             Strongly agree
```

21. I feel the coach helped me apply my professional development coursework to my classroom teaching practices.

```
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10
Strongly disagree            Neutral            Strongly agree
```

22. I fear that I would not teach the children what they need to know to do well in kindergarten.

```
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10
Strongly disagree            Neutral            Strongly agree
```

23. I think that I need college coursework to be a teacher of children birth to five.

```
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10
Strongly disagree            Neutral            Strongly agree
```

24. I think being a woman makes me qualified to care for children birth to age five.

```
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10
Strongly disagree            Neutral            Strongly agree
```

25. I use "mothering" skills in my classroom.

```
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10
Strongly disagree            Neutral            Strongly agree
```

26. I need to do as I am told at work even if I do not think it is best for me.

```
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10
Strongly disagree            Neutral            Strongly agree
```

27. Please rate the following types of professional development from the least to the most you believe are necessary to do a good job of teaching the children in your care.
Workshop___
Conference___
College coursework___

28. Prior to the H/V Professional Development Project I did not think I had the ability to take college courses to improve my skills in early childhood education.

```
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10
Strongly disagree            Neutral            Strongly agree
```

29. After participating in the H/V Professional Development Project I think I have the ability to take college courses to improve my skills in early childhood education.

```
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10
Strongly disagree            Neutral            Strongly agree
```

30. Prior to the H/V Professional Development Project I did not have the confidence to take college courses to improve my skills in early childhood education.

```
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10
Strongly disagree            Neutral            Strongly agree
```

31. After participating in the H/V Professional Development Project I have the confidence to take college courses to improve my skills in early childhood education.

```
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10
Strongly disagree            Neutral            Strongly agree
```

32. I have no desire to continue taking college coursework.

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```
1       2       3       4       5       6       7       8       9       10
Strongly  disagree           Neutral              Strongly  agree
```

33. Now that the H/V Professional Development Project has finished, I do not have access to funding to take college courses to improve my skills in early childhood education.

```
1       2       3       4       5       6       7       8       9       10
Strongly  disagree           Neutral              Strongly  agree
```

34. I do not have the support of my family to take college courses to improve my skills in early childhood education.

```
1       2       3       4       5       6       7       8       9       10
Strongly  disagree           Neutral              Strongly  agree
```

35. I think my husband, partner, boyfriend, etc. wants me to take college courses to improve my skills in early childhood education.

```
1       2       3       4       5       6       7       8       9       10
Strongly  disagree           Neutral              Strongly  agree
```

36. What barriers would prevent you from attending? (check all that apply)
    Cost___
    Time___
    Belief in yourself___
    Director Support___
    Owner support___
    Family support___
    Transportation___
    Child care for your children___
    None of the above___
    Other_____

37. Describe your experience in this project.

**Knowledge & Skills**
38. What words would you use to describe the word "education" as it relates to a young child?

39. What does "school readiness" for a 4 or 5 year old mean to you?

40. Do you use the word teacher to describe yourself at the child care center?
    Yes____ No____
    Why? Why not?

41. What type of teaching activities do you use in your classroom that you believe help the child develop "school readiness" skills? (Please mark all that apply)

    Activities that allow the child to explore ____
    The child can raise questions that will cause me to change my teaching activities
    The child can select activities____
    Individual interest____
    Play based learning____
    Learning through interaction with adults and children____
    As a teacher you direct all the activities____
    Allow for the child to have experiences that occur at different times and with different activities____
    Whole group activities mixed with small group and individual instruction____

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Whole group activities for the majority of the day__
Social emotional learning____
I do not know what you mean by social emotional learning____
Social skills with peers and adults____
I do not understand social skills _____

42. I usually need someone's help/support when I try something new.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| **Strongly disagree** | | | | **Neutral** | | | **Strongly agree** | | |

43. I do not like to take workshops.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| **Strongly disagree** | | | | **Neutral** | | | **Strongly agree** | | |

44. I do not like to take college courses.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| **Strongly disagree** | | | | **Neutral** | | | **Strongly agree** | | |

