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INFLUENCES ON PRESERVICE TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY: AN EXPLORATION OF MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe the relationships between four preservice teachers and seven cooperating teachers participating in an early childhood practicum. The study examined the relation of cooperating teachers' beliefs about family involvement and cultural diversity to preservice teachers' beliefs about family involvement and cultural diversity. Additionally, the study explored the influence of cooperating teachers on preservice teachers' beliefs. Multiple sources, including open-ended interviews, field observations, and reflection and dialogue journals, were employed during data collection. Data analysis included single case analyses followed by a cross-case analysis.

Seven research questions guided the collective case study: (1) What is the relationship between cooperating teachers and preservice teachers during an early childhood practicum?; (2) What are cooperating teachers' beliefs, values, attitudes, and reported practices related to family involvement?; (3) What are cooperating teachers' beliefs, values, attitudes, and reported practices related to cultural diversity?; (4) What are preservice teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes related to family involvement?; (5) What are preservice teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes related to cultural diversity?; (6) In what ways do cooperating teachers influence preservice teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes related to family involvement?; and (7) In what ways do cooperating teachers influence preservice teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes related to cultural diversity?

Data revealed a number of findings. First, the relationship between cooperating teachers and preservice teachers was, in many ways, a mentoring relationship. However, the mentoring relationships varied among the dyads. Within the mentoring relationships, positive and negative experiences occurred, regardless of gender. Furthermore, clear, explicit expectations and ongoing

communication appeared to be related to positive experiences within mentoring relationships. Second, cooperating teachers' beliefs, values, attitudes, and reported practices related to family involvement varied, but were similar in a number of ways. In general, the teachers believed that ongoing communication was essential to the relationship between teachers and families. Additionally, the teachers reported similar practices, such as soliciting parent volunteers for field trips and classroom activities, scheduling parent-teacher conferences, and keeping families informed through newsletters and verbal contact. Third, cooperating teachers' beliefs, values, attitudes, and reported practices related to cultural diversity varied. Overall, the teachers reported that they incorporated cultural diversity into their curriculum. Furthermore, they generally believed that it was necessary for teachers to address cultural diversity mainly because it serves as a valuable learning experience for young children.

Fourth, preservice teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes related to family involvement varied. Generally, they believed that communication between teachers and families was critical. Similarly, they believed that teachers and parents were equally responsible for family involvement. Finally, they believed that families could be involved in several ways, such as attending school events and assisting in curriculum planning or classroom activities. Fifth, preservice teacher' beliefs, values, and attitudes related to cultural diversity varied. For the most part, they believed that an incorporation of cultural diversity into the classroom would serve as a learning experience for young children. Additionally, they believed that teachers needed to have an awareness of diversity issues in order to address cultural diversity in the classroom. Finally, preservice teachers reported that their beliefs in relation to family involvement and cultural diversity either changed somewhat, were reinforced, or remained stable. Influences on beliefs were attributed to cooperating teachers, the overall practicum experience, or both to some extent.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Teacher preparation is a critical issue in education today as the cultural gap between students and teachers is fairly wide and is predicted to continue growing. In 2003, student enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools was 60.3% White, 16.8% Black, 17.7% Hispanic, 1.3% American Indian/Alaska Native, and 3.9% Asian/Pacific Islander (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). In the same year, the teaching force was 83.1% White, 7.9% Black, 1.3% Asian, 0.5% American Indian/Alaska Native, 0.2% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and 6.2% Hispanic. The percentage of minority students is expected to increase as the U.S. population becomes more racially and ethnically diverse. According to Riche (2000), in 1999 the population in the United States was 72% White, 12% Black, 12% Hispanic, 4% Asian, and 1% American Indian. Furthermore, it has been projected that by the year 2050, minorities will make up 47% of the total population (Riche, 2000).

The cultural gap between teachers and students is not the only concern in teacher education. Another major concern is the diversity of today's families. Children that come from traditional American families are becoming less visible in school classrooms. Between 1990 and 2000, the percentage of married-couple households dropped from 55.2% to 51.7% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). More diverse family structures have become the norm in today's society. Current family compositions include single parents, noncustodial parents, teenage parents, gay and lesbian parents, stepparents, and culturally and linguistically diverse parents.

What do these statistics mean for future teachers who are expected to meet the increasingly diverse needs of students and their families? More importantly, what do these

statistics mean for teacher education programs that are faced with the challenge of preparing our nation's future teachers? Perhaps it seems rather obvious that these findings point to the need for more effective teacher preparation.

> Whether teachers continue to be trained traditionally or with new methods, one thing is certain: New teachers must be as effective as possible as soon as they set foot in the classroom. Given what is known about the impact, good or bad, that even one teacher can have; given the growing need for new teachers as student enrollment grows and many current teachers retire or abandon the profession; and given the fact that many of the most vulnerable students are taught by teachers just beginning their careers, it is no longer sufficient to put "minimally competent" teachers in the classroom. (Allen, 2003, p.7)

Much attention has been directed at the critical need to prepare teachers to work with diverse children and their families. National organizations, such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), have developed standards as a means to judge the ability of teacher education programs to prepare competent, highly qualified teachers. Among NCATE's six standards, one standard specifically addresses the issue of diversity:

> Standard 4: Diversity. The unit designs, implements, and evaluates curriculum and experiences for candidates to acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and disposition necessary to help all students learn. These experiences include working with diverse higher education and school faculty, diverse candidates, and diverse students in P-12 schools. (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2006)

NAEYC's standards for teacher education specifically address programs that prepare early childhood professionals. Currently, there are five NAEYC Initial Licensure Standards. Standard Two and Sub-Standard 4a, in particular, address the issue of family involvement:

> Standard 2. Building Family and Community Relationships. Candidates know about, understand, and value the importance and complex characteristics of children's families and communities. They use this understanding to create respectful, reciprocal relationships that support and empower families, and to involve all families in their children's development and learning.

> Sub-Standard 4a. Connecting with children and families. Candidates know, understand, and use positive relationships and supportive interactions as the foundation for their work with young children. (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2001)

In addition to a number of national organizations that have shown a commitment to quality teacher education through their assessments of programs, researchers have been devoted to evaluating teacher education programs across the nation as well. In a study published by the Harvard Family Research Project, researchers conducted a national survey of state certification requirements and preservice teacher education programs (Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider, & Lopez, 1997). In their analysis of state certification requirements from 51 state departments of education (including the District of Columbia), the researchers found that most states did not even mention parent involvement in their teacher certifications requirements. Of the 22 states that did mention parent involvement in their certification requirements, parent involvement was defined in vague terms. In their analysis of preservice teacher education programs' parent involvement training, they found that most of the programs did not offer sufficient parent involvement training. The

training tended to be defined in limited ways using conventional teaching methods such as discussions, required readings, lectures, and class assignments.

In 1999, Epstein and colleagues published a national survey they conducted with leaders (i.e., deans of education, chairs of teacher education programs, educational administration) of 161 schools, colleges, and departments of education. The findings revealed that while most of the leaders strongly agreed that it was important for teachers to know how to involve families, few of them believed that the preservice teachers who graduate from their programs were fully prepared to do so. Additionally, only 9% of the colleges and universities in the study offered more than two full required or elective courses on parent involvement or school, family, and community partnerships (Epstein, Sanders, & Clark, 1999).

There is growing consensus in teacher education research that more must be done to prepare preservice teachers to work with diverse families (Blasi, 2002; Broussard, 2000; deAcosta, 1996; Foster & Loven, 1992; Graue & Brown, 2003; Midkiff & Lawler-Prince, 1992; Morris & Taylor, 1998). Empirical research has revealed that providing preservice teachers with a wide variety of diverse field experiences can be most beneficial (Burant & Kirby, 2002; Gipe, Duffy, & Richards, 1989). Early field experience, also known as practicum experience, is a vital component in many teacher education programs, mainly because it prepares preservice teachers to become professional classroom teachers by providing real-life experiences outside of university courses and inside real classrooms (Ediger, 1994). Additionally, early field experiences provide a number of potential benefits for pre-service teachers: (1) to explore teaching as a career choice early in the college experience; (2) to bridge the gap between theory and classroom practice; and (3) to refine basic teaching skills (Aiken & Day, 1999; Bischoff, Farris, & Henniger, 1988; Boner, 1985).

NCATE and NAEYC also support the need for field experiences as they are included in their standards. Prior to revision of its standards in 2001, NAEYC created a separate standard for "Field Experience". Under the most recent standards, field experience is considered central to all five standards, thus it is no longer separated into its own category. NCATE's attention to field experiences can be found under Standard Three.

> Standard 3: Field Experiences and Clinical Practice. The unit and its school partners design, implement, and evaluate field experiences and clinical practice so that teacher candidates and other school personnel develop and demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and disposition necessary to help all students learn. (National Council for Accreditation for Teacher Education, 2006)

Although NAEYC and NCATE include field experiences in their standards, they fail to specifically address the kinds of field experiences that are most beneficial to preservice teachers. In contrast, a number of empirical studies have revealed that community-based or cross-cultural immersion experiences are valuable (Barnes, 2006; Burant & Kirby, 2002; Cooper, 2007; Garmon, 2004; Kwartler, 1993; Tiezzi & Cross, 1997) as they challenge preservice teachers' beliefs or misconceptions about diverse groups.

There is no doubt that teacher education programs face a great challenge in providing authentic experiences which enable students to become aware of their beliefs, analyze their beliefs, discuss their beliefs, and reconsider their beliefs (Kagan, 1992; Vartuli, 2005). Challenging preservice teachers' beliefs may prove difficult, however, due to the fact that: (1) People are unable to change beliefs they are unaware of and (2) People are not willing to change prior beliefs unless they see good reason to do so (Pajares, 1993). Research on the influence of teacher education programs on preservice teachers' beliefs has produced mixed results. Some studies have asserted that preservice teachers' beliefs are formed well before they enter teacher

education programs and that these beliefs are resistant to change (Aldrich & Thomas, 2005; Kagan, 1992; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1993); yet, others have found changes in preservice teachers' beliefs (Nettle, 1998).

Purpose of Study

Field experiences have been considered a vital component in teacher education programs, yet the guidance preservice teachers receive during those experiences has received less attention. Moreover, while the influence of field experiences (particularly immersion experiences) on preservice teachers' beliefs or dispositions has been studied in great detail, the influence of cooperating teachers, or mentor teachers, on preservice teachers' beliefs has not. The purpose of the present study was to explore the influence of cooperating teachers on preservice teachers' beliefs, particularly in relation to family involvement and cultural diversity. First, I sought to describe the relationship between cooperating teachers and preservice teachers during an early childhood practicum experience. Second, I sought to examine the relation of cooperating teachers' beliefs about family involvement and cultural diversity to preservice teachers' beliefs about family involvement and cultural diversity. Finally, I sought to explore the influence of cooperating teachers on preservice teachers' beliefs.

Using a collective case study methodology, I attempted to gain insight into the mentoring experiences of four preservice teachers and seven cooperating teachers participating in an early childhood practicum. I collected data during the Spring semester of 2007. Multiple data sources- formal interviews, field observations, and document analysis- were employed in order to gain a holistic meaning of participants' experiences. Data analysis consisted of single-case analyses followed by a cross-case analysis. Given my interest in the preparation of preservice teachers,

particularly as it relates to cultural diversity and family involvement, seven relevant research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between cooperating teachers and preservice teachers during an early childhood practicum?

2. What are cooperating teachers' beliefs, values, attitudes, and reported practices related to family involvement?

3. What are cooperating teachers' beliefs, values, attitudes, and reported practices related to cultural diversity?

4. What are preservice teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes related to family involvement?

5. What are preservice teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes related to cultural diversity?

6. In what ways do cooperating teachers influence preservice teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes about family involvement?

7. In what ways do cooperating teachers influence preservice teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes about cultural diversity?

Significance of the Study

First, few studies exist that explore the relationship between cooperating teachers and preservice teachers during early field experiences, prior to student teaching. The majority of studies on mentoring focus on beginning teachers, usually as a part of induction programs (Abell, Dillon, Hopkins, McInerney, & O'Brien, 1995; Martin & Trueax, 1997). Furthermore, the few studies that do focus on mentoring during teacher preparation examine mentoring outcomes for preservice teachers during their student teaching (Elliott, 1995; McNamara, 1995; Stanulis & Russell, 2000; Sudzina & Coolican, 1994). This research specifically examined the mentoring

relationship between cooperating teachers and preservice teachers participating in an early childhood practicum. The early childhood practicum was an early field experience; therefore, it was not considered a part of student teaching.

Second, studies that focus on mentoring more often look at specific functions of mentors and the outcomes of mentoring for mentors and protégés. Few, if any, specifically explore the influence of mentoring on proteges' beliefs and/or behaviors. In addition to exploring the kinds of experiences that occurred in the mentoring relationships, I examined the influence of those experiences on the preservice teachers' beliefs.

Third, empirical studies which focus on teacher beliefs, for both preservice and inservice teachers, are overwhelmingly quantitative (Aldrich & Thomas, 2005; Brousseau, Book, & Byers, 1988; Buchanan, Burts, Bidner, White, & Charlesworth, 1998; Cassidy, Pugh-Hoese, & Russell, 1995; Kagan & Smith, 1988; McMullen & Alat, 2002; Nettle, 1998; Pohan, 1996). This research examines the beliefs of preservice and inservice teachers using qualitative methods. As such, I was able to gain deeper insights into the participants' beliefs, values, attitudes, and reported practices through formal interviews, observations, and document analyses.

Finally, this study fills a void in existing literature because it examines two critical issues in education- family involvement and cultural diversity. To date, I have found no other empirical study in teacher education that has focused on these two key issues together. There is a considerable amount of research related to family involvement in teacher education (Broussard, 2000; Chavkin & Williams, 1988; Foster & Loven, 1992; Jones & Blendinger, 1994; Morris & Taylor, 1998; Shartrand, Kreider, & Erickson-Warfield, 1994), as well as to diversity in teacher education (Blasi, 2002; Dee & Henkin, 2002; Garmon, 2004; Kidd, Sanchez, & Thorp, 2005; Tatto, 1996); yet none look at both issues simultaneously. Although these two key issues have

not been examined together within the literature on teacher education, it may be important to note that they have been examined within the wider literature on family literacy.

Synopsis of the Study

This dissertation includes nine chapters. Chapter 1 began with a brief introduction leading to the purpose of the study, the research questions that guided the study, and finally the significance of the study. In Chapter 2, I review relevant literature as it relates to three main areas in teacher education (a) teacher preparation, (b) teacher beliefs, and (c) mentoring. In Chapter 3, I discuss the collective case study methodology which was employed for the present study. Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 include the case studies of David and Jodi; Natalie and Marla; Amber and Karen, Carol, Debra, Laura; and Paul and Tracy, respectively. These chapters provide descriptive data on the dyads during the practicum. Chapter 8 includes a cross-case analysis of the four case studies. Salient themes which appeared across all four cases are discussed. Finally, the study is concluded in Chapter 9. A discussion of the findings is followed by the strengths and limitations of the study, implications for practice, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this research was to describe the relationship between cooperating teachers and preservice teachers participating in an early childhood practicum. Specifically, I sought to examine the relation of cooperating teachers' beliefs about family involvement and cultural diversity to preservice teachers' beliefs about family involvement and cultural diversity. Additionally, I sought to explore the influence of cooperating teachers on preservice teachers' beliefs about family involvement and cultural diversity. In the following sections, I will review relevant literature as it relates to: (1) teacher preparation; (2) teacher beliefs; and (3) mentoring. Teacher preparation will be discussed, particularly as it relates to family involvement and cultural diversity. Likewise, teacher beliefs about family involvement and cultural diversity will be included in the review.

Preparing Preservice Teachers for Family Involvement

Family involvement has not received a great deal of attention in many teacher education programs. As a result, most beginning teachers feel unprepared to work collaboratively with parents and other family members, especially when families are ethnically, culturally, or socioeconomically different from themselves (deAcosta, 1996). For decades, research has documented the positive effects of family involvement on children's school achievement and overall well-being (Broussard, 2000; Chavkin & Williams, 1988; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). Despite these findings, most teacher education programs fail to incorporate substantial courses or practical experiences devoted to family issues. Chavkin and Williams (1988) surveyed

575 teacher educators from six states- Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas- about their inclusion of parent-teacher relations in their courses and found that only 4% of them taught a complete course on parent involvement. Additionally, only 15% provided part of a course on the topic, and only 37% reported having one class period devoted to the topic.

A number of national studies have examined teacher education programs' preparation of preservice teachers for family involvement (Broussard, 2000; Epstein et al., 1999; Shartrand et al., 1994). These studies, as well, have found that most programs were inadequate in their preparation of preservice teachers for family involvement. Broussard (2000) examined 116 teacher education programs across the nation. Content analysis of programs' mission statements, required and optional curricula, and content in courses related to family issues revealed a lack of family friendly language and family content. Nearly half (42.4%) of early childhood education curricula required at least one course related to family issues; however, only 5.5% of elementary education and 5.4% of middle school education curricula required courses addressing family issues.

In a national survey conducted by Shartrand and colleagues (1994), findings revealed that most teacher education programs did not offer substantial training in parent involvement. When parent involvement training was offered, it was mostly offered as part of a required course (83%) or during student teaching (63%); it was seldom offered in a full required course (37%) or in field placements (36%).

Epstein and colleagues (1999) also conducted a national survey of colleges and universities. Leaders (i.e., deans, associate deans, department chairs, educational administration chairs) from 161 colleges and universities responded to questionnaires about their program's

course offerings, their attitudes about school, family, and community partnerships, and their perceptions of their program's readiness to improve teacher preparation for school, family, and community partnerships. Findings revealed that nearly 60% of the leaders reported that their program offered at least one course on parent involvement, or school, family, and community partnerships. However, only 8.7% reported that their program offered more than two full required or optional courses for graduate or undergraduate students. Nearly 70% of the leaders strongly agreed that "all teachers should know how to conduct practices of school, family, and community partnerships with all families" (p.11), however only 7.2% reported that new teachers who graduated from their programs were fully prepared to work with their students' families.

As the previous research has shown, preservice teachers across the nation leave teacher education programs underprepared to work with families, in general. The mere fact that these studies did not specifically focus on the preparation of teachers to work with diverse families, points to an even greater problem: If beginning teachers do not possess the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to work with traditional families, then they most certainly do not possess the knowledge, skills, or attitudes to work with diverse families. Ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse families are becoming more visible in today's classrooms than ever before. This means that teacher education programs must work even harder to prepare preservice teachers for not only family involvement, but cultural diversity as well.

Preparing Preservice Teachers for Cultural Diversity

Although the population of children in today's schools is becoming more diverse, teachers continue to be overwhelmingly white, middle-class females. Even more, while the student population is expected to continue to diversify, it is predicted that the population of

preservice teachers will become more homogeneous (Causey, Thomas, & Armento, 2000). These predictions have serious implications for teacher education programs. How can teacher educators adequately prepare their preservice teachers for the diverse population that awaits them in their future classrooms? What strategies should teacher educators use to instill in preservice teachers the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are necessary to effectively meet the needs of diverse students? Are teacher educators themselves equipped with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to adequately prepare future teachers?

> Most of the education faculty, who must be counted on to improve the preparation of teachers for diversity, lack the same kind of interracial and intercultural experience as their students. Thus, there is a real question as to whether the expertise needed to address the preparation of teachers for diversity is currently found within the faculty who staff our teacher education programs. (Zeichner, 1992, p.5)

The preparation of preservice teachers for cultural diversity seems to be an even greater challenge for teacher education programs than preparing teachers for family involvement. Cultural diversity is a critical issue, but at the same time it is a complex issue for many people. Many preservice teachers, particularly White, racially isolated preservice teachers, feel uncomfortable with the idea of diversity. A number of research studies have documented mainstream preservice teachers' hesitation in teaching students from other cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Barnes, 2006; Burant & Kirby, 2002; Zeichner, 1992). Still, teacher education programs can not afford to ignore the critical need to prepare teachers to work with diverse groups. A considerable amount of literature has discussed specific instructional strategies, or approaches, that appear to be effective in preparing teachers for cultural diversity (Barnes, 2006; Causey et al., 2000; Miller & Fuller, 2006; Nieto, 2000; Ragan, 2002; Sleeter,

2001; Zeichner, 1992; Zygmunt-Fillwalk & Clark, 2007). Biographies, Attitude change (re-examinations of prior attitudes and beliefs), Cultural knowledge, and Field experiences are among some of those strategies and approaches.

To increase early childhood education preservice teachers' cultural competency and preparedness to work with culturally and linguistically diverse families, Miller and Fuller (2006) created a Cultural Self-Analysis (CSA) project. The project consisted of six steps: (1) autobiography; (2) biography; (3) cross-cultural analysis; (4) analysis of cultural differences; (5) home connection plan of action; and (6) reflection. In step one, preservice teachers were required to write a personal autobiography documenting important life events, such as education, family, religion, cultural traditions and values, personality, and work. After writing their autobiographies, the preservice teachers moved to step two, which was to interview a person from a different cultural background and write their biography. After steps one and two were completed, the preservice teachers were required to do a cross-cultural analysis of themselves and the person they interviewed. They created Venn Diagrams depicting similarities and differences. Step four required the preservice teachers to write a cross-cultural analysis of cultural similarities and differences between themselves and the person whom they interviewed and wrote a biography. As they retrospectively looked at previous cultural experiences that impacted their attitudes and beliefs about different cultures, they analyzed them and wrote how they shaped present beliefs and attitudes. In step five, the preservice teachers developed a plan of action for home-school interactions and communication to enhance parent participation and the learning of culturally diverse students. Finally, step six required the preservice teachers to reflect on the entire CSA project experience.

Miller and Fuller's (2006) findings revealed positive outcomes. First, the CSA project increased preservice teachers' confidence and comfort in communicating with culturally diverse families. Second, preservice teachers felt better prepared to facilitate home connections and involvement of culturally diverse families and communities. Third, the CSA project enlightened preservice teachers as to their roles and responsibilities as teachers, beyond academic instruction and classroom management.

Barnes (2006) described the impact of a culturally responsive teaching framework (CRT) on preservice teachers in a teacher education program. The CRT framework included three dimensions: (1) academic achievement- make learning rigorous, exciting, challenging, and equitable with high standards; (2) cultural competence- know and facilitate in the learning process the various range of students' cultural and linguistic groups; and (3) sociopolitical consciousness- recognize and assist students in the understanding that education and schooling do not occur in a vacuum (Barnes, 2006). Preservice teachers utilized this framework while teaching reading to elementary students during their field experiences. Findings of the study revealed that preservice teachers learned to: (a) focus on their own attitudes and beliefs about diversity to better understand that their worldviews are not the only views; (b) use culturally responsive teaching approaches in their content areas; (c) understand that students' complex social and cultural networks influence their educational growth; (d) use various pedagogical practices to support the academic and social achievement of their students; and (e) explore how they can positively or negatively impact student learning.

Field Experiences

One approach that nearly all researchers would agree with is the incorporation of direct experiences as a means to prepare preservice teachers to work with diverse students. Preservice teachers need to be exposed to diverse groups either in community- or school-based settings. Direct experiences with other cultures, particularly in community settings, have been referred to as immersion experiences. Immersion experiences are believed to be an invaluable learning tool for preservice teachers as they are forced to confront their preconceptions, or misconceptions, about people who may be ethnically, culturally, linguistically, or socioeconomically different from themselves.

> Whether the immersion experience takes place out of the country or within, preservice teachers who teach, serve, and learn in an unfamiliar setting have a unique opportunity to examine their own values and beliefs regarding class, race, culture, and teaching and learning. As they live in and experience a culture unlike the one in which they grew up, they encounter, on a small scale, what it feels like to be in the minority, to struggle to make ends meet, or to try to get along in an unfamiliar language. (Zygmunt-Fillwalk and Clark, pp.290-291)

Cooper (2007) examined the influence of community-based immersion activities on preservice teachers' beliefs about diverse learners and their communities. In one of the activities, "Debunking the Community", preservice teachers were required to attend church services in the community, make purchases and spend time in the community grocery store, participate in recreational activities with community members, and make home visits or telephone calls to parents of struggling students. Findings of the study revealed that although there was strong resistance initially, preservice teachers' perceptions of their students changed. They began to see students' families "through a lens of strengths instead of one filled with deficits" (p.253).

Tiezzi and Cross (1997) examined the influence of an urban field experience on preservice teachers' beliefs. They found, however, that many of the preservice teachers' beliefs did not change throughout the experience. They argued that an immersion experience, such as the one they incorporated, has the potential to reinforce ill-informed beliefs, prejudices, and misconceptions when preservice teachers are not given the opportunity to first learn about the urban context and develop broader frames of reference for looking at urban schools. They also found that the preservice teachers' thinking was more focused when they were discussing and reflecting on diversity issues in class as opposed to their field assignments. They recommend utilizing an ethnographic-instructional framework, which incorporates other activities, such as course readings, videos, and writing and discussion activities, along with field experiences. Other literature also supports this view that guided reflection during field experiences is critical to determining the educational value of the experience (Zeichner, 1992).

Field experience in general, whether in a community setting or not, is viewed as a significant contributor to preservice teachers' professional development. Furthermore, early field experiences (also known as practicum experiences), are especially useful. Early field experiences are those experiences that take place before student teaching and they have a number of potential benefits. One of the most important benefits may be the opportunity for preservice teachers to explore their career options. Researchers suggest two reasons early field experiences are essential to teacher education programs: (1) students "need to know" and (2) institutions "need to know" (Dueck, Altman, & Haslett, 1984). Preservice teachers need to know if they are suited for a career in teaching, but more importantly, institutions and the teaching profession need to know who should be admitted into teacher education programs, and ultimately, into the teaching profession (Aiken & Day, 1999; Altman, Guthrie, & Dueck, 1985; Dueck et al., 1984).

Without early field experiences, preservice teachers may believe themselves to be making good progress toward their goal of becoming good teachers because of a good grade point average in their professional courses when, in fact, they are not able to translate their theory into effective practice. In these situations, the university needs such information about a student as early as possible in order to redirect the student into a career which he or she can be successful. (Elliott & Mays, 1979, p.9)

The present research study takes place within the context of an early field experience, or practicum experience. Although the practicum experience is not considered an immersion experience, one of the goals of the study is to provide preservice and inservice teachers the opportunity to reexamine their attitudes and beliefs, particularly about cultural diversity and family involvement.

Teacher Beliefs

Educational researchers have been interested in teacher beliefs for many decades. Teacher beliefs, although implicit and often unarticulated, are believed to influence teacher behavior and classroom decisions and, thus, student achievement (Kagan, 1992; Nespor, 1987; Vartuli, 1999, 2005). Therefore, it is important to examine teacher beliefs as it facilitates reflective thinking on the part of the teacher and provides opportunities for beliefs to be made explicit. As teachers reflect on their practices they may come to understand how their beliefs and assumptions about student learning can directly affect students' attitudes, behavior, and academic achievement- in positive or negative ways. The classroom decisions teachers make, while seemingly harmless, can have detrimental or beneficial effects.

Research on teacher beliefs suggests that beliefs originate from one's own personal experiences (Murphy, Delli, & Edwards, 2004; Nespor, 1987; Orton, 1996; Vartuli, 2005).

Personal experiences which influence teachers' beliefs can be traced back to when teachers were students themselves. Teachers' experiences as college students, however, may or may not influence their belief systems; the research is inconsistent. Some researchers believe that preservice teachers enter teacher education programs with a well-established set of beliefs about teaching and learning (Pajares, 1993). These beliefs are also thought to be stable and resistant to change (Nespor, 1987). According to Nettle (1998), the actual influence of teacher education on preservice teachers' beliefs remains unknown. Nettle reviewed a number of empirical studies on changes in preservice teachers' beliefs and found evidence of change, as well as evidence of stability in preservice teachers' beliefs. Kagan (1992), on the other hand, found in her review of empirical studies on changes in preservice teachers' beliefs, that preservice teachers tend to leave teacher education programs with the same beliefs they brought with them. She asserts that instead of modifying initial biases, preservice teachers appear to grow more comfortable with them. It may be the case that such programs do not require preservice teachers to confront their preexisting beliefs or, more importantly, they may not challenge those preexisting beliefs.

One of the purposes of the present research study was to examine the beliefs of preservice teachers and cooperating (inservice) teachers, specifically as they related to family involvement and cultural diversity. As such, the following review includes empirical studies on the beliefs of inservice and preservice teachers as they relate to family involvement and cultural diversity. It is important to consider the beliefs of inservice teachers as they may, in some way, influence preservice teachers' beliefs.

Beliefs about Family Involvement

Teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes about children's parents are believed to originate from a number of sources, including their own personal backgrounds and experiences (Grossman, 1999). Given the fact that the majority of teachers are White, middle-class, females, one could argue that they likely grew up in families who had the financial resources and social support to invest in their education. As a result, they may have developed preconceived notions of what it means to be a good parent and also, what it means to be involved in a child's education. When families do not conform to their dominant cultural norms, those teachers may develop deficit views of families, believing that they lack the necessary skills and knowledge to value and support their children's education (Auerbach, 1989). These deficit views of families may, in turn, influence teachers' interactions with families.

Lareau (2000) has conducted significant research on the influence of social class on family-school relationships. In her study of upper middle-class and working-class families, Lareau found that upper middle-class, or mainstream parents, experienced better family-school relationships due to a number of factors, including: (1) competence; (2) confidence; (3) income and material resources; (4) work; and (5) networks. First, through their college education, the mainstream parents gained access to the world of education and were able to understand the educational jargon of teachers. Second, the mainstream parents' social status was a resource which gave them the confidence to communicate with teachers in an educational setting. Third, the income and material resources of the mainstream parents played a significant role in building family-school relationships. Transportation and childcare were not major concerns and so they were always able to attend school events. Fourth, the mainstream parents' work-family connections mirrored the school-family relationship more than non-mainstream parents.

Mainstream parents' jobs usually required that they work at home as well as the workplace, while the non-mainstream parents' jobs ended with the work day. The teachers preferred parents' work-family connections because the children were expected to complete school work at home on a regular basis. Finally, mainstream parents' networks provided them with additional information about schooling. Many of the mainstream parents had teachers, principals, counselors, and special education teachers among their family, friends, and neighbors. On the other hand, the non-mainstream parents had gas station attendants, carpenters, janitors, and factory workers among their relatives and neighbors.

Nakagawa (2000) provided a critical analysis of the discourse on parental involvement. Similar to the ideas of Lareau, Nakagawa argued that the construction of the ideal parent is directed entirely towards non-mainstream parents who are believed to be unable to support their children's education. The discourse of parental involvement found in educational policies perpetuates "deficit views" of non-mainstream parents.

> The prevailing discourse says that the good, involved parent is one who visits the school site and participates in sanctioned school activities. Those parents who work in jobs where they cannot take time off or who have difficulty attending meetings are not recognized as involved parents. PTA meetings and having parent volunteers in the classroom- activities that are discussed and sanctioned in different policy texts- involve parents in methods primarily controlled by the school. The school establishes and permits these activities; parents are controlled through the structuring of time and space of their involvement…Those parents who do not meet these expectations and do not learn to get involved discover that

they have no right to expect quality education for their children. (Nakagawa, 2000, p.466)

Uncovering teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes about families can lead to a reexamination of ill-informed beliefs and misconceptions. A considerable number of empirical studies have examined teachers' beliefs and attitudes about family involvement (Foster & Loven, 1992; Graue & Brown, 2003; Jones, White, Aeby, & Benson, 1997; McBride, 1991; Moseman, 2003). A number of studies reveal changes in deficit views of families, especially for preservice teachers during teacher preparation.

Morris and Taylor (1998) studied the influence of a university course on preservice teachers' attitudes toward working with parents and their perceptions of their comfort and competency levels in planning and implementing parent involvement programs. During the course, preservice teachers completed four assignments, including conducting parent interviews, developing a parent involvement/education plan for one school year, developing a parental involvement notebook, and planning and implementing a parent workshop. Data revealed that the four assignments enhanced preservice teachers' comfort and confidence levels in working with parents. They reported that they had more positive attitudes about involving parents in school activities and were confident that they gained the knowledge, skills, and strategies that would enable them to plan effective programs for parents.

Kidd and colleagues (2005) found that preservice teachers' attitudes toward families changed as a result of their interactions with them. As a requirement of their preparation, early childhood preservice teachers engaged in coursework and a field experience each semester. Preservice teachers engaged in several learning assignments including visiting families in their homes, gathering families' stories, and implementing a family-stories project. Results of the

study revealed that interactions with families through home visits and gathering family stories greatly influenced preservice teachers' attitudes and beliefs about families.

