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Investigating Preschool Teachers' Implementation of Multicultural Curriculum through Teacher Evaluation Approaches

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INVESTIGATING PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' IMPLEMENTATION OF

MULTICULTURAL CURRICULUM THROUGH TEACHER

EVALUATION APPROACHES

Anni Krummel Reinking

132 Pages

"American schools have in fact grown increasingly diverse as policies opened classroom doors to previously excluded populations" (Paine, 1989, p. 1). However, as student populations are increasing in diversity, the teaching staff is not (Gollnick & Chin, 2009). Therefore, this qualitative research study focused on five preschool teachers' (three certified head teachers and two assistant teachers) understanding of diversity between and among their students, as well as their implementation and understanding of multicultural curriculum. This study used teacher evaluation approaches, such as observation, feedback, and self-reflection, to understand teachers' implementation of multicultural curriculum, as defined by Banks (1993) and McIntosh (2000). As well as preschool teachers' understanding of diversity as outlined by Paine (1989). The findings from this study add to the limited scholarship regarding multicultural implementation in preschool settings with the ever-changing student demographics, along with teacher

evaluation methods during a time of increased accountability. The researcher found three themes after data analysis. The participants had a tendency to avoid conversations or interactions with students focused on multicultural topics, there was an ineffective support system from the administration, and the participants had a lack of knowledge (training and education) on "how to do" and "what do say" in regards to multicultural education their preschool classrooms.

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<div align="right">A.K.R.</div>

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the 1960's and 1970's, the United States was in a period of social change as Civil Rights leaders urged citizens and social institutions to reexamine mindsets and social constructs (Andrews, 2001; Hanley, 2012). Nearly three decades later, in the early 1990's, the education system in the United States began to take notice and the concept of multicultural education was implemented and studied at a deeper level (Banks, 1993). When researchers began studying multicultural education concepts, they realized that demographics in American schools were changing. After multiple research studies, researchers stated that by the year 2020 students of color will constitute fifty percent of the school population, while teachers will likely remain predominantly White and female (Amos, 2010; Gollnick & Chin, 2009; Paine, 1989). The Census Bureau has also projected an increase in the minority population in the United States stating, "by 2023 minorities will comprise more than half of all children" (United States Census Bureau, 2008). In essence, researchers found that student populations in schools will continually become more diverse while the teaching population will not (DeVillar & Jiang, 2012). Therefore, Paine (1989) ignited conversations regarding the comprehension of teaching approaches and mindsets through reflective strategies, which are supported by Banks' (1993) and McIntosh's (2000) research focusing on multicultural education infusion as a response to the changing demographics in school environments.

Topics supporting multicultural education can be summarized by one term: diversity. Diversity is a concept that has been infused into nearly every aspect of information flow in the United States, including media, politics and academic environments (Park, 2010). Diversity has a variety of meanings and includes many topics such as socioeconomics, race, culture, sexuality, family demographics, and religion (Banks, 1997). The National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) agrees with the above definition when describing multicultural education or/and "culturally diverse students" in preschool settings (www.naeyc.org).

In education, researchers have studied diversity in association with the known "cultural gap" phenomenon; especially as students' demographics change and teachers' demographics remain stagnant (Laughter, 2011). Laugher claims that the "cultural gap" is a term used to recognize the fact that a predominate percentage of teachers are White and female, which does not coincide with the increasingly diverse student population. As the cultural gap continues to grow in schools, researchers and education professionals are advocating for infused multicultural curriculum. An infusion of multicultural curriculum in school buildings, supported by teachers and leaders alike, has the potential to challenge the existing hierarchical cultural capital (the non-financial social assets that promote social mobility), which will be discussed in the review of literature (LiPuma, 1993; Olneck, 2000).

Multicultural education is not only needed in elementary and secondary school buildings, but it is also needed in preschool environments. Arguably, within preschool environments, teaching begins to focus on differences between and among students as well as social-emotional development in children between the ages of three and five. One

way the current Administration, under the leadership of President Barack Obama and U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan, has started to bring focus to the social-emotional and academic development of young students is through the development of an early learning initiative. President Obama and his Administration are specifically focused on preschool teacher accountability by advocating for the implementation of research-based teacher evaluations (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). In his 2013 State of the Union address, President Obama stated, "I propose working with states to make high-quality preschool available to every child in America…Let's do what works and make sure none of our children start the race of life already behind" (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Secretary Duncan has also advocated for high quality preschool education, with a specific focus on high quality teachers. Secretary Duncan stated, "Someday, we can track children from preschool to high school and from high school to college and college to career. We must track high growth children in classrooms to their great teachers and great teachers to their schools of education" (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

Top economists are also advocating for high quality preschool environments by supporting President Obama and Secretary Duncan's proposed early learning initiative. Economists in support of the proposed early learning campaign agree "high-quality early learning programs can help level the playing field for children from lower-income families on vocabulary, social and emotional development" (Administration for Children and Families, 2013). Researchers, such as Guernsey and Ochshorn (2011), are also advocating for the expansion of preschool teachers' accountability measures in order to improve the early learning atmosphere and increase student achievement. They stated,

"Studies consistently remind us of what children could achieve if they attended high-quality early learning programs and received high-quality instruction in their early grades of school" (Guernsey & Ochshorn, 2011, p. 1).

Some teachers, administrators, researchers, or other advocates and stakeholders in the field of early childhood education might argue that preschool environments only need math and reading to make it "high quality." However, a high quality preschool environment also includes multicultural education, which partners with social emotional development or the ability to communicate and cooperate with others. Two leading early childhood and multicultural researchers stated, that since diversity and multicultural education must occur all the time in early childhood programs, teachers and administrators need to look at ways curriculum and instruction can be more diverse and include more multicultural topics (Wardle & Cruz-Janzen, 2003).

Therefore, due to the available knowledge regarding diverse student demographics, the lack of quality multicultural curriculum infusion, and the increased accountability measures for preschool teachers, this study focused on preschool head teachers and assistant teachers in classrooms of students who are between the ages of three and five years old in Central Illinois. The researcher focused on the infusion of multicultural curriculum as measured through the teacher evaluations of the classroom observations, observer feedback, and teacher self-reflections. These specific teacher evaluation methods were used while multicultural curriculum conversations and topics were occurring at different levels in preschool classrooms, as outlined by McIntosh (2000) and Banks (1993). The level of multicultural curriculum implementation and any change in teachers' understanding of diversity, as described by Paine (1989), was also

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studied. Overall, the researcher observed preschool classrooms in Central Illinois and focused on one topic that is often ignored or minimized in educational research and society: multicultural education. The researcher also chose to focus on a "hot topic" in current educational circles, teacher evaluations.

Research Overview

A phenomenon that is present in all of society is the uneasiness around discussing differences, especially in school environments (Tatum, 1992). Every student is not the same and every student is not completely different. The consequences of educators' and administrators' inherent tensions regarding multicultural conversations result in school environments where students do not feel accepted and successful. This occurs because topics regarding who they are as an individual become taboo. As described by Lee, Ramsey, and Sweeney (2008), "conversations are a vital part of early childhood… and multicultural education because they enable children to connect with others and to begin to see the implications of certain assumptions" (p. 1). Therefore, this research study aimed to investigate the needed implementation of year-round multicultural curriculum in preschool environments (Lowenstein, 2009; Paine, 1989). The research began with teachers reflecting on the school environment and their mindsets regarding diversity and multicultural curriculum in a written reflection, one-on-one interview, and focus group. It then progressed to the researcher observing and collecting data points, which included multicultural conversations and lesson plan topics teachers were involved in during the twelve-week classroom observation period. Additionally during the study, the researcher reflected on data points, such as observed situations and conversations regarding multicultural topics and implementation practices.

At the conclusion of the study, the participants were again asked to reflect in a written format, as well as to participate in a final one-on-one interview and focus group. Overall, the focus of the research was to study how multicultural curriculum is currently being implemented in preschool classrooms in Central Illinois. Additionally, the researcher investigated the thoughts and feelings of teachers surrounding multicultural topics and their perception of diversity in classrooms. This openness to think, feel, and ultimately discuss has the potential to benefit a plethora of stakeholders, including teachers, students, families, and administrators.

In order to provide quality, beneficial research, the research study began and ended with the same four main research or guiding questions. Each of the questions was answered through a variety of data points as outlined in Appendix A.

Research Questions

1. How do preschool teachers describe diversity in their classrooms and school environment?

2. How does a comprehensive preschool teacher evaluation approach generate preschool teachers' sense of agency when implementing integrated multicultural curriculum?

3. What does it mean to preschool teachers to implement integrated multicultural curriculum in preschool settings (look like, feel like, sound like)?

4. How does an incorporation of multicultural materials into a preschool classroom environment influence the teachers' view and implementation of multicultural curriculum?

<center>**Theoretical Framework**</center>

As defined by Anfara and Mertz (2006), a theoretical framework is "any empirical or quasi-empirical theory of social and/or psychological processes, at a variety

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of levels, which can be applied to the understanding of phenomena" (p. xxviii). The multiplicity of available theoretical frameworks allows researchers to "see in new and different ways what seem to be ordinary and familiar" (Anfara & Mertz, 2006, p. xxviii). While a single theoretical framework or theory does not provide a flawless explanation for what will be studied, theoretical frameworks are still used as the foundation for qualitative research studies (Anfara & Mertz).

This research study had two main theoretical frameworks on which to base the findings. One focused on teachers' understanding of diversity (Paine, 1989) and the other on multicultural curriculum infusion (Banks, 1999; McIntosh, 2000). The first theory, developed by Lynne Paine (1989), outlines four categories on which teachers view diversity among and between students in their classrooms and became a major focus during the data analysis process. Paine's (1989) first category is individual differences, which is when teachers view students as being different "in many ways and on many dimensions" (p. 3). The second type of teachers' understanding is categorical differences, which is when the teacher views students by differences based on specific stereotyped categories (Paine, 1989). Third is a contextual difference, which is described by Paine as a technique where teachers assign a social construct or stereotype to students' specific categories. Finally, there is the category of pedagogical perspective. This is when teachers assume that differences are not simply random, but interesting. Paine described the pedagogical perspective as one that has consequences for both teaching and learning, which could include classroom differentiation to meet the needs of individual students through student-centered lessons. In this category, teachers believe that "every child is

unique and deserves an education suited to his or her special needs" (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, n.d., p. 10).

However, prior to exploring the four categories, Paine (1989) acknowledges that teachers must understand their own thoughts and biases before implementing multicultural curriculum. Therefore, when teachers are ready to implement multicultural curriculum, Paine (1989) urges teachers to first reflect. After teachers are able to reflect, Paine acknowledges that teachers are viewed as agents of change or the individuals who can effectively implement multicultural curriculum, as depicted by the second theory, described below (Lattimer, 2012).

The second theory used to analyze the data points is based on Banks' (1993) and McIntosh's (2000) theory of multicultural curriculum implementation. While Banks (1993) initially studied the approaches or levels to multicultural curriculum implementation, McIntosh (2000) drew from Banks' (1993) ideas and in the end designed five steps or approaches.

The first of the five approaches is the Curriculum of the Mainstream (Banks, 1993; McIntosh, 2000). In this approach the information is presented in a Eurocentric manner. The second approach is the Contributions Approach or the Heroes and Holidays Stage. This approach is where teachers incorporate books and activities to celebrate differences. Third is the Additive Approach or Integration Stage. This is where content, concepts, themes, and perspectives are added to the curriculum without changing the basic structure (Banks). The fourth approach is the Transformation Approach or the Structural Reform Stage. This is when the structure of the curriculum changes to encourage students to view concepts, issues, themes, and problems from several cultural

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perspectives. The final approach is the Social Action Approach or the Multicultural, Social Action, and Awareness Stage. This approach adds to the changes made in stage four along with encouraging students to question and act on social issues (Banks, 1999; McIntosh). The five approaches or stages are implemented in classrooms around the United States in different ways and to different degrees (InTime, 2002).

Overall, combining the two above theories laid the groundwork on which the study was based by focusing research questions on two main areas: teachers' understanding of diversity, as described by Paine (1989), and the level of multicultural curriculum implementation, as described by McIntosh (2000) and Banks (1993). The two theoretical frameworks were used to guide the research study, which focused specifically on preschool classrooms.

Significance

Although there is a need for multicultural curriculum at every grade level, this study focused on preschool environments due to the increased focus on high-quality early learning from President Obama and other leading officials, who acknowledge that students learn their social and pre-academic skills in preschool settings (Howes et al., 2008). Therefore, preschool teachers need to be strong leaders in the education field through processes of accountability and academic responsibility (Wood & Bennett, 2000). The ability to accurately evaluate, reflect, and implement new ideas or concepts (ex: multicultural education) into the classroom setting is foundational when working toward higher teacher quality and high-quality early learning environments.

High-quality environments and increased teacher accountability are current issues in early learning. Therefore, the research study focused on those current issues by

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combining teacher accountability and multicultural education. Prior to discussing the research, however, terms with multiple meanings need to be defined for the purpose of this study.

Definition of Terms

For the most part, the terms and definitions that were used in the study are intertwined and are supported by theories and/or other research. The terms and definitions below are specific for this study.

Culture: A "toolkit of symbols, stories, rituals, and worldviews, which people may use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems" (Swidler, 1986, p. 273). Culture has also been defined by the U.S. Department of Minority Health as "integrated patterns of human behavior that include the language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups" (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014).

Diversity: Incorporates many, if not all multicultural topics. Based on the U.S. Department of Education's definition, which is "avoiding racial isolation" (2014). As defined by Merriam-Webster (n.d.) dictionary, "the state of having people who are different races or who have different cultures in a group or organization." Therefore, for this study, diversity is intertwined with race (Silverman, 2010).

Multicultural education/curriculum: valuing strengths of individuals that are worthy of recognition and incorporation into the classroom through integration into every aspect of the preschool environment; course of study/lesson in a classroom

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environment (Amos, 2010; Banks, 1995; Banks & Banks, 1995; Gollnick & Chin, 2009; Gorski, 2010; Swidler, 1986). Examples of multicultural topics include, but are not limited to the following: race and culture (family and holidays), class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, language, and religion. Multicultural education and multicultural curriculum will be used interchangeable in this research study.

Observation: A specific type of teacher evaluation method that is completed in a variety of formats, but overall is when someone is watched carefully to gain information (Higgins, 2011).

Preschool: a classroom consisting of students aged three to five years old

Race: Based on the American Anthropology Association's (1998) view of race, which states that race is not a biological category but rather a social and cultural category (1998).

Teacher: An individual in a preschool setting who interacts with the students on a daily basis (head teacher or assistant teacher)

Teacher evaluation methods, instruments, and/or approaches: a strategic way to support student growth by reinforcing high expectations and creating a common language for best practice (The New Teacher Project, 2014).

A foundational overview regarding multicultural education, teacher evaluations methods, and preschool settings (early childhood education) was provided in chapter 1. This chapter presented a context for how these three areas support current issues and trends in school buildings around the United States, as well as society. Additionally, the

two theoretical frameworks used in this study were introduced, which included Banks'

(1993) and McIntosh's (2000) levels or stages of multicultural curriculum

implementation and Paine's (1989) ideas focusing on teachers' understanding of student

diversity in their classrooms. Definitions for specific terms were also stated in order to

develop a clear understanding for readers as the research is discussed in future chapters.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2 creates an overarching understanding of the three topics discussed in this research study. Additionally, what has been done and what is missing will be discussed. Moreover, the literature reviewed in this chapter does not guide this research study, but rather provides a foundation and background knowledge regarding current scholarship focused on the topics of this research study.

The review of literature is divided into two distinct sections. The first section focuses on teacher evaluations such as observations, feedback, and self-reflections. The second section discusses multicultural curriculum and education literature. Subtopics within multicultural curriculum include the idea of race and diversity, cultural competency, and how higher education institutions are preparing preservice teachers to implement multicultural curriculum.

Teacher Evaluation

Teachers are perceived as agents or catalysts for change in classroom environments (Lattimer, 2012). Therefore, in order to understand teachers' performance or teaching styles in classrooms, instruments and strategies to evaluate preschool teachers have been developed and expanded upon (Agbenyega, 2012). In the past, early childhood teachers have had some form of evaluation system. However, there is a lack of professional consensus regarding internal quality control and implementation consistency

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in early childhood settings (Darling-Hammond, 2010). In one study, preschool teachers reported that they were not accurately assessed through an evaluation method because it was not designed specifically for preschool teachers (Lazzari & Bruder, 1988). Therefore, as accountability measures increase for preschool teachers, there is a need to create teacher evaluation instruments that accurately measure preschool environments. The teacher evaluation methods being studied and improved upon provide meaningful information for multiple stakeholders, which can be used to advance the quality and application of high-quality educational preschool programs (Decker & Decker, 2001).

Two stakeholders, administrators and education policymakers, are turning to teacher evaluation models to help teachers develop and grow as professionals, especially in the early learning field (Lazzari & Bruder, 1988). Teacher evaluations are viewed as a way to support student growth by reinforcing high expectations and creating a common language for best practice (The New Teacher Project, 2014). Researchers have studied numerous evaluation approaches, including observation, feedback and self-reflection strategies, each of which has their own strengths and weaknesses (Bilbrey, Vorhaus, Farran, & Shufelt, 2010; Casey & McWilliam, 2011; Farran & Son-Yarbrough, 2001; Klein & Knitzer, 2006; Pianta, 2012). These approaches are being studied as a way to evaluate preschool teachers' ability to interact socially with students, assist in the development of students' social emotional development, and encourage students to succeed academically.

Observation

One research approach, observation, has been a foundational strategy and influential measurement tool in early childhood classrooms for more than three decades (Downer et al., 2012; Gage & Needels, 1989; Guernsey & Ochshorn, 2011; Lazzari & Bruder, 1988; Ortlipp & Nuttall, 2011; Pianta, 2012; Pianta & Hamre, 2009). Observation is a way to assess classroom environments and teacher/child interactions (Pianta, 2012). The information gathered during an observation is not provided as a feedback tool, but rather a verbatim of what occurred during the observation or time in the classroom. Classroom observations afford an opportunity to access the actual instructional experiences that are at the heart of teaching and learning (VanTassel, Quek, & Feng, 2010).

Types. There are multiple observation tools or instruments currently being used in preschool classrooms. Each type will be discussed. However, each of the instruments uses one or both of the most common types of observation: narrative and structured (Higgins, 2011).