45. I do not like individuals from other early childhood organizations coming into my classroom.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| **Strongly disagree** | | | | **Neutral** | | | **Strongly agree** | | |

46. I want to make changes in my classroom to improve the quality, but my center director will not let me.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| **Strongly disagree** | | | | **Neutral** | | | **Strongly agree** | | |

47. I want to make changes in my classroom to improve the quality, but the center owner will not allow it.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| **Strongly disagree** | | | | **Neutral** | | | **Strongly agree** | | |

48. Please list who you go to when you want to try something new in your classroom?

49. What else would you like to say about participating in the United Way Professional Development Project?

APPENDIX C

INFORMATION LETTER FOR SURVEYS

February ___, 2011

Dear Participant:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Michael F. Kelley in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University.

I am conducting a research study to examine a funded United Way project designed to provide focused professional development activities to seven high need center-based early childhood centers and their personnel to assess if specific interventions such as tuition assistance, baseline assessment of classroom practices, coaching, and one on one meeting with an educational coordinator positively impacts classroom practices. In more detail, the study will explore the beliefs and attitudes of early childhood teachers related to focused professional development and the ability of such professional development to influence their educational and career options, the impact of focused professional development activities on classroom practices of center-based early childhood teachers, and explore barriers that impact career path participation and sustainability.

I am inviting your participation, which if you are a teacher will involve the completion of a brief survey that will take approximately twenty minutes to complete.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and would be over the course of the next five months (February – May 2011). You can skip survey questions if you wish. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. You must be 18 or older to participate in the study.

Although there is no direct benefit to you, the results of this study may produce new insights as to how to design individualized professional development opportunities to enhance classroom practices and career opportunities for the early childhood teacher. There are no foreseeable risks to your participation.

The co-investigator will not identify you by name, but will use a pseudonym/code to identify each study subject/participant. All data will be maintained under lock and key at the Arizona State University Community Services Building. Only the Principal Investigator (Dr. Michael F. Kelley), co-investigator (Karen Ortiz), a possible data support individual, and staff from the United Way currently involved in the ongoing research, along with doctoral committee members will have access to the data. Surveys will be maintained for the three year time frame for which all records must be kept and at the end of the three years the surveys will be shredded. Your responses will be anonymous and remain confidential. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be known or used (as described above) and results will only be shared in the aggregate form.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at: Dr. Michael Kelley, Mkelley@asu.edu or Karen.Ortiz@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

Return of the survey will be considered your consent to participate.


Sincerely,

Karen J. Ortiz

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR SURVEYS

February ___, 2011

Dear Participant:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Michael F. Kelley in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University.

I am conducting a research study to examine a funded United Way project designed to provide focused professional development activities to seven high need center-based early childhood centers and their personnel to assess if specific interventions such as tuition assistance, baseline assessment of classroom practices, coaching, and one on one meeting with an educational coordinator positively impacts classroom practices. In more detail, the study will explore the beliefs and attitudes of early childhood teachers related to focused professional development and the ability of such professional development to influence their educational and career options, the impact of focused professional development activities on classroom practices of center-based early childhood teachers, and explore barriers that impact career path participation and sustainability.

I am inviting your participation, which if you are a teacher will involve the completion of a brief survey that will take approximately twenty minutes to complete.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and would be over the course of the next five months (February – May 2011). You can skip survey questions if you wish. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. You must be 18 or older to participate in the study.

Although there is no direct benefit to you, the results of this study may produce new insights as to how to design individualized professional development opportunities to enhance classroom practices and career opportunities for the early childhood teacher. There are no foreseeable risks to your participation.

The co-investigator will not identify you by name, but will use a pseudonym/code to identify each study subject/participant. All data will be maintained under lock and key at the Arizona State University Community Services Building. Only the Principal Investigator (Dr. Michael F. Kelley), co-investigator (Karen Ortiz), a possible data support individual, and staff from the United Way currently involved in the ongoing research, along with doctoral committee members will have access to the data. Surveys will be maintained for the three year time frame for which all records must be kept and at the end of the three years the surveys will be shredded. Your responses will be anonymous and remain confidential. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be known or used (as described above) and results will only be shared in the aggregate form.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at: Dr. Michael Kelley, Mkelley@asu.edu or Karen.Ortiz@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

Return of the survey will be considered your consent to participate.