Beliefs about Cultural Diversity

Teacher education programs are faced with the challenge of providing authentic experiences which enable preservice teachers to make explicit their beliefs. However, when cultural diversity is not a major focus in teacher education, preservice teachers' beliefs about cultural diversity are less likely to be made explicit. Examining preservice teachers' beliefs about cultural diversity can help researchers and teacher educators understand the mindset of teachers as they enter the field. Teachers' beliefs are the driving force behind teachers' expectations; some teachers hold cultural biases that negatively affect students' academic performance. Therefore, teacher educators must ask themselves: How can teacher education help to eradicate cultural biases that persist in the educational system? Often times, teacher education programs are held accountable for teachers' beliefs and practices and, in turn, student achievement. Garcia and Guerra (2004) developed a professional development project which targeted deficit thinking among educators. The project was developed in response to a number of school district superintendents who believed that "the achievement gap experienced by poor and by CLD students in urban public schools was in great part because of the inadequate preparation by institutions of higher education of their predominately White, middle-class, female teachers to work with this population" (Garcia & Guerra, p.152).

Although an awareness and understanding of cultural differences is a requisite for teachers, few preservice and beginning teachers understand or are prepared for the diversity that awaits them in today's classrooms (Taylor, 1999). Again, the first step is to make preservice

teachers' beliefs explicit in order to facilitate an examination and reconsideration of their existing belief systems. A substantial amount of literature has documented preservice teachers' beliefs about cultural diversity, as well as changes in their beliefs (Blasi, 2002; Causey et al., 2000; Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Garmon, 2004; Kidd et al., 2005; Pohan & Aguilar, 2001; Tatto, 1996; Tiezzi & Cross, 1997; Warren, 2002; Wolfe & Falk-Ross, 2002).

Blasi (2002) examined changes in preservice teachers' perspectives towards culturally diverse children and families. Preservice teachers' perspectives were first examined during their participation in a teacher education course which focused on the development of necessary knowledge, skills, dispositions, and experiences to work with diverse families. Preservice teachers' perspectives were then examined as a result of participating in a field experience at a family literacy program. During site visits, preservice teachers were required to interview a parent, interview a parent liaison, complete a home visit, and attend a team meeting. Results revealed that preservice teachers did change their perceptions toward diverse children and families. Instead of viewing them through an "at-risk" lens, the preservice teachers viewed them as children and families "of promise". They began to realize the importance of valuing and respecting parents as their children's first and most important teachers. Most importantly, they realized that many of the children and families had strengths, although they were not compatible with the school definition, and that they were not deficient, but instead lacked the opportunities and resources that would permit them to support their children's education.

Wolfe and Falk-Ross (2002) found in their study of early childhood preservice teachers, that early field experiences greatly impacted their attitudes about diversity. They suggest that providing preservice teachers with direct, hands-on experiences can facilitate a greater awareness

and understanding of diversity. Furthermore, they assert that it is necessary to align coursework with field experiences in order to strengthen the connection between theory and practice.

In addition to studying the impact of university courses and field experiences on preservice teachers' beliefs, researchers have also examined the impact of university faculty and experienced classroom teachers on preservice teachers' beliefs and behaviors (Tatto, 1996, 1998). However, the research is substantially limited. Thus, the present research study attempts to address this gap in the literature. One of the purposes of the present study is to explore the influence of experienced classroom teachers on preservice teachers' beliefs about family involvement and cultural diversity. The final section of this review includes relevant literature as it relates to mentoring.

Mentoring

The concept of mentoring has been addressed extensively in literature across a broad array of fields including education, business, nursing, and psychology. Definitions of mentoring are as diversified as the fields that have taken an interest in it (Anderson & Shannon, 1988; Clifford & Green, 1996; Jacobi, 1991; Shandley, 1989). For the purpose of the present study, which is situated within the context of a practicum experience, I have utilized Shandley's (1989) definition of mentoring:

> It is an intentional process of interaction between at least two individuals, requiring specific action on both parts…Mentoring is a nurturing process that fosters the growth and development of the protégé toward full maturity…Mentoring is an insightful process in which the wisdom of the mentor is acquired and applied by the protégé. This acquisition may often be selective and does require a contextual situation that enables the application of what is learned…Mentoring is a supportive, often protective process. The mentor can

serve as an important guide or reality-checker in introducing the protégé to the environment he or she is preparing for. Finally, it is also reasonable to conclude that an essential component of serving as a mentor is role modeling. (p.60)

This definition provides a comprehensive view of mentoring; however, it is conceivable that all processes might not exist in every relationship. Furthermore, it is quite possible that mentors, for whatever reason, may not have the capacities to perform each function in every relationship.

Mentoring Functions and Roles

A number of studies have revealed the perceived importance of certain characteristics that both mentors and protégés should possess (Applegate & Lasley, 1984; Clifford, 1999; Sudzina & Coolican, 1994). Mentor characteristics include: leader, helper, open-minded, sense of humor, knowledgeable, flexible, organized, patient, positive, good listener, friendly, nurturing, caring, respectful, and supportive. Protégé qualities include: receptive to criticism, willingness to work, adequate preparation, cooperative, and good rapport with children. Preservice teachers, or protégés, often look to mentors for encouragement and support, guidance, and constructive criticism (Clifford, 1999). In a study conducted by Abell and colleagues (1995), mentors were seen as support systems as they helped preservice teachers learn the knowledge necessary to survive in the school setting. Mentors were supportive as they talked to the interns, offered them advice, answered questions, and helped them solve problems.

Clifford (1999) examined the relationship between mentors and protégés who were together for three semesters in a preservice teacher program. Clifford found that the perceptions of mentors and protégés in relation to mentor characteristics were common in many ways. They both agreed that mentors should be nurturing, caring, open, sensitive, warm, friendly, and should

respect others' feelings. Additionally, they felt that when mentors interact with protégés, they should be supportive, share ideas, give constructive criticism, allow protégés to make mistakes, be able to share the classroom and children, and be an active listener.

An important element of the mentoring relationship is the mentor teachers' willingness to provide space for the preservice teacher to learn from his or her mistakes. This is often difficult for mentors because they wish to protect preservice teachers from serious failure, but at the same time they understand that it is necessary to provide the space for them to try new things, even if they fall flat on their faces (Abell et al., 1995). In a study conducted by Sudzina and Coolican (1994), the biggest fear reported by student teachers was that their cooperating/mentor teachers would not let them try new ideas or "let go" of the class. Preservice teachers often expect to be provided the opportunity to teach and practice some of the techniques they learned in their university courses (Applegate & Lasley, 1985). Preservice teachers also feel that it is important to be in the role of a real teacher in order to develop professionally (Beck & Kosnik, 2002).

Mentoring relationships have the potential to enhance the career development and the psychosocial development of protégés (Kram, 1983). Kram developed a model of mentoring functions, which includes psychosocial and career functions. Psychosocial functions enhance a protégé's sense of competence, confidence, and effectiveness and include role modeling, acceptance-and-confirmation, counseling, and friendship. Career functions enhance career advancement and include sponsorship, coaching, protection, exposure-and-visibility, and challenging work assignments.

Motivations of Mentors

The relationship between the cooperating teacher and the preservice teacher is at the heart of the practicum experience (Caruso, 2000). Preservice teachers' experiences in the classroom are highly dependent upon the cooperating teacher. Positive experiences more than likely derive from positive relationships (Sudzina & Coolican, 1994). Although there is little research on the kinds of teachers who volunteer to mentor preservice teachers, understanding the motivations of cooperating teachers may help to explain why some early field experiences are positive, while others are negative.

Sinclair and colleagues (2006) conducted a study in which they developed profiles of cooperating teachers in order to understand their motivations for working with preservice teachers as well as the factors that encourage or dissuade them from working with preservice teachers. The findings of the study indicated that cooperating teachers' positive motivations for taking pre-service teachers were attributed to an array of professional commitments to themselves, preservice teachers, and the teaching profession. The factors that discouraged cooperating teachers from working with preservice teachers included: negative student-related reasons (students unprepared for practicum, students who were lazy); teacher-related reasons (wanted a break from students, teacher was in first year of teaching either altogether or at that their present school); and structural reasons (classroom unsuitable for student teachers, teacher was not asked) (Sinclair, Dowson, & Thistleton-Martin, 2006). Some of the results of this study are consistent with other research that reveals that cooperating/mentor teachers are motivated by their willingness to help and desire to contribute to the field of education (Clifford, 1999).

Expectations in Mentoring Relationships

Regardless of cooperating teachers' motivations, they often have specific expectations of the preservice teachers who come to their classrooms; some teachers may have unrealistic expectations of what preservice teachers can do (Anderson, 1993; Applegate & Lasley, 1982, 1984). Applegate and Lasley (1982) conducted a study of cooperating teachers' problems with preservice field experience students. Results of the study reveal that cooperating teachers have a number of expectations of preservice teachers. First, they expect preservice teachers to exhibit professionalism. This means that the preservice teachers should appear and act like professionals, exhibiting behaviors that show their commitment to the profession. They should have the mind-set of a teacher and be prepared for lessons and take their instructional responsibilities seriously. Second, preservice teachers should possess a range of positive qualities such as a love of children, patience, interest in learning, and potential for making sound professional judgments. Likewise, preservice teachers should exhibit enthusiasm, regardless of the task. Enthusiasm is viewed as synonymous with cooperation.

Preservice teachers also have expectations of early field experiences and of cooperating teachers. In a study of preservice teachers' expectations for early field experiences, six themes emerged: (1) Preservice teachers, through observations of "real" teachers, expect to develop a better understanding of their teaching abilities and to assess their pedagogical strengths and weaknesses; (2) Preservice teachers expect to develop an understanding of effective classroom management through observations of model teachers; (3) Preservice teachers expect to be provided opportunities to observe and learn practical as well as specific ideas for successful performance; (4) Preservice teachers expect to be provided opportunities to practice teaching skills; (5) Preservice teachers expect to be exposed to various settings in order to see how

different teachers work in diverse contexts; and (6) Preservice teachers expect to be provided the opportunity to deal directly with students, especially those with special learning needs (Applegate & Lasley, 1985).

In a qualitative study conducted by Martin and Treaux (1997), mentors and preservice teachers in an early childhood mentoring program were asked about their perceptions of the mentoring relationship. The researchers found five emerging themes: (1) mentoring builds a foundation for growth and change; (2) mentoring promotes personal development; (3) mentoring promotes professional growth; (4) mentoring changes both mentors and preservice teachers; and (5) mentoring provides benefits to both mentors and preservice teachers. In the beginning, a solid foundation for growth and change must be built. This can be achieved through an establishment of trust from the very beginning (Abell et al., 1995; Awaya et al., 2003; Clifford, 1999; Martin & Trueax, 1997; Stanulis & Russell, 2000; Whitebrook & Bellm, 1996).

Gender and Mentoring

Gender composition seems to be a critical factor in mentoring relationships. However, nearly all of the research on gender and mentoring has been found in fields outside of education (i.e., business, psychology). The existing literature on gender and mentoring has examined effects of gender on mentoring functions and outcomes (Allen, Day, & Lentz, 2005; Allen & Eby, 2004; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000), the perceptions of cross-gender relationships (Ragins & McFarlin, 1990), and barriers to cross-gender relationships (O'Neill & Blake-Beard, 2002).

According to researchers, gender composition appears to be related to specific mentoring functions. Sosik and Godshalk (2000) investigated the effects of gender composition on

mentoring relationships. Two-hundred thirty six adult students enrolled in a part-time Masters of Business Administration program reported being involved in formal and informal mentoring relationships. Researchers examined the mentoring functions the students received, specifically as they related to same-gender and cross-gender mentoring. Results of the study revealed that male mentors were perceived to provide higher levels of career development support than female mentors. Specifically, male mentor/female protégé dyads were associated with higher levels of career development functions. Results further revealed that male mentor/male protégé dyads were associated with lower levels of psychosocial support than female mentor/male protégé dyads and female mentor/female protégé dyads.

Allen and Eby (2004) found similar results in their study of 249 male and female mentors in accounting and engineering. Male mentors reported providing more career-related mentoring to their protégés. Moreover, female mentors reported providing more psychosocial support to their protégés. Additionally, female mentors reported providing more psychosocial support to female protégés; however, male mentors reported providing psychosocial support to male and female protégés equally.

Ragins and Cotton (1999) revealed interesting findings about female mentors and male protégés. They found that male protégés with female mentors were significantly less likely, than any other gender composition, to report that their mentor provided acceptance roles. They also reported less psychosocial and career development functions than any other gender composition. Overall, male protégés were less satisfied with their female mentors. O'Neill and Blake-Beard (2002) also address the issue of male protégés and female mentors. They assert that there are several gender-related barriers to female mentor/male protégé relationships: (a) organizational

demographics; (b) relational demography; (c) sexual liaisons; (d) gender stereotypes; and (e) power dynamics.

First, Organizational demographics refer to the underrepresentation of women in positions of leadership. "Specifically, the relative scarcity of mentoring pairs with a senior woman and a junior man is certainly in part because women are scarce at the upper levels of management" (O'Neill & Blake-Beard, 2002, p. 54). Second, relational demography refers to the idea that people are drawn to others based on similar characteristics, such as same sex or similar attitudes, beliefs, values, or experiences. Male protégés may not be interested in a mentoring relationship with a female due to the fact that they may have little in common. Third, sexual liaisons may affect the formation of mentoring relationships between men and women. According to O'Neill and Blake-Beard, even the potential for sexual involvement may influence cross-gender mentoring. Fourth, gender stereotyping may affect cross-gender mentoring because women and men have certain expectations of each other based on feminine and masculine stereotypes. Men may not want a female mentor because of their perception that women lack the necessary skills to be good mentors. Finally, power dynamics are believed to affect cross-gender mentoring. O'Neill and Blake-Beard argue that few female mentor/male protégé relationships exist because men do not perceive women as having the power to support their career development.

The previous research studies examined cross-gender mentoring mainly as it related to the field of business. Yet, the results have implications for the field of education, particularly early childhood education. The presence of male teachers in early childhood education is considerably scarce. As such, one can almost predict that the majority of mentors in early childhood will be females. Similarly, it is likely that female mentors will be paired with female

protégés. Female mentor/male protégé relationships do not occur often in early childhood education. The present research study explored same-gender and cross-gender mentoring relationships; two of the four dyadic relationships involved female mentors and male protégés.

Theoretical Framework

The existing literature on mentoring has raised concerns for many researchers. There is a consensus that an overwhelming number of studies on mentoring lack a theoretical base (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2001; Gibb, 1999; Hansford, Tennent, & Ehrich, 2003; Hawkey, 1997; Jacobi, 1991). Hawkey (1997) argues that the literature on mentoring is "either descriptive or declarative with little analysis or theoretical underpinning to the study and practice of mentoring" (p.325). Jacobi (1991) said, "One of the weaknesses of research about mentoring is the lack of a theoretical or conceptual base" (p.522). Gibb (1999) stated, "Substantive theoretical analysis of formal mentoring has been absent, implicit, limited, or underdeveloped" (p.1056). Ehrich and colleagues (2001) assert that the definitional problem of mentoring can be attributed to "the fact that missing from so much of the mentoring literature is a lack of grounding in an appropriate theory" (p. 2).

Hansford and colleagues (2003) conducted a review of the literature on educational mentoring. In their review, they examined the extent to which studies on mentoring had referred to a theoretical or conceptual framework. Of the 159 studies reviewed, only 22 (13.8%) identified and discussed at least one conceptual or theoretical perspective. Within the 22 studies, a myriad of theories or frameworks were identified, including: adult development theory, developmental stage theory of adults, cognitive development theory, adult learning theories, social capital theory, role model theory, theory of possible selves, models of mentoring,

constructivist/socio-cultural theories, coaching/skill development models, social exchange theory, contingency theory, and change theory. For the purpose of the present research, I have identified one framework- Social Constructivism- which seems to have relevance to preservice teachers and mentoring.

Social Constructivist Theory

Three major tenets of social constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978) can be applied to mentoring relationships in teacher education: (1) knowledge is constructed by learners; (2) learning involves social interaction; and (3) learning is situated. First, social constructivism posits that learners construct knowledge based on their prior experiences. Moreover, learners' preexisting knowledge has a significant influence on what new knowledge is learned and whether conceptual change occurs (Applefield, Huber, & Moallem, 2000/ 2001). As previous literature has shown, preservice teachers bring their own set of beliefs, values, and attitudes to teacher education programs. These beliefs, values, and attitudes are thought to be influenced by preservice teachers' personal backgrounds and experiences and therefore, serve as filters for subsequent learning. Preservice teachers' preexisting beliefs, values, and attitudes are also believed to have a powerful influence on whether and/or how conceptual change occurs (Applefield et al., 2000/ 2001).

Second, social constructivism is based on the principle that learning is social (Beck & Kosnik, 2006). The construction of knowledge is viewed as a highly interactive process which is socially mediated or influenced by others in social interaction (Samaras & Gismondi, 1998). The interactions that occur between preservice teachers and cooperating teachers during mentoring relationships are vital to preservice teachers' learning. Ideally, these interactions involve some

form of dialogue, which is considered a catalyst for knowledge acquisition (Applefield et al., 2000/2001; Beck & Kosnik, 2006; Tatto, 1998). Furthermore, social constructivism underscores the "supportive guidance of mentors as they enable the apprentice learner to achieve successively more complex skill, understanding, and ultimately independent competence" (Applefield et al., 2000/2001, p.38).

Third, according to social constructivism, learning is situated within specific contexts. Knowledge is context-bound; it is embedded in and connected to the situation where learning occurs (Applefield et al., 2000/2001). For preservice teachers, learning occurs within the context of a real classroom, or in the case of an immersion experience, learning can occur within the context of a community setting. Research on the influence of field experiences during teacher preparation has revealed that preservice teachers learn a great deal and are able to confront their previous beliefs. In many cases, preservice teachers' beliefs about family involvement and cultural diversity have been altered as a result of their direct experiences with families and in diverse settings.

Conclusion

A review of the literature yields important implications for future research. First, family involvement and cultural diversity have received little attention in most teacher education programs. Second, there is no consensus on whether or not preservice teachers' beliefs can be changed as a result of teacher education programs. Third, the influence of mentoring on preservice teachers is unknown. Furthermore, cross-gender mentoring has not been studied extensively in the field of education, particularly in early childhood education. The present research study attempts to bring greater awareness to these complex issues. Through a social

constructivist lens, I examine preservice teachers' construction of new knowledge, or beliefs,

particularly in regards to family involvement and cultural diversity and as it is situated within the

context of a practicum experience and as it may be influenced by their preexisting beliefs and/or

through their interactions with their mentors.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Collective Case Study

"A case study is an exploration of a 'bounded system' or a case (or multiple cases) over time and through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (Creswell, 1998, p.61). A case may be an individual, a group, a program, or an event and it may involve a single case or multiple cases-otherwise referred to as collective case study (Stake, 1995, 2000; Yin, 2003). This collective case study explored the relationship between four preservice teachers and seven cooperating teachers participating in an early childhood practicum. The purpose of the collective case study was not only to describe the relationships that were formed between preservice teachers and cooperating teachers, but also to explore participants' beliefs- specifically about family involvement and cultural diversity. Additionally, I aimed to explore the influence of cooperating teachers on preservice teachers' beliefs.

Data from multiple sources- including interviews, observations, journals, and informal conversations- provided insight into the experiences of the preservice teachers and the cooperating teachers. Furthermore, analyses of the data provided answers to the seven research questions that guided the collective case study:

1. What is the relationship between cooperating teachers and preservice teachers during an early childhood practicum?

2. What are cooperating teachers' beliefs, values, attitudes, and reported practices related to family involvement?

3. What are cooperating teachers' beliefs, values, attitudes, and reported practices related to cultural diversity?

4. What are preservice teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes related to family involvement?

5. What are preservice teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes related to cultural diversity?

6. In what ways do cooperating teachers influence preservice teachers' beliefs about family involvement?

7. In what ways do cooperating teachers influence preservice teachers' beliefs about cultural diversity?

Research Setting

The present study was conducted in the College of Education, Department of Curriculum and Instruction at a large northeastern university. Specifically, the practicum course CI 495A was the main focus of the study. CI 495A is an early field experience that is offered during the Fall and Spring semesters. Preservice teachers are only required to take the practicum during one of those semesters. Preservice teachers who enroll in CI 495A are typically early childhood education majors beginning their junior semester. CI 495A students are placed in local child development centers for eight weeks, completing twenty-eight total hours. A major requirement of the practicum course is to teach two activities to preschool-aged children (See Appendix A).

Four child development centers[*] provided the primary context for this collective case study. The Child Development Center, located near the university's campus, was a community center which focused on the teachings of Judaism. The center was comprised of one mixed-age preschool classroom with children between the ages of two and four years. The classroom also

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[*] Pseudonyms are used to protect the identities of the centers.

included three teachers, one lead teacher and two assistant teachers. The Child Development Center stood apart from the other three centers in two ways. First, it was essentially a Parent Run School. Parents held virtually every position available on the School Board. Second, it focused mainly on the Jewish religion and culture, although the majority of children attending the center were not Jewish.

Happy Kids, located on the university's campus, was one of the largest centers in the study. There were a total of nine classrooms serving children ages six weeks to six years. Most classrooms had three teachers, one lead teacher and two regular teachers. Each lead teacher held at least a Bachelor's Degree. The particular classroom that was included in this study had three teachers who taught children ages two years to four years.

Early Years Preschool was within walking distance of the university's campus. The center was situated in a house in a residential neighborhood. As described by one of the center's teachers, Early Years Preschool "is more like home… more like grandma's house." There was one classroom of mixed-age children, two years to five years, led by four teachers. Each teacher was responsible for a particular age group.

The Children's Corner was also located on the university's campus. It was as large as Happy Kids, although it did not serve as many children. There were a total of three classrooms serving children ages six weeks to six years. Each classroom had at least two teachers. Each lead teacher held at least a Bachelor's degree. The particular classroom that was included in the study had three teachers who taught children ages two years to four years.

Researcher's Role

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection (Merriam, 1988). Qualitative research is subjective, thus the researcher is constantly aware of her role in the inquiry and how it shapes the study (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). This *reflexivity* is a goal of qualitative research (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2002). I believe my identity as a former early childhood teacher and my personal beliefs about family involvement and cultural diversity shaped the present study in some ways. Admittedly, I brought my own set of beliefs about appropriate teaching practices (specifically in regards to working with culturally diverse children and their families) to the study. As such, I viewed the participants' reported beliefs and practices through a critical lens. I was constantly aware of my own personal biases, but I made a conscious effort to be very descriptive-as opposed to critical-in reporting the findings. My experience as the supervisor of CI 495A also played a significant role in the present research study. At the time of the study, I had been serving as the supervisor of CI 495A for the past two years. Consequently, I developed good working relationships with the cooperating teachers over time and had preconceived notions about them as teachers and as mentors.

At times, I found it difficult to separate my role as researcher from my role as supervisor. As a researcher, I felt it was important for me to distance myself in order to fully explore the participants' experiences. However, as a supervisor, I felt an obligation to be involved on some level. I believe I maintained a balance between the two roles. I fulfilled my role as supervisor, communicating with the preservice teachers on a regular basis throughout the practicum, beyond the classroom observations. I offered advice and provided feedback as it related to course assignments. As a researcher, I remained neutral when listening to the stories of the preservice

teachers and the cooperating teachers. I made a conscious effort not to make judgments or to take sides. My main objective was to collect the data and report it in an impartial way that represented each participant's experiences and feelings.

I found that my role as the supervisor of the practicum was beneficial in at least one way. I was able to easily gain access to the participants and sites by requesting their participation in person (See Appendix B). The cooperating teachers who participated in this study had each participated in the practicum during previous semesters. They each had a copy of the Mentor Guidebook which is distributed to every cooperating teacher who takes part in the practicum (See Appendix C). Also, all of the Directors at the child development centers knew me and were willing and able to assist me in any way. Many of them expressed great interest in my research.

Gaining access to the pre-service teachers was as equally straightforward. Although I had not known any of the preservice teachers prior to the study, I was able to gain access to them at the beginning of the semester. During our orientation meeting, I spoke with the preservice teachers about my study and distributed the informed consent forms (See Appendix D). The informed consent forms were clear in stating that participation was voluntary and that refusal to participate, or withdrawal of participation at any time, would hold no bearing on grading or evaluation for the practicum. Of the twelve preservice teachers who were enrolled in the practicum, nine agreed to participate in the study.

Sample Selection

In qualitative inquiry, researchers typically engage in purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling, otherwise referred to as criterion-based sampling (Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 1988), is a strategy in which the researcher chooses particular settings, people, or events in order to

provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of interest. Researchers choose from several different strategies as they purposefully select *information-rich cases* (Patton, 2002). I chose to use maximum variation sampling because I wanted to purposely sample the widest variations of sites and people within the limits of my study (Seidman, 1991).

As discussed previously, the four sites varied in a number of ways. First, the sites varied in relation to size, resources, and philosophies or missions. The Child Development Center and Early Years Preschool were smaller and had fewer teachers than Happy Kids and The Children's Corner. Furthermore, due to the fact that Happy Kids and The Children's Corner were affiliated with the university, they had access to more resources and their facilities were more spacious and modern. The sites also varied in the demographic composition of the children in the classrooms (See Table 3.1). I chose to collect demographic background information about the children in order to provide some additional background information on the cooperating teachers' classrooms. Given the fact that I was interested in cooperating teachers' and preservice teachers' beliefs about cultural diversity, I felt it was necessary to obtain additional information about the ethnic and racial makeup of each classroom.

In order to purposefully sample the widest variations of preservice teachers, I distributed a diversity beliefs scale (See Appendix E), adapted from Pohan and Aguilar (2001). The scale was not used to provide any statistical information, as this study is entirely qualitative. Instead, I used the scale as a way to chose participants whose beliefs and attitudes varied to the greatest extent possible. From the nine preservice teachers who agreed to participate in this study, I only needed four participants. I decided to choose the participants who received the highest, lowest, and middle scores on the diversity scale. While the participants in the study did not represent a range of racial or ethnic groups, they did vary in gender, age, and years of teaching experience

(See Table 3.2). In order to provide demographic information about my sample, I distributed

demographic information sheets to each participant prior to the interviews (See Appendix F).

Table 3.1

Demographics of Classrooms

Center	White	Black/ African Am.	Hispanic/ Latino	Asian	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Other Race/ Ethnicity	Male	Female	ELL[1]
Child Dev. Center (Jodi)	16	0	0	0	0	1-Asian/White	11	6	0
Happy Kids (Marla)	14	1	0	3	0	0	9	9	5
Early Years Preschool (Karen, Carol, Debra, Laura)	15	1	0	0	0	0	11	5	1
Children's Corner (Tracy)	12	0	1	4	0	1- Asian/White 1- Indian	11	8	6

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[1] ELL refers to English Language Learners.

Table 3.2

Demographics of Participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Years of Teaching Experience	Highest Level of Education	Race/Ethnicity
Paul	18-25	Male	1-5	High School	White
Tracy	26-40	Female	6-10	Bachelor's	White
Amber	18-25	Female	0	High School	White
Laura	65+	Female	16-20	Bachelor's	White
Debra	40-65	Female	21+	Bachelor's	White
Karen	40-65	Female	21+	Bachelor's	White
Carol	40-65	Female	16-20	Associate's	White
David	18-25	Male	0	High School	White
Jodi	26-40	Female	1-5	Bachelor's	White
Natalie	18-25	Female	1-5	High School	White
Marla	40-65	Female	16-20	Master's	White

Data Collection

Qualitative researchers often employ multiple methods, which are interactive and

humanistic (Creswell, 2003). In order to gain holistic meanings of participants' experiences, data

sources included interviews, observations, documents, and informal conversations (See Table

3.3). While each method has its own strengths and weaknesses, collectively incorporating all

three methods allowed me to compensate for the weaknesses of one method by capitalizing on

the strengths of another (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Merriam, 1988). According to Lincoln and

Guba (1985), "no single item of information (unless coming from an elite and unimpeachable source) should ever be given serious consideration unless it can be triangulated" (p.283).

Erlandson and others (1993) further discuss the importance of incorporating data from multiple sources:

> The naturalistic researcher will gather data from a variety of sources and, preferably, in a variety of ways. Respondents are asked questions, but they are also encouraged to engage with the researcher in less structured conversations so that their hidden assumptions and constructions begin to surface. They are observed in their daily activity so that the researcher can begin to see the operational meaning of what they have said. Further insight into their constructed realities can be gained from documents…Data from all these sources are brought together and systematically analyzed in a process that proceeds parallel to data collection. (p.81)

Table 3.3

Summary of Data Collection

Dyad	Field Observations	Formal Interviews	Reflection Journals	Dialogue Journals
David Jodi	2/9; 2/16; 2/23; 3/2; 3/23	David: Pre- 2/7; Post- 4/23 Jodi: 2/5	Submitted 4/23	2/9-4/16 Submitted 4/23
Natalie Marla	2/12; 2/19; 2/26; 3/5; 3/19; 4/2	Natalie: Pre- 2/2; Post- 4/11 Marla: 2/19	Submitted 4/13	2/12-4/9 Submitted 4/11
Amber Karen Carol Debra Laura	2/9; 2/23; 3/2; 3/23; 4/6	Amber: Pre- 2/5; Post- 4/18 Karen: 2/12 Carol: 2/16 Debra: 2/20 Laura: 2/21	Submitted 4/13	2/9-4/11 Submitted 4/13
Paul Tracy	2/12; 2/19; 2/26; 3/5; 4/2; 4/9	Paul: Pre- 2/2; Post- 4/13 Tracy: 2/22	Submitted 4/13	2/19- 3/2 Submitted 4/13

As discussed in the previous chapter, social constructivist theory is relevant to the present study. Therefore, the rationale for collecting data from multiple sources should also be discussed within the context of social constructivism. First, I was interested in preservice and cooperating teachers' beliefs. More specifically, I wanted to examine any possible changes in preservice teachers' beliefs. According to social constructivism, knowledge is constructed by learners and is influenced by their prior experiences. Preservice teachers are believed to bring existing beliefs into their teacher education programs. Therefore, in order to gain deeper insight into preservice teachers' beliefs prior to and after the practicum, I needed to conduct pre- and post-practicum interviews.

Second, social constructivist theory maintains that learning is a socially interactive process. An expectation of the practicum is that preservice teachers would interact with- and therefore learn from- mentor teachers. In order to document the communication and interaction between preservice and cooperating teachers, dialogue journals were collected. Reflection journals also documented the interactions between preservice and cooperating teachers. Finally, a major tenet of social constructivism is that knowledge is context-bound. Direct observations allowed me to gain insight into preservice teachers' experiences within the context of a real classroom- inclusive of young children from diverse backgrounds, experienced classroom teachers, and children's families.

Interviews

"Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit. We interview to find out what is in and on someone else's mind, to gather their stories" (Patton, 2002, p.341). In order to gather the

participants' stories, I conducted open-ended interviews with each participant. As stated before, I interviewed the preservice teachers before and after their participation in the practicum in order to gain insight into any possible changes in their beliefs or influences on their behaviors. Additionally, I interviewed the cooperating teachers either before or during the beginning of the practicum. As a follow-up to the interviews with the cooperating teachers and the preservice teachers, I spoke with each of them informally throughout the practicum.

The interviews lasted, on average, between 30 minutes to 1 hour. A standardized open-ended interview format (See Appendix G) was utilized as a way to ensure that all participants answered the same questions, thus facilitating comparability of responses during data analysis. According to Patton (2002), the standardized open-ended interview makes data analysis easier as the researcher is able to locate and organize each participant's response. Moreover, Rossman and Rallis (2003) argue that a degree of standardization in interviews may be necessary, especially in multisite case studies.

Observations

According to Patton (2002), direct observations offer several advantages, such as the opportunity to better understand the research context as well as the opportunity to gain additional insight into the things that people would not be willing to share in an interview. Through direct field observations, I was able to understand the participants' experiences as it related to their environment. Additionally, I was able to gain insight into behaviors and interactions that affected the participants' positive and negative experiences in the practicum.

Field observations were made during the first four weeks of the practicum (See Appendix H). I was only able to observe the dyads in their natural settings for four weeks (one hour each

week) due to my obligations to the other preservice teachers who were enrolled in the practicum. The final four weeks of the practicum were reserved for evaluations of all of the preservice teachers' teaching activities. Although I was able to see the preservice teachers who participated in the study during the final four weeks, the time was extremely limited as I was required to meet with several other students in the same day.

