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Preschool environments, relationships and creative skills: A case study

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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2010

Abstract

Preschool Environments, Relationships and Creative Skills: A Case Study

by

Petronella Anita Cameron

M. A., California State University, Los Angeles, 2007
B. A., University of California, Los Angeles, 1997

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract

Studies indicate the importance of supporting children's creative and social skills during

the early years of their development, in part because children can develop low self-

esteem when these skills are left unattended in preschool environments. However, as of

yet research has not identified strategies preschool instructors used to prepare preschool

environments to nurture the development of these skills. This qualitative case study

examined how preschool environments nurture the development of preschool children's

creative skills and relationships. Grounded in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and

Torrance's theory of guiding creative talent, the study used a purposeful sample of 9

prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers from 5 private preschools. Data were collected

from 3 sources: (a) interviews, (b) online websites and school documents, and (c) student

artifacts. Data analysis identified related themes, categories, terms, and key phrases

using an adapted rubric, and open, axial, and selective coding. Findings showed that

preschool environments applied 18 strategies to nurture the development of relationships

and creative skills in preschool children. These themes included participation,

establishing trust, acceptance/self-awareness, dramatic play, collaborative play,

organization, open-ended materials, observation, creativity enhancing curricula,

children's transitional processes, encouraging social skills, language application,

understanding children's culture, cooperative learning, children's self-concept, teachers'

pedagogy, nurturing creativity and preparatory exercises. The study has a positive social

impact by providing preschool teachers and administrators with a framework for

preparing environments that not only promote academic achievement but also to use to

nurture preschool children's creative and social-skills development.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my two sons, Ezroy Cameron and Vashawn Briscoe, who have diligently supported me through the difficult times of managing my research studies and family obligations. They have repeatedly encouraged me to keep my eyes on the prize and shared how much they are proud of me for taking on such a challenging task. Thanks to Ezroy, for every time when I felt discouraged he said to me that my motivation keeps him encouraged in accomplishing his own goals. Thanks to Vashawn, for every time I was tired and unable to assist him with his homework he sat at his desk and completed his homework alone and then showed it to me. Without the support from both of you, I would not have been able to complete this dissertation. Thanks to Teri Copeland for all of her encouragement: you taught me to plough through the storm no matter the challenges presented along the way. Thanks to my mom and dad for all their support. I wish my mom was here to celebrate this accomplishment with me.

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Thanks to my committee members, Dr. Teresa Lao, Dr. Maryanne Longo, Dr. Irmgard Gruber, Dr. Gary Lacy, and Dr. Paula Dawidowicz for their support. Dr. Lao has been my mentor and committee chair throughout the beginning and final stages of my dissertation and has encouraged and supported me in all aspects of my emotional and academic endeavors. Dr. Longo has patiently provided me with substantial feedback that enables me to produce scholarly work with the highest level of academic excellence; Dr. Gruber has provided support in the development of my KAMs and research design; Dr. Lacy and Dr. Dawidowicz, my University Research reviewers, facilitated my critical-thinking skills that were applicable to all phases of my dissertation. Thanks to all of my committee members who have made this dream a reality.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction to the Study

Early childhood educators are continuously faced with the challenging task of promoting academics during the early years of children's development. This focus has reduced the time available to prepare preschool environments that can foster the development of their interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills (Feldman & Benjamin, 2006). Interpersonal relationships refer to the relationships that children establish with others, whereas, intrapersonal relationships relate to how children view themselves in relation to others (Gardner, 1983). The term *creative skills* refers to children's ability to develop original ideas, and create and solve problems (Duffy, 2006). Children must be provided opportunities in preschool environments that allow them to communicate effectively with their peers such that they can develop their creative skills and their interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). When these relationships are good, children are able to use their creative skills to express their feelings, to enjoy art, drawing, painting, and music, to develop original ideas, and to improve their emotional responsiveness (Fraser, 2000; Torrance, 1977). Therefore, the preparation of preschool environments can be a viable approach to support the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills, which, in turn, may increase academic achievement.

Intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships serve as a foundation for children's social-competency skills (Han & Kemple, 2006). Another major component related to social-competency skills is children's ability to use language effectively in developing intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships (Han & Kemple, 2006). Children can

express their creative and social skills in preschool environments that provide various play experiences and a variety of flexible materials (Fraser, 2000; Katz & Chard, 2000).