Sincerely,

Karen J. Ortiz

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: TEACHERS

*Thanks for taking the time to sit down with me today. My name is Karen Ortiz. I am a graduate student at Arizona State University. I also work at H Education Foundation as the VP and Director of Early Childhood Education. For the purposes of this interview, my role is limited to a graduate student. To complete my graduate degree I need to complete a research study. I am asking for your help in learning more about your center's participation in the H Education/V Teacher Professional Development Model Project. Below are a series of questions that will help me better understand what works in professional development projects and what does not. Your responses will remain completely confidential. I know that as a teacher of young children in an early childhood program you are faced with many tasks in the day. I am interested in knowing your thoughts and views about professional development.*
*This interview is being recorded – is this okay with you?*
*If at any time you want to stop, please let me know.*

**Background**

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
   - Family
   - Children
   - From Arizona
   - Do you live near the child care center where you now work?
   - When you were in high school, what did you want to be "when you grew up"?
2. Why did you choose to work in a child care center?
3. Have you ever taken college classes?
   - Before you started working at a child care center?
   - What type of classes?
   - Where?
4. If you were taking courses other than early childhood education why did you stop and why did you begin to work in a child care center?
5. Why do you work with the age group of children in your classroom? Did you make that decision?
6. How would you describe what you do for the children?
   - Care
   - Teach
   - Depend on the age?
7. Do you feel that talking to a baby is more like care/nurturing or does it fall under education? Why do you think that?
8. Are women better than men at working with children in child care centers? Why do you think that? How does that affect working with the owner of your child care center?
9. Tell me about your experience in working with the owner of your center?
10. Do you feel supported by your co-workers?
11. Do you believe you knew what to do for the children in your classroom because you are a woman?
12. If you are a "mom", do you believe you knew what to do for the children in your classroom because you are a "mom"?
13. Did your family include both a mom and a dad? What were their roles in the household?
14. Did the women in your family (mom, grandmother) give you information about caring for your own children? Do you use that information in your classroom?
15. Did the women in your family (mom, grandmother) give you information about the skills children need to be ready for school? Do you use that information in your classroom?
16. Who makes the decisions in your home?
17. Who manages the money?
18. Do your decisions about your role as a wife or a mother impact your decisions to take college classes?
    Tell me more…

19. Do you use information about children that you learned from your mom or grandmother in the classroom of children you teach?
20. Do you make decisions about your classroom activities? Why or why not?
21. Do you believe you are treated differently than a male teacher would be?
22. Do you feel you are treated differently because you are a woman?
23. Do you feel you can teach the children in your classroom? Why or why not?
24. Is caring/nurturing a child different from educating a child?
    Tell me more…
25. Would you like to go to college?
26. What courses would you take?
27. Did you make the decision to go to college on your own? If not – who else is included? Tell me more?
28. If you had a degree from college would you still work in an early childhood education program (child care center)?
29. If you had a degree from college would you still work at this center or another early childhood center? Why or why not?
30. Do you think more education makes you more knowledgeable?
31. Do you think more education makes you more powerful?
32. Does more education make you more respected by other individuals?
33. Would having more education create tension between you and your husband, boyfriend, partner, men you date?
34. What about with your parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents?
35. What can you tell me about the H/V professional development project?
36. Did you have a choice to participate in this project?
    If not – did you want to? Why or why not?
37. Why do you think your center was chosen to participate?
38. What did you like about the project?
39. What did you not like?
40. What worked in this project?
41. Tell me about your experience with the college courses?
    What was that like?
    Were the classes useful? Why or why not?
    What would prevent you from continuing the project following project completion?
42. What about the coach?
43. Was the coach someone you could confide in?
44. Was this a good relationship?
    Why or why not?
45. What did you like about the coaching part of the project?
46. Would you have ever taken college coursework if this project was not made available to you?
    Why or why not?
47. Will you continue with college courses?
    Why or why not?
48. Would you have liked more choices in the professional development project?
    Like what?
49. What other things would you like to tell me about the project?
50. What sort of things do you think would help you as a teacher in your classroom?
51. What other things would you like to tell me about you or your family?
52. What else would you like to tell me about your center?
53. What is your understanding of a professional development coach?
54. What does school readiness mean to you?