Narrative observation. Narrative observations are commonly known as a running record or anecdotal method. A running record/anecdotal method is a very detailed description of the event being observed. The most important part about completing a running record is to be extremely factual with everything that is seen because it tells a story for the readers to create a picture in their minds of the experience (Higgins, 2011). An anecdotal observation describes one event, is brief, and is collected over a span of time. Collecting information over a span of time is advantageous when describing a classroom or individual teacher. Another advantage is that the observers do not need any

special training and can catch unexpected incidents (Higgins). This type of observational method, however, is very difficult to use for research because it is time consuming (Higgins).

 Structured observation. Narrative observational strategies can be transferred to or used in conjunction with structured observations. These include checklists, social mapping, time and event sampling, and rating scales (Higgins, 2011). Checklists depict specific traits in a logical order, are quick, require minimal training, and help to focus the observation. Checklists, though, are not very detailed and can miss important information (Higgins).

 Social mapping works well when the observer is aiming to understand the communication and interactions of children with teachers or other children. This method allows the observer to include any relevant information related to the physical environment of the observation (Higgins, 2011). An example of a social map may look very similar to a brainstorming web. However, the linking lines would indicate communication between and among individuals.

 Time and event sampling, two more types of structured observation, are used to record the frequency of a particular event or incident (Higgins, 2011). Time sampling yields quantitative data or numbers related to events, does not take a lot of time, and can be used for research purposes. However, observers using time sampling may miss important events by limiting observations to one particular incident. Event sampling is aimed at identifying the cause of consequences, such as trying to understand a students' behavior in relation to the classroom environment (Higgins). Advantages of event sampling include the opportunity for observers to note the antecedent and consequence of

an incident. However, it does not include as much detail as narrative observations, as explained above (Higgins).

A rating scale is an additional type of structured observational method and includes numerical and semantic scales (Higgins, 2011). For example, a numeric scale may be rating a teaching strategy with numbers that represent words as such: 1- not at all, 2- somewhat, 3-all the way. A semantic rating scale uses opposing adjectives at either end of the scale, such as students not engaged and students engaged. Rating scales work best if there are well-defined differences in the events being observed and are usually implemented within an observational instrument (Higgins). The advantages to rating scales include the ease with which it is used and scored, as well as the convenient way the scale is setup to observe many traits at once. Nonetheless, there are also disadvantages. Rating scales focus on a specific teaching strategy and the ratings are subjective. This observational strategy is used in a variety of instruments (Higgins).

Instruments. Currently, there are multiple instruments utilizing the two observation strategies to evaluate teacher/child interactions. The observation instruments are being used as a way to make administrative decisions. They are also being used to implement evaluation practices and brainstorm future policies and research studies (Pianta & Hamre, 2009).

The instruments for observation that are being studied, implemented, and improved upon are in response to a specific heading in the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) application. As part of the application and fund allocation requirements, states are required to allocate a portion of the funds received to a specified system designed to increase the workforce or professionalism of early

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childhood educators. The "workforce" heading in the RTT-ELC is being met by variations of the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Each state receiving RTT-ELC funds is implementing a QRIS model involving areas that are hypothesized to be part of a "quality early learning environment." One area specifies teacher/child interactions. As defined by the NAEYC, the QRIS is a system that was developed and implemented in states as part of a larger conversation regarding the definition of what makes a high-quality early learning environment (NAEYC, 2013). Since this research study was conducted in Illinois, the name used for the QRIS model in Illinois is called "ExceleRate Illinois."

CLASS. As part of the early learning challenge and implementation of the QRIS, there is one instrument, the CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System), which is being used most prevalently to evaluate the foundational pieces of classroom environments. A section of the CLASS instrument depicts and evaluates interactions that create optimal learning environments, such as teacher/child interactions (La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004; Office of Head Start National Centers, 2013). These interactions can be viewed through observations.

When observers use the CLASS to witness and evaluate the teacher/child interactions, they are able to compartmentalize the interactions into three broad categories. The categories include emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support. The three specified categories are then broken down even further into two subcategories that include "positive climate" and "concept development." Both of these dimensions focus on teachers' interactions with children. The positive climate relates to teachers' interactions with children that create an enjoyable classroom

atmosphere. The concept development focuses on teacher interactions as students develop higher-order thinking skills (Downer et al., 2012). Both of these subcategories can be related to academic and behavioral development.

Previous researchers chose the ideas of positive climate and concept development as a way to use the CLASS to investigate the minimum level of preschool quality needed for children living in a rural area to show an increase in their academic, behavioral, and memory skills (Burchinal, Vernon-Feagans, Vitiello, Greenberg, & The Family Life Project Key Investigators, 2013). In this study, researchers used the CLASS and found that increases in positive behaviors, as evident through teacher/child interactions, were associated with higher-quality classrooms. However, the researchers did not find a direct correlation between high quality preschool settings and academics (Burchinal, et al.).

TOP. A second observation instrument, which was outlined by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Planning, Research, and Education (OPRE), is the Teacher Observation in Preschools (TOP) instrument. The TOP is used to observe head teachers' and assistant teachers' behaviors while working in a preschool classroom during a daylong visit (Fuhs, Farran, & Nesbitt, 2013). An observer, using the TOP observational instrument, gathers snapshots of head teachers' and assistant teachers' behaviors to present a picture of how the head teachers and assistant teachers are spending time in a classroom (Bilbrey, Vorhaus, Farran, & Shufelt, 2010). TOP is associated with the research-based curriculum, Tools of the Mind, which is "an instructional strategy used to promote the development of self-regulation" (Bilbrey et al.; Tools of the Mind, 2014).

TPOT. A third observational instrument, also outlined by OPRE, is the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool for Preschool Classrooms (TPOT), which is completely based on an observation conducted by a trained administrator in a preschool classroom during both teacher-directed and child-directed activities. The instrument also includes an interview with the teacher. The TPOT is an instrument designed to measure the trustworthiness of implementation practices associated with intervention strategies designed to support the social-emotional development of preschool children, along with the prevention of challenging behaviors in preschool classrooms (Branson & Demchak, 2011; Hemmeter, Fox, & Synder, 2008). The information gathered by observers using the TPOT focuses on how well teachers are implementing interventions or practices related to universal, targeted, and individualized supports.

ECERS-R. A fourth instrument used to observe in preschool classrooms is the forty-three item Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R), which was released in 1998 (Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, 2014). However, Harms and Clifford designed the first ECERS in 1980. Originally, environmental rating scales were developed because researchers found the best way to assess process quality, or the experiences children have in the setting through interactions, was through observation (Phillipsen, Burchinal, Howes, & Cryer, 1997). Regardless of the release date, however, the ECERS was "designed to assess group programs for preschool-kindergarten aged children" (Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute). The most recent version of the ECERS, the revised edition, contains new items that address culturally sensitive topics, a concentration on

interactions, and is being used in federally funded research projects with Head Start and RTT-ELC states (Clifford & Reszka, 2010; Environment Rating Scales Institute, 2014).

PQA. A fifth observation instrument, the Program Quality Assessment (PQA), is used in preschool classrooms for teacher evaluations and is associated with the research-based curriculum, High Scope (High Scope, 2014). The PQA is a sixty-three-dimension evaluation instrument with seven domains, including adult-child interactions and was designed to recognize strengths and detect areas for improvement in order to create an optimal environment for families and students (High Scope). The designed purpose of the PQA is to evaluate "the quality of early childhood programs and identify staff training needs" (High Scope). On the High Scope website it is stated that the Preschool PQA "is reliable and valid and is appropriate for use in all center-based early childhood settings."

Feedback

Feedback, in conjunction with an observational method, is considered by many researchers to be essential when creating an encouraging and high-quality preschool environment (Casey & McWilliam, 2011; Pianta, 2012). Feedback provides the teachers with an opportunity to reflect and improve their practice in order to increase student success. Feedback, also known as "good coaching" has the capability to improve teacher practice and program quality (Guernsey & Ochshorn, 2011). When observation is used with feedback, results yield improved implementation of a teaching strategy in subsequent observations (Alvero, Bucklin, & Austin, 2001; Balcazar, Hopkins, & Suarez, 1985). Therefore, professionals have developed a deeper understanding of the evaluation method known as feedback as research focusing on observation continues.

Feedback is when the assessor focuses on one specific area of the teacher's classroom in order to provide advice. Feedback can be communicated verbally, in a written form, or graphically displayed (Agbenyega, 2012; Barton & Wolery, 2007; Casey & McWilliam, 2008; Casey & McWilliam, 2011; McFarland, Saunders, & Allen, 2009; Wright, Ellis, & Baxter, 2012). Feedback provides the teachers with an opportunity to reflect and improve their practice to increase student success. Illustrating the impact of feedback, one researcher reviewed ten years of publications and discovered that peer feedback, both formal and informal, had the potential to provide constructive professional development by questioning and supporting the teacher's self-assessment (Avalos, 2011). Within the ten years of publications reviewed, other types of feedback were also found under the heading of performance feedback, including graphical, written, and verbal.

Performance feedback. Performance feedback is a specific type of feedback in which teachers are provided feedback specifically focused on their "implementation of an intervention during an observation in an effort to improve their implementation during subsequent observations" (Casey & McWilliam, 2011, p. 68). Teachers can receive the information regarding their performance of a specific task or teaching strategy through verbal, written, or graphical representations.

Graphical feedback. Two well-known researchers in the field of feedback, Casey and McWilliam (2008), conducted a study focusing on graphical feedback. Graphical feedback, a specific type of feedback used in quantitative research, is when assessors focus on one area of teaching and display the information in the form of a graph to influence future performance (Leach & Conto, 1999). Researchers have used graphical feedback as a way to monitor specific teaching strategies. For example, Casey and

McWilliam use graphical feedback as a way to measure the teacher's use of incidental learning in a classroom, which is "interactions on children's existing engagement to expand children's participant or encourage their use of more sophisticated behaviors" (p. 253). The results showed that, "presenting graphical feedback to teachers seemed to be effective in increasing the number of intervals in which they used incidental teaching with the target children" (p. 261). These results, while they cannot be generalized, can be replicated for future researchers to gain a better understanding of graphical feedback, in conjunction with a brief verbal conversation.

Written feedback. In addition to graphical feedback, there is also emailed or written feedback as a way to communicate with the teacher being observed. Barton, Pribble, and Chen (2014) conducted three studies with preschool teachers. In their studies, they focused on written feedback in the form of emails. They found that for a majority of their participants, emailed, written feedback showed initial increases of the targeted behavior, with some variability. However, participants maintaining the increased behavior varied in their three research studies.

In another study, Barton and Wolery (2007) used email feedback with preservice teachers who were in their student teaching semester. The observer sent emailed feedback to each participant focusing on the teaching strategy of expansion language. An example of "expansion language" would be when a child says, "pancake" the teacher could use expansion language stating, "Yes, I have a pancake on my plate that I will eat." All three participants increased their use of "expansion language" once the written feedback was introduced (Barton & Wolery, 2007).

The second experiment they conducted was a systematic replication of the first experiment (Barton & Wolery, 2007). By creating a systematic replication of the first experiment, the researchers attempted to replicate the experiment, but added new variables and changed some criteria. Barton and Wolery added the dimension of measuring child statements that did not result in an expansion. They also expanded their focus to include the measure of "missed opportunities" for expansion between a teacher and child. A "missed opportunity" is when a teacher misses a cue from a student to expand his or her language, as explained above. However, in the end, the second experiment had inconsistent results. Two of three participants responded well to the emails and increased their use of the specified language technique (Barton & Wolery). However, there are many outside factors to consider when implementing email feedback, including the investment and time constraints of participants. After completing these two studies, Barton and Wolery advocate for future research endeavors that may include feedback as part of teacher evaluations.

Verbal feedback. Graphical, written, and verbal feedback can go together and often accompany observations. Verbal feedback is a way to bring in the face-to-face or the social interactions needed for quality evaluation models. Verbal feedback is a conversation between the observer and the teacher to ensure teachers understand what they are viewing on the graph and/or reading in the other forms of feedback provided (Casey & McWilliam, 2008).

Self-Reflection

Overall, researchers and professionals in the education field view observation and feedback as a foundational quality for reflective teaching practices (Agbenyega, 2012;

Jackson, 1994; Lin & Bates, 2014; Ntuli, Keengwe, & Kyei-Blankson, 2009; O'Connor & Diggins, 2002; Wright, Ellis, & Baxter, 2012). Therefore, the last evaluation method is known as self-reflection, which is usually defined as allowing "educators to distance themselves from their thoughts and actions, make sense of how and why particular practices worked or didn't work and use new understanding of these processes to adapt practices to be more effective in the future" (McFarland, Saunders, & Allen, 2009, p. 506). In general, self-reflection is a way for teachers to assess their own instructional performance and question contradictory beliefs, in an ongoing process that reflects the ever-changing practices in classrooms (Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett, & Farmer, 2005; Beck, King, & Marshall, 2002; Capizzi, Wehby, & Sandemal, 2010; McFarland, et al.; Wood & Bennett, 2000; Wright, Ellis, & Baxter). Through this process, teachers are able to take ownership of the implemented strategies in their classrooms. Self-reflection is a great tool for educators to realize and articulate their progress as a teacher.

Journaling. One type of self-reflection teachers may use is journaling (Lin, Lake, & Rice, 2008). In one study, it was found that teachers are more willing to share information when they are writing a journal-like entry. Furthermore, the process of writing a journal has been found to help teachers transform and develop as professionals (Lindsey, Roberts, & Campbell Jones, 2004; Gere, Buehler, Dallavis, & Haviland, 2009). While journaling, teachers are able to become aware of their practices and create problem-solving strategies and pedagogical interactions by taking time to write and reflect, along with referring back to past entries (Wood & Bennett, 2000).

While the physical act of self-reflection has been studied, such as journaling, other researchers have investigated teachers' perceptions of self-reflection. In one

research study, pre-service teachers were asked to report their views on the self-reflection

process during their practicum course (McFarland, Saunders, & Allen, 2009). Overall,

McFarland, Saunders, and Allen found that the act of self-reflection or self-assessment

itself was the most important piece. Interestingly, the depth or detail to which the

reflection was completed was unrelated to the effects. In other words, the researchers

found that it did not matter how reflective the teacher was and to what extent the teacher

reflected, but that they were going through the process of reflecting. Overall, the

participants found many benefits to developing self-reflection skills (McFarland, et al.).

In summation, research shows that providing information alone does not usually

have an impact on teachers' behaviors in the classroom—they need to be given support

and to be held accountable (Rose & Church, 1998; Wade, 1985). Consequently, the three

described models of teacher evaluation methods can also be looked at in partnership with

each other. It has been said that, "learning to practice in practice with expert guidance is

essential to becoming a great teacher of students with a wide range of needs" (Darling-

Hammond, 2010, p. 40). The ongoing process of observation, feedback, and self-

reflection provides quality interactions and holds teachers accountable (Casey &

McWilliam, 2011; Klein & Knitzer, 2006).

<div align="center">**Multicultural Education and Curriculum**</div>

Teacher evaluation models are important when implementing and reflecting on

new teaching strategies such as multicultural curriculum/education implementation.

Multicultural education is a multifaceted movement that encompasses a wide range of

ideas, purposes, practices, and communities of interest (Banks, 1995; Gibson, 1976;

Sleeter & Grant, 1987). For generations it has been used as an "umbrella concept" for

educational practices that include race, class, and gender, along with disability, sexual orientation, and language (Sleeter & Grant, 1994). In more recent years, researchers have also added religion (Pohen & Aguilar, 2001). Most researchers, however, agree that multicultural education in school settings is geared toward stripping "the façade of neutrality from prevailing cultural standards, curricula, pedagogy, and instruments of assessment" (Olneck, 2000, p. 323).

As researchers, advocates, and educational professionals write about and discuss concepts regarding multicultural education and multicultural curriculum, the line often becomes blurred. While the two terms are tightly woven together, there are still distinctions. However, for the purpose of this study, the terms will be used interchangeably. Multicultural education and curriculum, for the purpose of this study, is defined as valuing strengths of individuals that are worthy of recognition and incorporation into the classroom through integration into every aspect of the preschool environment, which include such topics as socioeconomics, gender, race, religion, sexuality, and culture (Amos, 2010; Banks, 1995; Banks & Banks, 1995; Gollnick & Chin, 2009; Gorski, 2010; Swidler, 1986). In other words, it is a way to redefine "students' cultural repertories" as they are incorporated into the classroom and school (Olneck, 2000, p. 324).

Although that is the definition for this study, multicultural education has evolved throughout the decades. Since the Civil Rights movement, multicultural education has played an important role in society (Blum, 1997). Since then, the theory and practice behind multicultural education has advanced because it is a way to "create equal education opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic.... and cultural groups"

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(Banks & Banks, 1995, p. xi). As multicultural education has evolved, a variety of concepts of multicultural education have been developed. In spite of all the different theories, Gorski (2010) has gathered and organized six commonly shared ideas regarding multicultural education that are available in the literature.

First, every student in an educational setting must have an equal opportunity to reach his or her maximum potential (Gorski, 2010). That means that teachers need to create environments where students can and do succeed, both academically and socially. Students must also be prepared in school buildings to participate in the ever-changing multicultural society they live in (Gorksi). As school buildings become increasingly diverse, students have the responsibility to learn how to interact and embrace the changing societal demographics. This preparation occurs as a result of teachers preparing to effectively facilitate learning for individual students, regardless of their perceived "differences." Teachers can do this by creating lessons where all students can learn.

Schools must also be active in ending oppression for all types of individuals (Gorski, 2010). Educators, who create an environment where students are active and aware, both socially and culturally, are taking one step in ceasing oppressive environments in school buildings. The fifth common ideal among researchers and education professionals is that education must be student-centered and inclusive for all students. This stipulation falls in line with many of the previous ideas where students need to be the center of classroom instruction. Finally, educators and advocates for educational equity need to reexamine how educational practices affect student learning (Gorski). Some of the specific educational practices that should be questioned or reexamined include assessments, classroom management strategies, pedagogies,

materials, textbooks, children's books, and other artifacts in the classroom or school setting.