During field observations, I recorded extensive, descriptive notes on the interactions between the dyads in a field journal. Specifically, I looked for instances of direct communication between the preservice teachers and their assigned mentor teachers, as well as the communication between the preservice teachers and other teachers in the classroom. Additionally, close attention was paid to the kinds of interactions, as well as to the frequency of interactions between the dyads and the other teachers in the classroom. Finally, given the fact that the participants' beliefs about cultural diversity and family involvement were also of interest in this study, observations of cooperating teachers' practices in relation to cultural diversity and family involvement were recorded as well.

Document Analysis

The use of documents is believed to be particularly useful in qualitative case studies as "they can ground an investigation in the context of the problem being investigated" (Merriam, 1988, p.109). Documents may also be useful as substitutes for direct observations (Stake, 1995). The researcher, for whatever reason, may be unable to record specific instances. In such cases, documents can serve as backups or as additional support. Document analysis is also important "for qualitative researchers who wish to explore multiple and conflicting voices, differing and interacting interpretations" (Hodder, 2000, p.705). In relation to the present study, documents

certainly supported other forms of data, particularly observations. Due to the fact that I was only able to observe each dyad for a total of about four hours, I needed to gain a better understanding of what was taking place in the classrooms when I was not present. The documents provided that additional information.

Documents consisted of reflection journals and dialogue journals. The reflection journals were a requirement for all of the preservice teachers participating in the practicum. The preservice teachers were required to write three reflective journal entries. The predetermined questions included:

- Reflection about child study assignment (What did you learn from this assignment? How has this assignment helped in your understanding of assessment in ECE?)

- Observations and reflections about mentors (How did they address family involvement in their classrooms? How did they address cultural diversity in their classrooms?)

- Significance of the practicum (How has the practicum helped in your understanding of ECE? How effective was the mentoring relationship?)

The reflection journals were collected at the end of the practicum, during the final practicum meeting. The preservice teachers were required to submit their reflections as part of their final portfolios for the course.

Dialogue journals were required only of the preservice teachers participating in the study. The dialogue journals included weekly journal entries between the preservice teachers and the cooperating teachers. The preservice teachers began the dialogue by posing a question or a comment about anything related to teaching in early childhood. The cooperating teachers were asked to respond to the questions and/or comments before the following week when the

preservice teachers returned. In most cases, the dialogues continued each week for the duration

of the practicum. The purpose of the dialogue journals was to facilitate additional

communication between the dyads; it was not meant to substitute verbal, face-to-face

communication or interactions between the dyads.

Data Analysis

For me, data analysis began the moment I conducted my first interview. In qualitative

research, data collection and analysis are considered interactive processes (Erlandson et al.,

1993; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Merriam, 1988). Interviews were transcribed immediately;

they were usually completed within 1 to 2 days. Field notes were read after every observation

and summarized. This process of typing and organizing my field notes provided an opportunity

for me to begin to immerse myself in the data (Patton, 2002). Although documents were not

collected until the end of the study, I was able to read through the dialogue journals during site

visits. I made notes of what I read in my field journal. Once the reflection and dialogue journals

were collected, they were photocopied. I wanted to preserve the original copies in case I needed

to cut, highlight, or make notes on the pages.

After I collected all of the data, I organized it according to dyads. This made it easier for

me to first analyze each case individually, and then make comparisons across cases. While the

categories were created primarily from the research questions, the themes were established

through an inductive process, meaning they emerged from the data as opposed to being deduced

from an existing framework (Patton, 2002). First, I read through all of the interviews, field notes,

and journals. Then, I wrote comments and codes in the margins of the pages. I re-read through

the data again, extracting relevant text (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). After sifting through the

relevant text, I created tables of broad categories and emergent themes. Under each emergent theme, I included excerpts from various data sources (See Table 3.4 for example). I completed this activity for each case. Finally, I examined all of the tables, looking for repeating ideas (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). The repeating ideas provided additional themes that were later included in the cross-case analysis.

Table 3.4

Categories and Themes

Relationship	David	Jodi
Expectations	"I'm hoping that I'll be able to rely on her to help me understand some of the processes that are going on."	"Being responsible…and be respectful." "I think it's important that they know what kids in the age…are supposed to know or might be able, things that they might be able to do, so they don't have higher expectations."
Taking Initiative	Pre-Practicum: "The problem is as a newcomer into a classroom, it's hard for me to escape the feeling that I'm at least a little bit of an intruder."	Field Notes- 3/23/07- I had to evaluate David's activity today. I spoke to Jodi about his progress and she expressed her disappointment that he lacks initiative and doesn't get as involved with the children. She said he is always more than willing to help, but that she has to ask him to do things; he doesn't take the initiative.
Communication	"I really would have liked more communication… I feel like there wasn't enough communication."	(Informal conversation) Noticed that David was uncomfortable and when he did communicate with her, he lacked eye contact. She felt that some of his entries in dialogue journal were trivial and were questions that could have been asked any time in person. She attempted to have more verbal communication with him by replying to some of the entries that they should discuss it in person.

	(Observation) Initially David took the role of an outsider, an observer. By week 3, he began to interact more with the children. He began to act more in an assistant teacher way, sitting on the rug reading books to the children. The children began to notice him more and began recruiting him to interact with them. He began sitting with them during Circle Time.	Jodi viewed her role as a guide. "I think I should be there to watch and to guide and to give the advice, the right advice on time so it's not too late to make those changes. For good or for like if things are good, also to give that feedback."
Roles and Responsibilities		

Methods of Verification

Triangulation, member checking, and rich, thick descriptions ensure credibility of the findings of this collective case study. The use of multiple methods of data collection is considered a major strength of qualitative research. I utilized interviews, observations, and document analysis in order to gain insight into the participants' experiences. According to Maxwell (1996), triangulation "reduces the risk of chance associations and of systematic biases due to a specific method and allows a better assessment of the generality of the explanations that you develop" (p.93).

Member checking is a process in which the researcher is able to determine the accuracy of his or her findings by soliciting feedback from participants. Member checks, or participant validation (Rossman & Rallis, 2003), took place in two stages. First, interview transcripts and summaries were taken back to each participant as a way to correct any mistakes and to elicit further information. Overall, the participants agreed with the transcriptions and summaries and a few of them provided additional information. After data collection was complete, I began writing the final case reports. Once drafts of the reports were complete, I contacted the participants and asked for their help in ensuring that I accurately interpreted their experiences. I emailed copies of

participants' respective chapters and asked that they contact me with additional feedback. All of the participants responded, stating that they were pleased with what they read. There were no disputed interpretations; participants felt that I accurately represented their experiences.

Rich, thick descriptions address issues of transferability as the researcher writes such detailed descriptions of participants that readers could transfer that information to other settings (Creswell, 1998; Erlandson et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 1996). "Effective, rich description brings the reader vicariously into the context being described" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p.33). In presenting the findings, I relied heavily on the participants' own words as extracted primarily from interview transcripts, but also from their writings in the dialogue and reflection journals. I included a plethora of direct quotes, often times long, direct quotes throughout chapters four, five, six, seven, and eight. In this way readers are allowed into the participants' contexts, thus enabling them to wholly identify with the findings to which I arrived.

PRELUDE TO CASE STUDIES

The subsequent chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven focus on the cases of four dyads[*]- (1) David and Jodi, (2) Natalie and Marla, (3) Amber and Karen, Carol, Debra, Laura, and (4) Paul and Tracy. The findings discussed in each chapter are organized according to the following categories: (1) The Relationship; (2) Beliefs about Family Involvement; (3) Beliefs about Cultural Diversity; and (4) Influences on Beliefs. Within each category, I discuss major themes generated from the data. A summary of each single case will conclude its respective chapter. A cross-case analysis will follow in Chapter Eight.

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[*] Pseudonyms are used to protect the identities of the participants.

CHAPTER 4

CASE 1- DAVID AND JODI

David was a dual early childhood/elementary education major. Although he had no intention of teaching preschool or kindergarten, he wanted a dual certification "just in case." He believed his knowledge of early childhood education would be viewed as an additional credential by future employers. David's own experiences throughout school seemed to have influenced his decision to become a teacher. Although he would characterize his middle school experience as less than favorable, it was during that time that he decided he wanted to teach. In our initial interview he said, "I guess I could say I developed a like of school because I developed an enjoyment of what I perceived school to be…whenever I would play school I would always imagine what school should be."

David's commitment to teaching was evident in the time and thought he devoted to his undergraduate work. Despite being an ideal student, David lacked one of the most important skills many would argue is crucial for all teachers- social skills. Aware of this "weakness", David expressed a strong desire to overcome it through experience in the field saying, "I would definitely want to take away better social skills working with students."

Jodi was a young teacher with a diverse background. As a child, she was raised in Uruguay where she attended a bilingual school. Since the age of two, she was taught in both Spanish and English. By high school, Jodi had moved to Israel and joined the army before training as a teacher. During her preparation as a special education teacher, Jodi spent a great deal of time out in the field. Each semester she gained experience working with children from

different backgrounds. When she received her degree in education she moved to the United States where she began teaching preschool at a local Jewish community center.

The Relationship

Expectations

Before David and Jodi met, they each spoke with me about their expectations of one another. Prior to the practicum, David had only one other field experience in which he observed three different teachers. He had not gained much in terms of developing personal or professional relationships with any of the teachers. As such, he was careful not to have too many expectations for Jodi. More than anything David just wanted to be able to get to know Jodi and gain insight into her planning and decision making processes. David believed that, to some extent, Jodi had a professional obligation to help preservice teachers.

> If she supports what she does as an occupation, if she supports education in general, if she supports essentially all students beyond the ones she has to care for, then I feel that she would have an obligation to help teachers in training understand the classroom and understand what it means to be a teacher. (Interview, 2/7/07)

As a novice teacher, Jodi still remembered what it was like to be in David's shoes. She did not have any unrealistic expectations of him; she basically wanted him to be responsible, be respectful, and have an understanding of the developmental stages of young children. Given the fact that her classroom was a mixed age group, she was especially concerned about meeting the needs of all of the children. She said, "You really have to understand that you have all these different ages and you really need to understand what they are able to do and what they are not."

David's interest in gaining insight into Jodi's planning and decision making was evident in their dialogue journal. In one of his entries he asked, "How do you decide what types of

activities to do? Through weekly themes? Through a set curriculum? Or is it simply a matter of

intuitive belief about what would be best at certain times?" Although Jodi always responded to

such questions, David felt that he still had not gained enough insight into her thinking. He

attributed this lack of insight to the limited communication between them.

> I feel like I didn't really get a great idea of what she was thinking, the way she made her decisions. Just the whole process of what she does as an ECE teacher. I got a reasonably good idea, especially through the journal, but I feel like there definitely wasn't as much communication as I would've liked. (Interview, 4/23/07)

David discussed this issue further in his reflection journal.

> There certainly were moments in which we conversed about certain aspects of her philosophies and times when she briefly explained the reasoning behind her actions and activities, but not enough to give me an excellent view on who she is and how she plans and accomplishes what she does as an educator. (Reflection Journal, no date)

Similarly, Jodi felt that David did not meet all of her expectations. She expressed major

concerns about David's suitability to teach in early childhood. During one of his teaching

activities, he did not perform well and Jodi felt that he was out of touch with the needs and

interests of young children.

Taking Initiative

The first day David arrived in Jodi's class he seemed nervous and looked out of place.

This was not surprising given our recent conversation about his lack of social skills.

> The problem is as a newcomer into a classroom, it's hard for me to escape the feeling that I'm at least a little bit of an intruder…I just feel that it's hard to be very, very cautious in what I say, in what I do, not to step on anybody's toes or anything like that. (Interview, 2/7/07)

It became a constant struggle for David to initiate any type of interaction with Jodi or with the children in the classroom due, in part, to his "intruder" mentality. Internally, he sought Jodi's help in his struggle, unsure of his own responsibility in the matter. He stated, "I can't tell maybe if it was my fault for not initiating it or if it was on her shoulders to maybe help me through it." In his reflection journal, he further discussed his dilemma.

> I'm incredibly happy to do any work or observation under an experienced mentor teacher. However, at the same time, having a mentor has always made me nervous. When I walk into the classroom, I know it is not mine, and I always seem to hold myself back, concerned that taking the 'incorrect' action would cause me to be embarrassed and somewhat ashamed of my own conduct. (Reflection Journal, no date)

There were times, although few and far between, when David attempted to get involved in the classroom. He would ask Jodi or any of the other teachers if there was anything that he could do to help out in the classroom. His requests were often met with a "No, that's alright." When asked how it made him feel knowing that Jodi and the other teachers did not always need his help, he said, "It still made me feel like I was a bit of an intruder so to speak. Not literally…but it just felt like I'm sure I was, but it just didn't feel like I was as welcome as I could be." He also said that there were times when he felt like a "ghost" in the classroom.

David's lack of initiative was also related to time management. In other words, David did not take full advantage of the three and a half hours each week in the classroom. As stated before, David was an ideal student. However, his preoccupation with other class assignments negatively affected his involvement with the teachers and the children at the center. He eventually realized that he had not made good use of his time during the practicum.

> It was difficult to try to give 100 percent and still keep the assessment, the papers I had to fill out…write up journals and everything still in the back of my mind while I was working with the kids. That was the most difficult thing for me and in some ways it definitely did show and some ways it definitely did prevent me from being as maybe active as I could have been…It interfered with my mindset. I was

> going in with the mindset of a student and you really can't go into the center with the mindset like a student and a teacher. That's always difficult. (Interview, 4/23/07)

According to David, Jodi did not help him to face these types of challenges. He said, "It didn't seem like she was very supportive in general. But, she wasn't anti-supportive. It just seemed like she was very objective. She was very out of what I was doing."

After the practicum was over, David decided to continue visiting "just for my own enjoyment." He quickly noticed how he took more initiative to be involved and how he felt more relaxed. He no longer carried with him the "observational mentality" and he seemed ready to get into the mindset of a teacher. He said, "I can tell you after having the practicum over, it just felt like there was a weight lifted off my shoulder going in and I definitely felt like I was more free to be a teacher so to speak."

Communication

There was little communication between David and Jodi throughout the eight weeks of the practicum. Similar to the issue of initiative, David was unsure who should be held responsible for the lack of communication. He was still very much aware of his own weaknesses as far as interacting with others and he placed the onus on Jodi to open the line of communication. Again, he spoke of his hesitation about jumping into a new situation.

> I'm just very hesitant to go to a foreign classroom…and just get situated and be comfortable and doing things on my own under another person and I think I would have really liked it if she would have maybe asked me to do some more things, maybe work with specific students, things like that. I did ask her if she wanted me to do some of those things, but it probably wasn't as much as I would have liked. (Interview, 4/23/07)

Jodi was well aware of David's lack of comfort in talking with her. She said that when she tried to talk to David, he would never make eye contact with her. He seemed most comfortable using the dialogue journal as a means of communication and although Jodi appreciated the dialogue journal, she felt that many of his entries contained trivial questions that could have been discussed in person. She attempted on several occasions to facilitate more verbal communication by making specific comments in the journal. For example, when David asked her a question about age differences, she responded with a question of her own.

> *David*: With a variety of ages, are there any noticeable differences in the kids from age to age?
> *Jodi*: Sure there are! Could you tell me in a couple of weeks what they are? (Dialogue Journal, no date)

On another occasion, Jodi responded, "I would like to talk personally about this. I think that is going to be much better!" Despite those attempts, David seemed more comfortable using the dialogue journal. In his reflection journal he wrote,

> If anything, I found the notebook conversations to be invaluable over the course of the practicum. Through it, I was far more comfortable asking questions about the program and requesting suggestions on personal approaches in early childhood education. (Reflection Journal, no date)

During my observations, I noticed that there were very few times in which communication occurred. Each week something related to communication was noted in my field journal. Below are just two examples:

> Throughout the day, there continued to be little or no communication or interaction between David and the children and teachers. The only communication I observed was David asking if he could help clean the table. (Field Notes, 2/9/07)

> Jodi attempted to engage in conversation with David, asking him if he had ever made Challah bread. He replied, "Not really" and she began a conversation with

>another teacher. David chimed in that his father loves Challah. Jodi continued her
>conversation with the other teacher. (Field Notes, 2/16/07)

Whenever I spoke with David about the practicum, I would ask him if he had any concerns or problems and he would almost always say that everything was fine. However, by the fourth week of the practicum, he mentioned that he was having a hard time interacting with the children at the center. He assured me that it had nothing to do with Jodi, that it was his own disposition. I told him to speak with Jodi about his concerns because she would probably be able to help him or offer suggestions. When I saw David the following week, he still had not spoken to Jodi because, according to him, things were getting better.

Roles and Responsibilities

The lack of communication between David and Jodi resulted in some uncertainty about the roles and responsibilities each should assume during the practicum. Jodi viewed her role as a guide saying, "I think I should be there to watch and to guide and to give advice, the right advice on time so it's not too late to make those changes…to give that feedback." However, there was no discussion regarding Jodi's expectations of David in terms of what he would be responsible for or what type of role he would have, whether it was interacting with the children or simply observing them.

David initially assumed the role of an outsider. He often stood in the background being careful not to get too close to anyone. By the third week of the practicum, he began to interact more with the children. He began sitting on the rug during Circle Time and he even participated in songs and a few activities with the children. David's view of early field experiences seemed to hinder his initial interactions in the beginning of the practicum. He felt that field experiences, prior to student teaching, were more about taking on the role of observer.

In the very earliest preservice, I definitely say observation's really important…just watching the teacher, observing the teacher, observing what the students are doing, how the students are reacting. Later on…the student teacher becomes an assistant to the teacher, then eventually later on the roles should reverse that the actual teacher should become more of an assistant to the student teacher. For the later teacher education, whenever you're getting into student teaching, whenever you're getting to the end of pre-service, the teacher would become more of a principle. They would overlook what's going on, they would judge what's going on, but overall it would be the student teacher's decision, their guidance to the students, their planning, their decision on coursework. (Interview, 2/7/07)

David appeared to be more comfortable taking responsibility of the more custodial aspects of teaching. In our final interview he said, "To be honest most of what I anticipated me helping out…just getting things prepared, helping keep things in line." When he spoke of the few times he did take responsibility he said, "I did just maybe get some paper towels, wipe off a surface, put some things away."

One of the requirements of the practicum was to teach two activities. Beyond the teaching activities, David assumed no other major responsibilities in the classroom. David and Jodi discussed his role in teaching Circle Time in the dialogue journal. David asked, "Is there any particular advice you could give me for the circle-time calendar? What is the order of activities?" Jodi responded with a very detailed, step-by-step answer.

Beliefs about Family Involvement

Despite the fact that David's parents and Jodi's parents were not involved in their schooling beyond parent-teacher conferences, they seemed to share similar beliefs about family involvement and about the various ways in which teachers could facilitate meaningful involvement with children's families. During my observations, I noticed an inclusion of children's families throughout the program. On at least two occasions during my visits, I saw

parents actively participating in the center. One parent came into the classroom to participate in Shabbat[2] with her daughter. Another time, there was a celebration of Purim[3] with games for the children. The children's families also attended Purim, participated in Shabbat, and ate lunch together with the Rabbi[4]. I also noticed a bulletin board with information for parents.

Power

When asked about the role of parents in her classroom, Jodi spoke about parents being involved on a large scale, especially in making decisions on all aspects of the program.

> The parents actually are the ones that run the school. They are pretty much involved here. If we have field trips for example, they are the ones that are gonna drive or if we have a special celebration, they'll ask us what kind of help we can get from them. And sometimes they even prepare a craft for the kids or prepare a kind of activity or if we need substitute teachers, if one of the teachers is sick, they would come into the classroom and run a school day. They make decisions about payments…we have a parent board, we have a treasurer, we have the director, registrar, the teacher license, that's the one in charge of the teachers, we have a secretary, there's a religion affairs…there's a parent handbook that is written by them and they are in charge of hiring. But the curriculum, what happens in the classroom is my responsibility. (Interview, 2/5/07)

David's beliefs about the level of parental involvement were somewhat different from Jodi's. While he agreed that parents should be involved in some decision making at the center, he also believed that teachers should allow parents to get involved in the curriculum. This was in direct contrast with what Jodi said about being solely responsible for the curriculum. Despite this one disagreement, David felt that Jodi definitely met his expectations in terms of working with families.

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[2] Shabbat, the weekly day of rest, is viewed as the most important holy day in Judaism.
[3] Purim, a Jewish holiday, is celebrated by giving mutual gifts of food and drink, giving charity to the poor, having a celebratory meal, and wearing masks and costumes.
[4] Rabbi is a religious "teacher" or "great one".

Forms of Involvement

David believed that parents should attend important school events and be a visible presence in their children's school. Likewise, he believed that parents should be willing to work with teachers to do whatever was needed to help their children. In his reflection journal, he wrote about his observations of parent involvement in Jodi's classroom saying, "I don't see a lot of parent involvement in the program, but at the same time, I'm quite certain of its existence." In the same paragraph he wrote,

> I see parental involvement approached with open arms. In one conversation, my mentor mentioned that a parent on a counsel for the center arranges student field trips, and I'm certain there are other positions on this counsel. Similarly, many parents, primarily mothers, were able to plan, set up, contribute to, and participate in a few larger celebrations. (Reflection Journal, no date)

When David mentioned that he did not see a lot of parent involvement, he was careful to acknowledge that he was aware of its existence. It is worth noting that David only visited Jodi's classroom once a week for 3 ½ hours over an eight week time period. Therefore, his observations were limited to the times in which he was physically present. To supplement his observations, David gained additional insight into the various forms of parental involvement through the dialogue journal, the parent handbook, and the electronic weekly newsletters.

Communication

Jodi believed that it was important to regularly communicate with children's families. She communicated with her children's families through weekly newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, and daily conversations. She insisted that parents be aware of everything in the classroom saying, "We let them know everything like every week we have a weekly newsletter

that goes out and they know exactly what happens in the classroom." When David inquired about

parents in their dialogue journal she responded,

> The parents are very involved in what is going on in the school. We have weekly
> contact with them by newsletters. Of course, they are always welcome to come
> with ideas, suggestions, even concerns! Please find more information in Parent
> Handbook. (Dialogue Journal, no date)

Jodi emailed David a copy of the Parent Handbook, which was very clear and detailed. The

handbook provided information on everything from the center's mission to health policies to

evacuation plans. Jodi also added David to the center's list serve so that each week he would

receive the same electronic copy of the classroom's news that the children's families received.

David also noted his observations of the communication between Jodi and the children's

families in his reflection journal.

> I know there are many open lines of communication. I've witnessed her speak
> with parents casually, explaining how the child was that day and what he or she
> did or made throughout the day. I receive the same weekly newsletter that the
> parents are emailed. I've seen the plan worksheet for the instructor to use in bi-
> annual conferences. (Reflection Journal, no date)

During our initial interview, prior to the beginning of the practicum, I spoke with David about

communicating with children's families. He said he believed that teachers should be able to

communicate with families through various means including "a newsletter type thing" and "have

more parent-teacher conferences and parent-student-teacher conferences." Although David

believed in communicating with families, he did not seem quite ready or able to communicate

with them himself. During one of my visits, all of the children's families were at the center

celebrating Purim and interacting with each other and the center's staff. David did not appear to

be comfortable at all as noted in my field journal:

> When several parents were there for a celebration, David did not interact or communicate with any of them. He sat and took notes while the children were playing. He seemed very nervous when the parents were there. (Field Notes, 3/2/07)

Responsibility

Jodi took responsibility for getting families involved. Even though parents were already involved in all aspects of planning and running the program, she believed that, as a teacher, she was still responsible for sending information like the newsletter and presenting opportunities for families to get involved and letting them know what was happening in her classroom.

David believed that parents and teachers were equally responsible for family involvement.

> Teachers have to provide information on what they're doing to the parents and just as importantly, parents need to…provide the information on the child…Teachers have to offer the opportunity and parents have to take the opportunity or otherwise parents have to demand the opportunity and teachers have to provide the opportunity. (Interview, 2/7/07)

Furthermore, David believed that it was the teacher's responsibility to create a welcoming environment, to provide "an open door policy." He believed parents should also be able to get to know a teacher's "personality, philosophies, attitudes."

Beliefs about Cultural Diversity

Throughout my visits in Jodi's classroom, I observed a number of instances in which cultural diversity was incorporated into the classroom; however, most of the cultural diversity centered on Judaism. Teaching of the Jewish culture was predominant throughout the curriculum. The children were always engaged in an activity related to the Jewish culture-singing songs in Hebrew, creating art work in Hebrew, and participating in many of the religious

traditions- Shabbat, Purim, Tzedakah[5], Mitzvahs[6], and baking Challah[7] bread. Although the Jewish culture was the foundation of the center, the majority of the children in Jodi's classroom were not Jewish.

Cultural Diversity as a Learning Experience

Jodi believed that cultural diversity was beneficial for young children because it provided an opportunity for them to learn about differences. When asked why she thought cultural diversity was important she said, "I think it's better for the kids to have all these different people in their group so they can understand that the world is not just about them."

Even as a novice teacher, Jodi had experience working with children from different backgrounds. She strongly believed in treating each person as a human being regardless of their background.

> I actually worked as a teacher and as a tutor with kids from different religions, ethnicities, countries. I think it's good having that difference and I think it's good having that in this country. Since I got here, I hear that there's no discrimination and the more that I hear that, the more that I can feel that the racial discrimination is in there. Like if I have to apply for a job, why do I have to put my race? I'm a human being. That's what I am. Why does it matter the color of my skin, what country I am from? No, I'm a person and that's what I am. And I taught in Israel- Arab kids. That's like a very big thing that some people feel like, 'Why are you teaching them?' Why not, don't they deserve to learn, you know? (Interview, 2/5/07)

David's beliefs about the importance of cultural diversity as a learning experience for young children were similar to Jodi's. He said, "The more you expose the students to the better they can understand, the less confusion, the less conflict, the more they'll be able to…have an understanding of others." He also believed that exposure to different cultures would permit

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[5] Tzedakah means "charity."
[6] Mitzvahs are acts of kindness, or "good deeds."
[7] Challah is a special bread eaten on Shabbat.

people to react appropriately in certain situations. He said, "Whenever a student comes into a situation in which they are exposed to a different culture or…situation which they won't know how to react…they might look down on those types of things."

Cultural Diversity in the Curriculum

As mentioned previously, the Jewish culture was infused into the curriculum in Jodi's classroom. Nearly every aspect of learning dealt with the Jewish culture and religious traditions. I made note of such instances during my visits. For example,

> Teacher read book about Mitzvahs and the children discussed good mitzvahs they did recently. The children made flowers from coffee filters for the elderly so they discussed how that was a good mitzvah. The children also sang a song for Tzedakah and discussed more mitzvahs. They engaged in Shabbat celebration again and ate Challah and banana chocolate chip muffins. (Field Notes, 2/23/07)

Jodi spoke a lot about addressing individual differences in general, not just religious or ethnic differences. She said, "We are not only talking about religion or ethnicity different. We are talking about being different people. Each one is an individual and each one has their own beliefs, needs… so we have to respect that…And I think that tolerance is the key of having a good world."

David believed that it would be hard to promote multiculturalism if "you have a classroom like I did, all just all White, all Christian." David grew up in a rural town so he did not have a lot of exposure to diverse groups. In his reflection journal, he discussed his observations of Jodi's classroom as it related to cultural diversity.

> Visually, I am aware that there is some approach to diversity in the classroom, but I haven't really seen [it] play a profound role…So far the most culturally diverse activity I've witnessed is the field trip across the street to another center to learn about Easter…Many of the celebrations surrounding the center primarily deal with Jewish holidays…As such, I've certainly observed great emphasis on

elements of the Jewish religion, but not nearly as much on other cultures. (Reflection Journal, no date)

Teacher Awareness

When asked if she believed teachers needed to have experience working with culturally

or ethnically diverse individuals in order to be a good teacher, Jodi responded:

> I don't think it's a must, but it would be great if you have been exposed to that because it just opens your mind and it lets you understand that there are other things…try to work with different religions. Forget about different countries. With different religions…what happens if you want to work with people that don't believe the things that you…are you going to be able to do that? Do values go only through your religion? Can you teach values to other kids from other religions? So I think it's not just where they come from. I think starting with different religions it would make a great difference and I think, yes, the most exposed they are the better it is. The more open-mined people can be. (Interview, 2/5/07)

Although David did not have a diverse background, he did seem to be cognizant of the

importance of teachers being prepared to address cultural diversity in their classrooms.

> Teachers definitely need to be exposed to those types of situations. Teachers definitely have to be sensitive to other cultures…to be honest, students bring a lot of that into the classroom themselves and if a situation like that comes up, I feel that a teacher should definitely take the time maybe to do a bit of research to try to get a better understanding of things like that. (Interview, 2/7/07)

Influences on Beliefs

David's beliefs did not appear to change over the course of the practicum, although he

reported that he learned a few new strategies for working with families. He attributed the

formation of his beliefs about family involvement to his university courses.

> A lot of it that I mentioned is based off of another class I'm taking with [professor], his course on family involvement. So almost all of what I mentioned

is simply based off of what I've learned from him in that class. (Interview, 4/23/07)

In regards to his beliefs about family involvement, David reported that Jodi only reinforced his prior beliefs.

> There were a lot of instances of parent involvement. Most of them are stuff I've seen before like newsletters, parents preparing, helping out with the celebrations…for the most part she just did a lot of things that highlighted what I already knew about parent involvement, the strategies I was always familiar with. (Interview, 4/23/07)

David reported that he did learn a new strategy for involving families. He was impressed by the power that was given to parents at the center. He said, "I wasn't really familiar at all with any sort of school board like this and there are a good bit of parental positions that could be put in."

In regards to his beliefs about cultural diversity, David reported that his beliefs remained stable over the course of the practicum. On several occasions, David talked about the emphasis on the Jewish culture more than any other culture. As such, he believed he had not learned any new strategies for addressing cultural diversity; although I am sure that his knowledge base in relation to the Jewish culture grew quite a bit.

> It's a bit difficult whenever the majority there is all one religion and of all one ethnicity, race, things like that…the problem is again it was a church run center so it seems pretty obvious that they're going to have a lot of activities based on the religion there, which didn't surprise me at all…there wasn't a whole lot of diversity I'd say portrayed in the reading material and the toys and things like that. (Interview, 4/23/07)

Although David said that his experience with Jodi did not influence his beliefs about family involvement or cultural diversity, he did report that he learned a great deal about early childhood education.

Prior to the experience, I had very little understanding on how Early Childhood Education worked. I was familiar with the stereotypical view, equating Pre-K with daycare with only the most focused programs providing developmental value. Upon observing, however, I have a greater understanding on the importance of weighing student development, entertainment, and choice. All three are quite present in the center's curriculum, and I've witnessed how the three come together to make the program much more enjoyable and beneficial. In relation to choice, I have come to realize that, although planning is still quite important, some of the best educational experiences can be unplanned, spontaneous, student-driven, and casual. (Reflection Journal, no date)

Case Summary

The relationship between David and Jodi was fraught with unfulfilled expectations, a lack of communication, and unclear roles and responsibilities. From the beginning, David struggled to be more outgoing and communicative. His reserved disposition caused him to remain an "outsider" throughout the eight weeks of the practicum. He said he often felt like a "ghost" in the classroom and although Jodi made attempts to engage in more verbal communication, David never reached a level of comfort that would permit him to do so. On several occasions, David spoke of different factors that hindered his involvement with the teachers and the children at the center. He said that it was always difficult going into a new environment, or as he called it "a foreign classroom."

David's involvement also seemed to be hindered by his inability to prioritize and balance his work. According to Jodi, David always walked around the classroom with a notebook. She felt irritated in a sense because he could have used that time to interact with the children. While I'm sure David would agree with Jodi, he did not take full responsibility for his lack of involvement. There were instances when David built up the nerve to offer his assistance to the

teachers. However, he said those requests were often denied and it only reinforced his belief that he was an "intruder" in the classroom.

The relationship between David and Jodi did not appear to have any influence on David's beliefs about family involvement or cultural diversity (See Table 4.1). David and Jodi appeared to share some of the same beliefs in relation to family involvement. David and Jodi both felt that it was important to include parents in decision making roles. They seemed to differ, however, in their beliefs about parents' roles in planning the curriculum. Jodi took full responsibility for the curriculum in her classroom. David, on the other hand, believed that parents' decision making should not end at the curriculum; he felt that they should be equally involved in planning the curriculum. Although David observed many instances of parental involvement in Jodi's classroom, he felt that he was already familiar with most of her strategies. The only strategy that David was unfamiliar with was the inclusion of parents on the School Board. David felt that this was very important for parents and he viewed it as something to consider in his own classroom.