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: HIGHER EDUCATION SUBCONTRACTOR

*My name is Karen Ortiz. I am a graduate student at Arizona State University. I also work at H Education Foundation as the VP and Director of Early Childhood Education. For the purposes of this interview, my role is limited to a graduate student. To complete my graduate degree I need to complete a research study. I am asking for your help in learning more about your participation in the H Education/V Teacher Professional Development Model Project. Below are a series of questions that will help me better understand what works in professional development projects and what does not. Your responses will remain completely confidential. This interview is being recorded – is this okay with you?*
*If at any time you want to stop, please let me know.*

1. What is your title at R?
2. What is your job at R?
3. How long have you been in this position?
4. What was your role in this professional development project?
5. What was your institution's role in this professional development project?
6. Does your institution of higher education provide onsite classes?
7. Does your institution of higher education provide online classes?
8. Does your institution of higher education provide hybrid classes?
9. Did you prepare any new documents for this project related to educational plans for the teacher? If so, what? Do you have a copy that you are willing to share with me?
10. What changes did this project ask you to make to your educational program or curriculum to accommodate the project outcomes and the education knowledge of the teachers?
11. Were you able to make these changes? Why or why not?
12. What were the institutional barriers to providing the contracted services to this professional development project?
13. What were the unexpected outcomes of this project?
14. What learnings did you gain from your participation in this project?
15. What would you do differently?
16. Do you believe the teachers in this project were prepared to take college coursework? Why or why not?
17. Should the teachers in this professional development project been assessed for computer proficiency?
18. Does the entry knowledge of the teacher, related to early childhood development, denote what courses should be taken initially?
19. Is there a sequencing of coursework that needs to occur or can a teacher enroll in any early childhood classroom?
20. Did the educational questionnaire developed and used for this project provide you with the necessary information to create a successful outcome for the teacher enrolled at your institution of higher learning? Why or why not?
21. Were there project limitations to the teachers' participation in college coursework?
22. Were there issues at the early childhood center that limited the teachers' participation in college coursework?
23. Are any of the project teachers continuing their coursework at your institution of higher education?

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: COACH

*My name is Karen Ortiz. I am a graduate student at Arizona State University. I also work at H Education Foundation as the VP and Director of Early Childhood Education. For the purposes of this survey, my role is limited to a graduate student. To complete my graduate degree I need to complete a research study. I am asking for your help in learning more about your participation in the H Education/V Teacher Professional Development Model Project. Below are a series of questions that will help me better understand what works in professional development projects and what does not. Your responses will remain completely confidential. This interview is being recorded – is this okay with you?*
*If at any time you want to stop, please let me know.*

1. What is your name and title?
2. Are you employed? Where are you employed?
3. How long have you been in this position?
4. What was your role in this professional development project?
5. When did your employment with this project begin?
6. Did you prepare any new documents for this project related to professional development plans for the teacher?
   a. If so, what? Do you have a copy that you are willing to share with me?
7. Describe your role in this project.
8. Describe your interactions with the project participants?
9. Did you strictly adhere to the project design or did you provide other interactions/interventions and activities for and with the participants? Please describe.
10. What were the unsuspected outcomes?
11. What learnings did you gain from your participation in this project?
12. What would you do differently?
13. Do you believe the teachers in this project were prepared to take college coursework? Why or why not?
14. Should the teachers in this professional development project been assessed for computer proficiency?
15. Does the entry knowledge of the teacher, related to early childhood development, denote what courses should be taken initially?
16. Is there a sequencing of coursework that needs to occur or can a teacher enroll in any early childhood classroom?
17. Were there project limitations to the teachers' participation in college coursework?
18. Were there limitations at the early childhood center that limited the teachers' participation in college coursework?
19. What did you notice while working with the teachers at the centers that could positively impact the project?
20. What did you notice while working with the teachers at the centers that could negatively impact the project?