Stemming from the shared multicultural education traits, Gorski (2010) developed a working definition of multicultural education. His working definition states that there are three strands to multicultural education, which are all focused on social change, or the goal of multicultural education since the beginning (Gorski & Covert, 1996). The first strand is the educators' transformation of self. The educator is responsible for engaging and examining his or her own biases and stereotypes of cultures, religions, races, genders, etc. An educator is unable to effectively teach with a multicultural lens until he or she is able to understand how personal perspectives and continual self-examination need to occur as situations change and evolve in society and the school environment (Gorski, 2010). This idea supports the teacher evaluation model of self-reflection and Paine's (1989) descriptions regarding teachers' understanding of diversity. As schools transform with effective multicultural education implementation, it is the goal that pedagogy will be student-centered, classroom materials will be inclusive, classroom climates will be built upon support of all students, and educators will continually evaluate and assess their own understanding of achievement. The third transformation step is changing society through social change, which is incorporated in the final stage or approach for multicultural curriculum implementation (Gorski & Covert, 1996).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Closely associated with multicultural curriculum implementation is culturally relevant pedagogy. Culturally relevant pedagogy, described by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994), is a way to "describe a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially,

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emotionally, and politically by using cultural references to impact knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 17). Ladson-Billings described three criteria associated with culturally relevant teaching, which were also incorporated into the mentalities outlined by Gorski (2010). The first is that a student must experience academic success regardless of the inequities in the environment (Ladson-Billings). Second, students must develop cultural competence by utilizing their funds of knowledge or "the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for a household or individual functioning and well-being" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2001, p. 133). Third, students need to learn how to question the status quo of current oppressive social constructs (Coffey, 2008). Overall, culturally relevant pedagogy is grounded in teachers' ability to display culture competence or an understanding of cultures and the funds of knowledge associated with those cultures.

Even though culturally relevant pedagogy is an effective way to implement multicultural curriculum, it also has weaknesses. One weakness is ineffective implementation. An example of ineffective culturally relevant pedagogy would be a specific focus on "Heroes and Holidays" rather than utilizing students' funds of knowledge to expand and change the curriculum (Banks, 1999; McIntosh, 2000). Teachers who utilize students' funds of knowledge would learn about the students' cultures and backgrounds in order to inform instruction by expanding lessons to incorporate meaningful resources based on the students' prior knowledge, even if it is different from the teachers'. However, this practice is not happening consistently in the United States. Additionally, not all teachers are in favor of culturally relevant pedagogy or they may feel uncomfortable integrating classroom practices in order to present

culturally relevant teaching strategies (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2006). Teachers who

do not have the training or who refuse to accept the fact that school demographics are

changing, resulting in changed teaching practices, are also rejecting culturally relevant

pedagogy. When teachers do not accept the responsibility to change teaching strategies,

the American education system suffers, especially the students who are interacting with

others in the changing society. However, teachers are not exclusively at fault.

Administrators need to implement school-wide policies, support teachers, and become

educated themselves on multicultural topics and in their specific school communities and

across the globe (Lattimer, 2012; Yeung, Lee, & Yue, 2006).

Race and Diversity

While there are many terms related to the topic of multicultural education, the

terms race and diversity have been unofficially deemed central issues (Pohen & Aguilar,

2001). Organizations, as well as schools, have been attempting to address and define the

term "diversity" because it is saturating society (Park, 2010). Since diversity arguably

affects everyone, definitions often vary by experiences (Silverman, 2010). For example,

in the workplace, a Fortune 500 company defines diversity as, the "existence of many

unique individuals in the workplace…and community. This includes men and women

from different nations, cultures, ethnic groups, generations, background, skills, abilities,

and all the other unique differences that make each of us who we are" (Hewlett-Packard

Development Company, L.P., 2014). Conversely, the U.S. Department of Education

released a document stating the definition of diversity in school settings as, "avoiding

racial isolation" (n.d.). Thus, in educational environments, as deemed by the U.S.

Department of Education, diversity is intertwined with race (Silverman).

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Accompanying the term diversity is the term race. Race is a visible social construct, developed over the centuries as a means to identify individuals based on skin color (Silverman, 2010). The American Anthropology Association (1998) agrees that race is not a biological category but rather a social and cultural category. Due to the fact that race is often visible individuals may experience increased levels of self-awareness around others of different racial heritage or skin tones (Silverman).

While diversity is closely associated with race, so is culture. In fact, race and culture are so highly intertwined in society many individuals display an inability to differentiate the two terms (Olneck, 2000). While race has been defined as a social construct independent of an individual's biological composition, culture is defined as a "toolkit of symbols, stories, rituals, and worldviews, which people may use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems" (Swidler, 1986, p. 273). Culture has also been defined by the U.S. Department of Minority Health as "integrated patterns of human behavior that include the language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups" (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services- Office of Minority Health, 2013). Therefore, culture includes many of the multicultural curriculum categories such as social groups, sexuality, ability, and more.

Cultural Competency

Multicultural curriculum and culture also intersect when experts discuss cultural competency (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989). According to Cross et al., cultural competency occurs when individuals have the capacity to function effectively within the context of the community. When cultural competency is discussed in school buildings,

the focus is on teachers' and administrators' ability to develop an awareness of personal cultural identity and to develop the ability to learn from the varying cultures and community norms of students and families. When administrators cultivate a school environment of culturally competent teachers, they are expected to recognize the within-group differences to individualize to each student, as well as the between-group distinctions (Hughes & Johnson, 2001).

Within-group differences are those differences that are apparent within groups that are viewed as one by society. For example, Black individuals are commonly placed in the same group. However there are many differences between and among individuals considered to be in the "Black" societal group. Between group differences are the differences seen between larger groups, many times viewed as stereotypes. Therefore, administrators' and teachers' understanding and development of a high cultural competency is crucial because it starts the process of closing the racial and cultural gap in education, which is often fueled by one's cultural capital (National Education Association, 2014).

Cultural Capital

A person's identity relates to one's cultural capital or the non-financial social assets that promote social mobility (Olneck, 2000). Assets that promote social mobility beyond economic means include education, intelligence, speech, dress, etc. When designing his study, Olneck proposed the following question: "Can multicultural education transform cultural capital?" (p. 336). Olneck attempted to answer this question by referring to the power and privilege associated with cultural capital. However Olneck suggested that if multicultural curricula were implemented into an environment, the idea

of "disadvantaged" would be contested or questioned. Therefore, effective multicultural curriculum has the potential to change the negative stigma of "disadvantaged." This change in mindset and definition supports the concept of everyone bringing valuable resources or funds of knowledge to an environment, including classrooms and school buildings (Paine, 1989).

A change in mindset starts with teachers and administrators, the agents of change in the classroom (Lattimer, 2012). However, there is one question that is often raised. Who is responsible for teaching and implementing multicultural curriculum (Silverman, 2010)? Yeung, Lee, and Yue (2006) concluded that since school leaders are leading the school, they are the individuals who need to be educating and holding teachers accountable for infusing multicultural curriculum into the everyday routine of classrooms. This mentality supports the findings of both Gorski (2000) and Banks (1999) regarding the self-awareness and implementation of an effective multicultural curriculum. However, as other research studies have shown, preservice and inservice teachers do not consider multicultural curriculum infusion as part of their classroom teacher job description. Additionally, they do not feel well prepared or supported in regard to implementing multicultural curriculum, which generally stems from teacher education programs (Benton-Borghi & Chang, 2012; Liggett, 2011).

Teacher Education

Arguably teachers learning about and feeling prepared to teach multicultural curriculum should begin at the University level in education departments. Many teacher education programs have mandatory multicultural courses as part of the accreditation process. These mandatory courses are aimed at increasing preservice teachers' ability to

advocate for and implement multicultural curriculum in classroom settings (Silverman, 2010). Pohan and Aguilar (2001) found that preservice teachers felt a connection to multicultural education and therefore predicted they would advocate multicultural curriculum in their classroom. However, once preservice teachers entered the teaching field, the advocacy for multicultural curriculum diminished (Pohan & Aguilar, 2001).

Supporting those findings, Silverman (2010) found that teachers only saw themselves as a support to school wide diversity campaigns, but displayed contradicting messages through interactions with students. Lewis (2001) found teachers instructing minority students to get the "black staff" to explain a concept or stating that students "seem to play the race card a lot" (Lewis, 2001, p. 785). Additionally in Lewis' research, it was found that parents did not want multicultural education implemented in the schools. One parent stated, "I am so tired of Martin Luther King" (p. 788). From Lewis' study one can imagine that there are other schools that would build supportive research for his findings as well as schools that would contradict the findings.

As in Lewis' (2001) study, a majority of the discussed research focuses on multicultural education and curriculum in elementary and secondary school settings because of the limited information and research focusing on preschool settings. However, when gleaning the available scholarship focusing on the specific topic of preschool, much of the information supported Banks' (1999) and McIntosh's (2000) second step of "Heroes and Holidays." Hatch Early Learning (2013), a publisher, curriculum developing organization, and technology designer for early grades, depicted on its website ideas of multicultural implementation. They describe different artifacts teachers could use in order to integrate multicultural curriculum into preschool classrooms. Hatch Early Learning

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(2013) depicted articles of clothing for the drama area, musical instruments for other areas in the classrooms, and photographs and books for the library areas. While well intentioned, this frontline advocate for quality early learning environments is not guiding teachers beyond the superficial placement of artifacts around the classroom.

Additionally, an assessment instrument, the ECERS-R, also depicts specific artifacts that should be placed around a preschool classroom as a way to implement multicultural curriculum. The ECERS-R, which was discussed earlier, is the assessment tool utilized in the state of Illinois under the QRIS model. On their checklist and materials list, the ECERS-R specifies that in the "Dramatic Play" areas of classrooms there should be gender specific dress up clothes, multicultural food props, multicultural dolls, and multicultural food utensils. The document, which can be viewed in Appendix F, does not include any other center or area of the room in regard to multicultural artifacts (Environment Rating Scales Institute, 2014).

Although not everyone associated with preschool and early learning are integrating multicultural curriculum to the extent that Banks (1999) and McIntosh (2000) suggest, there are a handful of researchers who have initiated the conversation for a more integrated multicultural curriculum in preschool settings through research studies and articles, including this study.

Research Purpose

Overall, the incorporation of a teacher evaluation approach, while implementing a multicultural curriculum component in a preschool classroom, was the purpose of this study. As indicated through research, teachers who are observed and provided feedback with a purpose yield substantial improvements to instruction and other social emotional

factors (Pianta & Hamre, 2009). This research focused on the teaching strategy of implementing multicultural curriculum into State-funded preschool settings. Research suggests that preschool children are ready for the discussions and curricula surrounding multicultural topics (Piaget, 1973). Therefore, it is the responsibility of the teacher to implement the curriculum effectively (Park, 2010). This study, as evident in the data analysis and discussion portions of this research, adds to and supports the available scholarship regarding multicultural curriculum in preschool settings and the evaluation process for preschool teachers as they implement multicultural curriculum.

Overall, the literature depicted in this review indicates the importance of multicultural curriculum at all levels, along with the importance of teacher evaluations in early childhood settings. In summary, this review of literature illustrates the need for early childhood education, early childhood teacher evaluation approaches, and multicultural curriculum to expand with the support of research.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology used in this study to answer the guiding

questions which focus on teachers' descriptions of diversity; their implementation of

multicultural curriculum; and their view on the teacher evaluation approach used in the

study. Chapter 3 also provides the theoretical framework for the methodology and the

details of the research design. The following topics will be discussed: grounded theory as

part of a qualitative research design; reliability and validity; participants and their

classroom environment; data collection methods; and data analysis.

Grounded Theory: Qualitative Research Design

The technique that was used for this research study was qualitative research,

which is often used to answer questions regarding complex phenomena from the

participants' detailed viewpoint (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Therefore, qualitative research

provides rich, detailed information that adds to the available scholarship. In the case of

this research study, findings will add to the information in the overall field of preschool

education. Additionally, this qualitative study aims to understand the distinctiveness of

the particular context of multicultural education in preschool settings (Merriam, 2002).

The specific qualitative method employed was grounded theory, which is an

investigative research method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glesne, 1999). Grounded theory

is utilized when theories are used to explain and predict, as with the two theories associated with the proposed research study (Glaser & Strauss). Additionally, grounded theory is used when research is focused on a group of individuals who have a shared experience or interaction, such as in this study of multicultural curriculum implementation in a State-funded preschool setting (Creswell, 2012).

Furthermore, grounded theory was selected because of the specific data analysis coding process associated with this design: open coding. Open coding is when questions are asked about the data and comparisons are made "for similarities and differences between each incident, event, and other instances of phenomena" (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). For example, in this study, the participants were asked to write a self-reflection at the beginning and end of the twelve-week research study. These reflections were used to discuss and compare feelings, perceptions, and experiences; it was used as a starting point for the final one-on-one conversations and focus groups. Additionally, throughout the research study, participants received transcripts of the researchers' observations with graphical and written feedback.

During the first four weeks, the participants received only the transcript as a way to member check and develop an understanding of the exact procedures of the research. At the request of the participants, in the fifth week, the researcher began adding highlighted coding for the participants to understand and visually see what conversations were being considered multicultural during the narrative observations. Additionally, as part of their request, the participants began receiving graphs in week four that depicted, in a fast and visual way, what was happening in their classroom during each observation. The researcher chose to provide graphs when the participants asked for more information

after every observation because feedback can be communicated verbally, in a written form, or graphically displayed as a way to communicate information regarding current teaching strategies (Agbenyega, 2012; Barton & Wolery, 2007; Casey & McWilliam, 2008; 2011; McFarland, Saunders, & Allen, 2009; Wright, Ellis, & Baxter, 2012). The graphs depicted the approximate percentage of time participants engaged in multicultural conversations during the observation time frame. Providing a more visual representation allowed participants a reference point for conversations or questions during the process of the study regarding multicultural teaching moments. The graphs were also used at the end of the study to discuss multicultural implementation with the researcher. An example of the graph is provided in chapter 3 (Figure 2) and will be discussed in more detail.

Perceived Disadvantages

Qualitative research has strengths. However, like any research design there are inherent weaknesses. The weaknesses of qualitative research include validity, reliability, and bias or subjectivity. Despite inherent weaknesses of qualitative research, the goal of this research study was to add additional scholarship to the specific topics studied, multicultural education implementation and preschool teachers' evaluations.

Reliability and validity. This research study incorporated validity and reliability measures to counter potential weaknesses. Validation of findings occurred through strategies such as member checking and triangulation. This was added to provide readers information regarding the accuracy and credibility of the information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, as with any qualitative research study, the findings are interpretive or influenced by personal biases. Therefore, as part of this step, the researcher also was self-reflective about her role and background in the research (Creswell, 2012; Johnson &

Christensen, 2007). The researcher not only disclosed her background, perceptions, and biases, but also documented reflections, thoughts, and feelings during the course of the observations and overall study. This will be discussed further in chapter 5.

The aim to have reliable results was also achieved through accurately recording occurrences during the research study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This was accomplished by establishing clear instructions about the procedures throughout the entire research process. For example, the researcher engaged in writing narrative observational notes, which included most conversations teachers had with children and each other during the observation process. This procedure was set up because the researcher knew and experienced that the re-reading of observation transcripts brought to light conversations not noted as "multicultural" while in the situation of observing in the classroom. However, there were limitations to this process that were documented. Additional clear procedures that were used during the data collection process will be discussed, such as emailed feedback, graphical feedback, and time in the classroom.

Triangulation and member checking were two additional methods used in this study to ensure reliable and valid results. Triangulation is the process of collecting multiple data points (Glesne, 1999). In this study, triangulation was achieved through participant interviews, participant focus groups, school report card demographics, classroom observations, and researcher/observer feedback with conversations. Member checking, or the process of allowing participants to review the transcriptions and interpretations of the observations and interviews, was used (Lincoln, & Guba, 1985). Specifically, the researcher sent weekly emails to the participants. In the first and twelfth weeks, the email included focus group, one-on-one interview, and observation

transcriptions. During the course of the study, in weeks two through eleven, the emails included narrative observation notes. Beginning in week five, the researcher coded the observations to visually indicate to the participants what multicultural curriculum topics were being implemented in their respective classrooms. This process also aided the researcher in constantly checking, questioning, and reflecting on the observations, discussions, and findings (Bowen, 2005).

Researcher Bias/Subjectivity

Qualitative research has the potential for researcher bias (Creswell & Miller, 2010; Merriam, 1998). Researcher or personal biases can be triggered through personal experiences, personal background, and perceptions of individuals and situations (Johnson & Christensen, 2007). Engaging in the process of self-reflection was essential because "unacknowledged bias may entirely invalidate the results" (Kvale, 1996, p. 286). Therefore, the researcher engaged in journal writing throughout the duration of the study as a way to reflect and become aware of personal biases.

In the next section, the participants of the study will be introduced. There were five participants (three certified head teachers and two assistant teachers) who participated in the study. Every participant was in a State-funded preschool. The preschool classrooms were all located in Central Illinois and were provided grant funding. While all of the classrooms were under the same grant and entity, each one was also governed by the specific school district in the county in which they were located. One of the classrooms was located in an elementary school and the other two classrooms were located in a middle school.

Participants

The selection method of homogenous purposeful sampling was used in this study. This specific type of sampling is when a sample is selected in a fixed way in order to achieve a specific goal (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, purposeful sampling was used because the research setting had to adhere to detailed criteria. First, classrooms needed to be State-funded in a school district because classrooms under that category are guided by ExceleRate Illinois. ExceleRate Illinois is the quality assurance model using Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant money utilizing the ECERS-R observation tool, as described in the literature review. Second, classrooms that are NAEYC accredited were needed because of the multicultural component already built into the standards and curriculum. Finally, early childhood teachers in State-funded programs must have their teaching certification. The educational level of the assistant teachers varied. Additionally, once the researcher gained access the administration requested that the researcher reach out to only participants that "lacked multicultural implementation" as deemed by the administration. The researcher followed through with the request, but also recognized request as a limitation of the study, which will be discussed.

The small sample size of five participants allowed the researcher to fully engage participants during the study and was based on Morse's (2000) guidelines for determining sample size in qualitative research. The scope and nature of the topic for this study was quite specific (preschool head teachers and assistant teachers in Central Illinois willing and able to implement multicultural curriculum). Therefore, a smaller sample size was required. Also, a small sample size often results in high quality data due to the multiple interactions with the participants (Morse).