In relation to cultural diversity, David reported that his beliefs remained stable. David still felt that it was difficult to incorporate a multicultural approach into a homogeneous classroom. He felt that Jodi's classroom was rather homogeneous in the sense that they only celebrated the Jewish culture. In contrast, Jodi said that she addressed differences in general, not only religious and ethnic differences.

Table 4.1

Summary of Beliefs

Dyad	Beliefs about Family Involvement	Beliefs about Cultural Diversity
Jodi	• Regular, ongoing communication through newsletters, conferences, daily conversations • Teacher's responsibility • Parents in decision-making roles	• Learning experience for children • Teach about differences in general- not just religious or ethnic differences • Teacher awareness of diversity; prior experience working with diverse individuals
David	• Parents as decision-makers • Parents involved in curriculum • Parents and teachers equally responsible • Communication through newsletters, conferences • Beliefs Reinforced	• Exposure beneficial to young children as it leads to greater understanding of others • Difficult to address in homogenous classroom • Teachers need to be exposed to diverse cultures • Beliefs Remained Stable

David seemed to be influenced by his overall experience in the practicum. When David talked about his experience in the practicum, he described it as very enjoyable, "something that I looked forward to all week and as stressful as my week was I always enjoyed that and I always walked out there with a smile." He did not attribute his positive experience to Jodi, but to the entire experience in general. He definitely valued the fact that he had the opportunity to be inside a real classroom observing teachers and interacting with children. He was especially happy to have gained a greater understanding of early childhood education. In his reflection journal, he wrote that he still had no intention of teaching at the pre-kindergarten level although, he said, "I cherish every bit of experience I can get."

CHAPTER 5

CASE 2- NATALIE AND MARLA

Natalie always knew she wanted to be a teacher. As a child, she often 'played school' at home in her bedroom. Although she did not attribute any particular person or event to her desire to teach, a few teachers influenced her beliefs about teaching and learning.

> I think the strongest effects have been the negative teachers…cause everybody's had a few of those. To me, it was actually my second grade teacher that was the worst that I can remember…it really opened my eyes to what a good teacher is and I remember in second grade that I decided that I was not only going to be a teacher, but I was gonna go back to that school and take her job because I didn't think she should be a teacher. (Interview, 2/2/07)

Natalie's experience as a preservice teacher had been positive; she learned a great deal about teaching through her university courses and field experiences. However, her four years of experience at a daycare center was particularly helping in preparing her for teaching.

Marla had been an early childhood teacher for more than twenty years. Similar to Natalie, Marla always knew she wanted to be a teacher. As she recalled her childhood, she said, "I used to always play teacher and I played nurse and I played many different roles, but it always involved me caring and nurturing other children." When she went to college, however, Marla decided to major in counseling. After receiving her degree, she began working at a preschool, which she thought would only be temporary. To her surprise, she "fell in love with it" and have been working in some aspect of child care ever since.

The Relationship

Expectations

Natalie was very explicit in her expectations of Marla. Given her prior experience in an early childhood setting, Natalie knew what she needed to learn in order to be successful in the classroom. Her expectations centered mostly on curriculum planning and classroom management.

> My ideal relationship would be either getting the week's lesson plans or the day's lesson plans or having two minutes when I first walk in when the teacher goes 'This is what we're gonna do today, it'd be really helpful if you could do this for me, if you could be in this area or if you could run this program'…so that I know what to look for and I know how I can help her instead of just being in the way…I expect [Marla] to have especially good planning; abilities so that [she] can assist me in my planning, but mostly just a knowledge about the children and what they need…I'm really hoping to see a seasoned teacher who inspires her kids and is excited. (Interview, 2/2/07)

Marla- more than anything else- wanted Natalie to be able to communicate. Prior experience and a wealth of knowledge about child development were not requirements in Marla's classroom. As a veteran teacher, she was accustomed to having university students in her classroom every semester, so she seemed to understand that the practicum was a learning experience.

> I don't even care if they don't have prior experience, but I want them to be a people person. I want them to be able to communicate, to show some type of relationship with the children, whether it's just talking with them or interacting with them through play…they need to know that if you're gonna be in this field, you've got to be able to communicate and to build a relationship. (Interview, 2/19/07)

Natalie was able to learn a great deal about planning and classroom management throughout the eight weeks of the practicum. She learned mainly through observations of and conversations with Marla. The dialogue journal proved to be a useful resource for Natalie

because Marla always provided detailed responses to her questions- usually two to three pages in length. Most of the questions Natalie asked were related to planning the curriculum and managing various aspects of the classroom from the physical environment to children's behaviors.

Natalie was satisfied with her relationship with Marla and she felt that she had learned much more than she anticipated.

> She really exceeded my expectations because everyday when I walked in, she had a different plan…it was just very open and she shared with me how she does her planning and showed me on the computer how she does creative curriculum…and how she goes through all those things and how she assesses them…Sitting in on the parent-teacher conferences, just having that ability to just see how she handles herself with parents and just the fact that she has so many different tools and resources that she shares with the parents so they know it's not just her opinion, that she can back it up. (Interview, 4/11/07)

In her reflection journal, Natalie described how Marla's guidance helped her learn more about teaching young children. She said, "My mentor showed me how to guide and scaffold children. Furthermore, she showed me how to use 'play' in a way that educated children and kept them engaged…she had many suggestions for me. Her advice really paid off."

Marla also felt that Natalie had met her expectations. She spoke highly of Natalie and was impressed with her communication skills and confidence in the classroom. Marla was happy that Natalie took initiative and interacted really well with the children. She also said that she could tell that Natalie had prior experience in early childhood education.

Communication

The relationship between Natalie and Marla was the envy of many of the practicum students. Whenever we discussed the practicum as a group, Natalie always had something positive to say about Marla and about how well they got along. Unfortunately, not everyone

shared the same experience. Perhaps one of the most important aspects of their relationship was their communication with each other. There was a certain level of comfort between the two and they talked all the time.

> I liked the one on one communication with my mentor. Just being able to discuss my activities with her and having her feedback and just the way she interacted with me in the classroom…I could sit behind the glass and observe all day long, but not to get that conversation that makes you think and makes you realize things you didn't notice. (Interview, 4/11/07)

Although there were two other teachers in the classroom, Natalie felt most comfortable talking to Marla. Some days Marla would arrive later than Natalie, and on those days Natalie said, "When it wasn't her when I walked in the classroom, I felt a little bit different." Of the other two teachers, only one "would try to get me involved, ask about my activities, talk to me about children, things she'd observed."

One of Marla's expectations had been that preservice teachers would be able to communicate, so when she met Natalie it seemed like the perfect match. The dialogue journal was only a supplement to their ongoing verbal communication and, even though they conversed on a regular basis, Marla always responded to Natalie's questions within one week. Marla also gave lots of positive feedback in regards to Natalie's questions in the dialogue journal. She would write things such as, "Wow, such great questions!" and "This is a great question!"

As mentioned previously, Marla always responded to Natalie's questions in great detail-usually in two to three pages. In one of her entries, Natalie asked Marla for feedback on her performance. Below is an example of the type of response Marla would give:

Natalie: What do you consider to be my personal weakness(es)? How can I improve?

Marla: As a mentor teacher, I would also like to mention your strengths. You are very knowledgeable about child development, interact very well, reliable, and

seem to be very interested in learning more! (Such as the insightful questions you are asking in this book). With regards to things to work on: Some suggestions were made on your lesson plan activity; Try to be more patient with the children especially when they seem upset or angry; Don't be too hard on yourself as this is a learning experience and don't strive for perfection: As no one is!; Remember to have fun! If you're not enjoying what you do, the children quickly learn this; Also, always keep in mind that these children are only 3, 4, and 5 years [old]. Sometimes we have high expectations and lose sight of who we are working with! (Dialogue Journal, 3/26/07)

Responsibility

From the very beginning, Marla placed a certain amount of responsibility on Natalie. Marla knew what Natalie expected because they talked during Natalie's first visit. Each week when she arrived in Marla's classroom, Natalie knew that she would be in charge of one of the learning centers and that she would be very much involved in other aspects of the classroom just as the other teachers were. In our final interview, Natalie said, "She kind of went out of her way to make sure that I was always in charge of something or the kids saw me as a teacher in the classroom and not just a helper." She also discussed this further in her reflection journal:

> The most significant experience of the practicum was working with my mentor teacher. I realized early on that my mentor was determined to make me a part of the classroom, not just an observer. I appreciated her effort greatly, especially later in the practicum when I needed to prepare and present two different activities. Since the students in the classroom already viewed me as a teacher, getting their attention was not difficult…I enjoyed walking into that classroom every Monday because I knew what to expect and what was expected of me. (Reflection Journal, no date)

Marla presented numerous opportunities for Natalie to get involved with the children and even some parents. She invited Natalie to sit in on two parent-teacher conferences. During one of the conferences, Marla allowed Natalie to participate and join in on the discussion about a child

she had been observing for a class assignment. Natalie said Marla used her to support her

arguments about the child's progress in the classroom.

> You know, if she's saying, 'He does really well and he plays with everybody', she'd say, 'Well have you noticed that?' and I could say, 'Yeah just five minutes ago he was playing with six different children' because he's been my sole focus…and the activities I'd done with him one on one, she pulled out and she had me explain and so she really gave me a lot of responsibility…I thought she made me seem much more important than I felt. (Interview, 4/11/07)

When I asked Natalie how she felt about being included in the two conferences, she said, "I felt

that she had a lot of faith in me…I felt that I must have given her some kind of confidence that I

held myself in a professional manner."

Beliefs about Family Involvement

During my visits to Marla's classroom, I observed an inclusion of the children's families

in nearly every aspect of the classroom environment. There were pictures throughout the

classroom of children and their families and each child had a photo album of his or her family. I

also noticed a world map on the wall that read, 'Where in the World Are Our Families From?'

and there were markings on different locations indicating where the children were born. This

detail was significant considering the fact that there were a number of international children in

the classroom.

Natalie and Marla stated similar beliefs in relation to family involvement. They both

seemed to share a concrete understanding of the significance of family involvement as well as

the various ways that teachers should promote family involvement within the classroom. This

was rather interesting given the fact that their own parents were not physically involved at their

schools in the same ways that they believed families should be involved today. Natalie's parents

were more involved in her school activities and conferences during her earlier school years, but

she could not recall their involvement beyond the fourth or fifth grade. Marla's parents were not

physically involved in her classroom or in school events. Her mother was a stay at home mom of

ten children and her dad traveled regularly on business.

Forms of Involvement

Marla believed that families could be involved in a number of ways, thus she presented

many opportunities for the children's families to become involved.

> We do a lot of field trips and special activities within our classroom that the parents are always invited to come join us and we also like to have them participate in some of our curriculum activities if they're knowledgeable about certain subjects or they may just have books, materials. So for instance we're just finishing up with dinosaurs and we've had so many parents bringing in objects and movies and whatever to share with us which I think is awesome. (Interview, 2/19/07)

Marla also discussed, through the dialogue journal, the various ways that she involved and

communicated with her children's families. Parents were encouraged to join the PTO, volunteer

in the classroom, attend parties and celebrations at the center and in the classroom, share

information on the cultures and holidays they were familiar with, and help with themes by

bringing in materials.

Natalie's beliefs about family involvement were in congruence with Marla's beliefs and

classroom practices.

> I think there should be times of the day when the parents can always choose to come in, maybe lunch time and during certain activities, always during field trips and then if you're doing a topic, have an idea from a survey or something at the beginning of the year from talking to parents. (Interview, 2/2/07)

Natalie was aware of the fact that certain circumstances could prevent some families from being

involved in the same way as others. She said, "There's some parents whose jobs don't allow

them to ever miss work or who don't have a car or whatever the case may be, so they may not be

able to come into the classroom the way another parent might." In the case of such families,

Natalie believed there were other ways of getting them involved.

> Maybe they can help me work on a project or I can meet them somewhere outside of the school environment to work on something to bring into the classroom or we can go to their work and they can give us a tour or they can explain something…there's different economic factors too and so maybe a parent can make a meal or we can bring a cultural aspect, I know different cultures don't want to get involved in the classrooms you have to break that barrier too…I think there needs to be special attention paid to those kinds of issues, if a parent is really uncomfortable in a really strict school setting, then maybe there's things to get them involved with outside or maybe they could come into the classroom when you're doing a not so structured activity. (Interview, 2/2/07)

Communication

Marla believed that communication was a key component in family-school partnerships.

As such, she communicated with the children's families on a regular basis through various

means.

> We just started doing home visits before a new child starts in our classroom. We started it actually two years ago where we go into the child's home and we get some background information there and both the parents and the child get to see who we are before they just step into our classroom…Weekly reflections where we're sending them home to the parents and they can see with pictures so they can see what's taking place in the room…it's real important that we have that open communication…We do newsletters, we do a monthly calendar that we send home so that they're aware of any special events or field trips or special holidays or birthdays and things like that. We do reflections, we also do handbooks that we give to the parents when they first start. We email a lot of times…Phone calls if we're concerned about a child, especially if they're not feeling well we call them right away and let them know what's up. So I think we have…many avenues of trying to reach the parent so hopefully in some way they're getting the information. (Interview, 2/19/07)

Natalie also believed that it was important to open the lines of communication and she

equally placed the responsibility on teachers and parents.

> Opening up the lines of communication with the teacher and saying 'I want to be involved', I know a lot of parents worry about being pushy, but to come up and just say 'I would really like to be involved and please call me'…I think it also all starts with Open House night and the teacher really encouraging parents to come that night or if they can meet with the teacher at a coffee shop and just kind of be welcomed into that warmly, then it can break down some of those other barriers and make it a more comfortable place. (Interview, 2/2/07)

In her reflection journal, Natalie discussed the different strategies Marla used in her classroom to facilitate communication with families. Similar to Natalie's beliefs, Marla placed equal responsibility on herself as the teacher and on the parents to keep ongoing communication.

> She schedules an appointment with the parents within forty-five days of the child's entry into the classroom…In order to give parents time to prepare for conferences my mentor sends out a spreadsheet with times when she is available to meet so that parents can choose a time that fits them best. Attached to the time sheet is a paper that asks the parents open-ended questions. These questions ask about the strengths, weaknesses, concerns, and behaviors of the child. After completing the paper, parents are asked to return the sheet to the teacher so that she can review it before the conference. At the conference the teacher addresses the opinions, concerns, and ideas that the parents recorded on the sheet as well as any they might have brought to the meeting. (Reflection Journal, no date)

Parents as Key Players

Marla believed that the parents in her classroom were key players in the family-school partnership. The parents were the ones the teachers relied on for information about their children. When Natalie asked Marla a question about family involvement in the dialogue journal, Marla replied, "Family Interaction: This is vital to a good program- open communication and involvement is a MUST!"

Natalie also believed that children's families were vital to any early childhood program. As such, she approached family involvement from a "strengths" perspective.

> Family Involvement in its best sense is when you can take the gifts and talents of the family and to incorporate them into your classroom…Maybe one parent's an engineer or a contractor and try to plan lesson plans that can incorporate their

talents and that makes the kid feel more special because their parent's involved and their parent has a special job now too. (Interview, 2/2/07)

Beliefs about Cultural Diversity

I observed an inclusion of various cultures throughout Marla's classroom. First, there was a magnetic erase board with pictures of children from different countries as well as pictures of families from different races and cultures. Second, there was a collage of "All About Me" which the children created themselves. There were pictures of people from various cultures, even those that were not actually represented in the classroom. Lastly, there was a diverse selection of books available in the library center. Marla added to all of these things by also discussing diverse cultures and practices and planning activities that would allow the children to gain hands-on experience. She talked about Jewish traditions and the children created art work related to Martin Luther King Jr., and Mardi Gras.

A Classroom Environment Rich in Diversity

Marla believed that young children should be exposed to cultural diversity because "it's a wonderful unique experience." Her beliefs were evident in her classroom practices as she worked hard to provide unique learning experiences for the children. She believed that learning in a diversity-rich classroom environment helped the children develop an acceptance of others. She said, "I think the children growing up in our classroom are more open, they're more accepting of diversity."

Natalie described Marla's classroom environment as one that was conducive to learning about differences. In her reflection journal she wrote:

> She always had books with different types of families, cultures, regions of the world, and religions on display for the children to look through…She decorated the classroom for holidays, units on different countries, and hung pictures that showed children of all nationalities playing together. (Reflection Journal, no date)

Natalie also talked about how the teachers were encouraging of the international children's use of their home language to communicate with each other. She said, "This classroom values their background and understands that it is more comfortable for them to speak their native language together."

In the dialogue journal, Marla discussed her incorporation of different cultures throughout the classroom environment.

> *Natalie*: I noticed the different flags you used at circle. What other ways do you incorporate other cultures?
>
> *Marla*: 1) On our Lesson Plan Form, we indicate and celebrate and World-Wide Holidays/Celebrations. This usually includes a discussion, a book, a project and making a special snack, etc. posters, artifacts, 2) We have a World Map that displays where all the children and parents are from, 3) We always invite parents to come in and discuss or share items regarding their Culture/Heritage, 4) Multicultural items in room, such as: posters, CD games, art materials (markers, paints), pretend foods, dolls, World Language students (French), music/games, dress-up clothes, songs, puppets, 5) In September, we always do a theme titled, "We are all alike, yet different", which goes in depth about other cultures, 6) The PTO has special events which include an "International Festival", in which we get to see displays and taste food from all around the world! (Dialogue Journal, 3/5/07)

Natalie shared Marla's belief that it was important to create a classroom environment that is rich in diversity. One of her suggestions was to "have pictures all around the wall that are from all different backgrounds." Natalie also believed that it was as equally important to have a diversity-rich classroom environment even if the classroom's population was homogeneous.

If you end up in a classroom where all the kids are exactly the same, then it's even more important to be able to teach them what other people are like or they'll never be exposed to it…it's really important for kids to know what the world is, not just [what] their town is. (Interview, 2/2/07)

Cultural Diversity in the Curriculum

Marla believed it was important to incorporate all forms of diversity into the curriculum. She talked about how she included diversity of all forms in every aspect of her classroom from Circle Time to art activities to thematic units.

We talk about it all the time, we sing songs, we do projects, we have actually French students that are coming in and teaching us French…from day one, we start our curriculum we do an All About Me Theme…Our big focus was 'Yes, we're all different, but yes we're all the same'. And so we were looking at many different ways and how that happens and whether it was color or language or their cultures or where they were born and raised and whether or not they had any siblings or they had parents that were married. I mean there were so many different ways to look at that. (Interview, 2/19/07)

Natalie's observations of Marla's strategies for including cultural diversity matched her reported classroom practices. In her reflection journal, she wrote:

The teacher would present flags from numerous countries and sing their greeting for 'hello'…my teacher introduced the idea of diversity through themed units, holiday celebrations, and classroom decorations…[she] made sure that she celebrated holidays from all over the world and from as many religions and cultures as she could find. (Reflection Journal, no date)

Natalie also believed that it was important for teachers to incorporate cultural diversity into the curriculum. She believed it was even more important for teachers to rely on the children and their families for information about their own cultures. She said, "It's really important just to ask the child to talk to the parents and figure out what their story is…try to incorporate that into the classroom."

Teacher Awareness

Natalie and Marla stated similar beliefs about the importance of teachers' awareness of cultural differences in order to address those kinds of issues in the classroom. Their own experiences with diverse groups, however, were a bit different. Natalie had a fair amount of exposure to diversity growing up. Although the community in which she grew up was White Irish Catholic, her parents made an effort to expose her and her siblings to other people in "the city." When she got older, Natalie's family moved to a more diverse community and she attended middle and high school with "a very mixed group of people." Marla, on the other hand, did not grow up in a diverse environment. She said she grew up "pretty much in a white city town where we had one or two black families so it was kind of unique when they were in your class or whatever, you were like Wow!"

Despite Marla's limited exposure to diverse groups growing up, she managed to gain insight into diverse groups through teaching. She believed that knowledge of diversity was important when teaching. She said, "Whatever way [teachers] can gain that knowledge I think it's very vital, cause it's hard to teach something to the children that you don't understand yourself."

Natalie believed that it was harmful for teachers to teach about other cultures if they themselves did not understand those groups.

> Make sure I'm giving relevant and truthful information; I think that's the biggest danger when you give a child information about something you're not a master of. To either find someone that can be a master or make sure what you're giving is truthful. (Interview, 2/2/07)

Influence on Beliefs

Natalie's beliefs were influenced in some ways by Marla. Her beliefs about family

involvement changed in some ways, while her beliefs about cultural diversity were only

reinforced. In regards to her beliefs about family involvement, Natalie said, "I think it's changed

a little bit and she made it look a lot easier than I thought it was." Although Natalie had a good

understanding of what family involvement is and a pretty good idea of how to promote it, she

learned that above all else communication needed to be consistent. In Marla's classroom, the

children's families were highly valued. The communication between the teachers and the

families was so commonplace that, according to Natalie, "the teachers knew the occupations of

the parents, when people were sick, and the interests of each family."

In our final interview, Natalie discussed the strategies she observed that led to some

change in her beliefs about family involvement.

> Just the little things like making sure every parent that walked in the door, [Marla] said hello to the parent and the child. [The teachers] have things that hang down in the doorway with paperclips so they can put notes up so parents always know what's going on and don't have to worry about missing anything….just having positive communication twice a day so that it's not all of a sudden you have to talk to parents. And they also meet a lot more than I expected. They have three or four conferences a year. So parents really have a chance to ask questions. (Interview, 4/11/07)

Natalie also talked about different strategies she would possibly use in her own classroom.

> Before she does parent-teacher conferences, she sends a note home with which times they are available, which I've seen before, but what I didn't think of is she also sends home a worksheet where they can write any questions that they have and any concerns. So it gives them a time to sit down and talk together and to really put it down on paper and she asks for those back before the conference so she can write notes and messages and know specifically things to pull out. Then that's one of the first things she goes over in the parent-teacher conference so that the parents don't have to worry about forgetting questions or forgetting concerns and wanting to meet again. (Interview, 4/11/07)

Although Natalie's beliefs about cultural diversity did not seem to change, they were reinforced by what she saw in Marla's classroom. In our final interview, she said, "I've always thought it was really important, but I liked the way that she brought it into the classroom because their themes change all the time." Natalie did learn new strategies for addressing cultural diversity in the classroom. In her reflection journal, she discussed the strategies that she observed. She said, "in the short months that I observed, the class celebrated many holidays, both religious and cultural, that I had never heard about before…in most cases, the class prepared a food or craft from that area after learning about the celebration." Natalie also discussed some of Marla's strategies in our final interview.

> Making sure the parents feel comfortable, which I hadn't really thought about so much…[it] really just has more to do with the environment that she set up in the classroom where everybody feels comfortable. And I think that just had more to do with anything that I really hadn't thought about. Just making it a daily thing and making it more to do with the parents. (Interview, 4/11/07)

Case Summary

The relationship between Natalie and Marla was ideal in a number of ways. They both had certain expectations of each other and, fortunately, those expectations were met. Marla understood her role to be that of a guide-- supporting and encouraging future teachers. She took her position seriously and felt a certain obligation to Natalie. From the first day of the practicum, Marla felt that it was important to meet with Natalie to discuss any questions or concerns. That meeting set the tone for the next eight weeks.

Three factors seemed to contribute to the type of relationship that developed between Natalie and Marla. First, the communication between Natalie and Marla was ongoing and very open from the beginning. From the first day of the practicum, Marla sat down with Natalie and

they talked about their expectations of each other. It was at that point that Marla understood what Natalie needed and she created the space for her to learn.

Second, the fact that Marla presented a plethora of opportunities for Natalie to learn and be a part of her classroom made the relationship meaningful for Natalie. Natalie was the only preservice teacher in the practicum that was allowed to sit in on parent-teacher conferences. This made Natalie feel proud and she felt that she must have done something right if Marla invited her to be a part of something so personal between teachers and parents. In addition to the conferences, Marla also made sure Natalie was viewed as a teacher by the children. Each week Natalie was put in charge of a different learning center.

Third, Natalie seemed very appreciative of Marla and it was evident in our many discussions of her. Natalie felt that she had learned many of the skills she believed were necessary for early childhood teachers. In our final interview, Natalie said:

> Throughout my many weeks of observation I never stopped learning. I learned as I observed my mentor teacher as she interacted with children, introduced activities, led lessons, managed the classroom, transitioned between activities, and redirected children. However, I learned most by watching my mentor play. Through play she was able to connect with the children and not only help them to increase their own understanding, but she increased her understanding of them as individuals and learners…There are many strategies and theories described in textbooks that do not take on real meaning until they are observed and used in the classroom. (Reflection Journal, no date)

Natalie and Marla seemed to share similar beliefs about family involvement and cultural diversity (See Table 5.1). Furthermore, Natalie seemed to be influenced by Marla. Natalie observed a plethora of practical and useful strategies that she could apply in her own classroom. In relation to family involvement, Natalie always believed it was important for teachers and parents to meet during conferences, but she learned how to be better prepared for those types of

meetings. In terms of cultural diversity, Natalie learned the importance of creating a comfortable

classroom environment for children and their families.

Table 5.1

Summary of Beliefs

Dyad	Beliefs about Family Involvement	Beliefs about Cultural Diversity
Marla	• Parents as key players • Must communication through home visits; weekly reflections, newsletters, monthly calendars, parent-teacher conferences • Parents involved in classroom activities (i.e., field trips, holiday celebrations) and curriculum activities	• Learning experience for children • Plan curriculum around diverse issues and cultural celebrations • Diversity-rich classroom environment
Natalie	• Teachers responsible for creating welcoming environment • Parents permitted to visit and participate in classroom activities • Teachers approach families from a strengths perspective • Parents and teachers responsible for communication • Beliefs Changed Somewhat	• Teachers must create classroom conducive to learning about diversity • Teachers must address diversity even in homogeneous classroom • Teachers rely on families to inform curriculum related to cultural diversity • Beliefs Reinforced

CHAPTER 6

CASE 3- AMBER AND KAREN, CAROL, DEBRA, LAURA

Amber knew she wanted to become a teacher when she was in the tenth grade. Her experiences at a local YMCA summer camp ultimately led to her decision to teach. As she talked about the program she said, "at least just being around kids I knew that's what I wanted." Amber also shared fond memories of her own early childhood school experiences, which seems to have influenced her decision as well. Her favorite teacher was in the first grade and she developed such a close relationship with her that she still speaks to her regularly.

> She's been like a mentor for me…I went into her classroom and when I'm on breaks…you know helped her with certain lessons and just helped around the classroom and I always go in and see what new thing she's doing or for advice…I constantly keep in touch with her. (Interview, 2/5/07)

Karen, Carol, Debra, and Laura had been working together at the same child development center for several years. They all seemed to have close personal and working relationships with one another. Although they shared many experiences over the years, their journeys into the field of early childhood were very different.

Early Childhood Education was not Karen's first choice for a career. When she started college, she majored in French and Secondary Education. After student teaching, however, she quickly realized that teaching at the secondary level was not something that she desired. After graduating from college, Karen found a job as a substitute teacher at a day care center. She enjoyed the work and has been teaching in an early childhood setting ever since.

Growing up in a small village in France, Carol's school experiences were somewhat different from her colleagues. Carol attended a boarding school for girls where she was exposed

to many people from different countries. She had friends from America and Africa and, according to her, "I always felt more comfortable with foreigners." When she was in high school, Carol decided that she wanted to become a teacher. During college, she majored in English and Child Psychology, but after attending for two years she quit. She began teaching and has been an early childhood teacher for nearly twenty years.

Ever since she was a young girl, Debra loved to care for small children. She said, "My entire life I've been baby crazy. I mean just wild about babies…My neighbors…had a brand new baby and I was there everyday. I was like the little nanny at twelve." Nearly a decade later, she earned a degree in Early Childhood Education and has been teaching preschool for over twenty years.

Laura's journey into early childhood was quite interesting. She initially wanted to be a singer, saying, "I had a lot of talent and I had a lot of experience singing and I had a lot of confidence." When Laura realized that she didn't have the time to devote to learning piano, she switched majors. Laura began taking courses in art and education and after graduating from college, she began working as a substitute art teacher. When the opportunity came for her to work with younger children, she said she "really enjoyed it" and has been working in early childhood for almost twenty years.

The Relationship

Expectations

Before the practicum began, I spoke separately with Amber and her four cooperating teachers- Karen, Carol, Debra, and Laura- about their expectations of each other. Although the practicum was Amber's first field experience in an early childhood setting, she already had a

mentor who she relied on for support and advice. She had an informal mentoring relationship

with her former first grade teacher. As such, Amber had specific expectations for her four

cooperating teachers in the practicum. Amber expected to have an open relationship with the

teachers; one in which she would feel comfortable asking questions about anything related to

early childhood.

> I'm hoping I'll be comfortable enough to go up to them…I'm hoping that I can just go up and just talk to them on a personal and professional level and hopefully they'll help me out…a very open relationship. You have to be able to communicate, if there's no communication then there's nothing. (Interview, 2/5/07)

Amber also expected to learn specific teaching skills and strategies, such as addressing

individual differences, classroom management, curriculum planning, and working with families.

> Hopefully [they'll] help me out a lot or show me how to deal with certain situations, if they have different kids from different backgrounds or if they have different learning levels, how do they deal with it instead of kind of just throwing me in the classroom and be like 'here you go' and 'talk to that kid'…I also think that knowledge-wise [what] I'll gain is just observing them constantly, anything I can take in, how they do certain lessons, see how they deal with discipline problems too, how to communicate with the kids, if there's parents that have questions, how do they send newsletters home to basically everything they do. (Interview, 2/5/07)

Karen, Carol, Debra, and Laura had specific expectations for Amber as well. Karen

believed that the relationship between preservice teachers and cooperating teachers should be

"pretty close" and she viewed it as more than a mentoring relationship. "It's almost like a

combination of mentoring and parenting," she said. As far as her expectations of Amber, Karen

wanted her to be able to interact with the children and learn how to validate their feelings. She

also said she looked forward to helping Amber learn "all about nonviolent conflict resolution and

how to use that as a resource rather than sticking a child in a chair and putting them away from

everybody."

Carol's expectations were somewhat similar to Karen's expectations of teaching conflict resolution. Carol said that she expected Amber to learn how to "teach children how to resolve their conflicts peacefully." In addition, she wanted Amber to have an outgoing personality.

> We want to show [Amber] what works…I think it's more a matter of attitude. I think if [she] has a very open attitude and [she] really wants to learn and really seek our help…not passive, observe and jump in and that's what we look for. (Interview, 2/16/07)

Debra's expectations of Amber also included learning how to teach peaceful conflict resolution. She had hoped that she and the other three teachers could serve as an inspiration for Amber in learning how to approach conflict resolution.

> Peaceful conflict resolution, it's really important to us. Reflective listening is really important, allowing [children] to be sad and angry. We don't do time out chairs so it would be important for [Amber] to know that…we stay with [the children] and work out their feelings. So all those things are really important to our program. (Interview, 2/20/07)

Laura believed that preservice teachers and cooperating teachers should have a friendly and accepting relationship. Her expectations for Amber were straightforward- that she "really like children and like working with children." She also said that she thought university students would leave their center with "a better understanding of the need for open-ended activities."

By the end of the practicum, Amber felt that her expectations were not met. In an email correspondence to me following our final interview, Amber said:

> The mentors at first did not meet my expectations…I expected full communication but instead it was like I walked in and I should have known what to do but I didn't. It was more like I entered and just did my own thing. Also, I had to approach them with questions about what I should be doing or how they handle certain situations. Once I started asking questions then the communication line opened up…I did expect to learn some organizational skills, but I didn't get this. Instead I basically got what not to do…My expectations were not met but in order for me to understand the system I had to step up and begin the communication. (Email, 4/23/07)

Amber also felt that her expectations of using the dialogue journal as an additional means of communication were not met. Each week she would write questions and she expected to read the teachers' responses when she returned the following week, but this did not happen. Often times, the teachers forgot to respond and had to be reminded to use the dialogue journal.