APPENDIX H

FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT

1. Welcome participants; encourage participants to enjoy food and beverage
2. Investigator calls participants together, introduces herself, and coach
3. Process overview
   a. I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Michael F. Kelley at Arizona State University.
   b. I am conducting a research study to examine a funded United Way project designed to provide focused professional development activities to seven high need center-based early childhood centers and their personnel to assess if specific interventions such as tuition assistance, assessment of classroom practices, coaching and creating educational pathways impacts classroom practices.
   c. In addition, I am interested in learning from you about your beliefs and attitudes related to focused professional development and the ability of such professional development to influence your educational and career options.
   d. I am also interested in hearing from you about any barriers that impact your participation in taking college coursework and completion of a degree.
   e. Has anyone ever had the chance to participate in a focus group before? If so, for what purpose? A focus group is simply a group discussion to learn more about a particular issue, viewpoint, or experience.
   f. Barb and I appreciate your participation in this discussion. What we learn will be of assistance to funders of professional development projects and to the field of early childhood education.
   g. All of your comments are confidential – no one's name will be used in our report. I will use codes as a substitute for any names and all individual comments will be shared as a group rather than identifying one individual.
   h. While we are taping the discussion and taking notes, we are only doing so to make sure we do not miss any of your comments.
   i. All of your thoughts are welcomed – both positive and negative, and sometimes negative comments are of the most help in improving things.
   j. Everyone here has a story to share, has experiences that are of value. There are no "wrong" answers. We do ask that we all respect each other's opinions, and that we keep these comments confidential with one another.
   k. My role is to ask you a set of questions, to guide the discussion, and to keep us on track since we only have 90-minutes.
   l. My role is also to make sure that we hear from everyone that wants to share something. We want to make sure we get to all our questions and that everyone has a fair share in the conversation. Some of you may be more comfortable talking than others and we do not want to be rude, but we may interrupt to make sure everyone has a chance to talk. If someone is not saying much, I may call on that individual, just to check in and give them the opportunity to speak, should they choose.
   m. Feel free to continue enjoying the food and beverages we have provided. Should you need to visit the restroom during our conversation, feel free to do so.
   n. Okay, if there are no questions, let's begin our discussion.
4. Why are you working with young children?
5. Do you consider what you do in your classroom teaching? Do you also feel what you do is care/nurture the children?
6. Where did you learn to do what you do in your classroom (activities, groups, etc.)?
7. Is mothering a part of it?
8. What do you think is important for you to teach the children in your care?
9. Do you think because you are a woman you have "natural" abilities to work with young children and to teach them?
10. What does professional development mean to you?
11. Do you feel professional development is important for you to do a good job with the children in your classroom?

12. Have you participated in professional development projects prior to the project by United Way?
13. Did you want to be a participant in this professional development project?
14. Did you feel you had a choice?
15. How did someone coming in and saying we have this project and we would like you to participate, but you will need to take college courses make you feel?
16. What difficulties if any occurred when you enrolled in the college courses?
17. Did you have a good experience? Why or why not?
18. Will you continue with college coursework? Why or why not?
19. Do you think teachers of children aged birth to five need to have a college degree? Why or why not?
20. This is our final question - How do you define school readiness?
21. So to go back to our opening comments – what we learn will be of assistance to funders of professional development projects and to the field of early childhood education.
22. (Closing) Is there anything we may have missed that you would like to share with us?
23. (Turn off recorder) What did you think of the conversation?
24. Thank you for your participation. (Distribute thank you letters).