The participants in this study were located in two different school buildings within the same county in Central Illinois. Each classroom had two administration offices to report to. They each had to report to the specific district in which they were located, as well as the county office, which was in charge of disbursing the grant money and overall early childhood oversight. One of the classrooms was located in an elementary school (pre-k-3rd grade). The other two classes were located in a middle school (6th-8th grade) due to room availability. The following section describes the specific classrooms, as well as the participants associated with each classroom. The participants' names are changed to pseudonyms for confidentiality. In chapter 4, Table 2 summarizes the participants, but below is the full description of demographics as pertinent to this study.

Elementary School: Classroom 1

The classroom located in the elementary school included two of the participants for this study. The school building was located in a rural Central Illinois community. It was home to two communities that shared an elementary and middle school. One of the towns was more affluent in comparison to the other town. However, at the time of this study the district had 56.9% low-income students and 2% of students were homeless. The teaching staff in the district was 100% White, 13.8% male and 86.2% female. Overall the district was 85.3% White, 5.7% Black, 3.3% Hispanic, 0.9% Asian, and 4.7% Two or More Races (www.illinoisreportcard.com).

The teachers' day was split into two sections, a morning session and an afternoon session. Each session lasted approximately two and a half hours. The researcher observed the head teacher and assistant teacher during the afternoon session in classroom one. It is

also important to note that as a program there were no "themes" or "units" as part of the lesson planning process, but rather child-led projects.

The elementary school was designed to have a hallway for each grade level. The specific preschool classroom was located in the special education and kindergarten hallway in the elementary school. Upon entering the classroom, designated in this research as Classroom 1, there were a variety of centers. There was an art center, woodworking center, housekeeping area, block center, floor toys, table toys, a science area, a library or quiet reading area, as well as a snack table. Traveling around the classroom students came into contact with many artifacts deemed "multicultural" by the definition of this specific early childhood program, which focused on "culture" or "country". For example, in the housekeeping area there was a painted turtle shell from Nigeria. In the block center, hanging on the wall, was a sombrero, map, "Holland shoes" or clogs, and an African drum. The library area included books with pictures and stories of individuals from China, Africa, and the United States, along with children of different physical abilities, such as children in wheel chairs and children who are blind. The housekeeping area had baby dolls of a variety of races, dress up clothes from a variety of careers, and dolls varying in physical ability as indicated by wheel chairs and crutches. Additionally, in the library area there was a shadow box of a Chinese doll with other cultural artifacts.

Aside from manufactured artifacts, there were "family flags" around the whole classroom. These were 8X11 pieces of paper children and families were asked to complete at the beginning of the year to represent their home family in the classroom. On these "family flags" children included pictures of their families, activities they enjoy

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together, and their favorite color, toy, etc. Additionally, for individuals who can read, there were labels in different languages. For example, there was a wreath with greetings in a variety of languages. Overall, the classroom in the elementary school included artifacts that would approach the "culture" and "family" aspect of multicultural education, as defined in this study.

There were two participants in this classroom. There was Alexandra, the certified teacher, and there was Delores, the assistant teacher in the classroom. A description of each participant in the elementary school setting is below.

Participant 1: Alexandra Alexandra was in her mid-20s, Caucasian, Christian, single, middle class female. She was an early career certified teacher in the state of Illinois and graduated from a mid-sized state school with her teaching degree. She was currently in her second year of teaching as the head teacher in the classroom.

Participant 2: Delores Delores was in her late 50's, Caucasian, middle class, Christian female. She has been in the teaching field for twenty years. Delores was the assistant teacher in the preschool classroom and attended a small community college to receive the certification for her current position.

Middle School: Classroom 2

There were two classrooms located in the Central Illinois middle school, which included three participants. At the time of the study the overall school statistics focused on teaching staff were 97% White and 3% Black, 7.5% male and 92.5% female. Focusing on the student demographics, the middle school district had 41.4% White, 50.7% Black, 0.7% Hispanic, and 7.2% Two or More Races. The overall low-income percentage was

89.9% with 2% of students who were homeless. Additionally, this school district had 0.4% English Language Learners.

The teachers' day was split up into two sections, a morning session and an afternoon session. Each session lasted approximately two and a half hours. The researcher observed Classroom 2 during the morning session and Classroom 3 during the afternoon session during this study.

Classroom 2, the first classroom located in the middle school, was the classroom of Alivia, a certified teacher. Classroom 2 was located next to a special education classroom and near Classroom 3 in this study. As in the whole school building, the classroom doors must be closed and locked. Therefore, when approaching Alivia's classroom, the researcher noticed a poster hanging on her door referring to the fact that everyone is different and that we should accept and support our differences. Upon entering the classroom, there were a variety of centers set up in specific areas around the classroom. There was the sensory area that included water and sand. There was a quiet area that included a feeling chart of children of a variety of races. There were the art center, the science center, and the block area. In each of the centers there were artifacts to facilitate multicultural conversations. In addition, there were musical instruments from a variety of countries, wooden people from a variety of cultures, and porcelain figurines resembling people of Dutch heritage, a Nigerian cloth, and Native American artifacts.

Other areas of the classroom were quite similar to the Classroom 1 described in the elementary school. There were family flags from each student hanging around the classroom; the housekeeping area was stocked with baby dolls and dress up clothes from a variety of races, cultures, and careers, along with food from varying cultures. There

were signs around the room in other languages describing where things go or what things are. For example a chair was labeled "silla".

Participant 3: Alivia Alivia was in her mid-30's, White, Christian female who self-describes herself as living in poverty. Alivia attended a Midwest University and received her B.A. in education along with her early childhood teaching certification. At the time of the study she had been a head teacher for eight years.

Middle School: Classroom 3

Classroom 3, the second classroom located in the middle school, was the classroom of Monica and Alexis. The early childhood special education classroom and the other preschool classroom were located next to this classroom. When entering their classroom, the researcher noticed many of the same artifacts and centers as already described in Classroom 1 and 2. The first center that the researcher came to was the art center and the snack area. There was also the rug area, which included blocks, a housekeeping center, water table area, science table, sand table, playdough and tool bench, and an art easel. An additional area of the room was designated as a quiet place for children to calm down if they were upset. There was also a math table to use small manipulatives. In the corner by the teacher's desk was a place for students to read and listen to books on a CD player. In the described areas above there were posters with children of varying physical abilities and a variety of races and cultures. They had the Nigerian cloth, as mentioned before in Classroom 2, as well as many of the same artifacts in the housekeeping area.

Upon further investigation and questioning, the researcher discovered many of the artifacts were purchased and given to all of the classes, hence the commonality among

the classes in many of the centers or areas. Additionally, this classroom also included family flags as a way to bring families into the classroom. This classroom also had labels in English and Spanish. A difference from the other two classes was that they did have a Spanish-speaking student.

Furthermore, the researcher noted that a portion of this classroom was the cultural area, which was located in the back of the classroom for the first half of the research study. However, the center was redesigned into a doctor's office for a project they were completing in the classroom for the second half of the study. When it was the "cultural area" there were big pillows to sit on, a wooden house with a variety of wooden family members, a globe, and a wall hanging with small flags from around the world. As both a doctor's office and cultural center, students utilized this space as will be described in the "findings" section.

Participant 4: Monica Monica was in her early-40's, a Catholic, middle class female. She self-identifies as White on the demographic survey provided at the beginning of the study, however throughout both interviews she spoke of her Native American heritage. She has her B.A. from a Midwest University and, at the time of the study, had been in education as a head teacher for fifteen years.

Participant 5: Alexis Alexis has her AA from a Midwest community college. She was in her 30's, and was a White, non-religious, middle class female. She had been in education for ten years as an assistant teacher.

Data Collection

The objective of this study was to investigate the implementation of multicultural curriculum in preschool settings in Central Illinois. The topic for the study is current and

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meaningful to the changing student demographics in preschools and the stagnant

demographics of preschool head teachers and assistant teachers (DeVillar & Jiang, 2012).

This was accomplished through a teacher evaluation model, including observation,

feedback, and self-reflection. Qualitative research methods were used to gather data.

Throughout the entire study, the researcher was collecting data on teachers'

understanding of diversity, their implementation of multicultural curriculum, and their

knowledge and level of comfort when discussing multicultural topics with other staff

members, the researcher, and children in their classrooms. The data points that were

included in this study were one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and reflections that

occurred at the beginning and end of the study with the participants. Additionally, the

researcher reflected throughout the entire study and engaged in observations and written

weekly feedback cycles for twelve weeks. The research also answered and engaged

teachers when questions arose in the classroom regarding multicultural curriculum and

topics. Documentation of the schools' report card was added as a way to understand the

demographics of the school and classroom environments. Figure 1 provides a visual

representation of the data points for the research study.
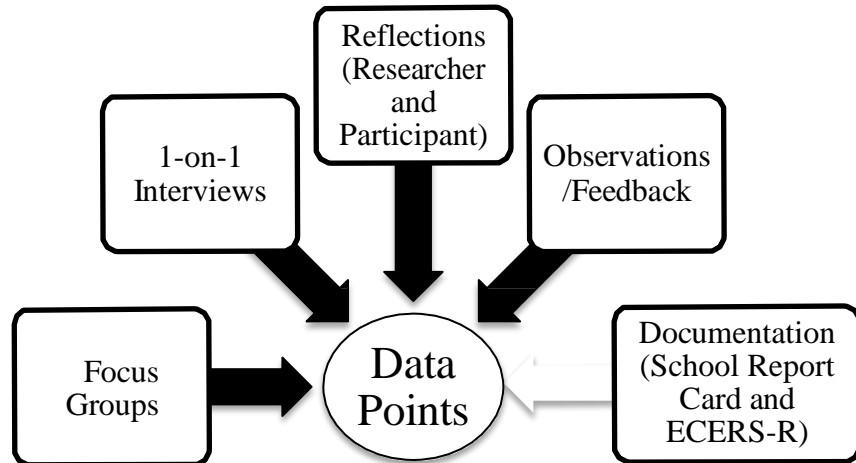
Figure 1: *Data Points.* The data points used to collect data.

Methods

In order to gain information, the researcher used four guiding questions as a way to focus data collection and analysis (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2013). The four guiding questions addressed different aspects of the research project, therefore utilizing all data points and were based on the purpose of this study (Appendix A and B).

The four questions were as follows:

1. How do preschool teachers describe diversity in their classrooms and school environment?

2. How does a comprehensive preschool teacher evaluation approach generate preschool teachers' sense of agency when implementing integrated multicultural curriculum?

3. What does it mean to preschool teachers to implement integrated multicultural curriculum in preschool settings (look like, feel like, sound like)?

4. How does an incorporation of multicultural materials into a preschool classroom environment influence the teachers' view and implementation of multicultural curriculum?

As depicted in Figure 1, the various data points were used as a way to establish triangulation over the course of the twelve-week study. Triangulation is important in qualitative research to increase the confidence in the findings (Glesne, 1999). In this research study, triangulation occurred through the data collection points of observations, reflections, feedback, interviews, and focus groups. Additionally, incorporating different data sources provided numerous forms of data to investigate wide-ranging issues.

The information that was collected from both the interviews and focus groups were transcribed, sent to the participants for member checking, and finally analyzed by the researcher (Creswell, 2012). The researcher engaged in reflection and note taking while transcribing and rereading the documents several times. Additionally, the participant reflections at the beginning and end of the study were analyzed in conjunction with the interview and focus group transcriptions. Each time the researcher read the documents more findings became evident, which guided the description of the data. The researcher was looking for emergent categories through the data analysis process (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Due to the nature of the questioning used and the manner in which the observations were completed, overall themes emerged, which were avoidance, knowledge ("here and now"), and support.

Focus groups. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), focus groups (also known as group interviews) are implemented in research studies as a way to facilitate an atmosphere of rich conversations among a small group of participants on specific issues (Bogden & Biklen, 2007; McCawley, 2009). Through this process, group participants often encourage each other to articulate views. However, it can also create an atmosphere of participants who are too embarrassed to share (Bogden & Biklen). Setting focus group

guidelines, as discussed by Bogdan and Biklen, was implemented by discussing "what is said here stays here" along with the researcher encouraging participants to relate to the researcher as a peer and former teacher.

The participants engaged in two focus groups, one at the beginning of the study and one at the end of the study. The focus groups centered on diversity and multicultural education implementation in the participants' schools. They not only focused on the schools, but also on how supported the participants felt from both of their administration entities. The audio taped focus groups, along with other audio taped portions of the research (interviews), were transcribed for use during data analysis. The purpose of transcribing audio taped portions of the gathered data was to gain more information from the participants by allowing them to member check, or review the interactions, in order to ensure accuracy (Kvale, 1996).

Interviews. Conversations are at the core of human interactions. Therefore interviews, a type of conversation, were an important data collection procedure (Kvale, 1996). According to Glesen (1999), interviewing is the best way to gain information regarding participants' feelings and opinions. However, developing trust and rapport is essential. This was achieved through developing a professional relationship with the participants throughout the research study by getting to know them, greeting them upon entering the classroom, and discussing how their days/weeks were going through daily conversations.

The interviews engaged participants in individual, audio taped, semi-structured, open-ended interviews at the beginning and end of the twelve-week study (Appendix B). Semi-structured interviews were implemented because they involve in-depth

conversations on specific topics with flexibility (Creswell, 2012; Glesen, 1999; Kvale, 1996). By utilizing a semi-structured interview format, there was the flexibility to develop questions in response to unexpected points of interest (Glesen). For example, during one of the first interviews, one of the participants began discussing current issues in society such as the Ferguson, MO, and Michael Brown case.

The interviews focused on the teachers' perception of diversity, which was analyzed through the lens of Paine (1989). They were also asked questions regarding the level of multicultural implementation in their classroom and school building, along with their sense of agency, or level of comfort regarding multicultural education implementation. This type of interview protocol allowed participants to create and state their opinions when responding in more of a "client-centered" format (Creswell, 2012; Kvale, 1996).

Self-reflection. Self-reflection is a way for teachers to assess their own instructional performance (Beck, King, & Marshall, 2002; Capizzi, Wehby, & Sandemal, 2010; McFarland, et al., 2009; Wright, et al., 2012). McFarland, et al. define self-reflection as allowing "educators to distance themselves from their thoughts and actions, make sense of how and why particular practices worked or didn't work, and use new understanding of these processes to adapt practices to be more effective in the future" (p. 506). Reflection creates an environment where teachers want to change themselves, rather than have change dictated to them by articulating implicit and personal theories (Wood & Bennett, 2000). One type of self-reflection teachers may use is journaling, which is the process of teachers becoming aware of practices and problem-solving strategies through writing (Lin, et al., 2008; Wood & Bennett).

In order to gain more information, the participants were asked to complete a written reflection focusing on their feelings, perceptions, and insights regarding multicultural education in preschool environments at the beginning and end of the research study. The first reflection and the final reflection were both reviewed at the same time during the final one-on-one interview with each participant. The addition of two self-reflections added another layer to the participants' thoughts and feelings by providing an unstructured time for the participants to think about diversity and multicultural education in their school environments.

Observation and feedback cycle. Preschool teachers have been participating in observations for decades (Guernsey & Ochshorn, 2011; Pianta, 2012). Observations are a way to gain first-hand information that either supports or contradicts teachers' words and actions (Silverman, 2001). Although this study focused on the research questions, the researcher made sure to document all conversations in order to have a reference when reflecting and transcribing the observations.

Along with the observations, feedback was also provided. Feedback is when researchers provide information or their perspective on a given topic (Bodgan & Biklen, 2007). Feedback can be formative or summative. Formative feedback is provided when the goal is to improve an ongoing program. Summative, on the other hand, is provided as a final report of the program (Bodgan & Biklen). For a majority of this study, formative feedback was utilized. However, at the end of the study there was summative information provided to the participants.

The observation and feedback cycles were scheduled three times per week for a total of approximately 155 minutes per week in each classroom. The researcher and the

participants set up a schedule prior to the research project in order to schedule times around assemblies, field trips, and scheduled days off. Generally speaking, on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Fridays the researcher observed the three participants at the middle school, one in the morning and two in the afternoon. On Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays the researcher observed the two participants at the elementary school during their afternoon class session. However, due to illnesses and snow days, the shortest amount of time a participant was observed in a one-week period was sixty minutes. Therefore, when documenting the length of multicultural conversations, a percentage was used as a way to represent an approximate amount of time multicultural conversations occurred during the observation time frame. The researcher used the time on her phone as a way to keep track of the approximate length of time teachers engaged in conversations. The researcher did not keep track of exact seconds, but used this data as a way to inform participants of the approximate amount of time multicultural conversations occurred during each observation. Additionally, during the structured portion of the observation cycle, descriptive and reflective field notes were written to describe the setting, people, activities and any direct quotes. This occurred because there was no video or audio taping while in the classroom environment (Creswell, 2012).

The observations concentrated specifically on the participants, head teachers and assistant teachers as they engaged in conversations around the classroom with students. However, the students' portions of the conversations were not recorded because they were not the focus of this study.

The observation notes, or formative feedback, were communicated to the participants via email upon each of their requests. The first four weeks of observations

included transcribed notes from the observer. Beginning in the fifth week, the observer added highlighted portions of the transcriptions to indicate to the participants what was being considered multicultural conversation, upon their request. Additionally, in weeks four, eight, and twelve, the researcher provided each participant her own graph set. The graph was broken down by week, which will be displayed and discussed in the findings of this study. The percentage of time multicultural conversations occurred was documented, as described above. The percentage was chosen by the researcher because of the different length of times observations occurred during each week, as documented in Table 1. These different types of written communication were used as a way to communicate and allow participants to member check the information to ensure the information gathered was accurate according to the participants. It was also a way for participants to "see" their classroom during each observation.

Table 1

Total Observation Time Per Week (in minutes)

		Participants			
Week	Alexandra	Delores	Alivia	Monica	Alexis
1/2*	232	232	213	223	223
3	225	225	140	210	150
4	215	215	60	205	205
5	165	165	220	200	200
6	105	105	70	90	90
7	210	155	85	50	110
8	205	205	140	145	145
9	140	140	150	50	125
10	200	200	70	175	50
11	140	140	155	70	70
12	215	215	175	70	120
Total	2025**	1997	1478	1488	1488

*Weeks 1 and 2 were placed together due to many snow days at the beginning of
the study.
**Alexandra has the most because she never missed an observation.