> Certain times the teachers[s] were really busy and I didn't wanna bother them which was nice, I could write in the dialogue journal. The only thing was that they really didn't respond. Even though I was only there on Fridays, they had a whole week and I don't know if they forgot about it…I would kind of ask them, 'Oh, I wrote some questions in the dialogue journal' and they would be like, 'Oh yeah, well we didn't get to it, we've been really busy'. But then the more I thought about it, I was like well there's nap time in the afternoon…I mean there were four of them…I don't know if they were just busy or if they forgot about it or it wasn't one of their main priorities. Some of the questions, I kind of wanted to know the next week cause it was still on my mind, but not to have that question answered was just like okay. (Interview, 4/18/07)

Communication

Amber was the only preservice teacher in the study to have four cooperating teachers. One might assume that someone in her position would benefit greatly from the "extra" mentoring; however this was not the case for Amber. In fact, Amber faced similar challenges as David did in communicating with his mentor. In our final interview, Amber revealed that there were some communication problems between her and the other teachers. After some time, Amber felt more comfortable communicating with one teacher in particular.

> There was probably one though that I really connected with cause I did my activity plans with her…it was a really good relationship where I felt comfortable enough I could go and approach her about a situation….the other ones I kinda observed more. (Interview, 4/18/07)

The lack of communication between Amber and the other teachers was documented in my field notes throughout my observations.

No observation of interaction or communication between Amber and the other teachers. (Field Notes, 2/9/07)

I asked to see [Amber's] dialogue journal and she told me that none of the four teachers had responded to any of her entries yet. I had to remind one of the teachers that Amber had questions that needed to be answered from her dialogue journal. One of the teachers told me that she had looked at the journal, but hadn't had a chance to respond to it. (Field Notes, 2/23/07)

Amber was talking to one of the teachers about family involvement. When I asked to see her dialogue journal, she said one of the teachers took it home and was on her way to the center and she would get it then. (Field Notes, 3/2/07)

Throughout my visits, I had not observed any real interaction or communication between Amber and the other teachers. She appeared to be disappointed about their lack of attention to her journal, but kept saying everything was okay. (Field Notes, 3/6/07)

I also noticed that only two of the four teachers responded to Amber's questions in the dialogue journal. It is still unclear as to whether or not the other two teachers ever read the dialogue journals.

Roles and Responsibilities

From the beginning Amber seemed unsure about her responsibilities in the classroom. There was not any discussion at the beginning of the practicum about what the teachers expected of Amber or about the roles and responsibilities she could assume while in their classroom. Eventually, Amber said she took the initiative to find out what she should be doing.

Well I kinda just went up to them and asked them, 'What do you want me to do?' or, 'Okay you're doing this activity, do you want me to help out or just stand back?' and they were like, 'Well, we want you to do this'. So it was kind of me taking the initiative to go to them and ask them what I'm supposed to do more than just sitting back and observing. (Interview, 4/18/07)

When I spoke with the four teachers at the end of the practicum, they expressed some concern about Amber's lack of initiative in taking on responsibilities. They felt that she did more observing than interacting. They did, however, feel partly responsible because they had not expressed their expectations of her from the beginning. Contrary to what Amber said, the four teachers told me that *they* often had to ask Amber to do certain things- to which she obliged. In their opinion, they felt that she was very professional. The main problem, according to the teachers, appeared to be the lack of communication. They wanted her to be more involved and take on more responsibilities, but they failed to communicate this directly to her.

Perceived Benefits

The four teachers all expressed a desire to mentor preservice teachers within the context of practica and/or student teaching. They felt that such experiences were beneficial to the preservice teachers, the cooperating teachers, and the children in the classroom in different ways. Karen said that although she and the other teachers never expect preservice teachers to replace regular teachers, "they are here to enhance our program and give the kids a little extra one on one."

Carol talked about the benefits of having good mentors for preservice teachers. She also believed that her mentoring of future teachers could affect young children too as they would eventually be placed with these teachers.

> I think it's extremely important to have good teachers and I believe that we are good teachers cause we've been in the business for so long and we know what works and what doesn't work…we want to show [preservice teachers] what works and it's for the good of humanity for all the children who will need good teachers. You can't keep it all to yourself. You want to help others to show them how it works and what works best. (Interview, 2/16/07)

Debra also believed that having preservice teachers in their center was beneficial for the young children. She said, "It's always so nice to have an extra pair of hands and the extra attention for the kids. You can never have too much attention for young ones."

Beliefs about Family Involvement

Communication

Amber believed frequent communication, whether speaking in person or over the phone, was a key aspect of family involvement. She placed equal responsibility on children's families and teachers.

> Family involvement would be when somebody in a child's life comes and talks to the teacher or you know may make a phone call…Basically for me family isn't just a mother, a father, a grandparent. It could be anybody in that child's life that maybe is taking care of them at the moment. So to have involvement of just a phone call is plenty of involvement. (Interview, 2/5/07)

The four teachers stated similar beliefs about family involvement and reported similar practices with respect to communicating with children's families. Karen reported that the teachers regularly communicate with children's families, mostly in person.

> We try to touch basis with the parents at the end of every day. I mean we talk to them about what their kids have done and any issues that have arisen during the day and we try to keep it up to date as much as possible so that something isn't building up over a long period of time before it's talked about…we have a website, we have a newsletter that goes out every month or two, depending on how much we get. (Interview, 2/12/07)

Karen stated that they often developed close relationships with children's parents, allowing them to feel free to talk about anything with each other. She said, "We're almost like an extended

family for our parents so our parents talk to us a lot about the problems they're having and with

their children and otherwise as well."

Carol also believed the teachers were "like a family extension." She said she believed

that it was important to maintain ongoing communication with families through various means

such as conferences, newsletters, and verbal contact.

> We try to keep the communication going and very open so that we try to talk to
> the parents almost everyday if we can…we have a newsletter and we usually tell
> them what's happening, but I think the most effective way, and because we are a
> small center we can do that easily, sometimes I will write a note…we also offer
> parent-teacher conferences on demand anytime, you know if they feel that they
> would like to meet with us then we will meet , but we don't do it on a regular
> basis, once a month. (Interview, 2/16/07)

Debra believed that it was important to try to give daily feedback to parents, but she realized that

it was not always possible. She also talked about strategies the teachers used in the past, such as

newsletters.

> We don't always approach every parent at the end of the day cause it's kind of a
> hectic time, but we try and we know it's important and…some of our parents feel
> comfortable enough to approach us like, 'How was her day?' and we try to do
> that…In the past we used to have a newsletter that we hung on our door, a big
> giant newsletter and they loved that, but it really took a lot of time. (Interview,
> 2/20/07)

Laura also talked about the ongoing communication that was a crucial part of family

involvement at their center. She said, "a lot of verbal communication…we have a newsletter we

send out every month that kind of prepares parents for the next month of what's coming up."

Amber talked about the communication she observed between children's families and the

teachers at her practicum site. In her reflection journal she said,

> [Center's name] interacts with the families almost everyday as they drop off and
> pick up their children. They also have a book for the parents to write in if there is
> a concern or if there is a different person picking up their child that day. There is

also a bulletin board that has each child's name on it and under their name tags the teachers can post announcements and letters to go home. They have also created a directory with each family's name, address and email; this way the parents can keep in touch with each other as well. (Reflection Journal, no date)

In an email correspondence to me, however, Amber seemed to contradict the teachers' reported practices in regards to their communication with parents. She said, "There were times when parents would call and leave a message and the teachers wouldn't check the answering machine, or the parents would leave a note in the book and only one teacher knew about it and did not share it with the other three."

Forms of Involvement

Amber believed that families could be involved in different ways throughout the classroom; although she maintained that a simple phone call would suffice.

Offering to go on a field trip or to come in and help clean the classroom or supervise an activity or craft. But it can range from doing all of that to just a phone call or writing a letter and making sure everything's okay. (Interview, 2/5/07)

In her dialogue journal, Amber inquired about parental involvement at the center. One of the teachers responded by noting the different ways families had been involved in the past.

Amber: The other day you had a guest, the "singing lady", do you often have guest come in and do activities with the children? Do parents come in on some days and talk about their jobs?

Carol: She (the singing lady) was a gift to us from one of our children's mom. Yes we sometimes have special guests, and we also have had parents come and help us for a special project, for example a Japanese mom came to make sushi with us, as a snack to help us celebrate the cherry-trees festival; another mom who had lived in china came to help us do crafts in celebration of the Chinese New Year, taught the children some words, expressions, and talked about some

traditions. We try to encourage our parents' involvement and participation to our program as much as possible. To help with field trips. To visit them at their job-site if possible, especially if our unit is about community helpers- The librarian has come a few times. (Dialogue Journal, no date)

Similar to what was written in the dialogue journal, the teachers discussed the different forms of family involvement that occurred at their center. Karen talked about parents volunteering at the center as a form of involvement.

> We sometimes have parents come in to volunteer. Sometimes parents will come in and especially around holidays, and bring things from their traditions and holidays and talk about that. We have several times a year when parents will come in, usually once in the Spring and once in the Fall, they'll come in and help us with some of the outdoor cleanup that we have to do or have a work day and do a little bit of the physical things that need to be done. (Interview, 2/12/07)

Carol also talked about parent volunteers. She said, "at least every three months we have an event where parents can come and help us either clean up or spread mulch on the playground and at Halloween we have a party." Laura said that parents would sometimes get involved in classroom activities such as cooking.

> Sometimes they bring in our favorite dishes and or cooking activities with the children and very often at holiday time they show the children some of the things that they used to make when they were little kids. (Interview, 2/21/07)

Again, Amber refuted some of the teachers' reported practices in relation to family involvement. In her reflection journal, she said, "There really isn't a time for the parents to come and be with the children or interact or have a career day or anything."

Responsibility

Amber believed that parents and teachers were equally responsible for creating home-school partnerships. At the same time, she believed teachers were the ones who should initiate such partnerships.

> It's an equal collaboration because I think the teacher has to inform the parent of what's going on through newsletters and maybe like Friday folders with their schoolwork. But then the parents have to make an effort to make sure the child's doing their homework…the teacher should initiate it, telling them what we're going to do or what the year is gonna look like, what the subject materials gonna be, but then the parent has to respond to it, they're showing up to parent-teacher conferences, coming in helping out…But I think they both have to work together. (Interview, 2/5/07)

The four teachers did not explicitly state who they felt was responsible for facilitating family involvement. However, it appeared that they believed family involvement required a concerted effort on the behalf of both teachers and parents. All of the teachers talked about their efforts to facilitate and maintain communication (i.e., website, newsletters, notes, verbal contact). At the same time, they talked about the parents' efforts in getting themselves involved (i.e., volunteering, cooking, coming into the classroom sharing their culture).

Beliefs about Cultural Diversity

During my visits at the center, I observed some evidence of cultural awareness/inclusion. In terms of the physical environment, there were pictures of African Americans, Asian clocks, numbers written in various languages, and a Hebrew calendar. The children recited their numbers in at least three different languages during calendar time. One international child who was from Bosnia regularly said her numbers in her native language and the teachers often showed an appreciation of her language and culture throughout the day.

Cultural Diversity in the Curriculum

Some of the teachers discussed the importance of creating a classroom environment that is responsive to cultural diversity. Karen believed that it was important to have diverse materials in the various learning centers throughout the classroom.

> We try to have a lot of diverse materials around. Posters up on the wall with faces of people from different ethnic backgrounds…we try to have baby dolls and people who are coming from different backgrounds. Eating utensils and plates and things, we try to have different varieties of those. Lots of different books. I mean books are the easy ones; we have a lot of multicultural books. (Interview, 2/12/07)

Amber acknowledged the teachers' attempts at creating a diverse environment. In her reflection journal, she wrote, "they have several books that are in Spanish and they have several books that show different cultures and their traditions."

Karen believed that while it was important to include cultural diversity in the curriculum, it seemed more realistic to focus on the ethnic backgrounds that were present in the classroom.

> We try to talk about holidays that different people celebrate. It's kind of more realistic to stick with the ethnic backgrounds that we have here, but if you don't have enough then you have to go ahead and educate anyway. We have songs that we sing at the beginning of the year that have hello in different languages. We do units on skin color and try to have multicultural crayons and paints around so that they can experiment with different hair colors and different skin colors when they're doing their art work too. (Interview, 2/12/07)

Debra also believed that incorporating cultural diversity into the curriculum would be easier and perhaps more realistic if other cultures were represented in the classroom.

> Of course it's a little more meaningful even for them if we have, you know, Minu, she celebrates this, but we still try to talk about it even if they're not here…we do a lot of different languages for calendar time, for numbers for counting. And then of course we have French so they get exposed to a lot of French. (Interview, 2/20/07)

Carol, being bilingual herself, believed that it was important to expose children to different

languages.

> I love to do baking projects…when they have to stir something, we say, 'Well
> let's count to ten' and they want to do that in different languages too. So it
> radiates in different parts of the day, you know, for different activities. (Interview,
> 2/16/07)

In her reflection journal, Amber discussed some of the ways that the teachers

incorporated cultural diversity into the curriculum.

> At group singing time where all the children are present they have a child pick a
> song. One of the songs is in French and English…the children learn some words
> in French and are able to sing it in context; it also helps that one of the teachers
> speaks French and is able to help the children…they do a good job of addressing
> cultural diversity in the classroom through several activities that they do daily to
> keep the child's mind working and remembering. (Reflection Journal, no date)

A Strengths Perspective

Amber believed that it was important for teachers to focus on the strengths of diverse

cultures by providing opportunities for children to share their own cultures with the classroom.

She said, "Every student has their own experience, their own story and just have them, if they

feel comfortable, share it in front of the classroom so that everyone else can learn from their

experience."

Carol also believed that it was important for children from diverse cultures to share their

experiences.

> To me it's so interesting I always ask [international child], 'So what did you do in
> Italy?' and 'What songs did you learn?' and she's trying to remember and she's
> very excited that she can share that I think and I think it's important to be curious
> about it…it's fun to try to find out what other kids' cultures so we ask parents.
> Also we try to get them involved so that they can share their customs and the
> different things they do in their country. (Interview, 2/16/07)

Cultural Diversity as a Learning Experience

Amber believed that teaching about cultural diversity was beneficial for children and served as a learning experience for them.

> At a younger age if you're able to teach them about diversity and you're able to teach them about other cultures and you're able to interact with diverse people, then when they grow up, they're able to build connections and there won't be problems, political problems, other problems, there won't be this big issue now that we have. (Interview, 2/5/07)

Amber was also interested in the four teachers' beliefs about the importance of cultural diversity so she asked about it in the dialogue journal.

> *Amber*: When having calendar time, I noticed that you said the numbers in other languages- what is the purpose of introducing other languages at this age? (Also noticed the different clocks).
>
> *Debra*: Not only are pre-school aged children enthusiastic about learning different languages, but at this age, they are capable of learning them easily and quickly. [Child's name] is fluent in four different languages at the age of 5 ½ (Bosnian, Slovenian, English, Italian). I've also noticed that when a child learns another language during these years, but then stops using it regularly, when it is re-introduced, it comes back to them quickly (also their accent and annunciation is incredible at this age). (Dialogue Journal, no date)

Teacher Awareness

Some of the teachers believed that it was important to have an awareness of diversity and to be exposed to diversity in some capacity in order to be able to successfully address cultural diversity in the classroom. Most of the teachers, however, had little exposure to diverse groups before their own teaching experiences. Amber had some exposure to diverse groups- mainly Mexican Americans and African Americans- during her high school years. She believed that

teachers must be prepared to address diversity issues because they will inevitably emerge in the classroom.

> There's gonna be certain subjects that are gonna be touchy and you're gonna hit that history civil rights movement, you're gonna hit the slaves, you're gonna hit the immigration laws and issues and you know today immigration is such a big thing that, you're gonna have that one kid where a parent said something and they're gonna repeat it and you're gonna have to learn how to deal with it. So to have that experience with diverse people, you'll be able to handle certain situations like that better. (Interview, 2/5/07)

Karen attended a school that served predominately Caucasian students. She said, "I've had to learn a lot and I like to think that I'm still learning and that's my attitude toward life is that I don't wanna close anything off. I want to keep learning about different ethnic backgrounds and different people." Debra shared similar experiences as Karen did growing up.

> We had one Jewish student in our entire elementary school…sad my high school we had no African American students in my high school…we had no Asian population either. It was just White, White, White, White. (Interview, 2/20/07)

Debra did not believe it was absolutely necessary for teachers to have diverse experiences in order to be good teachers. She said, "I'm sure it would be great and it couldn't hurt, it could only help I would guess…I think we do a pretty good job at diversity whether or not we have an extremely diverse personal life."

Carol had more exposure to diverse groups than did any of the other teachers. As I mentioned in her introduction, Carol had many friends from different countries when she attended a boarding school in France. She also developed friendships with international individuals when she moved to the United States with her husband.

> Before I went teaching, I met my husband (who is American) in France and he came here to do a doctorate in philosophy. We lived in the graduate housing and we practically did not know any American people. I mean all our neighbors were from Iraq, from India, from Korea, from Brazil, from all over the world, from Iceland and we would get together. We were like a little microcosmic community

and it was so wonderful. We would baby-sit for each other, we would cook together, and you know that's where I learned to cook all kinds of dishes from all over the world. (Interview, 2/16/07)

Influences on Beliefs

By the end of the practicum, Amber reported that her beliefs about family involvement remained stable and that her beliefs about cultural diversity were reinforced. She did learn a few new strategies for addressing family involvement and cultural diversity. In relation to family involvement, Amber made contradictory statements about what she observed at the center. In her reflection journal, she noted that families were involved in the center in a number of ways.

> [Center's name] interacts with the families almost everyday as they drop off and pick up their children…Families are [involved] at [Center's name] in several different ways. They have "Work Days" about two to three times a year where they have some of the parents come in and help with Spring cleaning, watching the playground, cleaning the toys, etc. The families are also signed up for snack days, where they are responsible for bringing in snack for the rest of the children. [Center's name] has an open-door policy where the parents can come and go as they please. Parents may stop by on their lunch break or just to check up on their child. (Reflection Journal, no date)

In our final interview, Amber made several contradictory statements about family involvement at the center. At first she said, "the parents are a huge involvement and I saw it at [Center's name] how, you know, the teachers talk to the parents when they come in." Shortly after making that statement, Amber said, "but the one thing that I saw differently was that [Center's name] really doesn't involve their parents as much…there really isn't a time for parents to come and be with the children or interact."

Amber did report that she learned new strategies for involving families, although she managed to sort of criticize the teachers' implementation of one of the strategies.

I think it was a really good idea with the bulletin board because you can just post all the same flyers…the other thing they had is that they have a notebook and the parents would come in…write in it…it's kind of like a communication tool, but then it's a matter of them checking the notebook because it seemed like they were a little disorganized, it was all set on this one desk. But it's a good strategy if a parent can't get to the teachers, they drop off their kid, they can just write in the note and then there's still communication there. (Interview, 4/18/07)

Amber's belief that teachers should approach diversity from a strengths perspective was reinforced as she observed how the teachers showed a genuine appreciation of an international child's culture. The teachers allowed the child to share her home language during calendar time and they often asked her to share some of her experiences in other countries.

Amber reported that she learned strategies for incorporating cultural diversity into the classroom. In her reflection journal, she wrote, "[Center's name] has shown me how to incorporate all cultures and how to deal with diversity in the classroom. I will be able to take what they have taught me and apply it in my own classroom and use it as a reference."

Besides learning new strategies in relation to family involvement and cultural diversity, Amber also reported, in her reflection journal, that she gained a greater understanding of teaching and learning in early childhood education.

[Center's name] has helped me understand Early Childhood Education in several ways…It showed me that one should try and provide a curriculum that encourages children to be actively involved in the learning process; experience a variety of developmentally appropriate activities and materials; and pursue their own interests in the context of life in the community and the world…Also, I have learned some important philosophies that one should teach and practice as an Early Childhood Educator. Some of them is encouraging crying in boys and girls of all ages: it is not healthy to hold in tears; practice peaceful conflict resolution. (Reflection Journal, no date)

Case Summary

Based on the data collected throughout the eight weeks of the practicum, it appears that the relationships between Amber and Karen, Carol, Debra, and Laura were distant and ineffective. Although the teachers seemed to have an understanding of their roles as cooperating/mentor teachers, they did not undertake any of those roles with Amber. In our initial interview, Karen, Carol, Debra, and Laura shared their personal views of the relationship between cooperating teachers and preservice teachers.

> It's almost like a combination of mentoring and parenting…we do end up kind of talking to the young people about their problems and as well as giving them an example and kind of guiding them through the preschool experience. (Karen-Interview, 2/12/07)

> I would characterize it as mentors, maybe just a role model. (Carol- Interview, 2/16/07)

> I would like for us to be mentors…comfortable enough to be around that they feel at home with us. (Debra- Interview, 2/20/07)

> If we see someone looking confused, we try to figure out how to help them make the next step. (Laura- Interview, 2/21/07)

With the exception of Debra, the teachers' views were not consistent with their actions. When I spoke with Amber about her experience in the practicum, she told me the one thing she liked least was the "communication problems with the teachers."

Amber did not feel that she received the guidance and support the teachers claimed to be ready to offer during our initial interview. As such, the four teachers did not appear to have any influence on Amber's beliefs (See Table 6.1). In relation to her beliefs about family involvement, Amber reported that her beliefs were stable across the period of the practicum. Although Amber stated that family involvement could be as simple as a phone call, she criticized the teachers'

efforts to involve families. First she would say that the teachers really did not involve parents, then she would list a number of practices that the teachers engaged in such as using a bulletin board to post notices, talking to parents when they dropped off and picked up their children, and having work days for parents to volunteer.

Table 6.1

Summary of Beliefs

Dyad	Beliefs about Family Involvement	Beliefs about Cultural Diversity
Karen	• Regular communication through newsletters, daily conversations • Teachers and parents have close relationships; like family extension • Parents volunteering	• Diversity-rich classroom environment • Realistic to address backgrounds that are represented in classroom
Carol	• Teachers like family extension • Ongoing communication through conferences, newsletters, verbal contact • Parent volunteers to clean up, assist with classroom parties	• Exposure to different languages through classroom activities • Teachers should allow children from diverse backgrounds to share their cultures with class
Debra	• Teachers should give daily feedback to parents, however, not always possible • Communicate through newsletters	• Incorporating cultural diversity into curriculum easier and more practical when classroom is representative of various cultural groups • Teachers don't have to be exposed to diverse groups in order to be good teachers
Laura	• Ongoing communication crucial • Communicate through newsletters • Parents get involved through classroom activities, such as cooking	
Amber	• Communication is key • Parents can get involved through field trips, classroom activities • Parents and teachers equally responsible • Beliefs Remained Stable	• Teachers should focus on strengths of diverse cultures • Learning experience for children • Teachers should be aware of diverse issues • Beliefs Reinforced

The teachers believed that communication was a key aspect of family involvement. They reported similar practices in communicating with families- regular verbal contact and newsletters; although one of the teachers reported that they no longer used newsletters. The teachers also believed active parental participation was a form of involvement. They talked about parents visiting the center, sharing their traditions, and engaging in activities with the children. They also said that the parents often helped clean the outdoor area of the center. Some of the teachers viewed themselves as an extended family, saying that they maintained a close relationship with the children and their families.

Amber's beliefs about cultural diversity were reinforced by her participation in the practicum. Amber believed it was important to allow children to share their different cultures with the class and she observed the teachers doing this at their center. The teachers stated similar beliefs in relation to cultural diversity. Although some of the teachers acknowledged the challenge of incorporating cultural diversity into a homogeneous classroom, they believed it was important to address diversity through classroom materials and activities.

CHAPTER 7

CASE 4- PAUL AND TRACY

Paul wanted to become a kindergarten teacher because, he said, "I think if I can be a kindergarten teacher I can get kids on the right track and the right mindset about school and they might not have the bad experience with it." The "bad experience" Paul was referring to was his own school experience.

> I actually didn't like school very much the whole way through…in elementary school I had a lot of bad teachers who were just unfriendly and I don't know why they were working there cause they didn't like their job at all and it was pretty clear. (Interview, 2/2/07)

Paul's experiences with bad teachers taught him the importance of being friendly and understanding with children. He did not feel, however, that any of those teachers influenced his decision to become a teacher. It was mainly his experience as a volunteer at a day care center during college that inspired him. Paul also volunteered at a day care center when he was in high school although, he said, "I don't think it occurred to me to be a teacher yet."

Tracy's love for the environment did not initially lead her into early childhood education. When she was in college, she majored in Environmental Education. After graduating, Tracy began working as an environmental education specialist. She sometimes worked with young children in an after-school program, teaching them about environmentalism.

> After working with kids I would say I wanted to work with kids all the time, I didn't just want to work with the kids a couple times a week. I wanted to build relationships with kids and get to know them better and that was sort of what spurred me on to become a preschool teacher. (Interview, 2/22/07)

The Relationship

Expectations

Although Paul had experience at day care centers, he had only one other field experience

prior to the practicum. During that experience, he described his interactions with the teachers as

"really brief". As such, he was rather unsure of what to expect with Tracy. He said that he

wanted to be close to her and he wanted to learn new teaching skills and strategies.

> I'd like to be really close with my teacher so [she] could pass on…as much
> knowledge and wisdom that [she has] gained through the years onto me…I'd like
> to learn a lot of tricks of the trade kind of things…I'm sure they're all kinds of
> situations that I haven't been prepared for, so I'd like to see in action when
> something goes wrong and this X situation arises how exactly she deals with it.
> (Interview, 2/2/07)

Although Paul believed that Tracy had some obligation as a veteran teacher to mentor future

teachers, he felt that her number one concern should be the children in her classroom.

> She's been in the same position as I have and if she believes in [the] teaching
> profession, I think she'd wanna try to have good educators…I think her number
> one priority has to be the students, but hopefully we have a pretty open line of
> communication going cause I'll be able to learn a lot from observing but I'd also
> like to hear what's going on in her mind. (Interview, 2/2/07)

Paul also felt it was important for him to learn how to manage his own classroom. He was still

volunteering at a day care center and a major challenge was drawing the line between being a

teacher and a friend to the children in his classroom. He had hoped to leave the practicum

experience with some classroom management strategies.

> I'd like to learn what kind of tone the teacher uses for the kids because I know
> I'm a bit of a pushover at the day care which doesn't bother me too much, but
> when I'm in a classroom with twenty kids I think there's probably a fine line. I
> wanna be friendly and stuff like that but…the kids probably need to know that
> I'm in charge, they need to listen to me. So I'd like to try to pick up on that kind
> of stuff…I think classroom management is probably a good thing I wanna learn.
> (Interview, 2/2/07)

Tracy's expectations of preservice teachers, in general, were straightforward.

> Just that they like children, [that] they want to explore a career with children and they want to get involved in any way in our classroom. I mean I would be happy if they came and were willing to just sit and read a book with a child, just as long as they're willing. I don't feel like they need to think they know how already. Just that they are willing to be there and willing to try. (Interview, 2/22/07)

When I later spoke with Tracy about Paul, she said that he had met her expectations. He was very outgoing and more than willing to help out in any way possible. Tracy said she was very pleased with Paul and she felt that he was definitely cut out to be an early childhood teacher. Paul formed very strong attachments to many of the children in the classroom; one little boy even cried when he learned that Paul would not be returning.

For the most part, Paul felt that Tracy met his expectations. The only expectation that was not met was his anticipation of getting close to her.

> Everything except getting close to her. I definitely felt like anything I would have asked her, she would have definitely made a big effort to explain to me and just through observing her, I learned a lot of kind of management things. (Interview, 4/13/07)

Communication

Paul enjoyed his experience in Tracy's class and he referred to her as "an amazing mentor and fantastic teacher." Paul's only issue with the relationship between him and Tracy was their limited communication.

> Tracy was really great, I had a lot of respect for Tracy, I just wish I could have talked to her more because I didn't really do that too much…I just should have been more assertive and asking her questions…there were a lot of days where literally the only thing we said to each other was Good Morning and then See Ya Later. I mean I wanted to be communicating more, but I guess it was all circumstantial. (Interview, 4/13/07)

In his reflection journal, Paul further discussed his feelings about his communication with Tracy.

I felt that I spent pretty much all of my time with the children while Tracy was busy working with other children. On some days, we hardly had the opportunity to exchange more than a hello and goodbye! Certainly this was no fault of Tracy's, I just wish we could have had more time to discuss the issues in the classroom. Perhaps if we were supposed to have a longer stay, we could have had more opportunities to talk to one another…Fortunately, [the] dialogue journal provided me some supplementary advice from Tracy. (Reflection Journal, 4/13/07)

Paul's communication with the other teachers in the classroom was even more limited than was his communication with Tracy. He felt that part of the reason he was unable to communicate as much with the teachers was because they seemed busy most of the time.

Everyone that's in there, all the staff…they're busy because they have jobs to do, so I felt really grateful that they're inviting me in cause it seems like it's got to be… a little bit of a nuisance having all those Penn State students there so I tried to stay out of their way a little bit. (Interview, 4/13/07)

Paul and Tracy felt that the dialogue journal was a useful tool for facilitating additional communication. Paul used the journal to ask questions mostly about classroom management. As discussed previously, Paul was concerned about drawing the line between teacher and friend. In one of his entries he asked Tracy for advice on how to approach that issue.

Paul: Do you think it's more important to be a friend or authority figure to the children? Or how do you maintain a good balance? For example, right now some of the children are trying to tell me things, but the movie is on so would you listen or tell them to watch the movie?

Tracy: I personally feel it is more important to be a teacher. That is to set good examples for children to follow. But, being a good teacher also means setting a good example of friendship too. Children have many "friends" in the classroom but only a few "teachers" (in the title sense). In the scenario you mention above, I would tell the child "We're watching a movie quietly now, but later I would love to chat with you". This sends the message that you really do care a lot about what they have to say, but it's just not an appropriate time to talk right now. I find

myself using those words a lot at nap time too. I really try to remember that we are <u>ALL</u> teachers <u>AND</u> friends to one another and we learn from the children as well they learn from us. I always try to follow the directions I give and to set the best example with my actions that I can. (Dialogue Journal, 3/2/07)

Tracy always responded to Paul's questions with detailed answers such as in the above journal entry, and she often made comments such as, 'Good Question!' or 'Great questions so far, I can tell you really think about your work.' She told me that the dialogue journal was helpful and that Paul was very observant and posed good, thought-provoking questions.

Paul felt responsible for taking the initiative to communicate with the teachers, but he felt that it was sometimes difficult to do. He said, "I guess the responsibility lies with me, but I'm not very assertive like that." Although he was not as assertive in terms of opening the lines of communication with the teachers, Paul was definitely assertive in interacting with the children. His initiative was noted in many of my field notes. For example,

> Paul was engaged and interacting with the children from the beginning. When I arrived, several children were surrounding him and playing with him and in his hair. One little boy asked, "Why are you so big?" The children appeared to be comfortable with him from the beginning; one little boy sat in his lap within two hours of meeting him. (Field Notes, 2/12/07)

> When I arrived, Paul was sitting at a table with children and another teacher. He spent most of his time interacting with various children throughout the classroom. He attempted to engage with each child at some point. He was not afraid to get involved with the children and appeared to be very comfortable in the classroom. He was enthusiastic and very attentive to the children's needs. (Field Notes, 2/19/07)

Perceived Benefits

In our initial interview, Tracy talked to me about her views of the relationship between cooperating teachers and preservice teachers. She believed that the relationship was beneficial to preservice teachers, as well as cooperating teachers for different reasons.

I feel like it's a very helpful relationship on each side. I feel like they are able to really help us get things done in our classroom, they are extra hands in the classroom and sometimes that's the most important thing, just an extra lap to sit in, an extra person to read a book, an extra person just to play with and they can do all that…we're able to help them decide, set a role model and decide if they want to continue on and continue to work with kids and work towards the careers that we have as teachers or whether they are ready to change or think of something else. (Interview, 2/22/07)

When asked what led her to volunteer to become a cooperating/mentor teacher, she said,

I think that it's really important. I came from programs where we didn't have college students' help and coming back to the program. I saw how important they were and how much we were getting from them and I feel like it's important for us to give back to them as well and to make that relationship fifty-fifty as much as we can, to give them as much as we get from them. (Interview, 2/22/07)

Beliefs about Family Involvement

During my visits to Tracy's classroom, I observed an appreciation of children's families. I saw pictures of children and their families on a shelf in the classroom. I also observed an inclusion of children's families through a bulletin board with Parent Information, such as community news and events.

Communication

When I spoke with Paul about his beliefs regarding family involvement, he had difficulty explicitly stating his beliefs. He sometimes contradicted himself and he seemed unsure of his beliefs. Initially, Paul said family involvement was the family's responsibility.