APPENDIX I

OPEN CODES

1. Attitude
2. Care
3. Center Culture
4. Children
5. College Courses
6. College Degree
7. Compensation
8. Credits
9. Day in the Life of one of the Teachers
10. Default into the Field
11. Deficit Approach
12. Demographics
13. Discord
14. Early Childhood Field
15. Education Cohorts
16. Education System
17. Employment Other
18. Family
19. H
20. Hours
21. Identity
22. Interviewees' Concern for Me
23. Job Hunting
24. Mentor
25. Mother
26. Orientation When Hired
27. PD and Education
28. Perceptions of what an ECE Teacher Does
29. Quotes
30. R
31. School Readiness
32. Teacher and Teaching
33. Teacher's Well Being
34. Temporary Mistake
35. Terminology
36. Who is Being Talked About
37. Women versus Men

APPENDIX J

OPEN AND AXIAL CODES

1. Attitude
   - Conflicted
   - Negative
   - Positive
2. Care
3. Center Culture
4. Children
   - Children have issues
5. College Courses
   - In-person
   - On-line
6. College Degree
   - ECE
   - K-12
   - Other
   - Pursue another field than ECE
   - Pursue ECE
   - Unsure
7. Compensation
8. Credits
9. Day in the Life of one of the Teachers
10. Default into the Field
    - Chose Profession
11. Deficit Approach
    - No
    - Yes
12. Demographics
13. Discord
    - Home
    - Work
14. Early Childhood Field
    - Challenges
    - College Needed
    - College Not Needed
    - Family Issue
    - Feel Good, Rewarded
15. Education Cohorts
16. Education System
17. Employment Other
18. Family
19. H
    - Choice
    - H and V
    - Learned from project
20. Hours
21. Identity

22. Interviewees' Concern for Me
23. Job Hunting
24. Mentor
25. Mother
    - Experience-not useful, used
26. Orientation When Hired
27. PD and Education
    - Barriers
    - Degree necessary
    - Education
    - Experience
    - Family
    - Influence
    - Knowledgeable
    - Powerful
    - Respect
    - Support
28. Perceptions of what an ECE Teacher Does
    - General Public
    - Parents
    - Participant
29. Quotes
30. R
    - Assessment
    - Barriers-other
    - Created Documents
    - Customized Coursework for this project
    - Degree Obtained
    - D's Thoughts
    - ECE Teacher Impact
    - Fears of College
    - Institutional Barriers
    - Learnings
    - Project
    - Sequencing of Coursework
    - Teachers' Understanding of the Project
31. School Readiness
32. Teacher and Teaching
33. Teacher's Well Being
34. Temporary Mistake
35. Terminology
36. Who is Being Talked About
    - Other Mothers
37. Women versus Men
    - Women
    - Men

APPENDIX K

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

APPROVAL FORM

Office of Research Integrity and Assurance
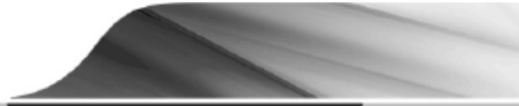
| | |
|---|---|
| To: | Michael Kelley<br>FAB |
| From: | Mark Roosa, Chair<br>Soc Beh IRB |
| Date: | 01/18/2011 |
| Committee Action: | **Exemption Granted** |
| IRB Action Date: | 01/18/2011 |
| IRB Protocol #: | 1101005862 |
| Study Title: | Professional Development for Non-Traditional Early Childhood Teachers: Does the mode |

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.   It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

APPENDIX L

MORE DETAILED LIST OF TEACHERS' COMMENTS REGARDING

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Continued growth in an area of expertise. There is always room to grow and learn new strategies.
2. It is to increase knowledge and skills for certified and consistent education in my profession.
3. Knowledge learned from individual and career development.
4. Using various ways to help you develop your skills for a professional position.
5. Professional development is bettering yourself to the best you can be at your job.
6. Increasing your knowledge or skills for your career.
7. Develop more knowledge in a certain area.
8. Professional development is training and education in your chosen field that will enable you to do your job effectively.
9. Anything that helps me to improve my work performance.
10. Building on the skills I have and gaining new skills. How to become a better teacher and co-worker.
11. Anything from classes, training, workshops, etc. geared toward improving your skills level in that profession.
12. Self-reflective goals and achievements.
13. Improving ones' knowledge and skills in their career.