Figure 2 displays all of the participants' time spent engaged in multicultural
conversations throughout the twelve-week study, which is based on the percentage of
time in the classroom as described earlier.
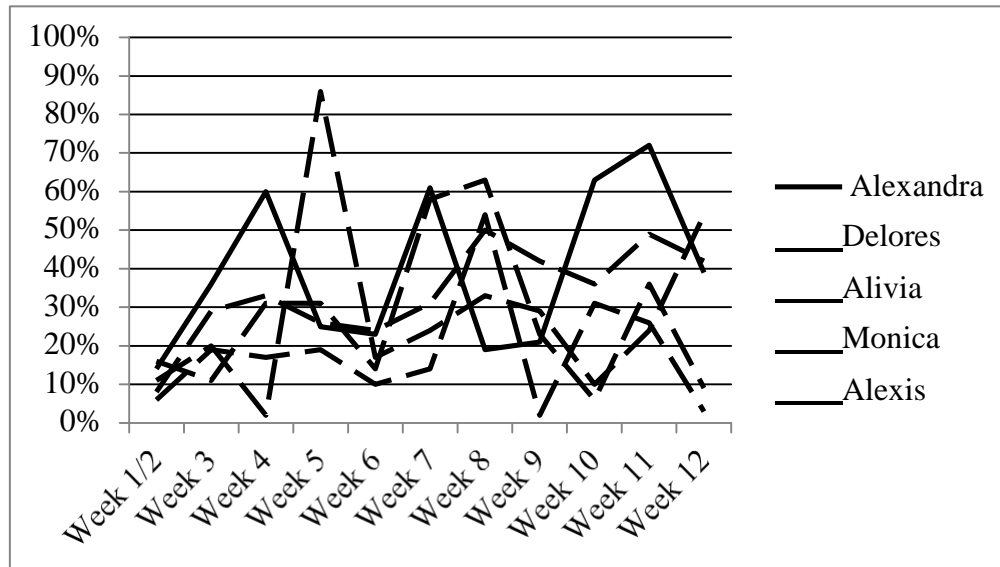
Figure 2: *Participants' Multicultural Conversations by Week.* The approximate average each participant engaged in multicultural conversations/lessons during the observation window per week.

As part of the observation protocol, the researcher also documented in handwritten notes, which were later transcribed to an electronic form, most of the teaching moments (conversations) that occurred during the researcher's time in the classroom. After transcription, the researcher was able to reflect and code multicultural teaching moments/conversations. This was an important piece of the narrative observation because the researcher was able to add more self-reflections while reviewing the day through the narrative notes. The researcher also realized that through this process of transcribing and self-reflection, conversations in the classroom were brought to her attention that were not initially seen as a multicultural moment while observing. This process allowed the researcher to continually ensure accurate coding of themes and analysis, with the addition of member checking the transcriptions. Finally, the coding process led to themes that directly related to the guiding research questions.

During the researcher's reflection process of the transcriptions, observations, and reflections, she asked herself many questions such as, "What is in the classroom that could be used for a multicultural conversation?", "Are teachers utilizing what they have?", "Do the teachers have the resources and/or support to implement multicultural conversations?" and "What do teachers think multicultural topics and lesson plans are?". These questions, along with others, provided the researcher with topics to discuss during the end-of-study interviews and throughout informal conversations while in each classroom observing.

Documentation. Documents refer to a wide range of written and physical material (Merriam, 1998). There are advantages to using documents in various research studies. In this specific study, limited documentation was used, and added to the overall understanding of the community and school demographics. The researcher accessed the School Report Card to help understand the racial demographics and the class or socio-economic demographics of the two school buildings. These documents provided a deeper understanding of the community of students in the classroom environment.

Additionally, multicultural descriptions and standards were accessed in order to gain a wider understanding of the stipulations placed upon the preschool classrooms being observed. The researcher gained knowledge of the definition and activities surrounding multicultural education for both NAEYC and the ECERS-R instrument. The researcher gained knowledge of the NAEYC definition because each classroom observed was NAEYC accredited. The ECERS-R evaluation tool was accessed because the state of Illinois uses this instrument during their observations and evaluations of preschool

classrooms (Appendix C). Therefore, accessing both of these definitions and accompanying documentation was important for the data analysis process.

Procedures

Prior to gathering data, the researcher obtained the human subject permission from the University's Internal Review Board (IRB). The researcher then reached out to various State-funded preschool entities located in school buildings around the Central Illinois area by mailing a letter. The letter was sent to the gatekeepers of potential schools, such as superintendents and principals/directors. In the letter the researcher explained the purpose and details of the study. Once a State-funded preschool program's gatekeeper agreed to participate, the participants were recruited through homogenous purposeful sampling utilizing emails. The gatekeeper, or the director in the case of this study, guided the researcher to email head teachers and assistant teachers who had been identified through state visits as classrooms needing assistance in implementing multicultural education into their classrooms. (This was recognized as a limitation and will be discussed.) The goal was to obtain between four to ten participants for the study. By contacting potential participants, the researcher was able to secure five participants.

After all parties agreed to participate, they had the opportunity to sign consent. As part of the written consent to participate, the head teachers and assistant teachers were given information regarding the study, including information that participation in the study was optional and could be discontinued at any time with no repercussions. Additionally, as dictated by the University's IRB protocol, the participants had to re-sign consent after three months, which was at the end of the study before the final one-on-one interviews and focus groups.

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Once participants had signed initial consent, the first round of interviews and focus groups were arranged at the convenience of the participants. A set of questions for the focus groups and one-on-one interviews was established. However, these were only used as a guide for the conversations. They were both semi-structured experiences.

Upon completion of the interviews and focus groups, the researcher began her observations in the classrooms. A schedule was set up for each teacher to ensure the researcher saw various portions of the day throughout the twelve-week time period, which was approximately between January 2015 and March 2015. The first observation consisted of the researcher taking pictures of the classroom (without students present) and taking detailed descriptions of all the items or artifacts in the classroom. After the initial observation, the researcher made notations on changed items in the classroom rather than documenting every artifact again in future observations.

At the beginning of each observation, the researcher and participants would have a brief discussion on how the day was going or any questions the participants had regarding any portion of the research. The researcher made sure to document these conversations as a way to reflect on the day. Some examples of documented conversations include a participant indicating to the researcher that they were not feeling well that day, assemblies or classroom visitors that took place the day of the observation, or any other personal or professional discussions the participants brought up. This detailed documentation was beneficial during the data analysis process.

During the observations, the researcher would document conversations or teaching moments teachers demonstrated. After each observation, the researcher would type the observations and highlight multicultural portions of the day, as dictated by the

definition used in this study. In the first four weeks, the researcher sent the transcriptions to the participants via email. Beginning in week five, the researcher began sending the transcriptions with highlighted portions to indicate to the participants what was being considered multicultural including conversations about culture, race, family, holidays, religion, sexuality, gender, and socioeconomic or class. Additionally, the researcher made notes of different aspects of Banks' (1993) and McIntosh's (2000) levels of multicultural implementation through the coding process, however did not provide this information to the participants unless requested.

The researcher also gathered two additional forms of data during each observation. The researcher would document the time spent observing, along with what discussions or teaching moments occurred in the classroom. The researcher also had conversations with participants regarding multicultural curriculum in their classrooms, which provided sufficient information and data to support the purpose of this study. Throughout the data collection process, the researcher began to hone in on more specific guidelines for the observations focusing on multicultural curriculum implementation. However, the researcher made sure to continue to document most, if not all, of the conversations teachers were having in the classrooms. This was a conscious decision to prevent an initial judgment or bias. Upon transcribing, re-reading, and reflecting, the researcher was able to gain a better understanding of the classroom as a whole, rather than always focusing on what the researcher believed was multicultural during the classroom observation.

Ethical Concerns

There are ethical concerns when research involves human participants. Bodgan and Biklen (2002) depict two main ethical issues. The first is informed consent. At the beginning of this study, as well as at the three month mark, the participants were provided information regarding the details and purpose of this study. They were also given the opportunity to ask specific questions, which most of the participants chose to do. These are documented in the researcher's notes. Additionally, the participants were informed that at any time they could stop their participation in the research without any repercussions. Furthermore, the participants were treated with respect without deception. An example of this would be sending transcriptions as a way to involve the participants in member checking.

The second ethical issue, as depicted by Bodgen and Bilken (2002), is protecting the participants from harm. Throughout this study the researcher encouraged the participants to express themselves openly. The participants were also provided the opportunity to member check and were provided drafts to show how they would be presented, quoted, and interpreted in the data (Stake, 2000). This availability of drafts allowed participants to comment and voice their own beliefs and perceptions based on the study, data analysis, and findings.

Data Analysis

Data analysis, as described by Glesne (1999), includes the processes of reflection and organizing the information gathered. Analyzing data as it emerges is often used in grounded theory design in order to create a focus throughout the process of the study and guide further data collection (Creswell, 2012; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba,

1985). The continuous analysis of data did influence the researcher, specifically in the types of notes and reflections taken during and after the observations in the classrooms. As the researcher continued observing and taking notes in the classrooms, more detailed and verbatim quotes were evident in the transcriptions.

During data collection and analysis there were specific steps followed, as described by qualitative methodologists (Creswell, 2012). Initially the data points, which were the interviews, focus groups, and observations, were transcribed within twenty-four hours of the event. This was to ensure the researcher still had the events fresh in her mind as she transcribed and reflected. At the end of each week, the participants received the observation notes and were encouraged to review and member check to ensure the researcher had accurate information. This process also gave the participants an understanding of what was occurring in their classroom by reading the transcriptions. Many times this process leads to a deeper reflection process. Additionally, as the researcher highlighted or coded specific multicultural conversations in the observations, the participants were able to better understand what the researcher was focusing on during observations. The graphs also added a level of focus for the participants to see their multicultural conversations week by week.

The data was then sorted into open codes to provide descriptive information (Glaser & Strauss, 1967: Glesne, 1999). Open coding, a familiar process in grounded theory design, was used to compare data points, instances, and participants' responses (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Furthermore, the researcher collected her thoughts as a way to document her perceptions of the data. This was helpful as the researcher went back to critically think about and analyze the data.

Using the method of open coding facilitated the ability to compare and contrast the reflections, conversations, and teaching moments observed. These open codes were then placed into analytic files, which were separated into categories such as participants and research questions. (Anfara & Mertz, 2006; Glesne). This process was completed in order to understand the research from multiple viewpoints (Glesne). The data was analyzed to find major themes and any subthemes that emerged. Non-useful information was disregarded from the data points in order to focus on the useful information that was gathered.

This study investigated the implementation of multicultural curriculum in State-funded preschool settings located in Central Illinois. The designed research process yielded findings that add to the available scholarship. These strong research methods led to triangulation, therefore increasing the validity and reliability and addressed concerns associated with qualitative research by including multiple strategies utilized to create a well-built research study.

Chapter 3 discussed the methodology used to collect data for this study, including participants, the school buildings, and the specific procedures used throughout the entire study. As indicated above, there were multiple data collection points used to ensure triangulation, which therefore increased the reliability and validity of the study. This grounded theory research used interviews, focus groups, observations, feedback, and documentation as a way to gather data focused on the guiding research questions. Furthermore, concerns regarding the methodology of this study were discussed.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In chapter 4 the findings of the research study will be presented in two sections. First, the findings will relate to research questions one and three by utilizing Paine's (1989) theoretical framework and Banks (1993) and McIntosh's (2000) levels of multicultural implementation. Second, the researcher will relate the findings to research questions two and four by relating the findings to the participants' sense of agency when implementing multicultural curriculum as it corresponds to administrators' involvement and the evaluation method used in this research study.

Additionally, throughout the data analysis process the researcher found overarching themes, which were avoidance, knowledge, support and the overarching consensus of implementing multicultural curriculum that is in the "here and now" for teachers and students. These themes support and add to the current literature. They will be described in greater detail throughout chapters 4 and 5.

Preschool Teachers' Description of Student Diversity in Classrooms and Schools

Through the data analysis process the researcher found that many of the same data points could be used when citing findings related to research questions one and three. Therefore those two questions were combined. Research question one focused on Paine's (1989) theory, which describes how teachers view diversity in and among the students in

their classrooms and schools. Research question three focused specifically on how the preschool classroom environments in the study looked, sounded, and felt from the lens of multicultural curriculum implementation depicted by Banks (1993) and McIntosh (2000).

Prior to discussing the findings regarding participants' views and implementation of multicultural curriculum, the demographics of the five participants will be presented and reviewed to understand their backgrounds. The five participants in the study had varying backgrounds, degrees, socio-economic levels, ages, and years of experience in the field of education. Table 2 shows the demographics of each participant as self-described.

Table 2

Participants' Demographics

	Participants				
	Alexandra	Delores	Alivia	Monica	Alexis
Gender	F	F	F	F	F
Age	25	58	31	40	30s
Education	BA	AA	BA	BA	AA
Marital Status	Single	Married	Single	Married	Married
Race	White	White	White	White*	White
Religion	Christian	Christian	Christian	Catholic	Non-Religious
SES	Middle Class	Middle Class	Poverty Class	Middle Class	Middle Class

*Although she self-identified as White, she indicated in both interviews that she has Native American heritage in her background. (i.e her grandmother was Native American)

When discussing the findings, the researcher will display findings associated with both theories. However, the following section will be divided into the four categories of Paine (1989), which include individual differences, categorical differences, contextual differences, and the pedagogical perspective. These four categories will be used to describe the findings of the following themes: avoidance, knowledge ("here and now"), and support. These three themes will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 5.

The researcher will use Paine's (1989) categories as a way to describe the themes, but will also interconnect Banks' (1993) and McIntosh's multicultural education levels or approaches as appropriate. Through the data analysis process, it became clear to the researcher that teacher mindsets, or their views of diversity, were integral to the implementation of multicultural education in their classrooms. Therefore, focusing on Paine's (1989) theory and interconnecting Banks (193) and McIntosh (2000) was guided by the data analysis process.

Individual Differences

Individual differences, according to Paine (1989), include the perspective that "the world is seen as full of people who differ in all sorts of ways and on all sorts of dimensions… psychological and biological explanations of diversity" (p. 3). The five participants all displayed this mentality at various degrees, as described below.

When asked to describe the diversity in their classroom and/or school building, each participant immediately used the description words of "poor", and "minority", and described the family demographics of their student body. Additionally, they each stated that they had a strong desire for their students to understand that everyone is the same regardless of money, skin color, or family situations. However, when discussing the idea

that everyone is different but alike, Monica and Delores both alluded to their own personal belief systems. They believed multicultural education should not be a focus in preschool classrooms because the United States is a "melting pot." Delores said:

> I don't understand why there is all this like Black History month but there's nothing for Caucasian people. So, that kind of bothers me because we are becoming, at some point, we are going to be a melting pot and we (White people) are dwindling so are we going to have a Caucasian month? And, we won't.

When discussing this idea with Monica, she also mentioned the "melting pot" idea, but took it one step further. She approached this concept by focusing on all of the differences in the world and stating that being a "good person" or a "good Christian" is something everyone should "just do" in relation to other people. Monica stated:

> It is more of just respect for other people. I feel like I already do that. If you are a teacher at all you should be doing that all day everyday… I think that is just more of my personality. *(Researcher: "Not every teacher is like that.")* Well, then, they are not a good teacher. I mean honestly, I mean not even a good person. I mean good people don't treat other people that way. I guess it is just treating other people with respect and care and you know and understand that we are different agree to disagree on something.

Additionally, Monica reflected on her own heritage as she supported this idea. She said, … but at this point in our lives I don't think that race, are you black or are you white, I think that we are the melting pot at this point. In my history there is Native American, but I don't walk around saying I am a Chippewa.

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While Monica and Delores viewed the individual category from one perspective, Alexis and Alexandra approached this concept as differences with no connection to social groups. They both spoke about their childhood experiences of growing up in homogenously White communities, but with parents who encouraged discoveries related to differences.

Categorical Differences

A categorical difference perspective includes categorizing individuals based on repeating patterns "such as social class, race, and gender" (Paine, 1989, p. 3). While stereotyped categories are the focus of this perspective, the explanation of why society has created social constructs or why students may "fit" into a social construct is not considered or discussed.

In general the five participants all agreed that there were categorical differences and spoke of the differences without being directly asked by the researcher. Delores focused on the categories of socioeconomics and gender as the two most important categories affecting her school and classroom. Alexandra agreed and reflected with Delores during a focus group regarding the category of socioeconomics. An example of this mentality occurred during a whole group activity when Alexandra read a book about two little girls who were friends. One of the little girls did not have any food at home and the other little girl had plenty of food at home. During the reading of that story the participants asked the students if they had food in their refrigerators at home. Both Delores and Alexandra commented that they were surprised when all of their students reported having food in their refrigerators at home. Additionally, Alexandra reflected on

another whole group activity including literature about a child going to the Laundromat with his father. In reference to the book Alexandra said to the students,

Some of you have a washer and dryer in their house. Some people don't, they have to go somewhere. Some houses and trailers don't have washer and dryers. This is the Laundromat. You put money in the machine. If you have one at your house you don't have to put money in it.

By engaging students in literature and discussions regarding the multicultural topic of socioeconomic status, Alexandra was beginning to touch on the Additive Approach as described by McIntosh (2000).

When analyzing the data it became apparent that not only Alexandra, but also all of the participants agreed with Delores regarding the category of socioeconomics. Alivia said:

We do have parents in there who make pretty decent money, I mean, in our classroom, mostly in the morning class, mostly it is divided up our morning class you kind of have middle class parents, I mean you don't have rich people, but you have middle class and then our afternoon is pretty much low socioeconomic.

During a focus group session the same sentiment was referred to by a participant who stated, "I have more kids who would qualify to get a basket then would qualify to donate. You know, I just don't think it's fair, so I just don't do it."

Aside from socioeconomics, participants also spoke about the importance of introducing students to differences, based on the category of cultural traditions; however the "why", was left out of the discussion and lesson implementation. Alexis stated:

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Talking about including lots of other traditions, not to focus on what we think is our normal tradition, like Christmas. Usually we try to include all of the holidays when it comes to the Christmas season. Kwanza, to Chanukah, the whole realm and if we are going to teach one, we give them a taste of each of them.

Moreover, Monica spoke about traditions and cultures during interviews and reflections. She, along with the other participants, incorporated many Eurocentric or "traditional" holidays into her classroom such as Valentine's Day and St. Patrick's Day throughout the course of the study. However, each participant failed to acknowledge Black History Month, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, and President's Day in their classroom and curriculum.