I mean I guess family involvement is the family's responsibility, so it's the families and the teachers relationship with one another, working together and collaborating to give the kid a better education. (Interview, 2/2/07)

After making that statement, Paul then said it was the teacher's responsibility.

> I guess the teacher should be responsible for taking the initiative, sending out flyers, and trying to get the parents involved. So I guess the responsibility lies in the teacher. (Interview, 2/2/07)

When I asked Paul how he saw himself involving families when he becomes a teacher, he said, "I guess calls home, flyers I think are a good idea. Just maybe a weekly flyer of what's going on in the classroom, that kind of stuff."

Tracy believed that communication was an integral component of family involvement, so she made sure that she and the other teachers maintained ongoing communication with the children's families.

> We spend a lot of time communicating with…the children's parents…it's important for us to have an open communication line with parents so that we know what's happening at home, you know if somebody didn't sleep well, we need to know that kind of information and we need to give them information as well. This is a big chunk of the day that they are not sure what's going on with their child or you know they may feel that they're unsure so it's our job to really document what is going on with their child. (Interview, 2/22/07)

In his reflection journal, Paul discussed Tracy's strategies for communicating with children's families.

> During my interview with Tracy, she told me about some of the ways she tries to support family involvement in her classroom…Tracy also showed me some of the folders that she shows parents during parent-teacher conferences, which seemed to thoroughly display what the child has been doing in the classroom with lots of pictures, anecdotal notes, plenty of drawings, and assessments of different learning domains. (Reflection Journal, 4/13/07)

Forms of Involvement

Paul believed it was useful for parents to be involved in the classroom, but only to a certain extent. He said that he would want parents to volunteer in his classroom only if he solicited their help.

> I wouldn't want a parent insisting upon, well like asking to be in the classroom if I didn't suggest it, but it'd certainly be nice if I said, 'I'd like some volunteers for this event for this reason'. It'd be great if parents helped out, but no I don't think I would like it if parents would just be hanging around the classroom. (Interview, 2/2/07)

Tracy, on the other hand, believed that there were many ways that parents could and should be involved inside and outside of the classroom.

> We have things like Parent Teacher Organization meetings…second Tuesday of each month…Like tonight actually is Soup Night that's sponsored by the Parent Teacher Organization. So all the parents who are willing to come to the soup night, the teachers will be there. It's a chance for the parents and teachers to communicate…just to have a good time and sorta be in a different atmosphere…we also have brown bag lunches that are sponsored by the Parent Teacher Organization where we come over a lunch hour and parents can come and we bring in speakers…every month there's something that goes on…in the spring we have a garden night, over the Winter holidays we have Deck the Halls. (Interview, 2/22/07)

In his reflection journal, Paul talked about the different ways that families were involved inside and outside of Tracy's classroom.

> Meetings are always scheduled later in the day so that parents with jobs can still attend, and there are activities that take place on select Saturdays for parents and their children who would be too busy to be able to attend on a weekday…I saw parental involvement the most though during each morning. When the parents dropped off their children, they always got a chance to spend a little bit of time in the classroom and see what the students have been doing recently. Also, they had the opportunity to speak with the teachers about any concerns they may have been having, or simply to ask how their child has been doing recently. (Reflection Journal, 4/13/07)

Although Paul and Tracy had very different views on family involvement, they shared similar experiences with their own parents' involvement. Both of them stated that their parents were not very involved in their schooling beyond parent-teacher conferences. It is plausible that Tracy had a better understanding of family involvement because she had been teaching for a number of years. Paul, on the other hand, was unsure of exactly how to approach family involvement because, as he said, it is "not something I have a lot of experience with so I'm not too sure what to expect in that."

Beliefs about Cultural Diversity

Tracy's classroom was the most diverse of all the classrooms involved in the study- out of nineteen children, twelve were White, four were Asian, one was Latino, one was Indian, and one was biracial (Asian and White). Throughout my visits, I observed an inclusion of mostly Asian cultures. There was a plethora of Asian materials displayed throughout the classroom. I observed Asian prints on the walls, an Asian clock, an Oriental horoscope on the wall, and bilingual books (mostly Asian).

Cultural Diversity as a Learning Experience

Paul did not believe that teaching about cultural diversity was necessary in early childhood. He felt middle and high school students were better prepared to learn about it.

> It almost doesn't seem necessary at that age because kids at that age aren't thinking in terms of different backgrounds and stuff like that. Everyone just sees everyone for who they are which is a cool thing about kids…I would say it's probably a bigger issue with high schoolers and middle schoolers I would think just because like I said kids don't even see that kind of stuff at that age. (Interview, 2/2/07)

Tracy believed that it was important and necessary to address cultural diversity because it

served as a valuable learning experience for children.

> I think that it really promotes a sense of difference and it…gives us a chance to promote how much we value difference because we want these children to grow up valuing difference the way that we do as teachers…when the children see us as teachers value those special experiences, they value them also and they have a good example set to value different races, different backgrounds because they get the chance to value those things. (Interview, 2/22/07)

Cultural Diversity in the Classroom

Tracy believed that having a culturally diverse classroom enhanced her program as it

allowed children to gain first-hand exposure to diversity.

> I feel like that adds a lot to our classroom. I feel like that's one of the big positive things about this program is that it is so ethnically diverse and people come from diverse backgrounds to be here…with such a diverse group of students and college students and people involved in the program, we're able to learn that first-hand, we're able to value those differences with first-hand experiences and I just feel like it's really valuable to our program, really allows us to teach diversity hands-on instead of doing it through books or other ways that there are to do it, it really allows us to do it with a hands-on approach. (Interview, 2/22/07)

Paul acknowledged an appreciation of cultural diversity in the classroom and discussed it in his

reflection journal.

> It was clear that Tracy and the other staff members valued cultural diversity in the classroom. There were representations of different cultures all around the building, including Chinese words on the front door in celebration of the Chinese New Year, and picture books about different cultures of the world in the library. (Reflection Journal, 4/13/07)

Although Paul observed an appreciation of cultural diversity in the classroom environment, he

said that he had not observed an incorporation of cultural diversity into the curriculum.

> I do not believe I ever witnessed a moment when Tracy or any of the other teachers specifically tried to address cultural diversity in the form of a lesson or activity. However, I think the philosophies the teachers used in the classroom

regarding the treatment of others probably instilled a belief consistent with respect for cultural diversity. (Reflection Journal, 4/13/07)

Teacher Awareness

Neither Paul nor Tracy had a great deal of exposure to diverse groups growing up. Paul said that he gained much of his experience with diverse groups when he began volunteering at a day care center during college. Tracy said that prior to her college experience- and subsequently her work in preschool- she had not gained much experience with diverse groups.

Paul's limited exposure to diverse groups resulted in some uncertainty in regards to approaching cultural diversity in the classroom. Although he said that he definitely felt prepared to work with children from ethnically or culturally diverse backgrounds, he was unable to discuss specific strategies that he could use in the classroom to address cultural diversity.

> I definitely want to promote acceptance and being friendly to one another and all that kind of stuff, but I'm not sure if I could think of any particular activities that would like illustrate that…as far as specific lessons go, I don't think I'm going to be having a lesson or a topic day kind of thing. But everyday I think I'm going to be trying to encourage and promote acceptance and being friendly to all classmates and respecting each other's uniqueness and all that kind of stuff. So as far as that goes, it's kind of subconsciously like a lesson. (Interview, 2/2/07)

Tracy believed that it was helpful for teachers to have prior experience with diverse groups in order to successfully address cultural diversity in the classroom.

> I feel like if you're going to try to teach those differences, it's so many more times helpful to have witnessed those and had experiences with those first hand. It kinda is like if you were gonna learn about a banana, but not eat a banana. How you might feel about that, it would be really hard to teach about what a banana is if you were not able to take a bite of that banana. (Interview, 2/22/07)

Influences on Beliefs

Paul reported that his beliefs about family involvement and cultural diversity changed somewhat. He said that while he learned strategies for working with families, he did not learn any strategies for addressing cultural diversity. In his reflection journal, Paul discussed the change in his beliefs about family involvement.

> Before I started the practicum…I told [researcher] that while I supported family involvement in general, I wasn't sure if I would want parents dropping by un-announced to see the activities of the classroom. I felt this way because I thought parents would probably get in the way of things, and also because I thought that I may feel somewhat under pressure with a parental audience. However, after spending time in [Center's name], I feel differently. It was always nice to get an opportunity to speak with the students' parents, and get a chance to hear what the child has been up to at home. Tracy and the other teachers certainly didn't seem hindered or slowed down by the presence of parents, and instead of feeling pressure from the parents, I was always just happy to get a chance to introduce myself and show the parents what we've been doing on the classroom. (Reflection Journal, 4/13/07)

Paul also said that he learned the importance of accommodating parents. Tracy told him that it was important to schedule meetings after school, around six or seven o'clock, and even on different days such as Saturdays to accommodate parents' work schedules. He said he thought it was a good idea to keep in mind those additional things that may be going on in other people's lives.

Paul reported that his beliefs about cultural diversity changed somewhat, although he was still unsure of how to approach it in the classroom.

> Maybe my beliefs have changed a little bit…you know it's the early years where you're gearing up their minds for how they're going to be seeing these things…I still am completely unaware of what the best way is to go about [it]. Like how do you really get through to kids about respecting different cultures and well also embracing your own stuff…I still wouldn't know how you go about that really. So I don't know. I agree, I do think that different cultures should be incorporated, I just don't really see how, you know. (Interview, 4/13/07)

Case Summary

The relationship between Paul and Tracy was friendly, although it was not as close as Paul would have liked. It appeared that Paul and Tracy genuinely liked each other, but their limited communication hindered the possibility of a connection on a more personal level. It did not seem as though Paul was uncomfortable with Tracy or any of the other teachers. In fact, he was always actively engaged in some aspect of the classroom. From the very beginning, Paul jumped right into the routine of the classroom and he looked as if he could have been one of the regular classroom teachers. Paul believed that the limited communication between him and the teachers was simply the result of a busy classroom and because he felt that Tracy's number one priority should have been the children, he was careful not to interfere with that.

Paul's beliefs about family involvement and cultural diversity were influenced in some ways as a result of the practicum (See Table 7.1). In relation to family involvement, Paul believed that it was useful for teachers and parents to communicate. However, he set clear limits on the level of parental participation he wanted for his own classroom. At the beginning of the practicum, Paul said that he would not want parents "hanging around" in his classroom, unless he asked them to volunteer. He thought that he would feel threatened by the mere presence of parents. By the end of the practicum, he realized that it was not such a bad idea. He said "I think before what I was thinking… it seems like a bad idea to have parents in the room. I don't wanna feel critiqued sort of. But I mean it wasn't that way at all."

Table 7.1

Summary of Beliefs

Dyad	Beliefs about Family Involvement	Beliefs about Cultural Diversity
Tracy	• Ongoing communication crucial • Families can get involved on many levels • Parents participating in PTO meetings, brown bag lunches, special school events	• Valuable learning experience for children • Teachers need to be exposed to diverse cultures in order to successfully teach about cultural diversity • Teach cultural diversity through hands-on experiences, especially when classroom is ethnically and culturally diverse
Paul	• Contradictory statements about beliefs (initially families responsibility, then teachers responsibility) • Useful for families to get involved, but to certain extent • Communication through phone calls, weekly flyers sent home to parents • Beliefs Changed Somewhat	• Important for older children (middle and high school) • Young children aren't thinking about diversity issues • Beliefs Changed Somewhat

Tracy also believed communication was important but- unlike Paul- she welcomed the presence of parents inside and outside of her classroom. The center provided many opportunities for parents and teachers to meet informally (i.e., brown bag lunches, soup nights, garden nights), and this allowed Tracy and the other teachers to get to know the children's families on a personal level. Developing close relationships with parents also eliminated any feelings of intimidation on the part of the teachers and the parents.

Paul's beliefs about cultural diversity changed in that he no longer saw diversity as an issue for older children. He began to understand the importance of exposing younger children to diversity so that they would be better prepared to deal with certain issues as they got older. Although he began to see the importance of addressing cultural diversity, he still had not learned *how* to address it in the curriculum. He observed the teachers' appreciation of children's differences, but he said that he never saw them incorporate diversity into any activities or lessons in the classroom.

Tracy's beliefs about cultural diversity were very different from Paul's beliefs. While Paul seemed to lack an understanding about why cultural diversity is important and of how to address cultural diversity in early childhood, Tracy understood its value as a learning experience for young children and she knew how to translate her beliefs into practice. Tracy believed it was important for teachers to have an awareness of- and exposure to- diversity themselves in order to successfully address diversity issues in the classroom. Tracy reported that she was able to teach diversity hands-on, due to the ethnically diverse group of children in her classroom.

CHAPTER 8

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a cross-case analysis of the four case studies. Major themes which appeared across the cases include: (1) Expectations; (2) Communication; (3) Interpersonal Comfort; (4) The Influence of Mentor(s) vs. Practicum; (5) Time; and (6) Power.

Expectations

Expectations appeared to be one of the most salient themes throughout the study. In other empirical studies, researchers have examined the expectations of preservice teachers and cooperating teachers during early field experiences and have found that expectations influence the quality of field experiences, as well as the quality of the relationships formed during those experiences (Applegate & Lasley, 1984, 1985; Sudzina & Coolican, 1994). The preservice teachers in the present study admittedly entered the practicum with some anticipation of either an ideal relationship or an opportunity to learn specific teaching skills. In general, they each had specific expectations of their cooperating teachers. Curriculum planning and classroom management seemed to be the most important skills the preservice teachers expected to gain during the short duration of the practicum.

Prior experience in an early childhood setting did not appear to be related to the preservice teachers' expectations. David did not have prior experience in early childhood; therefore he felt it was important to gain insight into Jodi's planning and decision making. Amber also did not have prior experience in an early childhood setting, so she expected to learn

specific strategies such as "how they do certain lessons…how they deal with discipline problems." Paul and Natalie both had experience teaching in early childhood settings, yet they shared similar expectations as David and Amber. Paul said he thought classroom management was something he needed to learn, while Natalie said that she expected to learn good planning from her mentor teacher, Marla.

Paul and Amber were the only two preservice teachers who, in addition to wanting to learn teaching strategies, had expectations for a relationship with their cooperating teachers. Paul said he wanted to be "really close" with Tracy so that she could share what she has learned over the years. Amber said that she hoped to have a very open relationship in which she could talk to her mentors on a personal and professional level.

David and Paul felt that their cooperating teachers were, in some way, obligated to help them during their training as teachers. David believed that Jodi had a professional obligation to assist preservice teachers in understanding the classroom and "what it means to be a teacher." Paul said that because Tracy had previously been in his shoes, she should want to help him become a good educator.

Overall, the cooperating teachers had straightforward, realistic expectations of the pre-service teachers. The preservice teachers were not expected to have prior experience in early childhood or possess any specific teaching skills. Jodi expected David to be responsible, respectful, and cognizant of child development. Marla wanted Natalie to be able to communicate and develop relationships with children. Tracy expected Paul to like children and to get involved in her classroom. Karen, Carol, and Debra expected Amber to learn about peaceful conflict resolution- a main philosophy of their center. Laura expected Amber to like working with children. All four teachers also expected Amber to interact with the children in their classroom.

Did expectations affect the mentoring relationship?

Expectations could affect mentoring relationships in positive ways and in negative ways. When expectations are met, one will likely experience a sense of elation and satisfaction. However, when expectations are not met, one can experience feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration. These positive and negative feelings can be reflected in the mentoring relationship. In relation to this study, when most expectations were met, the mentoring relationships were viewed as supportive and positive. On the other hand, when expectations were not met, the mentoring relationships were viewed as distant and negative (See Table 8.1). Sudzina and Coolican (1994) argue, as well, that expectations are crucial to mentoring relationships. In their study of the mentoring relationship between cooperating teachers and student teachers, they found that the relationships were likely to suffer when expectations were either unarticulated or incompatible.

Neither David nor Jodi felt as though their expectations of each other were met. David did not feel that he gained a deep understanding of Jodi's decision making processes- due, in part, to their lack of communication. At the same time, Jodi felt that David was deficient in his understanding of young children's needs and interests and, therefore, he was not suitable for a career in early childhood education. She also felt that he did not interact well with the children and the other teachers. Needless to say, David and Jodi did not have a positive relationship. They seemed indifferent towards each other and they never reached the level of comfort that would have allowed them to become closer. Therefore, the relationship was distant and negative.

Table 8.1

Summary of Expectations

Dyad	Expectations	Met/ Not Met	Mentoring Relationship
David	• Gain insight into Jodi's planning and decision making	Not Met	Negative, Distant
Jodi	• Have understanding of child development	Not Met	
Natalie	• Learn good planning	Met (Exceeded)	Positive, Supportive
Marla	• Be able to communicate • Develop relationships with children	Met	
Paul	• Get close to Tracy • Learn classroom management skills	Met (with exception of getting close)	Positive, Supportive
Tracy	• Enjoy being around children • Get involved in classroom	Met	
Amber	• Learn specific teaching skills (i.e., addressing individual differences, classroom management, curriculum planning, working with families)	Not Met	Negative, Distant
Karen	• Learn peaceful conflict resolution • Interact with children in classroom	Not Met	
Carol	• Learn peaceful conflict resolution • Interact with children in classroom	Not Met	
Debra	• Learn peaceful conflict resolution • Interact with children in classroom	Not Met	
Laura	• Enjoy working with children • Interact with children in classroom	Not Met	

Amber and her mentors shared a similar experience to David and Jodi. None of the teachers felt that their expectations were met. Amber seemed disenchanted with her practicum experience from the start, largely because of her relationship with her mentors. In addition to wanting to learn specific teaching skills, Amber also had expectations of an open relationship with the teachers. She had hoped that she would be comfortable with the teachers. Unfortunately, she was uncomfortable throughout the eight weeks, due to the lack of communication between her and the other teachers. Amber appeared to resent the fact that none of the teachers initiated communication with her. She said that she was essentially held responsible for opening the lines of communication.

The mentor teachers expressed similar frustration in their relationship with Amber. They felt that Amber was not involved enough in their classroom. The teachers did seem, however, to understand that they were partly responsible for the relationship. First, they had not communicated their own expectations to her. Second, they were lax in responding to many of Amber's questions and concerns in her dialogue journal. As such, the relationship between Amber and the four teachers was distant and negative.

The relationship between Paul and Tracy was positive and supportive, but not very close. For the most part, they both felt that their expectations were met. Paul learned classroom management strategies and Tracy felt that Paul interacted well with the children and was very involved in her classroom. The only expectation that was not met was Paul's expectation for a close relationship with Tracy. This did not appear to affect Paul's or Tracy's perceptions of the relationship though. They both spoke highly of each other and they seemed satisfied with the relationship.

Natalie and Marla had a very positive, supportive relationship. They both felt that their expectations of each other were met. Natalie even felt that Marla exceeded her expectations. Natalie considered Marla an ideal role model as she learned a great deal about planning and classroom management. Although Natalie had not expected to assume any major responsibilities in the classroom, Marla included her in the classroom and treated her just like another teacher. Natalie felt important and she credited her positive experience to Marla. She said, "The most significant experience of the practicum was working with my mentor."

Based on the above analysis, it seems apparent that expectations can influence mentoring relationships in positive or negative ways. Therefore, it is crucial for preservice teachers and cooperating teachers to make their expectations of each other explicit. Marla and Natalie appeared to be the only dyad that met during the first day of the practicum to discuss their expectations. Apparently this strategy worked well as they had the most positive relationship in the study. This issue points further to the need for ongoing communication.

Communication

Communication was also one of the most significant themes throughout the study. The mentoring relationship appeared to be largely affected by the communication or the lack thereof (See Table 8.2). This was found to be consistent with other research which indicates communication as one of the key ingredients to successful mentoring relationships (Beyene, Anglin, Sanchez, & Ballou, 2002; Clifford, 1999). Unfortunately, problems in communication during field experiences are common. Albers and Goodman (1999) argue that there is a tradition of silence during early field experiences. All of the dyads- except Natalie and Marla-experienced problems in their communication at some point during the practicum.

Table 8.2

Summary of Communication

Dyad	Communication	Mentoring Relationship
David and Jodi	• Weekly through Dialogue Journal • Very limited verbal communication	Distant, Negative
Paul and Tracy	• Weekly through Dialogue Journal • Limited verbal communication	Not Close, Still Positive
Amber and Karen, Carol, Debra, Laura	• Infrequently through Dialogue Journal • Very limited verbal communication	Distant, Negative
Natalie and Marla	• Weekly through Dialogue Journal • Ongoing, weekly verbal communication • Communication via e-mail	Close, Positive

The breakdown in communication, in many cases, seemed to be fueled by a lack of initiative on the part of the preservice teachers and the cooperating teachers. It appeared that the responsibility for opening the line of communication remained unclear. The preservice teachers expected the cooperating teachers to take the initiative and vice versa. This issue of responsibility in mentoring relationships has been addressed in previous research. It has been argued that mentors are likely to initiate interactions with their protégés when they feel responsible for their development (Elliott, 1995).

In the case of David and Jodi, it seemed unclear as to who was responsible for opening the lines of communication. David felt that perhaps Jodi- being the veteran teacher- should have taken the initiative. David also felt that because he had a tendency to be uncomfortable in new situations, Jodi could have stepped up to help him out. David struggled with his perception of

himself as an "intruder" in Jodi's classroom. He seemed to be somewhat intimidated by Jodi and it showed in his actions. Throughout the practicum, David maintained very little interaction and communication with the teachers and the children. He appeared to be more comfortable taking observational notes during his visits. David was well aware of his somewhat self-imposed alienation as he talked about his preoccupation with his other class assignments. He understood that this greatly impacted his communication with his mentor.

According to Jodi, the limited communication between her and David was not her fault. She said that David seemed very uncomfortable with her and the few times they did communicate, David never made eye contact with her. Jodi also felt that when she tried to facilitate more verbal communication, David was not responsive to her attempts. Although Jodi believed the dialogue journal was useful as an additional communication tool, she felt that it should not have taken the place of their weekly one-on-one conversations. She tried to encourage more communication in person by making comments in the dialogue journal such as "I would like to talk personally about this." Similar to unmet expectations, the limited communication between Jodi and David resulted in a mentoring relationship that was essentially distant and negative.

Paul and Tracy had a good relationship from the beginning, but they still faced a few challenges in regards to their communication. Paul was excited about his experience in the practicum and he felt that he had learned a lot of new teaching strategies through his observations of Tracy. Paul did not have much to complain about in relation to Tracy as a mentor or as a teacher. He felt that she was a great teacher who showed him the value of having patience as a teacher. The only issue that Paul was concerned about was their limited communication during the practicum.

Paul felt that he could have definitely benefited more from his experience had he talked more with Tracy. However, he did not express any frustration with Tracy. Instead, he attributed their limited communication to the busy classroom and the short duration of the practicum. Because Paul believed Tracy to be an "amazing mentor", he felt that- more than anything- their relationship suffered from a limited amount of time together. Paul was thankful for the dialogue journal, which allowed him to maintain some form of communication with Tracy. The limited communication between Paul and Tracy did not appear to damage their relationship; although it was not as close as Paul would have liked, it was still positive and successful.

The communication between Amber and her four mentor teachers was just as limited as the communication between David and Jodi, and Paul and Tracy. From the first day of the practicum, Amber felt confused about her role in the classroom because none of the teachers communicated their expectations to her. She said that at some point, she "just did my own thing." Amber said she mostly observed three of the four teachers who worked with the younger children. The other teacher, Debra, worked with the preschool-aged children so Amber felt more comfortable communicating with her.

During my observations, I noticed limited communication between Amber and all of the teachers at the center. Amber felt that the dialogue journal was a good way for her and the other teachers to communicate, given their busy schedules. To Amber's dismay, the teachers did not treat the journal as a priority; they often forgot about it and on several occasions they needed to be reminded to respond to her questions in the journal.

The teachers seemed to be aware of the communication problems between themselves and Amber and they were not hesitant in taking the blame. They knew that it was important for them to communicate their expectations directly to Amber. They also seemed aware that the

limited communication affected the relationship in many ways. Without ongoing, clear communication, the relationship was not able to flourish. Instead, it remained distant and negative. Amber did not feel that the relationship was effective in teaching her the skills and strategies she had hoped to learn.

From the beginning of the practicum, Natalie and Marla regularly communicated with each other. On Natalie's first day, Marla met with her outside of the classroom to discuss the practicum and any issues or concerns the two may have had. Their initial meeting set the tone for the following eight weeks.

Marla wanted Natalie to be able to communicate and, because Natalie was outgoing and confident, she communicated very well with Marla and the children in the classroom. Although Natalie and Marla communicated regularly in person, they utilized the dialogue journal as an additional means of communication- to which Natalie gained additional insight into Marla's planning. It was quite obvious in reading the dialogue journal that Natalie and Marla had a very good relationship. Marla always made positive comments in the journal and her detailed responses showed her commitment to helping Natalie become the best teacher possible.

Interpersonal Comfort

The comfort level between the preservice teachers and the cooperating teachers appeared to be a factor related to the outcome of the mentoring relationship. David and Amber both talked about feeling uncomfortable during the practicum and their relationships with their mentors were the least positive out of the four dyads. From the beginning, David talked about his struggle with his "intruder" mentality. He said that he always felt nervous as a newcomer in a classroom and that having a mentor made him equally nervous. When he spoke with me about his experiences

with Jodi, he said things such as, "she was very out of what I was doing" and "it just didn't feel like I was as welcome as I could be." It is important to note that David's feelings of being an "intruder", or an outsider, in Jodi's classroom were not uncommon. In Albers and Goodman's (1999) study of discourse during field experiences, they found that preservice teachers often "felt like 'intruders' in another person's classroom" (p.108).

Based on my observations and David's accounts, Jodi did little to make him feel comfortable. Jodi was well aware of David's struggles and she knew that he was uncomfortable. Although she made a few attempts to get David to talk to her, she failed to include him as part of her class. She rarely asked for assistance and, more importantly, she did not give him any responsibilities in her classroom. As such, David felt "like I was maybe a ghost in the classroom or something."

Amber had hoped to be comfortable enough with her mentors that she could talk to them on a personal and professional level. Unfortunately, Amber was not comfortable and the teachers did not provide much assistance to her in becoming more comfortable. The teachers did not seem to initiate conversation or interaction with Amber. When Amber talked about her first day of the practicum, she said, "it was like I walked in and I should have known what to do but I didn't." Amber said she only really felt comfortable with Debra. However, during my observations I noted very few instances of conversation even between Amber and Debra. I only observed them talking about Amber's activity plans, which were a requirement for the practicum.

In contrast to David's and Amber's experience, Paul and Natalie were comfortable with their mentors throughout the practicum. From the first day of the practicum, Tracy talked to Paul and explained the classroom rules and routines. Paul said that Tracy and the other teachers took a very "hands-off" approach with him. In other words, he was not restricted in any way; he was

free to engage in all aspects of the classroom. Throughout my visits to Tracy's classroom, I observed Paul interacting with all of the children. He did not appear to be in need of any assistance and he seemed very comfortable in Tracy's classroom. Likewise, Tracy seemed comfortable with Paul. She gave him certain responsibilities, such as taking the children to the restroom. She also enlisted his help on other occasions, for example, when the children were preparing to go outside during the winter months.

Natalie was also very comfortable in Marla's classroom. Each week Marla put Natalie in charge of one of the learning centers. Throughout my observations, I noticed that Natalie was always busy engaged in some aspect of Marla's classroom. As evident in their interactions with one another and in their dialogue journal, it appeared that Natalie and Marla were equally comfortable with each other. Natalie admitted that she was more comfortable with Marla than with any of the other teachers in the classroom. In fact, she said that it felt awkward when Marla was not in the classroom. Marla felt comfortable enough with Natalie to let her sit in on two different parent-teacher conferences. During one of the conferences, Marla included Natalie and allowed her to share her own observations of the child. Natalie was very appreciative of Marla for providing her with the opportunity to gain experience in working with parents.

Based on the data from the four cases, the matching of dyads seemed to influence the relationships in fairly significant ways. The dyads appeared to be good matches when they either stated similar beliefs or had similar personalities or backgrounds. However, when the dyads either stated dissimilar beliefs or their personalities or backgrounds were different, they did not appear to be good matches. The matching of dyads, based on gender alone, however, did not appear to affect the mentoring relationship. Out of the two cases that included cross-gender dyads, one case appeared to be a good match, while the other case did not seem like a good

match at all. Research has been inconsistent in relation to the effects of cross-gender pairing on mentoring relationships. While some researchers assert that gender is not a major factor in mentoring relationships (Alleman, Cochran, Doverspike, & Newman, 1984; Beyene et al., 2002), other researchers assert that cross-gender pairing affects the mentoring relationship on many significant levels (Allen et al., 2005; Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

Natalie and Marla appeared to be a great match based on their shared beliefs and similar personalities. Both of them believed that family involvement was crucial and they believed there were various ways to involve families in their children's schooling. Natalie and Marla also believed that cultural diversity should be incorporated into the classroom environment and, more importantly, in the curriculum. They were both outgoing and confident in their teaching skills, and although Marla had more years of teaching experience, Natalie seemed just as comfortable in the classroom as Marla.

While Paul and Tracy did not state same beliefs in relation to family involvement or cultural diversity, their personalities were somewhat similar; thus they were essentially a good match. Paul seemed uncertain of his beliefs about family involvement and cultural diversity, but Tracy had a very good understanding of the importance of family involvement and of the value of cultural diversity in early childhood. In regards to their personalities, Tracy and Paul both were outgoing and enthusiastic and they both related well with the children. Paul felt that it was important to be patient and kind with children and Tracy exhibited the same belief in her practices. The cross-gender pairing did not appear to affect the relationship between Paul and Tracy. This is consistent with the findings of Beyene et al (2002), in which gender was not indicated as a factor in the relationships between mentors and protégés.

Amber and her mentor teachers did not appear to be a good match. In regards to their personalities, none of them were very outgoing. This became a major obstacle in the relationship because no one seemed to want to take the initiative. There was also some discrepancy in regards to who finally took the initiative. Amber said that she had to open the lines of communication because she did not understand her role in the classroom and the teachers did not interact with her. On the contrary, the teachers said that they had to ask Amber to do things because she would not take any initiative in the classroom. Based on my observations, it appeared that none of the teachers, including Amber, took any initiative. While the teachers interacted with each other, they did not interact very much with Amber. The four teachers seemed to be preoccupied with their own work and Amber often wandered the room without any clear sense of direction or purpose.

David and Jodi stated similar beliefs in relation to family involvement and cultural diversity, but their personalities were not exactly similar. David was shy and seemed unsure of himself most of the time. While Jodi was not extremely outgoing, she was personable. She was also confident in her abilities as a teacher. David and Jodi did not appear to be a good match, but it is difficult to determine whether or not the difference in their personalities was the only reason for the mismatch. It seems that David would have benefited from a mentor who was more outgoing than he was.

Additionally, it is unclear whether the cross-gender pairing affected the relationship between David and Jodi. If the cross-gender pairing was an issue, one could only speculate as to why. Did Jodi expect David to be more outgoing because he was a male? Was David insecure because he was a male in a predominately female profession? Did David expect Jodi to be more open and willing to help him as a male teacher? The answers to these questions remain to be

seen; therefore one could only assume that the pairing might have been more successful had David been placed with a male teacher. In Ragins and Cotton's (1999) study, they found that male protégés who were paired with female mentors were less likely than other gender pairings to report that their mentor was accepting, they reported less satisfaction with their mentor, and they reported less psychosocial and career development functions. Allen et al (2005) found that protégés in same-gender mentoring relationships reported greater interpersonal comfort than did protégés in cross-gender mentoring relationships.

Despite the findings of Ragins and Cotton (1999) and Allen et al (2005), I found it difficult to assert that cross-gender pairing affects mentoring relationships in general. Paul, who was also in a cross-gender mentoring relationship, did not share the same experiences as David. On the other hand, Amber, who was involved in same-gender mentoring relationships, did share similar experiences as David.

Influences

Based on all of the data, it appears that the preservice teachers were influenced in different ways after participating in the practicum. They attributed their influence either to their mentor teacher(s), the practicum experience in general, or both (See Table 8.3). David felt that he gained a better understanding of early childhood education after participating in the practicum. He said that he felt better prepared to teach because of the overall practicum experience, not specifically because of Jodi. He described his experience in our final interview.