When speaking to Alivia about the holidays, she did reflect that she "usually doesn't do that much," with holidays, but felt the pressure to provide similar experiences for her students, as other teachers were implementing the holidays into their classrooms. When the researcher asked each participant about the holidays that were celebrated in the classroom verses the holidays that were not celebrated in the class, generally speaking, the participants agreed that families saw the celebrated classroom holidays as the "normal" holidays. The participants reported that throughout the years families have rarely questioned or asked to be excluded from the celebrations. Therefore, most of the participants felt it was normal and okay to implement the Eurocentric holidays into their classroom settings, making the holiday celebrations part of the norm in the classroom and school building.

When speaking to Monica about the holidays, the researcher discovered that the lessons were planned around Thanksgiving and Christmas because, as she stated, "those

are the two holidays where typically your whole family gets together, you know. Thanksgiving and Christmas, so between that three-week span that's (family) my primary goal." She went on to say, "None of these 'things' (multicultural topics) matter when addressing my classroom; I view every child/family as individual—therefore respecting any diversity." While this mentality of holidays and the assumption of family time support more of a Curriculum of the Mainstream mentality, other participants also stated their feelings regarding the importance of family, but from a slightly different perspective.

Both Alivia and Alexis acknowledged, through different data collection points, the importance of bringing the family into the classroom in different formats. They discussed the importance and significance of a yearly project called "Family Flags" where each student was asked to make a flag with their family, which was then hung in the classroom throughout the year. That specific family project touched on Alivia and Alexis' perspectives of categorical differences but also on the fourth perspective of pedagogical implications (contextual), which will be discussed shortly.

Aside from families, but still within the categorical difference perspective, Monica discussed racial and socioeconomic differences she had experienced as a teacher in different school settings. For example, when discussing the different multicultural artifacts around her room she stated, "You know like the Sombrero and I had that Chinese lantern. I have been here for not even a full year and they (the children in her classroom) break everything. They don't know how to play with things." Additionally in focus group sessions she stated that she was unable to do things with "these kids"

because the kids "understanding and cognition level is so much lower here than it was at *previous school.*"

Contextual Differences

While participants had instances in "categorical differences," many of the participants also touched on the next category, contextual differences, through their empathic responses or the asking of "why?" regarding situations. Contextual differences continues to build onto the foundations of the first and second perspective because it takes the category or pattern and asks the larger "Why?" question in relation to the socially constructed stereotypes. At this level, the data analysis indicated that not all of the participants were asking "Why?" in their reflection process as teachers.

Monica embraced this perspective by stating her desire to understand the cause of socially constructed differences. She approached this perspective at both a macro-level and a micro-level in relation to society's categories and stereotypes. At the micro-level she focused on her students and their categories during her personal questioning. In a discussion focused on the importance of incorporating family life, she stated:

> So it's sort of this thing, oh these parents don't volunteer, oh they don't do this they don't do that. I mean I don't personally understand that but I can empathize with that, you know their worry is not sitting and making sure this child is sitting and learning ABCs, their worried about if they are going to get food tomorrow. You know their priorities are different and I get that.

Monica also touched on the fact that she understood the importance of asking why at the macro-level for students and schools. She reflected that she wanted students to understand the struggles that people went through to become American by teaching

aspects of history. For example, when discussing Thanksgiving, Monica believed students should understand the struggles of Pilgrims and Indians at a deeper level. Monica's descriptions related to understanding why and the desire for students to see the world through the eyes of history indicated her knowledge of the Additive Approach (Banks, 1993; McIntosh, 2000). The sentiment to have a consequence for teaching and learning was there, which leads into the final category, the pedagogical perspective.

Pedagogical Perspective

The pedagogical perspective "assumes that differences are not simply random and interesting… (they have) consequences for both teaching and learning" (Paine, 1989, p. 3). The participants in this study each approached this perspective in their own unique way. Nevertheless, each participant mentioned her own view regarding the "consequences for teaching and learning." This guided some of the participants to the highest level of multicultural implementation during portions of the observation cycle, which will be discussed later. One caveat, though, was that every participant stated that multicultural curriculum integration needed to be applicable to the students in the "here and now," which one participant did seamlessly: Alivia.

Alivia used her contextual perspective to guide her questioning in order to provide projects for students in the classroom that were applicable to their interests and were current to their lives. She reflected on three specific student-guided projects throughout the data collection process. One took place a few months prior to the research, which was a police project. In her final interview, Alivia referred to a recycling project she was planning to implement based on student interest. The final one she reflected on occurred several years prior regarding students' misconceptions of Black people.

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For a majority of the study, in interviews and during observations, Alivia reflected on a project she did with her students regarding the police. She indicated that many of the students in her classroom had negative views of police officers. She began to ask herself, "Why do students have this negative mindset regarding police officers?" She attributed those views to the fact that many of her students lived in the same Section 8 housing complex where there had recently been shootings and police activity. Throughout the course of the project she realized that her assumptions were correct. The students' negative views came from conversations they overheard at home and the experiences they were seeing first hand in their neighborhoods ("here and now"). When making a conscious effort to teach students about police officers and transform their mindsets, Alivia engaged in the Transformational Approach of multicultural education (Banks, 1993; McIntosh, 2000). She reflected the following:

> I wanted to turn that negative into a positive. We had a police officer come in and talk to the children about what they do. The officer explained to the children that parents don't go to jail because they are "bad" they go to jail because they break the rules. The children then had a better understanding of what police officers do and it seemed liked it was a positive experience.

During the course of the study she encouraged students to question their ideas. Furthermore, she unknowingly involved staff members in the conversation when posting the project in the hallway for other students and teachers to see. In her reflection she not only spoke of her interactions with students in her classroom, but also about some staff members who were adamantly against the displayed project because of the perceived negative portrayal of police officers. Conversely, some teachers found it enlightening and

worthy of praise for helping students to understand a social-misconception in the community the students in that school building were living in every day. It was their "here and now."

At the end of the study, Alivia continued to reflect on how she was planning on incorporating more student-initiated, multicultural projects, specifically one focused on littering. She chose this topic because of students' interest in the garbage surrounding the park they used for outdoor recess, therefore engaging students in a social activity aimed at changing mindsets and perspectives (Banks, 1999; McIntosh, 2000). She stated that, "hopefully they (students) will tell their parents to stop leaving garbage after BBQ's once we are done with this project." Alivia's overall mindset can be summarized into a statement where she said, "I would do a project on anything they (students) are interested in. So I mean, regardless if people are mad or whatever, if they (students) want to know about it I will do a project on it."

Embracing the pedagogical perspective, Monica approached it as one of personal heritage as related to the constructed idea of culture. For her, a cultural norm in America is to be with family around Thanksgiving and Christmas that can be seen as a Eurocentric mindset (Curriculum of the Mainstream), which was described earlier. Additionally, she discussed the cultural significance of Thanksgiving and St. Patrick's Day as it related to her and her family. Therefore, Monica wanted to bring in her personal background for the students in her classroom to experience. She saw this cultural additional, from her personal lens, as a benefit to her students by teaching and learning about the cultural context of traditions in America.

Stemming from Monica's pedagogical perspective was Alexis' view of contextual differences, including the teaching and learning in the classroom at the pedagogical level. Alexis greatly valued the family flag project and made sure to refer to the family flags throughout the entire observation window. This ongoing conversation with students brought in the idea of teaching to students' "here and now." Additionally, Alexis reflected on a family book project implemented in the classroom between Thanksgiving and Christmas. As part of this project, books were sent home to be completed with family members. In her interview, she stated that she felt like she needed to change the wording on some of the pages within the books because each page was not representative of each student's family. She knew not everyone in the classroom had a mom, a dad, a grandma, a grandpa, and other family members that were represented in the family book. Through this process and experience, Alexis displayed her attempt to engage in the transformational approach or structural reform according to Banks (1993) and McIntosh (2000).

Alexandra, who was the youngest teacher and most inexperienced participant, reflected during the final interview and focus group that throughout the study she had begun to reflect at a deeper level regarding multicultural curriculum implementation. First, she realized that some of her yearly classroom activities were multicultural but she had never considered them to be multicultural until participating in this study. She reflected that she did not feel they were multicultural because of the administration's definition of multicultural as only including culture, which will be discussed in more detail later. For example, she completed an entire study focused on students' self-portraits. Through this project Alexandra discussed skin color, hair color, eye color, and

so forth as a way to talk about differences. In the course of this project she had students use the "multicultural" markers in the classroom or the markers that displayed a variety of skin tones when drawing their self-portraits. During one interaction that occurred during an observation, Alexandra said to her student:

> Your skin is not this white. My skin is a little bit different than yours and your skin is a bit different than *student.* Mine is tan. Maybe *student*, do you know what makes your skin darker? How do you remember your skin is peach and not apricot? Is that okay that your skin is different than his? Yes, we all have different skin color.

Alexandra implemented this project and similar projects by including activities and books that support the researchers' findings regarding her multicultural implementation method focused on differences. Therefore, guided by the findings in her classroom, Alexandra's implementation style represented the Contributions Approach by celebrating differences (Banks, 1993; McIntosh, 2000). However, when asked about the lack of other multicultural topics in the classroom, such as Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and Black History month, she reflected that, "It didn't affect me I guess so I didn't think about it." In other words, it was not part of her "here and now," so she did not think about including those topics.

Creating multicultural topics that were tangible for students and teachers also supported the findings associated with Delores. For example, several times throughout the study Delores spoke of a Chinese student who was adopted and in the classroom several years ago. That child was the older sister of another student in the class, at the time of the study. Therefore, Delores' view of the pedagogical perspective focused on the

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fact that the Chinese culture was something that was actively part of a student's life. Hence, asking the parent to come into the classroom to share information was appropriate and resulted in learning for the students in the classroom. Delores saw that opportunity as a "here and now" teachable moment.

Overall, the data analysis focusing on research questions one and three led to an understanding of what was currently happening in the participants' classrooms. The data analysis process also guided the researcher to discover participants' mindsets and actions associated with multicultural curriculum implementation in a preschool setting. However, it became apparent that preschool teachers (participants) did not have total control of the information implemented in their classrooms. They must report to administrators who require specific standards, lessons, and activities.

Evaluations and Artifacts Influencing Participants' Sense of Agency and Views of Integrating Multicultural Curriculum

In this section, the researcher will discuss the participants' sense of agency as it relates to their overall view of multicultural education, their view of the multicultural artifacts in their classrooms, and the role of the administration in regards to multicultural curriculum implementation. This discussion will be based on observations and interviews from the research and will answer the guiding research questions two and four.

Participants' Sense of Agency

The researcher focused on participants' sense of agency when analyzing the data as it related to research question two. A participants' sense of agency relates to their level of comfort integrating multicultural education into their classroom. Throughout the data analysis process the researcher realized that most of the participants began and ended the

study with a different view and confidence level regarding the implementation of multicultural curriculum. However, their view of the artifacts placed in the room by state and administration mandates did not change, which the participants reflected on throughout the course of the research study.

Multicultural education/curriculum. At the beginning of the study, during the initial interviews and focus groups, the researcher informed the participants of the definition of "multicultural" for the purpose of this study. After which, the researcher asked the participants about courses or professional development they had received regarding multicultural education. This line of questioning, along with other collected data points, guided the findings to include the theme of "knowledge."

While interviewing the participants, the researcher found that they could generally verbalize that they had received training focused on multicultural education; however they did not remember or take any applicable information from those encounters. Alexandra, who was two years out of her undergraduate degree, recounted that, "I had one (multicultural education course), but I can't remember anything from it. It was in education. It was one of the first general education classes when I went to *name of university*." Alivia's experience affirmed Alexandra's undergraduate education. Alivia said, "I don't really know what I learned in college. No, I really don't think I learned a lot. I learned a lot more from experience." Additionally, Delores' comments supported the knowledge theme, broken down even further to "lack of applicable knowledge" when she reflected on trainings the preschool program had provided in the past as professional development. Delores declared:

Our trainings have become different. Twenty years ago we could afford to bring

in really interesting people and we would all go to the conventions. But of course money has stopped that so now we do what the others are doing and it is not on multicultural.

After hearing the definition for "multicultural" for the purpose of this study, and reflecting on past trainings and courses, most of the participants stated that they understood and appreciated the wider definition of multicultural to include disability, gender, socioeconomic status, and so forth. Delores said, "I like your description better because I do see the gender thing too. We do hear, especially out on the playground, this is the girl club." Alivia reflected, during the final one-on-one interview, that hearing the definition of multicultural education at the beginning of the research study and seeing it "in action" through the feedback notes was "an eye opening experience… we don't realize how much we talk about families and your mom and your dad and your brother and your sister and all that kind of stuff."

Although the participants were able to understand multicultural education from a wider lens than previously experienced, the lack of education and knowledge regarding "how to do" (implement) and "what to say" were still evident. Most participants agreed that they did not know "what to say" to preschool students to engage them in deeper multicultural conversations. Most participants reported that they were afraid that if they pointed out differences to students then they, as the teachers, would be drawing attention to qualities students had not noticed previously. Delores said, in response to a question asked by the researcher regarding the importance of multicultural education topics in preschool classrooms, "I am torn. I was hoping to be at a place where we would all already be considered equal and if you brought it up it was only pointing out that we are

different." Alivia echoed this mentality when answering a similar question during her one-on-one interview, which not only touched on the "how to do" but also touched on a previously stated mentality of making the multicultural information in the "here and now" for students. Alivia said:

> If I don't have a two-mom family in my room I am not going to teach two moms. I don't want to bring in a lot of confusion for kids. I want to go along with what is happening in my classroom.

As far as "what to say" to children, most participants were still confused or ill guided. The overall feeling can be summarized in a statement from Delores who said, "And it's hard at this age for me because I don't really know what to talk to them about," when approached with the question of how to implement multicultural curriculum.

Alivia had a similar reflection during an informal conversation in the midst of an observation. She reflected about an experience from the previous day. She explained that a student in her class made a comment regarding a female middle school student's haircut creating a situation where the preschool student said, "You look like a boy. Are you a boy?" Rather than discussing the situation with the preschool student or taking advantage of that "here and now" teachable moment, Alivia ignored the comment and pretended it did not happen. She reflected to the researcher that she realized that was wrong, but she did not know what to say to the preschool student regarding their observation of a female student with a shorter haircut looking like a boy. This example not only links to the themes of knowledge but also to the theme of avoidance.

On the other hand, Alexis saw the importance and appeared to understand the "how to do" from the point of providing many artifacts in the classroom. She also

reflected on the importance of talking with students about the artifacts in an honest, open, and developmentally appropriate way. Alexis reflected that,

At this level I would put out the pictures of lots of different cultures, ages, races, that way if they do question it through play you can still answer some of those questions even if it is not their direct culture. Like I told you before, I grew up in the same kind of school everybody was white, everybody was the same class. Where if they see pictures at least they are seeing some pictures that they can question. But if you isolate them and just don't even acknowledge that differences exists, then when they do get out there and they do have questions they won't be shocked.

After analyzing the data from the lens of participants' overall training and coursework regarding multicultural curriculum, the administrators' role became evident in the findings, which links to the theme of support.

Administrations' role. The administration for the classrooms in this study was two-fold. There was the administration in the building where the participants worked, which were separate school districts as described earlier. Additionally, the entire early childhood program in the outlying parts of the county had an administration team that ensured early childhood standards were met. While each participant needed to report to their building and district administration, the county or program administration guided the classrooms' implementation of most topics, including multicultural education.

During the data collection and analysis process the researcher found that the participants believed that the increased multicultural artifacts in the classrooms were directly linked to the previous state visit and NAEYC accreditation process. Therefore, as

a review, the term "multicultural artifact" for the purpose of this study encompassed materials around the classroom that were available to students with the potential of conversations focused on multicultural topics. For example, baby dolls of varying races and genders, a globe, or cultural trinkets placed around the classroom in various centers. The classrooms involved in this study had many artifacts around the classroom from artifacts on the walls to figurines throughout every center representing the administration's definition of multicultural as "culture."

Since the artifacts were mandated, the participants did display them in their classrooms. However, the participants had similar negative views of the multicultural artifacts, which impacted their sense of agency during the implementation of multicultural curriculum with the administration's definition in mind. Alexis stated that, "they (artifacts) are just decoration." When discussing the figurines and other multicultural artifacts with Monica, the researcher asked a question regarding the lesson planning behind introducing the materials. Monica stated, "No, they (artifacts) are brought to us before school starts and it's when we set up our room. They (administration) are like 'Here are your multicultural items and here set up your rooms.'" Delores' ideas regarding the artifacts are similar as well. She stated, "I feel it is kind of pointless. There are more things that are more important at this age to be teaching than to bring in something that they are not going to remember." She goes on to bring in the notion, however, that when it is applicable to the students she understands the importance of the lessons or artifacts. Such as when she stated, "I think if you have a Chinese child in your classroom, it is appropriate," as described previously as the "here and now," concept in her classroom.

Furthermore, Alexandra had similar feelings regarding the "cultural" artifacts mandated around the classroom. She also mentioned the idea that children were not supposed to touch the artifacts but rather just look at them in her classroom. Alexandra said:

> I don't really like them. They are just on the wall. You have to have so many other things that are at kids' level most of our multicultural things are not at their level, so not that they can't see it. Well, they are not supposed to touch them because the things we have are nice and from other countries. You can't just go get new ones.

Alivia supported the idea discussed by the other participants regarding the multicultural items, but also took a stand "against" the artifacts. She said, "I don't like them because I think they are so stereotypical and I just don't like stereotypical stuff." Later on she followed up that comment with the following statement: "Well honestly I just don't do it. I mean honestly I just don't do it because they don't understand it," in reference to implementing lesson plans along with the artifacts placed in her classroom.

In addition to having artifacts around the classroom, the county program administration also provided varying levels of support to the participants under the heading of multicultural education. Each classroom received a calendar that depicted multicultural themes for each month, which also included instructions on providing two multicultural snacks per month. The participants were also encouraged, from the snack description within the calendar, to add a lesson focused on the culture in which the food originated. However a specific lesson was not included. The overall consensus regarding the snack and lesson can be summarized when participants relayed their feeling during a

focus group in which they discussed the upcoming Latvia and Germany lessons/snacks. One participant said, "I feel they are way farfetched though. Like kids don't even know where they live and we are talking about Germany." Another participant, in this same conversation said, "I mean it's just so abstract to the kids, they don't get it… because tomorrow is Latvia and I am like, really?"