> It was very enjoyable. I know it's definitely something that I looked forward to all week and as stressful as my week was…I always enjoyed that and I always walked out with a smile…aside from just being there, I definitely enjoyed working with the kids…It's hard to pick out one thing. I just enjoyed the experience in general. (Interview, 4/23/07)

Table 8.3

Influences on Preservice Teachers

Preservice Teacher	Influence of Mentor	Influence of Practicum
David		• Gained better understanding of early childhood • Felt better prepared to teach
Natalie	• Heavily influenced • Learned new strategies for involving families • Learned new strategies for addressing cultural diversity • Learned planning strategies • Gained better understanding of importance of communication with families	
Paul	• Learned teaching strategies (classroom management techniques) • Felt better prepared for the classroom • Changed thoughts about parents visiting the classroom • Changed belief that cultural diversity is not necessary in early childhood	• Felt better prepared to teach • Gained experience planning activities • Gained experience teaching activities
Amber		• Gained experience working with mixed-age children

David reported that his beliefs about family involvement and cultural diversity were not heavily influenced by Jodi or by his participation in the practicum, in general. David's beliefs about family involvement were reinforced, while his beliefs about cultural diversity remained stable. He said that he observed many instances of parental involvement that "highlighted what I already knew about parent involvement." David felt that his beliefs about cultural diversity were

not influenced because he had not observed "a whole lot of diversity." He said that the center focused mainly on the Jewish culture and, based on his beliefs, he felt it was difficult to promote multiculturalism in a homogeneous classroom. David did, however, learn a great deal about the Jewish culture as a result of the practicum.

Natalie felt that she was heavily influenced by her mentor teacher, Marla. When asked what she liked the most about her experience, she said her relationship with Marla. She talked about how much she valued the communication and interaction she shared with Marla.

> My practicum experience was really positive cause my teacher was very outgoing and just kind of threw me into things and she was a lot of fun and it was a very positive classroom environment…She really treated me like another teacher. Not all the teachers treated me that way but I think she kind of went out of her way. (Interview, 4/11/07)

In regards to her beliefs about family involvement and cultural diversity, Natalie was influenced in some ways by Marla. She reported that her beliefs about family involvement changed somewhat, while her beliefs about cultural diversity were reinforced. After observing and talking to Marla, Natalie gained a better understanding of the importance of ongoing communication with parents. Natalie said that Marla made family involvement seem easier than she thought it actually was. Natalie also said that although she already understood the importance of addressing cultural diversity, Marla reinforced her beliefs as she observed the different strategies Marla utilized in her classroom.

Amber reported that she was influenced by the overall practicum experience. She described it as an "interesting experience" and she said that she valued her interactions with the children the most.

> I would say it was the overall experience just because Debra wasn't there all the time…it was just the whole experience and seeing each teacher and seeing the children grow individually. (Interview, 4/18/07)

Amber also reported that her beliefs in relation to family involvement and cultural diversity were influenced in some ways as a result of the practicum. She said her beliefs about family involvement were stable, while her beliefs about cultural diversity were reinforced. Amber believed that it was important to approach cultural diversity from a strengths perspective and she said the teachers' practices were consistent with those beliefs.

Paul believed that the overall practicum experience was beneficial to him. He felt better prepared to teach because of his required teaching activities and his observations of Tracy. He said, "It was a really good experience…and my mentor teacher, I learned a lot through her…she had a lot of good advice…I think the most beneficial to me was actually the teaching area." In his reflection journal, he discussed his experience further,

> I think that the practicum was a great learning experience for me. Admittedly, I felt somewhat skeptical at first; I have worked at several daycares for long periods of time, so how beneficial could it be for me to visit a preschool room for only eight four-hour visits? However, my skepticism quickly evaporated the first day I spent at the practicum. [Center's name] was set up much more like a classroom than the daycares I have worked at, and the entire staff impressed me with their abilities to maintain the highest respect for the children and attentiveness to the children's emotional needs. Besides the atmospheric benefits that the practicum held over traditional daycares, I also learned a great deal through the teaching assignments. Being able to spend time with children and keeping them happy and safe is one thing, but never before have I had to actually teach a child a specific lesson. I learned so much about the entire process that goes into creating a lesson, from designing the lesson plan to trying to effectively execute the activity. (Reflection Journal, 4/13/07)

Paul's beliefs about family involvement and cultural diversity were influenced in some ways as a result of the practicum. Before the practicum, Paul said that he would not want parents in his classroom unless he solicited their help. After observing the interactions between Tracy and the children's parents, Paul saw that the presence of parents was actually beneficial as the teachers and parents were able to informally talk about the children. Paul also said that while his

beliefs about cultural diversity changed in some ways, he was still uncertain as to how to incorporate cultural diversity into the curriculum.

Time

David, Natalie, and Paul each talked about the issue of time in relation to their practicum experience and their experiences with their mentors. They agreed that more time in the practicum could have led to better relationships and more learning opportunities. This finding is supported by other research that underscores the importance of time in developing meaningful mentoring relationships (Anderson, 1993; Clifford, 1999; Kram, 1983). In Anderson's (1993) study, not having adequate time to plan and work together was reported as a major problem for cooperating teachers and preservice teachers. In Clifford's (1999) study of the long-term effects of mentoring relationships, mentors and protégés reported that their prolonged time together was beneficial as it provided opportunities for them to become comfortable with one another and build trusting relationships with one another.

David acknowledged that time was a factor in his getting comfortable in new situations. He was certain that he would suffer the same fate during his student teaching.

> I'm probably gonna be uneasy about it even the first couple of days of my student teaching…or weeks of my student teaching. I can tell you that's gonna be difficult for me anyway just cause I like to think of myself as confident but I know very well I'm pretty nervous in new situations like that…I just feel like I'm ready to go into a classroom, but I'm not ready to be a leader. (Interview, 4/23/07)

David began to interact more with the children towards the end of the practicum. By the time the practicum was over, David felt that he was just starting to get comfortable. He continued to visit Jodi's classroom after the practicum had ended and he reported that he interacted more with the children during those times.

Natalie felt that she enjoyed her experience in the practicum and valued her relationship with Marla, but she said she could see how time could be an issue in mentoring relationships.

> In the classroom, you don't have much time to communicate, but there were a lot of times, like at the beginning of the practicum and before or after our parent-teacher meeting, when she'd take me for like ten minutes and we'd just talk about how things were going and if I had questions about the journal or whatever it happened to be. I feel like…instead of making the practicum longer, if there was a way to just have a couple of times where you have to have like a forty-five minute chat with your mentor, even if you met somewhere like downtown. Just to get to know the teacher better and have that connection. (Interview, 4/11/07)

Paul believed that time was certainly a factor in his relationship with Tracy. He felt that he needed more time to be able to talk to Tracy, to develop a closer relationship. He said, "If I could change it somehow, maybe like there would be prearranged times where you do just like set something aside just to talk for a minute." In his reflection journal, he said, "I just wish we could have had more time to discuss the issues in the classroom. Perhaps if we were supposed to have a longer stay, we could have had more opportunities to talk to one another."

Power

The mentoring relationship, in many ways, is unbalanced. Mentor teachers are the more experienced teachers who are- in a sense- gatekeepers to the teaching profession. They hold vital information on the ins and outs of the profession; they are the ones who can help preservice teachers avoid many of the pitfalls they encountered as beginning teachers. Preservice teachers are in a vulnerable position as they are seeking to gain access to valuable resources, such as specific teaching skills and strategies. This power disparity could undoubtedly affect the mentoring relationship in positive or negative ways (Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russell, 2000).

Marla used her power to help Natalie in every way possible. She knew that Natalie would look to her for suggestions and support and she was willing to share her knowledge and offer her assistance. Her motivations for mentoring preservice teachers were driven by an altruistic desire to help the teaching profession.

> I think [preservice teachers] really look to us for some support and some suggestions on how to handle things…after I got my Master's, I saw the importance of having somebody in the field, not that I feel like I know it all because we're all learners all the time, but I felt that we really need our people out there to kind of help guide these…younger students that are just getting into the field and I love working with them. I'm not afraid to, well I don't want to say criticize, but to critique them and show them, 'These are your strengths, these are your weaknesses'…I think that in the overall picture, these guys are gonna be teaching the next generation here so I want them to have a handle on what they're doing and what I feel is important. (Interview, 2/19/07)

The power differential between Natalie and Marla did not appear to affect their relationship in a negative way. Marla freely shared her classroom with Natalie. She allowed her work with the children and she included Natalie in virtually every aspect of her classroom.

The power gap between David and Jodi was more obvious than between Natalie and Marla. Jodi did not give David any responsibilities in her classroom and she did not use her power to help David in every way possible. As the more experienced teacher, Jodi could have exerted more effort into sharing her knowledge and skills with David. More importantly, Jodi could have made more attempts to include David as a part of her classroom. Instead, Jodi basically sat back and watched as David struggled to interact with the teachers and the children. Jodi seemed to understand the issue of power in mentoring relationships as she was a preservice teacher only a couple of years ago. During our interview, she talked about her own experience as a preservice teacher and the expectations she had of her mentors.

> My expectations were like any other student, [that] the mentor teacher would help me whenever I need[ed] and would be open enough to give me advice and if I did

something wrong to say it in the right way and not in a way that would really hurt
me. (Interview, 2/5/07)

Despite Jodi's reflection on her own experience as a preservice teacher, she seemed disconnected
from the needs of David. Jodi did not use her power as the more experienced teacher to help
David navigate through his experience during the practicum.

Similar to Marla, Tracy used her power to help Paul. Although she did not hold his hand
through the practicum, she was there to support him when he needed it. She took a "hands-off"
approach with him and allowed him to freely interact with the children. She also made sure that
he was a part of her classroom by giving him some responsibilities throughout the practicum.
More importantly, Tracy was open to sharing the difficult aspects of teaching, as well as the
good.

I hope [preservice teachers] get a whole picture of everything that goes into being
a teacher because its great to value the lovely parts where someone's sitting on
your lap and they're twirling your hair and, you know, they're like, 'Oh I love you
and you're my favorite teacher'. It's great to have those cuddly moments, but it's
good to see too all the work that goes into getting to that point. (Interview,
2/22/07)

Amber's mentor teachers- Karen, Carol, Debra, and Laura- held the power to help her by
sharing valuable resources, such as their own teaching skills and strategies. More importantly,
they held the power to enrich her experience in the practicum by providing opportunities for her
to practice certain teaching skills and strategies. Unfortunately, the teachers did not utilize their
power effectively and the relationship seemed to suffer as a result.

Summary

In this chapter, the mentoring relationships among the four dyads were compared and analyzed. Based on this cross-case analysis, it appears that there are a number of significant factors that affect mentoring relationships between cooperating teachers and preservice teachers. The most important factors, however, are *Expectations* and *Communication*. Without clear, explicit expectations and consistent communication, mentoring relationships are likely to fail. Moreover, mentoring relationships are more likely to be influential on preservice teachers' beliefs when they are positive.

This chapter also revealed influences on preservice teachers' understanding of (and preparation for) early childhood education. The preservice teachers reported being influenced either by their mentor, the practicum in general, or by both. While David and Amber did not feel as though their mentors influenced their understanding of early childhood education, they felt that the overall practicum experience (just being in an early childhood setting) did. Natalie, on the other hand, did not feel as though the practicum setting was influential. Instead, she attributed her "new knowledge" to her mentor and to the interactions they shared. Paul was the only preservice teacher to report that both the practicum setting and his mentor influenced his understanding of early childhood education. These findings support the social constructivist view that learners are able to construct new knowledge through specific contexts and through social interactions.

The findings from this cross-case analysis have important implications for future practice and research in teacher education. An examination of these implications will be provided in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize and conclude the present study. The chapter consists of four main sections: (1) Discussion of findings; (2) Strengths and Limitations; (3) Implications for Practice; and (4) Suggestions for Future Research.

Discussion of the Findings

The purpose of the present study was to describe the relationship between cooperating teachers and preservice teachers participating in an early childhood practicum. Additionally, I sought to examine the relation of cooperating teachers' beliefs about family involvement and cultural diversity to preservice teachers' beliefs about family involvement and cultural diversity. Finally, I sought to explore the influence of cooperating teachers' beliefs and/or behaviors on preservice teachers' beliefs. Analyses of the data provided answers to the research questions that guided the collective case study. The results are summarized and discussed below:

Question 1: What is the relationship between cooperating teachers and preservice teachers during an early childhood practicum?

Assertion One: The relationship between cooperating teachers and preservice teachers in an early childhood practicum is, in many ways, a mentoring relationship. However, mentoring relationships may vary among different dyads. Within mentoring relationships, positive and negative experiences occur, regardless of gender.

For the purpose of this study, I utilized Shandley's (1989) definition of mentoring, which states that mentoring is:

 an intentional process of interaction between at least two individuals, requiring specific action on both parts…a nurturing process that fosters growth and development of the protégé toward full maturity…an insightful process in which the wisdom of the mentor is acquired and applied by the protégé…a supportive, often protective process. The mentor can serve as an important guide or reality-checker in introducing the protégé to the environment he or she is preparing for. Finally, it is also reasonable to conclude that an essential component of serving as a mentor is role modeling. (p.60)

While not all of the preservice teachers received mentoring on all levels or viewed their experiences as positive, they did experience mentoring to some extent (See Table 9.1). Based on Shandley's (1989) definition, Natalie experienced mentoring on all levels. Marla and Natalie interacted regularly as they communicated (in person and through the dialogue journal) and worked together in the classroom. Marla nurtured Natalie as she provided a plethora of opportunities for Natalie to get involved in her classroom. More importantly, Marla provided Natalie with hands-on experience in parent-teacher conferences. Natalie gained insight into Marla's various strategies for communicating with children's families and addressing cultural diversity. Marla was supportive of Natalie as she listened to her concerns and offered her advice. Marla also supported Natalie's desire to learn by assigning her certain responsibilities in the classroom. Finally, Marla served as a role model for Natalie. Natalie said that she learned a great deal about teaching and learning simply from observing Marla.

Table 9.1

Summary of Mentoring Experiences

Dyad	Positive Mentoring	Negative Mentoring
David **Jodi**	• Communication through Dialogue Journal • Insight into ECE setting	• No support with "intruder" mentality, struggle to engage in classroom • Denial of requests to help • No nurturing to foster growth
Natalie **Marla**	• Communication (in person, dialogue journal, email) • Nurtured professional growth- provided opportunities for involvement • Insight into planning, addressing diversity, working with families • Provided support through advice, feedback • Guidance through ECE • Role modeling of teaching strategies	
Amber **Karen** **Carol** **Debra** **Laura**	• Some communication through dialogue journal • Feedback and advice on teaching activities from one mentor	• No nurturing to foster growth • No support, assistance in classroom engagement • No positive role modeling of teaching skills (organizational skills) • No guidance (felt confused)
Paul **Tracy**	• Communication through dialogue journal (sometimes in person) • Provided insight into classroom management; importance of cultural diversity in ECE • Provided support in interacting with children, teaching activities • Role modeling of teaching strategies	

Paul also experienced positive mentoring, although not to the same extent as Natalie. Paul and Tracy interacted with each other as they communicated in person and through the dialogue journal. According to Paul, their communication was limited due to: (1) the short duration of the practicum, and (2) the classroom environment- which he described as "busy". The mentoring was an insightful process as Paul gained insight into specific teaching strategies, such as classroom management, through his observations and conversations with Tracy. Tracy was supportive of Paul as she took a "hands-off" approach, allowing him the freedom to interact with the children and to practice his teaching skills. Lastly, Tracy acted as a role model for Paul. Through observing Tracy, Paul learned the importance of addressing cultural diversity in early childhood. Furthermore, Paul learned classroom management strategies through his observations of, and conversations with, Tracy.

According to Eby and colleagues (2000), negative experiences occur often in mentoring relationships. In their study of proteges' perceptions of negative mentoring experiences, Eby and colleagues found that 28% of the negative experiences were related to mismatches in the dyads' values, work-style, or personalities. Additionally, 25% were related to Distancing Behaviors such as neglect, self-absorption, and intentional exclusion. These results were found to be consistent with the findings from the present collective case study. Based on my interpretations of the data, David's and Amber's negative experiences were, in many ways, related to mismatches in the dyads' beliefs and/or personalities, as well as distancing behaviors such as neglect. Unclear expectations and limited communication also seemed to greatly affect the mentoring relationships.

Unlike Natalie and Paul, David did not receive mentoring on all levels. David and Jodi interacted, albeit on a very limited basis as they communicated primarily through the dialogue

journal. Although Jodi viewed herself as a role model, David did not seem to perceive her as such. The mismatch in David's and Jodi's personalities may have led to the negative mentoring relationship, but it also appeared that it was related to Jodi's neglect of David. When David spoke about Jodi, he said that she was not very supportive of him in general. He felt somewhat disconnected from her, saying she was "very out of what I was doing."

Amber's mentoring relationship was similar to David's. She and her mentor teachers interacted on a very limited basis and the few instances of communication occurred through the dialogue journal. According to Amber, the mentor teachers did not support or nurture her growth and development as a teacher. Furthermore, even though Amber reported that she regularly observed her mentors, she did not perceive them to be role models. She sometimes criticized them and contradicted their reported practices in relation to family involvement. Amber's negative experience, like David, appeared to be mostly related to her mentor teachers' neglect. Amber felt that the teachers neglected her as they provided little or no assistance to her. When Amber sought advice and support through the dialogue journal, the teachers failed to response to her in a timely manner, causing her to feel ignored or disregarded.

It is also important to note that explicit expectations and clear, ongoing communication seemed to be the most important factors which determined the outcomes of the mentoring relationships. In cases where expectations were met and communication was consistent, the mentoring relationships were positive. On the other hand, when expectations were not met and communication was limited, the mentoring relationships were negative.

Question 2: What are cooperating teachers' beliefs, values, attitudes, and reported practices related to family involvement?

Assertion Two: Cooperating teachers' beliefs, values, attitudes, and reported practices related to family involvement vary, but are similar in many ways. In general, teachers believe that ongoing communication is essential to the relationship between teachers and families. Additionally, teachers report similar practices, such as soliciting parent volunteers for field trips and curriculum activities, scheduling parent-teacher conferences, and keeping families informed through newsletters and verbal contact.

Jodi's reported practices in relation to family involvement included regularly communicating with children's families through weekly electronic newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, and daily conversations. Moreover, Jodi believed it was important to have parents in decision making roles. As such, parents essentially ran the center as they were in charge of virtually every aspect with the exception of curriculum planning.

Marla believed parents were key players in their children's schooling. Marla also believed ongoing communication was essential. Her reported practices in relation to family involvement included inviting parents to participate in classroom activities and to assist in curriculum planning; conducting home visits for new children; sending weekly reflections, newsletters, and monthly calendars home to the parents; and scheduling parent-teacher conferences with every parent at least twice a year.

Karen, Carol, Debra, and Laura stated similar beliefs and reported similar practices in relation to family involvement. They believed it was important to develop personal relationships with children's families and they viewed themselves as an extended family. They also believed

regular communication with families was important. The teachers' reported practices in relation

to family involvement included communicating with families through newsletters, parent-teacher

conferences, and daily conversations in the mornings and afternoons during drop-offs and pick-

ups; soliciting parent volunteers to assist in cleaning up; and inviting parents to share their

cultural traditions and to participate in special projects in the classroom.

Tracy believed that ongoing communication with children's families was crucial. She

also believed families could be involved in their children's schooling on various levels. Tracy's

reported practices in relation to family involvement included communicating regularly with

children's parents inside and outside of the classroom; and soliciting parents' participation in

PTO meetings, brown bag lunches, and special events such as Garden Night.

Based on some of the cooperating teachers' reported practices, empowerment was vital to

family involvement. Families were empowered on a number of levels, from decision-making in

the operation of a center to input in curriculum planning. The knowledge and skills of parents or

other family members were valued and, thus, utilized in meaningful ways. Auerbach (1995)

discusses the notion of empowerment and parental control in her analysis of the social change

perspective in family literacy. She argues that initiatives which focus on issues of power are

effective in engaging parents in their children's education.

Practices such as soliciting parents' participation in PTO and inviting parents to volunteer

in the classroom were also reported by the cooperating teachers. While these practices are

common and viewed by many as appropriate, they have been criticized by some researchers.

Nakagawa (2000), in particular, argues that such practices contribute to the view that good,

involved parents are the ones who visit the school and participate in activities authorized by the

school. In this way, parents whose work schedules do not permit them to attend school activities

are not recognized as involved parents. Fortunately, the cooperating teachers discussed multiple ways that families could be involved in their children's schooling; involvement was not limited to just school visits.

Question 3: What are cooperating teachers' beliefs, values, attitudes, and reported practices related to cultural diversity?

Assertion Three: Cooperating teachers' beliefs, values, attitudes, and reported practices related to cultural diversity vary. In general, teachers report that they incorporate cultural diversity into their curriculum. Likewise, they generally believe that teachers need to address cultural diversity because it served as a valuable learning experience for young children.

Jodi believed that it was important for young children to learn about differences in order for them to understand "that the world is not just about them." Due to the fact that Jodi taught at a Jewish center, her practices in relation to cultural diversity centered mostly on the Jewish culture and religious traditions. However, her practices also included teaching children about differences in general- not just religious or ethnic differences. Jodi believed that prior experience in working with individuals from ethnically or culturally diverse backgrounds would be useful for teachers because they would have an understanding of differences and they would be more open-minded.

Marla believed that it was important for young children to be exposed to cultural diversity. She felt that it was a good learning experience as children developed an acceptance of diverse people. Marla's reported practices in relation to cultural diversity included singing songs;

doing various projects; planning the curriculum around diverse issues; celebrating world wide holidays; and creating a diversity-rich classroom environment by including multicultural materials such as pretend foods, dress-up clothes, posters, and art materials.

Karen, Carol, Debra, and Laura believed that it was important to address cultural diversity; however, some of the teachers felt that it was more practical to focus on the ethnic groups that were represented in the classroom. The teachers' reported practices in relation to cultural diversity included discussing different holidays and celebrations around the world; teaching different languages; and bringing multicultural items into the classroom environment, such as books, eating utensils and plates, dolls, and art materials.

Tracy believed that addressing cultural diversity in the classroom was crucial because it was a valuable learning experience for young children. She also believed that teachers need to be exposed to diversity in order to successfully address it in their classrooms. Tracy's reported practices in relation to cultural diversity included using a hands-on approach through books and other approaches. She believed that having a culturally diverse classroom allowed her to address diversity through hands-on experiences. The children in her classroom essentially learned from each other.

Question 4: What are preservice teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes related to family involvement?

Assertion Four: Preservice teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes related to family involvement vary. In general, they believe that communication between teachers and families is critical. Similarly, they believe that teachers and parents are equally responsible for family involvement. Finally, they believe that families could be involved in several

ways, such as attending school events and assisting in curriculum planning or classroom activities.

David believed that teachers and parents were equally responsible for creating partnerships with one another. He believed that teachers should provide opportunities for parents to be involved and parents should take advantage of such opportunities. David's beliefs also reflected an empowerment perspective; he felt that parents should have the power to make decisions in their children's schooling. Moreover, he believed that teachers should allow parents to get involved in the curriculum. David believed that communication was important; therefore teachers should communicate with parents through various means such as newsletters and conferences.

Natalie believed that teachers needed to create welcoming environments for families so that they could be involved in every aspect. She also believed that parents should be able to visit the classroom and participate in classroom activities. More importantly, Natalie believed that it was important for teachers to approach family involvement from a strengths perspective, incorporating the gifts and talents of children's families into the curriculum. Natalie also felt that it was important for teachers to understand that the level of involvement varies among families. Natalie said that some parents would be unable to be physically involved in the same capacity as others due to personal circumstances such as work schedules and no transportation.

Amber believed that communication was a vital component to family involvement. Amber believed that teachers and parents were equally responsible for opening the lines of communication. She felt that teachers needed to initiate communication and interaction with parents, informing them through various means, such as newsletters. Amber believed that parents

could be involved in their children's schooling in multiple ways, including attending field trips and supervising activities.

Paul's beliefs in relation to family involvement were not as well-formed or as explicit as the other preservice teachers. He sometimes contradicted his beliefs, first saying that family involvement was the responsibility of families and then saying that teachers were responsible for getting families involved. Paul also felt that while it was useful for parents to be involved in their children's schooling, he did not think it was necessary for parents to be "hanging around the classroom" without being asked.

Question 5: What are preservice teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes related to cultural diversity?

Assertion Five: Preservice teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes related to cultural diversity vary. In general, they believe that an incorporation of cultural diversity into the classroom would serve as a learning experience for young children. Additionally, they believe that teachers need to have an awareness of diversity issues in order to address cultural diversity in the classroom.

David believed that exposure to cultural diversity was beneficial to young children for a number of reasons. First, he believed exposure to cultural diversity would lessen any confusion or conflict, thus leading to a greater understanding of others. Second, he believed that it was beneficial as a learning experience. David also believed that while exposure to cultural diversity served as a learning experience, it was difficult to address in a culturally homogeneous classroom. In addition to the need for children to be exposed to cultural diversity, David believed

that teachers needed to be exposed to diverse cultures in order to successfully address cultural diversity in the classroom.

Natalie believed that it was important for teachers to create a classroom environment conducive to learning about cultural diversity. Natalie felt that it was as equally important to address cultural diversity in a homogeneous classroom. Natalie also believed that it was important for teachers to rely on children and their families for information about their own cultures.

Amber believed that exposure to cultural diversity was beneficial for young children because it served as a learning experience. In order to successfully address cultural diversity in the classroom, Amber believed that teachers needed to be aware of diversity issues. Amber also believed that it was important for teachers to approach cultural diversity from a strengths perspective, providing opportunities for children to share their cultures with the classroom.

Paul believed that exposure to cultural diversity was not as beneficial for young children as it was for older children in middle school and high school. He felt that younger children did not think about differences in the same ways as older children. Unlike the other preservice teachers, Paul seemed uncertain about the importance of cultural diversity in early childhood.

Some of the preservice teachers' beliefs reflected the *contact hypothesis*- the belief that "contact between members of different racial and/or ethnic groups will result in a reduction of prejudice between these groups and an increase in positive and tolerant attitudes" (Connolly, 2000, p.170). With the exception of Paul, who believed cultural diversity was an issue for older children, the preservice teachers generally believed cultural diversity in the classroom was beneficial as it held the potential to transform biases and negative attitudes.

Question 6: In what ways do cooperating teachers influence preservice teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes about family involvement?

Assertion Six: Cooperating teachers' influences on preservice teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes about family involvement differ significantly. Preservice teachers report that their beliefs either change somewhat, are reinforced, or remain stable.

David did not feel that his beliefs about family involvement were greatly influenced by Jodi. Instead, he said his beliefs were mostly influenced by his university courses. During the practicum, David observed Jodi's interactions with children's families and he gained insight into the different strategies she used to communicate with them. David reported that those observations reinforced his prior beliefs about family involvement.

Natalie said that her beliefs about family involvement were influenced in some ways by Marla. Even though Natalie already had prior experience in an early childhood setting, she felt that she learned a great deal about family involvement through her observations of Marla. Natalie said that Marla made it look a lot easier than she initially thought it was. Although Natalie already believed that communication was crucial to family-school partnerships, Marla helped her see the need for consistent, ongoing communication. Natalie observed a number of strategies Marla used to communicate on a daily basis with children's families.

Amber did not feel that she was greatly influenced by her mentor teachers. She reported that her beliefs about family involvement remained stable. In our final interview, Amber made contradictory statements in regards to her observations of her mentor teachers' strategies for involving children's families. First, Amber listed several strategies the teachers used to engage

children's families, but then Amber said that she did not feel that the teachers involved parents as much.

Paul's beliefs about family involvement were influenced, in some ways, by Tracy. Prior to the practicum, Paul felt uneasy about the presence of parents in the classroom. He felt that if parents were "hanging around" the classroom, they would essentially be a hindrance to teachers and they would use that opportunity to critique teachers. After observing Tracy and her interactions with children's families, Paul felt differently. He saw that the parents were not there to critique the teachers and they did not seem to get in the way. Instead, it was an opportunity for parents and teachers to talk with one another about the children.

Question 7: In what ways do cooperating teachers influence preservice teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes about cultural diversity?

Assertion Seven: Cooperating teachers' influences on preservice teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes about cultural diversity vary. Preservice teachers report that their beliefs either change somewhat, are reinforced, or remain stable.

David's beliefs about cultural diversity were not influenced by Jodi as they remained stable. Although David learned a great deal about the Jewish culture, he did not feel that he had gained insight into the various strategies for addressing cultural diversity in general. David felt that Jodi focused solely on teaching about the Jewish culture and religious traditions. As such, David did not feel that he had learned how to address diversity on all levels.

Natalie reported that her beliefs about cultural diversity were reinforced by her observations of Marla. Natalie already believed that cultural diversity was important, but Marla

showed her the various strategies she utilizes to address diversity on all levels. Natalie said that Marla used strategies that she had never really thought about before. Natalie began to understand the importance of incorporating cultural diversity into the classroom on a daily basis.

Amber reported that her beliefs about cultural diversity were reinforced by her observations of her mentor teachers. Amber already believed that it was important for teachers to address cultural diversity in their classrooms. More importantly, Amber believed that teachers should approach diversity from a strengths perspective. In other words, Amber felt that teachers needed to show an appreciation of children's cultures by allowing them to share their culture and customs with their class. Amber's beliefs were reinforced as she observed the teachers capitalizing on the strengths of an international child's culture.

Paul's beliefs about cultural diversity were influenced by Tracy in some ways. Paul felt that Tracy showed him the importance of addressing cultural diversity in early childhood. Prior to the practicum, Paul believed that cultural diversity issues should be addressed in middle school and high school. Although Tracy influenced a change in Paul's beliefs, she had not been able to teach him how to incorporate cultural diversity into the curriculum.

The findings in relation to changes in preservice teachers' beliefs, like previous research (Kagan, 1992; Nettle, 1998), are inconsistent. Paul was the only preservice teacher who reported changes in his beliefs about family involvement and cultural diversity. Natalie's beliefs about family involvement changed somewhat and David and Amber reported no changes in their beliefs. Based on the data, I am unable to make any claims that preservice teachers' beliefs, in general, change as the result of a practicum experience or as the result of their interactions with mentor teachers.

Strengths and Limitations

The strengths, as well as the limitations, of the present study should be noted. First, the multiple sources of data that facilitated the analyses can be considered a strength of the study. I was able to formulate my assertions based on data from pre- and post-practicum interviews; observations in the participants' natural context; preservice teachers' reflection journals documenting their experiences as well as their personal feelings about their mentors; and dialogue journals, which provided additional insight into the relationships between the cooperating teachers and the preservice teachers.

Second, an exploration of four different cases offered insight into the various kinds of mentoring experiences that can occur during practica. I was able to examine mentoring relationships within and among cross-gender dyads, as well as same-gender dyads. Moreover, I was able to compare cases. For example, I compared one case in which there were four mentor teachers paired with one preservice teacher to three other cases in which there was only one mentor teacher for each preservice teacher.

Third, the contribution to existing literature the present study makes should be considered a strength. Existing research on mentoring in the field of education has examined functions of mentoring and outcomes of those functions mostly on beginning teachers. This study makes a significant contribution to the existing literature by examining mentoring during teacher preparation, specifically during a practicum experience prior to student teaching. Additionally, this study explores the influences of mentoring on beliefs, which adds to the literature on teacher beliefs, especially preservice teachers' beliefs.

One of the limitations of the present study was the sample of participants. While the sample of preservice teachers could be considered diverse in terms of gender (two males, two

females), the sample of both cooperating teachers and preservice teachers was rather homogeneous in terms of race. Consequently, I was unable to examine the beliefs or mentoring experiences of culturally diverse preservice teachers and cooperating teachers. Moreover, I was unable to compare the beliefs and mentoring experiences of dyads that were from different cultural backgrounds.

The study was also limited in that data were collected during one semester only, thus a longitudinal examination of the mentoring relationships was not possible. Perhaps an examination of the four dyads over an extended period of time would have revealed deeper insights into their relationships and experiences. For example, I might have uncovered various phases of the mentoring relationships (Kram 1983) and the differing effects of each phase on preservice teachers' beliefs and/or behaviors.

Implications for Practice

The results of the present study have a number of implications for practice. First, mentor training seems necessary when recruiting cooperating teachers to participate in practicum experiences. Cooperating teachers need to understand their roles as mentors and they must be willing and able to perform the mentoring functions that can assist in the development of preservice teachers. Teacher education programs, in collaboration with school districts, can develop mentoring programs in which veteran teachers would receive formal mentor training. This type of formal training should be considered requisite to teachers' professional development.