The calendar depicting the multicultural snack and lesson for the months of the school year was brought to the researcher's attention at the beginning of the study. Therefore, throughout the study the researcher looked for and paid closer attention to the calendar in relation to the snack and cultural lessons. At the conclusion of the study the researcher had only observed one classroom (the classroom of Monica and Alexis) explore the snack and country lesson. While Monica reflected that she did not see the point because it was too abstract for children, they still engaged in a teacher-created lesson plan focusing on cultures from around the world in conjunction with a snack.

The researcher asked the other two classrooms of participants about the snack and lesson plan focused on a country to ensure she had not missed it. The researcher was informed by Alivia that she "just does not do it," which follows her previous statements of taking a stand "against stereotypical" artifacts. As far as Alexandra and Delores, they had never thought of doing a formal lesson with the snack. Rather they just provided the snack to students. Additionally, Alexandra and Delores reflected that many of the snacks were "Americanized." Therefore it was difficult to draw a connection for students to understand. For example, some of the snacks were nachos from Mexico, pizza from Italy, and snickerdoodles from Germany.

Overall, the participants informed the researcher that from their perception the administration was more concerned about the artifacts around the classroom than the actual teaching and learning associated with the cultures. The participants also stated that within every district there was a concentration on the core areas of math and reading, therefore leaving minimal time for multicultural lessons. Upon hearing this, the researcher inquired about the building administration and their role in the teachers' classrooms. The participants reported that at the elementary school, the principal would only become involved during extreme behavior issues, but had yet to observe the actual teaching in the classroom. The teachers at the middle school enlightened the researcher with the fact that the building administration administered standard evaluations (The Danielson Model). Other than that, however, the middle school administration did not become involved in the life of either preschool classroom. This idea of evaluation guided the data analysis process to the next section, which will focus on state, school, and research based evaluation processes linked to research question two.

Evaluations

The topic of teacher evaluations corresponded to participants' sense of agency for two reasons. First, the evaluation process used by the state every three years as a way to monitor state-funded preschool settings impacted participants' sense of agency. Second, the evaluation method included in this study resulted in findings associated with participants' confidence or sense of agency when implementing multicultural curriculum. The data analysis process and findings will be separated into those two sections.

State. During the research window, the State of Illinois visited as part of their evaluation process every three years for state funded preschools. The tool Illinois used

during their evaluation was the ECERS, as described in the literature review. Prior to the state's visit, the teachers prepared their classrooms on a random day within a three-week time period. As previously reflected, the participants' view regarding the increased amount of multicultural artifacts in the classroom was directly related to the previous visit from the state when the program was reprimanded for their lack of multicultural artifacts.

Prior to the visit, the participants reported that the county administration for the program entered each classroom to provide tips on how to improve the classroom environment. Some of the comments were focused on multicultural topics. Overall, it appeared that the program team took great strides to improve the classroom environment regarding numerous indicators, including multicultural education, by placing artifacts and needed items around each classroom.

After the state visit, the teachers reported that the state's assessor minimally focused on multicultural topics. Alexandra stated that the assessor asked her only one question regarding multicultural activities in the classroom. Additionally, when the reports were received a few weeks later the participants informed the researcher that nothing was mentioned regarding the topic of multicultural education.

Research. In addition to the state's ECERS evaluation, the participants were also engaged in an evaluation process throughout the research study. The study's evaluation process was not focused on informing participants of "good" or "bad" teaching in reference to multicultural education, but rather providing an unbiased view in each classroom environment through narrative anecdotal notes. Additionally, part of the

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evaluation process was to encourage participants to reflect on their teaching, focused primarily on multicultural education.

Overall the participants reflected that they enjoyed the process and the ability to see what they were saying to students. Some of the participants reflected, in the last interview and written reflection, that they were able to think through situations creating a feeling of increased confidence when approaching multicultural topics or developing a stronger sense of agency. Alexis said the most beneficial portion of the study was "getting the anecdotal notes, seeing what I was saying that way I was more aware of it." Later she hinted at the fact that from the anecdotal notes she was able to think through future teachable moments with students.

Alexis' self-proclaimed boost in confidence was also reflected in Alexandra's reflections. Alexandra said, "I have changed a little in the way I may talk with the children or view different situations. I am more conscious when talking about class, gender, race, etc." Delores' reflection also summarized that feeling when she stated, "It has just made me more conscious and careful in how I listen and respond to children." Alivia's end reflection also supported the idea of becoming more aware of conversations and teachable moments through the narrative observation notes. Furthermore, in support of this notion, Alexis wrote:

> I have changed my level of awareness to the multicultural content of my conversations with children, and I have tried to provide lots of materials in the classroom to help stimulate those conversations.

While most of the participants enjoyed the evaluation process and found value in the reflection and self-discovering process, Monica had a different perspective

concerning the research and evaluation process. Monica repeatedly mentioned that she was seeking and wanting more from the actual research study. She wanted the researcher to tell her what she was doing right and how to fix what she was doing wrong. This goal of "fixing a problem" was not part of the study and was made clear to Monica several times through discussions regarding the importance of reflection and self-growth. However, in her final reflection, she stated that she had not changed her teaching at all regarding multicultural topics and that she did not understand the point of the research study. Monica stated:

> I guess I kept feeling like there needed to be an explanation for, yeah I got that you do this and you do this and you do this. And I was like well, is that good or is that bad?

Through conversations it became clear that Monica wanted more direct instruction on the "how to do" multicultural education.

Most of the participants' sense of agency or their confidence in implementing multicultural curriculum was impacted by the study. A key component of the participants' sense of agency was twofold. First, the researcher was able to provide a clear definition of multicultural education for the participants. The second component was the participants' acceptance or willingness to reflect and take ownership of their personal and professional growth as an educator in a preschool classroom.

Overall, through the data analysis process, which utilized the four guiding research questions as a foundation for discovery, the researcher was able to understand and discover information focused on multicultural curriculum implementation in preschool classrooms. Additionally, the researcher was able to delineate overarching

themes, which were avoidance, knowledge, which includes the concept of "here and now", and support as discussed throughout chapter 4 and will continue to be discussed in chapter 5.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

In chapter 5 the findings will be discussed by focusing on the themes that were found through the process of coding, which were briefly introduced in chapter 4. The coded themes were avoidance, knowledge, which included the "here and now" of multicultural education, and support. After discussing the findings and implications, the limitations will be presented. Then the researcher will present her personal reflections along with suggestions for future research based on the findings from this study. Finally, the researcher will discuss the conclusions of the study in its entirety as a way to finalize the reporting of this study.

The purpose of this study was to investigate how Central Illinois preschool head teachers and assistant teachers implemented multicultural education in their classrooms by using an evaluation method to observe and provide feedback. This study was significant for three reasons. First, it focused on the preschool classroom, which is a current focus for both President Obama and U.S. Department of Education's Secretary Duncan as they advocate for high-quality early learning environments (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Second, this study was significant because it brought attention to the importance of multicultural education in school buildings with changing student demographics and stagnant teacher demographics (Amos, 2010; Gollnick & Chin, 2009). Third, this study focused on an inclusive, peer evaluation method that had no other

implications than professional growth. Peer evaluations could support the increased accountability measures for teachers in the United States as evaluation models are continually being executed in schools (Saluja, Scott-Little, & Clifford, 2000).

This study used two theoretical frameworks as a way to understand how head and assistant teachers think about their students and the diversity within their classrooms. Additionally, the theories were used to understand how participants implement multicultural education in their preschool classrooms. The researcher used Paine's (1989) theory of teachers' mindsets regarding student diversity and Banks (1993) and McIntoshs' (2000) theory, which focuses on multicultural implementation within school buildings.

Implications

After data analysis and the construction of the themes of avoidance, knowledge, which included the "here and now" of multicultural education, and support for teachers and students, inferences could be made. Each theme will be discussed further; however it will also be illustrated how the themes intermingle throughout the data analysis.

Evident from the intertwining themes was that knowledge and support begin at the top with the preschool program administration and university faculty. This research, along with past research, support the notion that program administrators and faculty members have a duty to become comfortable in who they are as individuals through the process of reflection. This is needed in order to effectively lead and guide current and future educators through multicultural topic discussions and lessons (Johnson & Alkins, 2009; Lowenstein, 2009; Zozakiewicsz, 2010).

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Reflection is essential for the professional development of administrators and educators because individuals are able to take ownership of strategies and document progress. It is also an important piece when school communities are trying to prevent the inherent action of avoiding topics that may clash with the hetermormative or Eurocentric views in society. Not only must the individuals at the top reflect, but they must also encourage future and current educators to reflect in order to combat uncomfortable feelings felt when discussing multicultural topics such as sexuality or race (Yeung, Lee, Yue, 2006). When any individual begins to feel uncomfortable in a situation, they often revert to avoidance as a coping strategy (Amirkhan, 1990). Leading advocates and researchers understand and advocate for change in schools regarding multicultural education so the coping strategy of avoidance ceases and the conversations regarding race, culture, sexuality, gender, religion, and socioeconomic status begin (Banks, 2009; Vavrus, 2002). Banks (2009) stated that many times teachers or educators avoid situations focused on multicultural topics because the conversations are too difficult to handle. This was also evident in this research study.

While Delores and other participants reflected that fear was the leading factor in avoiding topics, she also reflected that she felt if differences between and among students were pointed out, then she would be influencing students' views of situations they may not have recognized previously. However, Piaget (1973), a world-renowned psychologist, stated that even young children place individuals into categories in order to make sense of their world. While children of preschool age may be very egocentric, they still have the ability to notice differences (Park, 2010). In one study that focused on preschool students, "skin and hair color were central aspects of a person's physical appearance," as described

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by students (Park, 2010, p. 402). More recent studies have found that White children consistently exhibit biases against Blacks (Goodchild & Gloger, 2005).

That phenomenon is called "in-group favoritism" and begins around the age of five (Aboud, 2003). This means that young children in early childhood classrooms begin to understand whom they look like and can associate with based on physical appearance and their understanding of similarities through developing higher cognitive functioning. Differences such as "out-group prejudice" are lower and develop as students grow academically and socially (Aboud, 2003). However, once children develop the cognitive ability to segregate based on skin color, it has been found that they begin to embody the idea of White as powerful and minority as inferior (Aboud, 2003; Guerrero, Enesco, & Lam, 2011). Therefore, discussing those differences actually has more of an impact in the lives of preschool students than avoiding the conversation altogether. However, in order to address the multicultural topics in classrooms, educators need to be provided with the knowledge and support to do so appropriately and effectively.

Avoidance

Overall, participants in the study either avoided topics or missed multicultural teachable moments in the classroom. As was evident through this research and previous research, early childhood educators not only avoid conversations with students but also with parents (families, guardians). It has been found that teachers will do anything in their power to maintain a pleasant and involved relationship with families, even if it means avoiding controversial issues such as multicultural topics (Connolly & Hosken, 2006). Therefore, it could be concluded that preschool teachers value the relationships

created with parents more than the experiences students have in their classrooms, even if it means conforming to a societal norm that could lack inclusivity.

While a direct link to pleasing parents or family members never became apparent, it could be concluded when reviewing previous research on the topic (Banks, 2009; Connolly & Hosken, 2006; Teach For America, 2011). There were several instances throughout the study when the participants either consciously or unconsciously chose not to discuss a multicultural topic, which led to the theme of avoidance. Participants reflected that when they felt uncomfortable about a multicultural topic that arose in their classroom, the topic or situation was ignored. While these findings support previous research, as indicated earlier, it also could lead to implications regarding participants' views of taboo topics in society. Such as fear of instilling their own morals and values on the students. When participants have their own viewpoint, such as Monica did regarding being a "good person," it could be difficult to approach "gray areas" with preschool students due to fear of disparities with parental and family values or morals.

Parents' and family members' influence in the lives of the students and the classroom environment could be implied when understanding previous research (Connolly & Hoksen, 2006). In an age of increased accountability, teachers have become fearful of challenging society's "normal" mindsets. But what is normal? The participants in this study indicated, for the most part, that they knew multicultural education was important, especially with the changing demographics in school buildings. However, they decided to avoid situations because of fear that parents/guardians would be unsatisfied with the education their child was receiving. For example, Alivia indicated that she only talks about two mom families when it is part of the classroom environment, but even then

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it is something that had received push back because it was not a "norm" or a concept fitting into the heteronormativity ideals most parents were seeking in school buildings.

Furthermore, Alexandra commented and reflected that she unknowingly did not discuss multicultural topics because they were not her own lived experiences. She was ignorant of the impact of multicultural topics in the lives of her students. Therefore, it could be implied that, until teachers are made aware of multicultural topics, it is hard for the predominantly heteronormative teaching field to implement topics they are unconsciously avoiding. This avoidance, whether it is due to ignorance or fear, can be linked to the knowledge educators receive from both universities and school districts. This leads into the next theme of knowledge and understanding of only implementing multicultural topics considered to be in the "here and now" for students.

Knowledge ("Here and Now")

Avoiding situations, as indicated above, could have resulted from participants' lack of applicable knowledge. In the example of Alivia avoiding the interaction when a student had a question about a girl who had shorter hair looking like a boy, Alivia reflected that she did not know what to say. Therefore, she avoided the situation due to her lack of knowledge. This concept, however, does not support the overarching knowledge concept of "here and now" as indicated by all of the participants when talking about implementing relevant multicultural topics in their classrooms.

Throughout the course of this study, participants often referred to the importance of implementing "here and now" lessons or applicable knowledge with concrete examples for their students regarding multicultural curriculum. One way educators could do this is by focusing on the funds of knowledge of students and families. As stated in the

literature review, it is important for teachers to value the family's funds of knowledge in order to understand the family, culture, and traditions (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Sternberg, Lipka, Newman, Wildfeuer, & Grigorenko, 2007). By gaining information about the families, the participants could and did bring in ideas and lessons focused on the "here and now" for students rather than the more abstract concepts associated with multicultural education in the eyes of the participants.

The participants appeared to be very comfortable talking about the families in the classroom. They had a strong sense of each family due to the programs' construction of home visits, family liaisons, and frequent family nights. Each participant overwhelmingly spoke to students about their families, what they do with their family, and how their family functioned or the demographics of the family. When discussing the "here and now" concept of multicultural education, most participants referred to their level of comfort surrounding the topic of family, therefore they would often use that "here and now" topic (family) as a way to discuss other multicultural topics (socioeconomics, gender, religion, etc.).

Stemming from the "here and now" concept of family, participants also indicated that when students had questions about their environment they were more comfortable implementing those topics because it was a question the students raise. For example, Alivia and Monica both indicated that they would be implementing a litter unit because of the students' interest in the garbage on their playground. While the students were able to ask questions and guide the teachers to a unit of study, this also supports the concept of teachers seeking knowledge.

While littering is not constricted to one race, culture, or socioeconomic class, the teachers did reflect that at times they did not understand the viewpoint or questions students asked because they, as teachers, did not have the same lived experiences. Therefore, part of the knowledge gained was one of introspective processing on the part of the participant. This processing or reflecting and researching relevant topics guided participants through accessing knowledge.

Aside from the knowledge participants gained from students, participants also reflected on the knowledge they gained or did not gain from both professional developments and previous coursework. It is evident through research that this lack of knowledge regarding multicultural education was not specific to this region. Multiple researchers have also found this phenomenon in various studies (Kea, Campbell-Whatley, Richards, 2006; Russell & Russell, 2014).

When discussing the program administration and the professional developed offered, one participant indicated that, "as long as we have our multicultural things on the walls, they are okay. They (administration) don't know what multicultural is how you (researcher) explain it, which I like better." This statement summarized the fact that the participants perceived the program administration as lacking multicultural knowledge, therefore were not reliable in answering questions. Not only did the program administration lack knowledge, but many of the participants did not agree with the administration's simplistic definition of multicultural as purely "culture." For many of the twenty years Delores had been employed with this program, multicultural education had focused on the "culture" of people, with occasional additions throughout the years, but rarely expanding to include topics other than culture.

This limited expansion to the definition of multicultural could be due to several factors. With the increased accountability measures focused on core content areas, the administration might not have had time to investigate the up and coming research focused on multicultural education. Additionally, the administration may not have their own experiences to guide them through the process of questioning and reflection through the eyes of the students in the buildings they manage. While the truth regarding the limited expansion may not be known, it did become apparent through the research process that not only was the definition limiting, but it seemed to have been constricted over the years with the elimination of Black History Month, President's Day, Cinco de Mayo, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. This elimination could be a result of avoidance, knowledge, or the concept of multicultural topics needing to be in the "here and now." Whatever the reasoning, these multicultural topics had been eliminated.

The eliminated holidays in this study support the overwhelming consensus that multicultural topics must focus on the "here and now." For example, a child cannot touch Martin Luther King, Jr. therefore he does not need to be discussed in detail. Also one participant indicated during a focus group that "preschool students do not need to hear about Black people and White people being mean to each other because then they may start to do it in the classroom." However, when asked about St. Patrick's Day, Christmas, Thanksgiving, and other traditional holidays the participants did not use the "here and now" statement, but rather the idea that those are "normal" holidays in our society and families expect to have those celebrations throughout the school year.

While most of the knowledge base was a direct result of the administration's applicable knowledge, several times throughout the study the participants indicated their

lack of knowledge started at the university level. None of the participants could state specific courses or topics they learned through their undergraduate studies. As previous research indicated, when conversations do not start through teacher preparation courses, the likelihood of the conversations starting after teaching diminishes (Russell & Russell, 2014; Sleeter, 2001). One study, by Laughter (2011), used discussion groups to facilitate conversations regarding race and racism. From his study, at a very minute level, it showed that reflection and dialogue groups (discussion/reflections) helped define race and racism for White pre-service teachers. These results, along with other research, support the importance of reflections and conversations at all levels of teaching from pre-service to in-service to school administrators (Davis, Ramahlo, Beyerbach, & London, 2008; Gay & Kirkland, 2010; McFarland, Saunders, & Allen, 2009).