Second, procedures need to be in place to facilitate the process of matching dyads for practicum experiences. The present study reveals the possible effects of pairing cooperating

teachers with preservice teachers who do not share similar beliefs and attitudes or who have different personalities or backgrounds. Perhaps university supervisors could devise specific measures to ensure that the best possible matches are arranged. Specific measures might include creating profiles of cooperating teachers and preservice teachers and arranging matches based on those profiles.

Third, teacher education programs need to provide longer, more intense practicum experiences for preservice teachers. Most of the preservice teachers who participated in the study specifically cited time as a factor in their experiences in the practicum and with their mentor teachers. They felt that they needed more time to get to know their mentors and/or to gain additional experience. Presently, most practicum experiences are shorter in duration than student teaching experiences. As such, cooperating teachers and preservice teachers may not see the value of practicum experiences; instead, they may view them as just another requirement for graduation.

Fourth, dialogue journals seem to be beneficial to preservice teachers. All of the preservice teachers in the present study discussed the value of the dialogue journals. Most importantly, the dialogue journals ensure that some form of communication is taking place between cooperating teachers and preservice teachers. Furthermore, the dialogue journal serves as an additional resource in which cooperating teachers can share specific teaching skills and strategies. The journal can serve as a reference guide for preservice teachers as they continue through their teacher preparation. I recommend incorporating dialogue journals in all field experiences.

Fifth, expectations are central to the mentoring relationship. Therefore, practicum supervisors need to ensure that preservice and cooperating teachers openly articulate their

expectations of each other. One way to achieve this would be to require pre-practicum meetings

between university supervisors, preservice teachers, and cooperating teachers. This strategy

would ensure that all parties are aware of their roles and responsibilities. Any conflicts would be

addressed before the practicum begins.

Finally, teacher education programs need to take a close look at the types of practicum

experiences that are being offered to preservice teachers. Immersion experiences (Burant &

Kirby, 2002; Cooper, 2007; Kwartler, 1993; Zygmunt-Fillwalk & Clark, 2007) are believed to be

just as influential, if not more, on preservice teachers' beliefs as their mentor teachers. Perhaps

preservice teachers' beliefs about cultural diversity and family involvement could be examined

in greater depth if they are placed in diverse settings under the mentorship of experienced

teachers.

Suggestions for Future Research

The present study points to the need for further research in the fields of mentoring and

teacher education. First, this study examined mentoring relationships during an eight-week

practicum. As such, I was unable to gain insight into the relationships over an extended period of

time. It is possible that an examination of the long-term effects of mentoring relationships on

preservice teachers' development could provide additional insights into the influences of

mentoring relationships. A longitudinal study of preservice teachers' experiences with mentors

throughout their teacher preparation could prove useful.

Second, this study examined the beliefs of Caucasian preservice teachers and cooperating

teachers. Given the fact that beliefs about cultural diversity was a focus of this study, it would

have been interesting to look at the beliefs of culturally diverse preservice or cooperating

teachers as well. Particularly, what influences would culturally diverse cooperating teachers have had on mainstream preservice teachers? Existing literature on teacher preparation argues that more needs to be done to prepare teachers for cultural diversity. Previous research has looked at the influence of diverse field experiences, but little, if any, research exists on the influence of diverse mentors. One way to better prepare teachers for diversity might be to place them in classrooms with experienced teachers who are from different backgrounds. Future research in this area may also prove useful.

This study examined the influence of teachers outside of the university on preservice teachers' beliefs. Future research should look more closely at the influences of university faculty and staff on preservice teachers' beliefs about cultural diversity. According to Zeichner (2003), the problem with preparing teachers for cultural diversity can be attributed, to some extent, to teacher educators.

> The White, monolingual, English-speaking teacher education professors and staff who are responsible for educating teachers for diversity often lack experience themselves in teaching in culturally diverse elementary and secondary schools, and the lack of diversity among faculty, staff and students in many teacher education programs undermines efforts to prepare interculturally competent teachers. (p.493)

A research study that would examine the beliefs of teacher educators, particularly in relation to cultural diversity, could reveal significant results. Those results could be used to inform future practice in teacher education programs and, in turn, lead to a restructuring of programs to better prepare teachers.

Finally, this study examined the influence of mentor teachers on preservice teachers. Future research on the influences of preservice teachers on their mentor teachers could reveal

significant findings. For example, what does the mentoring relationship offer mentor teachers and how do they develop as teachers through their interactions with younger, novice teachers? The literature on mentoring suggests that mentoring could be viewed as a reciprocal relationship in which both parties benefit (Abell et al., 1995; Albers & Goodman, 1999; Awaya et al., 2003; Martin & Treaux, 1997). It seems necessary to address this issue in future research.

There are many challenges in preparing preservice teachers. The cultural gap between teachers and students and diverse family structures are two major issues in teacher education. Previous research has explored both issues and has found that more needs to be done to better prepare teachers. The present research attempted to bring greater awareness to these issues and although it is a small, exploratory study, it offers insights into the various strategies that could be utilized in preparing teachers. The small, yet significant findings of the present study should be considered in future research, but more importantly, in future practice.

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APPENDIX A

CI 495A SYLLABUS

CI 495A PRE-K PRACTICUM
Spring, 2007

M; F 8:00 A.M.- 11:30 A.M.

Instructors: Shanna Graves, slg282@psu.edu   Office Hours: by appointment
157 Chambers Bldg. (ph) 863-3768

Jim Johnson, jej4@psu.edu   Office Hours: by appointment
145 Chambers Bldg. (ph) 865-2230

Purpose of Practicum
This practicum is designed to assist teacher candidates in applying their theoretical and practical and procedural knowledge in an ECE setting serving pre-K children. CI 495A teacher candidates are required to spend half a day each week in a preschool setting during the eight weeks period supervised by their course instructor(s). Each teacher candidate will be assigned to a mentor teacher who is in the classroom where the practicum is taking place.

Practicum Policy
The College of Education of the Pennsylvania State University works with a number of school districts and child development centers each year to provide teacher candidates with a place to practice their knowledge. Each school district and child development center with which the College of Education has a working relationship maintains its own regulations, procedures, instructional practices, professional philosophies, and personal and professional expectations with regard to teacher candidates and the teachers working in that district and center. Therefore, the teacher candidate's acceptance of an assignment indicates: (1) an understanding of this guest/host relationship; and (2) an understanding that s/he is expected to abide by the child development center's calendar, regulations, procedures, instructional practices, and professional and personal expectations of the particular district or center to which one has been assigned.

CI 495A teacher candidates are expected to display the following professional behaviors during their practicum:
• Being responsible
• Maintaining an excellent attendance record
• Showing initiative
• Developing rapport with students and others
• Maintaining flexibility
• Being prepared for teaching
• Maintaining confidentiality
• Demonstrating ability to meet deadlines
• Appropriate appearance
• Being present on time

Absence
When the teacher candidate is absent, a call <u>must</u> be placed by
7:30 AM to:
1) The mentor teacher or child care center;
2) The CI 495A supervisor: Shanna Graves (contact by email slg282@psu.edu)

Personal illness, participation in a sanctioned university function, and death in one's immediate family are reasons for excused absences.

Teacher candidates are expected to make up time missed either during their practicum or during University finals week. They are responsible for discussing make-up procedures with the CI 495A instructor and the mentor teacher within one school week of the absence.

Necessary Forms
• Valid Act 151—PA Child Abuse Clearance
• Valid Act 34—Criminal History Clearance
• Verification of a valid TB test (dated no earlier than one year before start of field experience)
• Verification of Professional Liability Insurance (available for $25.00 with credit card payable at www.psea.org)

Requirements

<u>**Activity Performance**</u>
Each CI 495A teacher candidate is <u>required to perform two activities</u>. Each teacher candidate may choose two of the following activities:
   (1) One on one
   (2) Small group (3-5 children)
   (3) Large group/Circle Time
   (4) Learning Center

To prepare your activities, please use the guideline to create activity plans provided in ECE 451.

On those days that teacher candidates perform their activities, they will be observed by the cooperating and/or supervising teacher(s). Day and time for observations will be decided cooperatively by candidate, instructor, and mentor teacher.

Course instructor will use an observation sheet focusing on different skills to observe teacher candidates' teaching performance. Each performance is equally weighted.

The Activity Performance grade will consist of three different categories: Preparation, Teaching, and Discussion and Reflection upon teacher candidate's performance.
Instructions will be given prior to beginning of practicum.
Upon completion of practicum, each teacher candidate will schedule an individual conference with instructor to evaluate their teaching experiences.

Child Study

Each CI 495A teacher candidate will observe one child at their practicum site throughout the eight weeks of the practicum. Anecdotal notes on the target child will be recorded in a notebook each week. The anecdotal notes, along with other material such as the child's work, will be compiled in preparation for a report for a parent-teacher conference. The reports will be collected and evaluated for both CI 495A and ECE 451.

Journal Entries

CI 495A teacher candidates are required to write three reflective journal entries in selected weeks of their practicum. The purpose of the journal entries is to have teacher candidates reflect on their experiences in the childcare center. Teacher candidates will complete the following journal entries: 1) reflection about child study assignment (what did you learn from this assignment? how has assignment helped in your understanding of assessment in ECE) ; 2) observations and reflections about mentors (how did they address family involvement in their classrooms? how did they address cultural diversity in their classrooms?); 3) significance of the practicum (how has the practicum helped in your understanding of ECE? how effective was the mentoring relationship?). Entries should not be less than two full pages. Each entry is 5 points.

Professionalism

The behaviors stated in the course policy will form your professionalism grade.   This grade will be decided upon based on self-evaluation and the site director's and/or mentor teacher's evaluations of your practicum performance, plus any available parental input. Also, the supervising teacher will evaluate your performance.

Portfolio

In a folder or small binder, compile all assignments, including activity plans, journal entries, and other materials (i.e., pictures, student work, evaluations) that represent the teacher candidate's experience in the practicum. The portfolio will be due within one week after completion of the practicum. Individual meetings will be scheduled one week following submission of portfolios. The meetings will be arranged based on a mutually agreed upon time and location.

Grading

Activity Performance	50%	
• Preparation		(15 points)
• Teaching		(20 points)
• Discussion and Reflection		(15 points)

Child Study	20%
Journal Entries	15%
Portfolio	10%
Professionalism	5%

Teacher candidates will not receive letter grades for the Practicum. Teacher candidates will receive a grade of Satisfactory (SA), Unsatisfactory (UN), or Deferred (DE) based on completion

of the Practicum. In order to receive a grade of Satisfactory (SA), teacher candidates must earn at least 90%.

Important Dates

February 2- Practicum Meeting, 10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. 175 Chambers Building
　　　　　　　　*Practicum Placements

February 9- Friday students begin practicum

February 12- Monday students begin practicum

Mar 9/Mar 19- Fifth Week of Practicum- Begin activities

April 6-　　　Last Week of Practicum for Friday students

April 9-　　　Last week of Practicum for Monday students

April 13-　　Final Practicum Meeting 10:00-11:30 a.m. 175 Chambers Building
　　　　　　　　*Portfolios Due

Note to students with disabilities: Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for modifications or reasonable accommodations in this course, contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) located in room 116 Boucke Building at 814-863-1807(V/TTY). For further information regarding ODS, please visit their web site at www.equity.psu.edu/ods. Instructors should be notified as early in the semester as possible regarding the need for modification or reasonable accommodations.

APPENDIX B

VERBAL RECRUITMENT SCRIPTS

Verbal Recruitment Script (For cooperating teachers)

Beginning in January 2007, I will be conducting a study on the mentoring relationship between

cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers enrolled in the CI 495A Practicum. This study will

be a part of my dissertation research at Penn State. For the purpose of research, I will be

conducting one interview before the practicum begins. The interview will last about 1 hour. I

will also informally observe you and the pre-service teacher assigned to your classroom.

Please know that participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at

any time. If you choose to participate in this study, I will take every measure to ensure that your

identity remain private. I would like to ask you to participate in this study as your contribution is

essential. I believe this study has the potential to benefit the educational community as it will

inform teacher education programs, university supervisors, cooperating teachers, and pre-service

teachers.

Verbal Recruitment Script (For pre-service teachers)

This semester, I will be conducting a study on the mentoring relationship between cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers enrolled in the CI 495A Practicum. This study will be a part of my dissertation research at Penn State. For the purpose of research, I will be conducting two interviews- one before the practicum begins and one after the practicum has ended. Each interview will last about 1 hour. I will also be observing you and the cooperating teacher who will be assigned as your mentor. Finally, I will be collecting your reflections, which are a general requirement for the practicum regardless of your participation in this study.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Please know that your refusal to participate or your withdrawal from the study will have no bearing on your grading or evaluation for the practicum. If you decide to participate in this study, I will take every measure to ensure that your identity remain private. I would like to ask you to participate in this study as your contribution is essential. I believe this study has the potential to benefit the educational community as it will inform teacher education programs, university supervisors, cooperating teachers, and pre-service teachers.

APPENDIX C

MENTOR GUIDEBOOK

COLLEGE *of* EDUCATION

Educating Today . . . For Tomorrow

A Guidebook for CI 495A Mentor Teachers

Teacher Education: A University/School Collaboration

CI 495A- Pre-K Practicum Supervisors

Shanna Graves
Doctoral Candidate
Early Childhood Education
(814) 863-3768; email: slg282@psu.edu
157 Chambers Building

Jim Johnson
Professor of Early Childhood Education
(814) 865-2230; email: jej4@psu.edu
145 Chambers Building

Curriculum & Instruction Department Head

Murry Nelson, Ph.D.
Professor of Education
Social Studies Education
(814) 865-6321; email: mrn2@psu.edu
141 Chambers Building

Welcome CI 495A Mentor Teachers!

Thank you for agreeing to host a CI 495A teacher candidate in your childcare or preschool setting this semester. Penn State prospective teachers gain much from having an opportunity to work side-by-side with an early childhood teacher. Hopefully, this packet will help you understand the goals of the Penn State Teacher Education Program and the expectations of the CI 495A teaching experience.

The faculty and staff in the Penn State College of Education view you as vital partners in developing the next generation of education professionals. We know our CI 495A teacher candidates will have a productive learning experience in this setting as they observe and teach. We thank you for your contribution toward ensuring their professional growth. Feel free to contact us by email or phone with your questions, comments, or concerns.

The practicum offers an opportunity to integrate the concepts, principles, theories, and models from the methods courses and to begin to apply the knowledge gained in them to the real world of the early childhood learning environment. Additionally, CI 495A enables teacher candidates to become more skilled observers of students and teachers, and to interpret observed behavior more productively by drawing on the professional knowledge that has been acquired through methods and foundations courses.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

When can I expect teacher candidates to enter the field experience?

Teacher candidates enrolled in the early childhood teacher education program begin their practicum in schools during the fourth week in the semester. Field days are on Monday or Friday over an 8-week period of the semester.

What happens if the teacher candidates are unable to attend school? Should they attend days when students are not present?

The teacher candidates are required to place two calls to report an absence: they must call the childcare center and the practicum supervisor. They are then required to make up missed days due to their own absences. They are **not** required to make up days in the event that school is cancelled due to inclement weather or other situations beyond the teacher candidates' control; **however**, they are encouraged to make the most of their time in school and consider spending additional time in the classroom with the students to make up for such days.

What are the teacher candidates required to do while in the classroom?

Please refer to the overview of assignments in the syllabus. Keep in mind that it is their responsibility and that of their supervisor to ensure that these assignments are completed, **not** that of the mentor teacher. However, in order to complete the assignments successfully, they should be afforded opportunities to carry out specific tasks. Please talk with your teacher candidate at the start of the practicum to determine the details of such.

How can I help my CI 495A teacher candidate?

Since CI 495A is a middle step toward becoming a teacher, your encouragement and feedback are extremely important and valuable. Let the student know specifically what is going well and provide critical, direct feedback when appropriate. If the prospective teacher needs additional support contact the supervisor. The CI 495A student's success is important to all of us. The following tips may assist you in guiding the student toward becoming a professional:

1. Offer a supportive environment in which a beginning teacher can learn. You may find a situation in which you could do the job better and/or faster yourself. Learning to teach takes time and patience; this is one of the first times your student has formally been in the role of a classroom teacher.
2. Provide specific feedback. Think of yourself as a coach, making suggestions that will help the student improve performance.
3. Take time to listen carefully to your beginning teacher. Most students are anxious at the beginning and need you to listen, which they interpret as caring about them.
4. Establish open and honest communication. Problem solving, early on, will more likely result in a productive experience and a mutually respective relationship. As well, help

the prospective teacher set goals for improvement and monitor his/her achievement of those goals.
5. Simply opening up your classroom to a beginning teacher is very helpful and much appreciated!

What do I need to know about CI 495A evaluation?

It is vital for all concerned to recognize that the CI 495A student is not a finished product. In fact, this is one of the first extended and formal opportunities the student will have in a classroom. For this reason, a grade of *satisfactory* or *unsatisfactory* is given in the CI 495 field experience. In this initial step toward becoming a teacher, the teacher candidate will have the opportunity to demonstrate growth. The teacher candidate's grade is based on his or her ability to meet the standards identified as appropriate for this field experience in the four performance domains. He or she is viewed as a novice teacher, and subsequently, is evaluated as one. The practicum supervisor, the mentor teacher, and the teacher candidate jointly contribute assessment data in the determination of the teacher candidate's grade for the practicum. Mentor teachers are asked to complete the evaluation checklist for teacher candidates' activities.
*See the attached evaluation checklist.

Who do I call if I have a question?

The initial contact should be the CI 495A supervisor. This person can answer questions regarding the CI 495A practicum and access information as pertinent to the teacher candidate's methods courses. Finally, if you have any comments, questions, or concerns about the CI 495A experience contact Jim Johnson at 865-2230. We look forward to a rewarding partnership with you and your childcare center and thank you for your important contribution to the development of the next generation of teachers!

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research (For pre-service teachers)
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: Mentoring in Early Field Experiences

Principal Investigator: Shanna Graves, Graduate Student
157 Chambers Building
University Park, PA 16802
slg282@psu.edu

Advisor: Dr. James Johnson
144 Chambers Building
University Park, PA 16802
(814) 865-2230; jej4@psu.edu

1. **Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this research is to explore the relationship between pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers. Also of interest is how the mentoring relationship might influence pre-service teachers' beliefs.

2. **Procedures to be followed:** You will be asked to participate in two in-depth interviews, which will be audio-recorded. Informal observations will also be conducted at your assigned site. You will also be asked to use dialogue journals with your cooperating/mentor teacher as an additional means of communication.

3. **Duration/Time:** Each interview will last 1 hour. The first interview will be conducted prior to the beginning date of the CI 495A Practicum. The second interview will be conducted after the last date of the CI 495A Practicum. Informal observations will last 30 minutes each week for eight weeks.

4. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. Only the person in charge will know your identity. ID numbers will be assigned to digital files and transcriptions. Coding forms and participant files will also be labeled by ID numbers. The data will be stored and secured in *157 Chambers Building* in a *locked* file. Only the person in charge will have access to the data. The data will be destroyed in December 2007. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared- pseudonyms will be used instead of your real name.

5. **Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact Shanna Graves at (504) 723-6833 with questions or concerns about this study.

6. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would receive otherwise.

7. **Permission for Recording:** _____ I give my permission to be audio/digitally taped.

                                       _____ I do not give my permission to be audio/digitally taped.

8. **Permission to Access Reflection Summaries for Research Purposes:**

     ____ I DO give my consent to have my work included in this study.

     ____ I DO NOT give my consent to have my work included in this study.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

_____ _____

Participant Signature   Date

_____ _____

Person Obtaining Consent   Date

APPENDIX E

BELIEFS ABOUT DIVERSITY SCALE

Beliefs about Diversity Scale

<u>Directions</u>

       The purpose of this questionnaire is to get your honest opinion on a number of statements about diversity in early childhood education. This is not a test so there is no right or wrong answer. Please record your answers on the following answer sheets.

Please read each statement carefully and then answer:

1- if you strongly disagree with the statement

2- if you somewhat disagree with the statement

3- if you somewhat agree with the statement

4- if you strongly agree with the statement

1- **strongly disagree with the statement**
2- **somewhat disagree with the statement**
3- **somewhat agree with the statement**
4- **strongly agree with the statement**

1. Accepting many different ways of life in America will strengthen us as a nation.

   1   2   3   4

2. People should develop meaningful friendships with others from different racial/ethnic

   groups.

   1   2   3   4

3. The reason people live in poverty is that they lack the motivation to get themselves out of

   poverty.

   1   2   3   4

4. In general, White people place a higher value on education than do people of color.

   1   2   3   4

5. It is more important for immigrants to learn English than to maintain their first language.

   1   2   3   4

6. Teachers should not be expected to adjust their preferred mode of instruction to

   accommodate the needs of all students.

   1   2   3   4

7. The traditional classroom has been set up to support the middle-class lifestyle.

   1   2   3   4

8. Only schools serving students of color need a racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse

   staff and faculty.

<div align="center">

1   2   3   4

</div>

9. Tests, particularly standardized tests, have frequently been used as a basis for segregating students.

<div align="center">

1   2   3   4

</div>

10. People of color are adequately represented in most textbooks today.

<div align="center">

1   2   3   4

</div>

11. Students living in racially isolated neighborhoods can benefit socially from participating in racially integrated classrooms.

<div align="center">

1   2   3   4

</div>

12. Historically, education has been monocultural, reflecting only one reality and has been biased toward the dominant (European) group.

<div align="center">

1   2   3   4

</div>

13. Whenever possible, second language learners should receive instruction in their first language until they are proficient enough to learn via English instruction.

<div align="center">

1   2   3   4

</div>

14. Multicultural education is most beneficial for students of color.

<div align="center">

1   2   3   4

</div>

15. Large numbers of students of color are improperly placed in special education classes by school personnel.

<div align="center">

1   2   3   4

</div>

16. In order to be effective with all students, teachers should have experience working with students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

<div align="center">

1   2   3   4

</div>

17. Multicultural education is less important than reading, writing, arithmetic, and computer literacy.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

18. It is important to help each child build pride in his/her self, family, and culture.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

19. It is important to model and encourage nondiscriminatory language.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

20. It is important to avoid making comparisons among and between children.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

21. It is important to avoid having the same academic expectations for minority children.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

22. It is important to incorporate each child's cultural and/or ethnic background into curriculum planning (e.g., uses songs and games from various cultures, dramatizes stories from various cultural origins, etc.)

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

23. It is important to provide experiences that encourage positive cooperative interactions among racial/ethnic, gender, disability, and ability groups.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

APPENDIX F

DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND FORMS

Participant Background Information Sheet

Age

18-25 ____

26-40 ____

40-65 ____

65+ ____

Gender

Female ____

Male ____

Years of Teaching Experience

0 ____

1-5 ____

6-10 ____

11-15 ____

16-20 ____

21+ ____

Highest Level of Education

High School ____

Associate's ____

Bachelor's ____

Master's ____

Doctorate ____

Race/Ethnicity

White ____

Black or African American ____

Hispanic or Latino ____

Asian ____

American Indian or Alaska Native ____

Student Demographic Background Information

Classroom: _____

Number of Students:

    White _____

    Black or African American _____

    Hispanic or Latino _____

    Asian _____

    American Indian or Alaska Native _____

Gender of Students:

    Male _____

    Female _____

Number of English Language Learners ___

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE AND PROTOCOLS

Interview Schedule for Dissertation

Friday, February 2

Paul   9:00 a.m.
Natalie   11:30 a.m.

Monday, February 5

Amber   11:30 a.m.
Jodi   3:00 p.m.

Wednesday, February 7

David   12:00 p.m.

Monday, February 12

Karen   1:30 p.m.

Thursday, February 15

Tracy   3:00 p.m.
*absent- had to reschedule

Friday, February 16

Carol   1:30 p.m.

Monday, February 19

Marla   2:00 p.m.

Tuesday, February 20

Debra   1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, February 21

Laura   1:30 p.m.

Thursday, February 22

Tracy   2:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 11

Natalie   12:00 p.m.

Friday, April 13

Paul   11:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 18

Amber   12:25 p.m.

Monday, April 23

David   11:00 a.m.

Interview Protocol

<u>Interviews with Cooperating Teachers</u>

1. Can you describe your earliest memory as a student?

   Probes: What did you like/dislike about school? Did you have a favorite teacher? Why was that person so special? Did you have a least favorite teacher? Why didn't you like him/her?

2. Were your parents involved in your schooling?

   Probes: In what ways? Did they have a relationship with your teachers? Did they like your teachers? Did they like the school?

3. When did you know that you wanted to be a teacher?

   Probes: Were you influenced by anyone?

4. Can you describe your experience as a pre-service teacher during field experiences?

   Probes: Do you feel you were well-prepared for the classroom? In what ways? Do you remember any early field experiences, prior to student teaching? What did you learn? How were your relationships with other teachers? Were they helpful for you?

5. What, in your opinion, is the importance of early field experiences in ECE?

   Probes: Do they matter? What are the benefits?

6. How would you characterize the relationship between cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers?

   Probes: Some people have used different metaphors to describe the relationship (i.e., gardening metaphor, parenting, mentoring)

7. What led you to volunteer to become a cooperating/mentor teacher?

   Probes: Is this your first time mentoring?

8. What expectations do you have of pre-service teachers who come to your class?

   Probes: What should they know and be able to do when they come into your class? What should they believe and value when they come into your class? What expectations do you think they have of you? Would you include practices that reflect a respect for families? For cultural diversity?

9. What roles do parents play in your classroom?

   Probes: What do parents do in your classroom? How do you communicate with the families of your students? Have you ever visited one or more of your students in his/her home?

10. What has been your experience with individuals from ethnically and/or culturally diverse backgrounds?

11. How do you try to prepare children in your classroom to interact with people whose race, ethnicity, or cultural background may differ from their own?

    Probes: Does your curriculum include activities that address various racial, ethnic, or cultural groups?

12. Are there things that you look forward to helping our Penn State students do or learn while they are in your classroom?

Interviews with Pre-service teachers (Pre-Practicum)

1. Can you describe your earliest memory of school?

   Probes: What did you like/dislike about school? Did you have a favorite teacher? Why

   was that person so special?

2. When did you know that you wanted to be a teacher?

   Probes: Were you influenced by anyone? Do you think your own experiences with school

   have had an impact on your beliefs about teaching and learning?

3. How would you describe your parents' involvement in your schooling?

   Probes: Did they have a relationship with your teachers? Was one parent more involved

   than the other? Were any of your parents a visible presence at your school? In your

   classroom?

4. How has your experience as a pre-service teacher been so far?

   Probes: Do you feel that you are learning the necessary skills for teaching in your

   university courses? Do you feel that you are getting the most out of your experience? Is

   something lacking?

5. What, in your opinion, is the importance of early field experiences in ECE?

   Probes: Do they matter? What are the benefits? Are they more important than

   coursework? Why or why not?

6. How would you characterize the relationship between cooperating teachers and pre-service

   teachers?

   Probes: Some people have used different metaphors to describe the relationship (i.e.,

   gardening metaphor, parenting, mentoring). If you could describe the relationship using a

   metaphor, what would it be?

7. What expectations do you have of your cooperating teacher?

    Probes: What specific skills or knowledge do you expect to learn from your cooperating teacher? Does your cooperating teacher have an obligation to provide you with meaningful, enriching learning experiences?

8. What qualities do you believe are essential for ECE teachers today?

    Probes: How should teachers behave? How should they treat children? Should they be aware of current issues and trends in ECE? What should they know?

9. What is your definition of family involvement?

    Probes: Who should be responsible for creating home-school collaboration- teachers or parents? How should teachers involve families? How should families involve themselves? How would you include families in your classroom?

10. What has been your experience with individuals from ethnically and/or culturally diverse backgrounds?

    Probes: Did you have any interactions with diverse individuals in your neighborhood? In a school setting? In a work setting? Would you say that your experiences were positive? Have your experiences reinforced or challenged any prior beliefs you may have had with them?

11. In what ways should teachers address issues of ethnic/cultural diversity in the classroom?

    Probes: Is diversity an important issue in ECE? How? How would you address learners from racially, ethnically, or culturally diverse backgrounds in your class? How would they be included in the class? How much should you, as a teacher, know about other cultures in order to work with all learners?

Interviews with Pre-service teachers (Post-Practicum)

1. Can you describe your practicum experience?

   Probes: What did you like most? What did you like least?

2. How would you describe your relationship with your cooperating teacher?

   Probes: Did you learn any new skills or strategies from her that you would use in your

   classroom?

3. Do you feel better prepared to teach as a result of your experience in the practicum?

   Probes: Are you better prepared because of the overall experience or specifically because

   of your cooperating teacher?

4. Have your beliefs about family involvement changed since your experience in the

   practicum?

   Probes: Did you learn any strategies for working with or including families from your

   cooperating teacher?

5. Have your beliefs about addressing cultural diversity in the classroom changed since your

   experience in the practicum?

   Probes: Did you learn any strategies for including diverse learners from your cooperating

   teacher?

6. Has your desired grade level changed since your involvement in the practicum?

   Probes: If so, what facilitated this change?

7. What do your friends and family think of your decision to become an early childhood

   teacher?

8. Do you expect to be teaching in the distant future or do you see yourself moving up to an

   administrative position?

9. Did you feel comfortable interacting with the children in the classroom?

10. Do you think society is equally accepting of male and female ECE teachers?

11. How do you feel about male ECE teachers?

APPENDIX H

FIELD OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

Observation Schedule for Dissertation

Friday, February 9

Amber   9:00-10:00
David   10:30-11:30

Monday, February 12

Paul   9:00-10:00
Natalie   10:30-11:30

Friday, February 16

David   9:00-10:00
Amber   10:30-11:30

Monday, February 19

Natalie   9:00-10:00
Paul   10:30-11:30

Friday, February 23

Amber   9:00-10:00
David   10:30-11:30

Monday, February 26

Paul   9:00-10:00
Natalie   10:30-11:30

Friday, March 2

David   9:00-10:00
Amber   10:30-11:30

Monday, March 5

Natalie   9:00-10:00
Paul   10:30-11:30

SHANNA L. GRAVES

EDUCATION

The Pennsylvania State University　　　　　　　　　　　　　State College, PA
Doctor of Philosophy, December 2007
Program of Study: Curriculum and Instruction
Area of Specialization: Early Childhood Education

Xavier University of Louisiana　　　　　　　　　　　　　　New Orleans, LA
Master of Arts: Early Childhood Education, Graduate Honors, July 2004
Bachelor of Arts: Early Childhood Education**,** Cum Laude, December 2001

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

The Pennsylvania State University　　　　　　　　　　　　　State College, PA
Graduate Teaching Assistant- Department of Curriculum and Instruction (2007)
Field Experience Supervisor- Department of Curriculum and Instruction (2005-2007)

New Orleans Public Schools　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　New Orleans, LA
Third Grade Teacher, (August 2003- May 2004) Henry C. Schaumburg Elementary
Kindergarten Teacher, (November 2002- May 2003) John W. Hoffman Elementary
Pre-Kindergarten Teacher, (January 2002- November 2002) John W. Hoffman Elementary

PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

Graves, S. L. (2007). *The influence of cooperating teachers on pre-service teachers' appreciation and use of play in early education*. Presented at The Association for the Study of Play/International Play Association Annual Conference, Rochester, NY.

Graves, S. L. & Johnson, J. E. (2006). *Family Literacy and Play*. Presented at the National Association for the Education of Young Children Annual Conference and Expo, Atlanta, GA.

Graves, S. L., Johnson, J. E., Ersay, E., Gol, M. & Aldemir, J. (2006). *Teacher educators' epistemological beliefs about art and science learning in early childhood*. Presented at the Jean Piaget Society 36th Annual Meeting- Art and Human Development, Baltimore, MD.

Graves, S. L. & Ersay, E. (2006). *How are teacher educators' childhood experiences with science related to their epistemological beliefs about science learning in young children?* Presented at the Northeast Alliance Science Day, State College, PA.

HONORS AND AWARDS

2007	Ashland University, Dissertation Writing Fellowship
2006	The Pennsylvania State University, Eva Diefenderfer Graduate Scholarship
2004- 2007	The Pennsylvania State University, Bunton-Waller Fellowship
2000	Xavier University of Louisiana, National Collegiate Education Award
1999	Xavier University of Louisiana, AmeriCorps Education Award