So, while the participants indicated they felt as though they did not have enough training or knowledge to implement multicultural education effectively, it also became apparent that the program administration was avoiding the topic of multicultural education. This was likely due to a lack of knowledge regarding current multicultural research through the mandates they set forth, which ignored topics such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Cinco de Mayo. Nevertheless, it does need to be stated that the administration was excited and willing to allow this research to occur in classrooms within their program as a way to learn. They responded promptly to emails and other inquires. So, while the lack of knowledge was apparent, their willingness and wanting to learn was also evident. This idea led into the next topic found through data analysis, the topic of support.

Support

In this research, support and knowledge became tightly intertwined as the researcher began to understand that the program administration needed to have knowledge in order to support multicultural education implementation appropriately. This concept supports previous research that encourages school administrators to educate themselves on multicultural topics, such as funds of knowledge and culturally relevant pedagogy, in order to implement school-wide policies and fully support teachers (Lattimer, 2012; Yueng, Lin, & Yue, 2006).

Throughout this research study, support was given to the participants focused on multicultural education from the program administration; however it became evident that the limited multicultural knowledge on the part of the administration impacted the results. The program administration provided support through a yearlong monthly calendar, professional development provided and paid for by the grant monies to the program, and visits throughout the year to monitor the overall classroom environment. Although the program administration provided support, the participants still indicated their needs were not being met with regard to multicultural education in their classrooms.

Each classroom had a yearlong monthly calendar provided by the program administration that included different events and topics throughout the year. One of the topics addressed each month was multicultural lessons and snacks. The snacks were associated with different countries and places around the world, such as Latvia, Germany, The Netherlands, and Mexico. Each classroom was instructed to provide two "multicultural" snacks in a one-month period while teaching students about that country and origin of the snack. As indicated in the findings, every participant did not do this, nor

did every participant agree this was time well spent in the classroom. While the administration did provide ideas for each classroom, implications can again be linked to the knowledge base of the administration team that put together the calendar. It could be assumed and confirmed by the participants that the administration had a very narrow idea of what "multicultural" entailed, specifically only cultures and countries. Ironically, when thinking back to the "here and now" concept, the idea of countries and cultures from around the world did not fit into that mentality. This again supported the idea of a Eurocentric mindset regarding how and what should be implemented as part of multicultural education.

In addition to the yearlong calendars, the participants also indicated that at times in the past there had been professional development workshops offered, which focused on multicultural education. However, due to budget cuts and a focus on the core areas of math and reading, multicultural education trainings had been eliminated from their available trainings. This could be directly linked to the budget cuts within the State of Illinois focused on early learning environments, along with increased accountability measures coming directly from the state based on standard teacher evaluations. Therefore, while the program administration may not have had the knowledge base to provide training on how to implement multicultural education, there was also a lack of funding support to pay for teachers to attend such trainings resulting in a lack of knowledge at all levels. However, as research shows, the increasingly diverse student populations in school buildings and stagnant teaching demographics will become a concern sooner rather than later and needs to be a focal point for support sooner rather than later (Laughter, 2011).

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Finally, in terms of support, the program administration did conduct classroom visits focused on different aspects of the classroom, one of which was multicultural curriculum. However, as indicated before, the program administration's definition for multicultural education focused primarily on cultures and cultural artifacts around the classroom. Each classroom had numerous objects and artifacts on the walls and in centers. Although, at one time, Alivia commented that the artifacts just became "white noise" to the children because the artifacts were always there. Additionally, Delores made the comment that the artifacts were over-stimulating to children with ADHD and other children with special needs. Therefore, while the administration was doing their part to support the "implementation" of multicultural education from their standpoint, the participants had a different view of that support. They felt the support was overbearing and unnecessary because the artifacts were out of context and too much for the students in the classrooms. From this experience, and the other experiences focused on support, it could be concluded that while the administration tried to support in the best way they could, there was still a lack of quality support from the lens of the participants in the classrooms. The administration seemed to be out of touch with what reality was in the classrooms and in the world of multicultural education.

Overall the participants indicated their understanding of how multicultural education was implemented in their classrooms from the top down, which stemmed directly from the mandates set forth by the state. The State of Illinois, as indicated previously, uses the ECERS-R tool for measurement. In the ECERS-R resource manual an entire section is dedicated to "promoting acceptance of diversity" (Cryer, Harms, & Riley, 2003, p. 287). Within that section of the book, which the participants and program

administration had access to, diversity is defined to include "race, religion, culture, ability, age, or gender" (p. 287). Additionally, the authors discuss how to "accept diversity" in preschool classrooms by sending environmental messages to students through interactions and handling prejudices among and between students appropriately by intervening and not avoiding situations. While the definition of "diverse" was expanded beyond what the program administration in this research study focused on, they did adhere to the visible cultural diversity stipulations in all of the classrooms.

Additionally, within this resource manual, examples of activities that "promote understanding and acceptance of diversity" were included. Some of the activities mentioned were celebrating "winter holidays of many different cultures," doing "art activities with varied cultures," and "learn dances from different cultures" (p. 294-295). It could be concluded that the administration staff of the program in the study focused primarily on the suggested activities, which were directed at cultures rather than the other concepts presented in the manual such as gender, race, and ability level. The other multicultural topics could have activities associated with them; however they were not depicted in the example section of the ECERS-R manual. Therefore, it could be assumed, that in order to meet compliance, the program administration focused on concrete and direct examples of multicultural implementation rather than embracing the entire section and making it their own.

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Limitations

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The most impactful limitation of the study was various life events of the participants, which the researcher had no control over. For example, when participants were sick or when there were snow days and other planned activities the amount of

observation time decreased resulting in irregular amounts of time each week. This limitation was associated with the timing and location of the research. In the Midwest between the months of January and March there are often snow days and illnesses in elementary school buildings. However, whenever the researcher could "make-up" time on a non-scheduled day, she did so in an attempt to close the observational time gap between participants.

The idea of time could also be viewed as a limitation because the researcher did not have the time to be in all three classrooms at one time. Therefore, some events or teaching moments were missed. This was addressed by adding in the reflection pieces and the interviews. During the interviews, the researcher was able to ask the participants if they wanted her to know anything specific that the researcher missed when she was not in the room. Additionally, during informal conversations at the beginning of each observation most participants would comment on what had been occurring that day or week.

Additionally, along the same lines of time, the research used her cellphone clock as a way to approximate the time in the classroom spent on multicultural topics. It was not the goal of the researcher to document exact time frames, but rather to get an overall idea of the classroom environment. The time was not the only aspect of the observation, however. The researcher also documented how many different multicultural conversations participants had during the course of an observation. So, while the use of an approximation for time was a limitation, it was also an easy and quick way to document the time in the classroom.

Another limitation, recognized by the researcher, was the inability to document every single conversation participants had in the classroom. This was due to multiple factors including noise level, place in the classroom, and at times simultaneously observing multiple participants in the same classroom. The researcher did not include an audio or video recorder during the study, therefore recognized that some conversations were missed during the observation cycle. The researcher reflected on this during her personal reflections and also recognized this as a limitation of the study.

Furthermore, some may argue that a limitation of this study was due to the fact that the participants were chosen by the program administration because of their "lack of multicultural" instruction. This was a constraint placed on the researcher by the administration or gatekeepers of the preschool program. When the administration met with the researcher to understand the purpose of the study, they agreed that their participation as a program depended on the researcher's ability to observe in specific classrooms. This was recognized as a limitation throughout the study.

Another limitation could be the participants' knowledge regarding the researcher's passion focused on multicultural education. While the data indicates honest answers from the participants, the opposite could also be argued. Participants' knowledge of the researcher's focus could have also influenced their behavior during observations. While several participants reflected that the researcher was there so often they began to forget she was there in the classroom, the opposite was also true throughout some of the reflections when participants indicated that, "some days you (researcher) would come in and I needed to do assessments, but I wanted to make sure you heard me talking to students other than doing assessment." Merriam (1998) indicated that when participants

know they are being observed they tend to "behave in socially acceptable ways and present themselves in a favorable manner" (p. 104). As a way to reduce this limitation, the participants were informed of the purpose of the study and were told many times that the researcher was not evaluating their teaching, even though one participant in particular found the non-evaluation part hard to conceive. The researcher was also non-intrusive by sitting off to the side during each observation.

Personal Reflections

Throughout the entire research process I, as the researcher, reflected on my experience collecting and analyzing data, as well as my personal biases, perceptions, or assumptions. Researcher or personal biases can be triggered through personal experiences, personal background, and perceptions of individuals and situations (Johnson & Christensen, 2007). Engaging in the process of self-reflection was essential because "unacknowledged bias may entirely invalidate the results" (Kvale, 1996, p. 286). My personal reflections were used as a basis for questions at the end of the research cycle and were also used to provide a reference for readers of this study.

While engaging in the reflection piece, I reflected on both the process and what I was learning from my participants along the way. As a researcher I learned to keep an open-mind when writing narrative observation notes. As I reflected previously, situations that did not appear to be multicultural in the moment were coded as multicultural upon transcription and reflection. Upon further thoughtful inquiry focused on the observations, I reflected that the most difficult part of the study was ensuring I narrated all of the conversations participants were having in the classroom. I can honestly reflect and state

that I did not; however I did try very hard, which has the potential to lead to a limitation, which was discussed earlier.

It was difficult to hear everything for several reasons. The first difficulty was my location in the classroom during each observation in comparison to where the participants were located because of my goal to stay out of the way. Second, in two of the classrooms I was listening to both teachers in the classroom (if there were two participants). Third, students were very interested in me on certain days as compared to others. They wanted me to read to them or do other activities with them. Finally, the noise level in the classrooms, while not extremely loud, did prevent me from hearing some softer conversations participants engaged in during the observation window.

Additionally, as the researcher, I reflected that the process of narrative observations, while at times quite time consuming, was well worth it. Every aspect of the data collection, from the observations, to the transcriptions, to the interviews, helped me understand the classroom, program, and participants at an even deeper level. I feel like I engaged in the research study for long enough and deep enough to get a realistic picture of each classroom, participant, and the overall program. At the end of the study, most of the participants reflected that they were sad I was leaving because they had built a reciprocal, professional, peer relationship with me throughout the twelve-week research window.

Not only were the participants sad to see me leave their classrooms, but I was also sad to complete the twelve-week research study in each classroom. I appreciated the time, energy, willingness, honesty, and openness every participant displayed during the span of the study. They were accepting of me into their classrooms and showed me a little piece

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of their world. I reflected that I did feel very accepted in the classrooms and comfortable during the interviews and focus groups. The participants also reflected that they did not feel judged, criticized, or demeaned during the research, but rather encouraged and supported. Most of the participants reflected that once they truly understood the researcher was not evaluating, but rather just taking notes, they no longer felt self-conscious or aware of the researcher in the classroom. Overall, the experience was rewarding for everyone involved.

Future Research

This study investigated the mindsets and implementation practices of preschool head teachers and assistant teachers in Central Illinois focused on multicultural education. After conducting this research project, there are recommendations for future research. The researcher thought of some of the ideas for future research after the entire research process was completed. The participants also thought of other ideas as they reflected on what they needed in the changing demographics of their school buildings and classrooms.

1. A similar research study with minority teachers as a way to compare mindsets, experiences, and reflections regarding multicultural curriculum implementation. Along with adding in the component of the administration to truly understanding their thinking and mindsets behind decisions, rather than having the head and assistant teachers' perceptions of those said mindsets.

2. A comparable study in elementary classrooms, daycare settings, and other settings with students eight years old and younger. This study could include seasoned and newer teachers. It could take place in urban or rural areas in

Midwest towns and cities as a way to build sets of data to compare and understand multicultural curriculum.

3. A mixed-methods study to investigate how resources, lesson plans, and more assistance from the researcher could influence the implementation of multicultural lessons in preschool and elementary classrooms. More assistance from the researcher could include lesson plan examples and sample classroom lessons with students. This future research was based on the feedback from participants.

4. A qualitative study where the researcher and other professionals guide and aid educators in early childhood and elementary settings through multicultural conversations. Once teachers feel comfortable in their own mentalities and reflections the researcher could see if that impacted the classroom or school building environment.

5. A study that investigates the incorporation of the deepest level of multicultural curriculum implementation: social action. How might the social action piece influence students' and teachers' mindsets regarding diversity?

6. Involving parents (families, guardians) in the reflection process as a way to see if their reflections and influences change the culture and mindsets of staff in the school buildings and classrooms.

7. Developing a study to understand the multicultural education pre-service teachers experience and what is available for in-service teachers as a way to develop their knowledge regarding multicultural curriculum in early childhood and elementary school buildings.

Final Thoughts

The results from this study have the potential to influence many stakeholders. These include politicians who need to understand the importance of implementing multicultural education in school buildings; administrators who need to develop a knowledge base to educate and provide resources to their staff so conversations are not ignored or avoided; and educators who need to develop a level of comfort when discussing multicultural topics. Additionally, the results of this research study have the potential to influence the increasingly diverse families and students in our society and school buildings. From this research families can develop an understanding of this influence in the lives of their students while students can be open to learning and hearing perspectives outside of their family's culture and view.

While this research could influence many stakeholders, it is still not complete. Research should continue on developing effective preschool teacher evaluation tools and instruments. Research should also continue in the field of multicultural education as pre-service teachers graduate and enter the teaching field and as students with increasingly diverse backgrounds enter school buildings at expanding rates. It is the hope of the researcher that this research does not stop, but rather continues the conversations focused on multicultural education and teacher evaluations. In the end, the goal is to develop a tool or instrument that accurately evaluate preschool teachers and to create a generation of students who are open to discussing differences, are willing to take action and participate in social change when inequities and discrimination occur throughout their lives and the lives of others.

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APPENDIX A

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Questions to ask/What to observe	Type of data to gather	Duration of collection	Analysis of data	Guiding Question
Multicultural Curriculum within the school/program	Head Teacher/ Assistant Teacher **FOCUS GROUPS** (participants)	Beginning of the project ~20 minute conversation with all participants	Coding for themes	#2, #3, #4
Personal backgrounds and experiences as it relates to multicultural, diversity, race, and culture	**INTERVIEWS** Head Teacher/ Assistant Teacher	Beginning of the project and end of the project ~20 minutes	Coding for themes	#3, #4
Observations in the classroom environment	**OBSERVATIONS** of teacher's conversations and interactions in the classroom related to multicultural curriculum	2-3 days/week 55-105 min each visit	Coding for Themes -Length, frequency, and topic of conversation	#3, #4
What are teachers doing? Talking about? How long? Are they engaged? How are they engaged?	**GRAPHING** of desired teaching (approximate % of multicultural conversation interactions of total time in room for each week)	Every observation (will be given to the teacher via email weekly)	Same as Observations	#3, #4
As an observer, what do I see, hear, and feel in the classroom?	**OBSERVER REFLECTIONS**	Daily with data analysis and collection	Coding for Themes	#2,#3, #4
Do the participants reflect on their teaching?	Participant written **RELFECTIONS**	Beginning and End of Study	Coding for Themes	#1, #3, #4

APPENDIX B

SEMI-STRUCTURED RESEARCH QUESTIONS

(Bolded sentences are the overarching research questions; non-bolded are the actual questions during the semi-structured interview)

1.   **How do preschool teachers describe diversity in their classrooms and school environment?**
      1. How would you describe diversity in your classroom?
      2. How would you describe diversity in your school building?
      3. Would you describe the students in your classroom as diverse? Why?
      4. Would you describe the school environment diverse? Why?

2.   **How does a comprehensive preschool teacher evaluation approach generate preschool teachers' sense of agency when implementing integrated multicultural curriculum?**
      1. When your supervisor or principal evaluates you, what is the process that takes place?
      2. As a teacher, what do you think would be the most effective evaluation system for your own professional development or growth as a teacher?
      3. As a teacher asked to implement multicultural curriculum as part of NAEYC accreditation, does your current teacher evaluation system support that implementation? Why? Or How?
      4. How do you decide how to implement multicultural curriculum?
      5. Do you receive multicultural curriculum implementation guidance?
      6. In your opinion, whose job is it to incorporate multicultural curriculum into a school building? Classroom?
      7. What is the most important aspect or quality needed with a school environment in order to implement multicultural curriculum?

3.   **What does it mean to preschool teachers to implement integrated multicultural curriculum in preschool settings (look like, feel like, sound like)?**
   1. When directed or asked to implement multicultural curriculum, in your opinion, what does that look like?
   2. What does that feel like to the students, families, and staff in the classroom?
   3. What does it sound like in terms of conversations or other areas in the classroom that involve sound and listening?

4.   **How does an incorporation of multicultural materials into a preschool classroom environment influence the teachers' view and implementation of multicultural curriculum?**
   1. The materials in your classroom, the babies, the food items, the books, etc., how are those chosen?
   2. Do you feel those objects or artifacts influence how you teach or interact with your students? Why or why not?
   3. In your opinion, what materials in classrooms are essential to implementing multicultural curriculum?
   4. What materials would you like to see added to your classroom in order to assist you in implementing multicultural curriculum?

APPENDIX C

ECERS MATERIAL REQUIREMENTS

F. DRAMATIC PLAY

3.1 Some dramatic play materials and furniture accessible in which children can act out family roles.

3.2 Dramatic Play materials must be accessible at least 1 hour daily.

3.3 Dramatic Play materials have a separate storage.

5.1 – Many means three (3) or more children can use the materials at one time without undue competition and the materials are plentiful enough to encourage more complex play. Dress up clothes must be provided. (In addition to other dress up items, there should be at least 3 examples of typically female specific clothing and 3 examples of typically male specific clothing. Examples of typically female specific clothing are dresses, women's shoes, purses, women's hats, skirts, blouses, etc. Examples of typically male specific clothing are clip on ties, men's shirts, men's shoes, sports jackets, pants, etc.)

Materials (examples)
- Dress up clothes (include gender specific and multicultural)
- Housekeeping Props
- Multicultural Food Props
- Multicultural Dolls
- Multicultural Food Utensils
- Furniture
- Stuffed animals
- Dishes
- Doll strollers

I. DIVERSITY

To score "yes" on 5.1, diversity must be represented in BOOKS, PICTURES, and OTHER MATERIALS (small figures, puzzles, dolls, etc.). EACH of those items should have the following areas of diversity represented:
- Race
- Cultures
- Ages (contrasting ages such as a parent with a child)
- Abilities (individuals with disabilities)
- Non-stereotypical gender roles (such as a male nurse or a female pilot)

Source: Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida
http://www.elcofswfl.org/downloads/profdev/ECERS%20Materials%20List.pdf