This study focuses on how preschool environments affect preschool children's development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. Studies showed that when children's creative skills are left unattended in preschool environments, they suffer from low self-esteem and experience difficulties in building social skills (Ladd, Herald, & Kochel, 2006; Maslow, 1987; Torrance, 1964). The purpose of the study was to examine strategies used by teachers in preschool environments to determine whether preschool environments nurture the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. Two specific research questions were explored using a qualitative case-study methodology. In this chapter, the background, problem statement, purpose, nature, conceptual framework, and significance of the study were presented, followed by terms, assumptions, scope, limitations, and summary. Additional detailed discussions related to the study are provided in Chapter 2.

Background of the Study

It is important to conduct this study because the environments for preschool children play a critical role in development of intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships, cultural competency, emotional regulation, and many other domains of social-competency skills. Children's creative skills and interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships continue to be an ongoing and controversial topic among parents, teachers, and early childhood educators (J. E. Johnson, Christie, & Wardle, 2005). This research study focuses on the effect of preschool environments on the development of preschool

children and how these environments might nurture their interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. Because interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships are embedded in social-competency skills, both of these terms are used interchangeably throughout the study. Parents and teachers view social-competency skills as children's ability to achieve or accomplish specific social tasks, rather than considering competency from the child's perspective (Hutchby & Moran-Ellis, 1998). Studies (Appl & Spenciner, 2007; Lillvist, Sandberg, Bjorck-Akesson, & Granlund, 2009) suggested that, although positive environmental factors are necessary in fostering social-competency skills, teachers perceptions of social-competency skills are more important. This finding implies that teachers are responsible for assisting children in developing appropriate social-competency skills as teachers and children relate to each other. This assistance can be effective when teachers provide supportive environments that can foster those skills.

It was not until the 18th and 19th centuries, the beginning of the Progressive Era, when living conditions improved and early childhood educators, including Vygotsky (1978) and Piaget and Inhelder (1969), developed theories to understand and support children's overall development. During the Progressive Era, teachers and administrators took children's development seriously and sought to provide new strategies to foster specific skills in young children by supporting various forms of play (Fantuzzo, Sekino, & Cohen, 2004). Thus, when teachers assisted children as they worked together on various activities or projects, children were able to exchange ideas with the teachers and their peers, which in turn developed their interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills.

Teachers and parents must take time to assist children in building these various components because children can develop these skills only with responsive adults. In addition, the relationships that children establish with their peers serve as a significant force in enhancing interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. According to Katz and McClellan (1997), "social competence involves a complex interplay of feelings, thoughts, and skills" (p. 1). Hutchby and Moran-Ellis (1998) proposed that children's social competency skills must be situated in a setting where children interact. In addition, children should be provided with the materials and cultural resources required to engage in developing interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. Matson and Ollendick (1988) suggested that when children's social-competency skills are being observed by teachers or other adults, these skills can be enhanced as adults provide opportunities for them to share, negotiate, and work together.

The second aspect of social-competency skills relates to how children perceive themselves, known as *individuation* (Hutchby & Moran-Ellis, 1998). In this phase, children may attempt to define their sense of worth based on societal expectations. Children may also learn to adapt their personal characteristics, that is, where they are aligned with the requirements of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, occupational, sex, and family roles (Hutchby & Moran-Ellis, 1998). Hussong, Zucker, Wong, Fitzgerald, and Putler (2005) indicated that social-competency skills entail children's ability to establish and maintain friendships, to develop social skills in relating to their peers and fostering popularity. However, children develop social-competency skills in various aspects of their development, particularly when they engage in different forms of play (Spodek & Saracho, 1995). Gagnon and Nagle (2004) posited, "children

learned to regulate their emotions and to develop a shared understanding of social norms and expectations when they engaged in peer play" (p. 183). This finding suggests that when children are provided with opportunities in preschool environments to help them develop their social and creative skills they will understand how to establish relationships with their peers and be open to new ideas.

Because preschool environments can affect the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills for preschool children, the results of the study will provide teachers with other strategies to prepare preschool environments that might nurture those skills. The preparation of these environments will aid children's transitions in schools and may contribute to academic achievement.

Statement of the Problem

An initial review of the literature revealed that interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships relate to social-competency skills and that a child's ability to develop interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships is essential to overall development of social skills (Hussong et al., 2005). The problem is that children develop low self-esteem interacting in preschool environments with their peers and thus are unable to develop positive relationships (Ladd et al., 2006; Maslow, 1987). Thus the environment in which children interact plays a critical role in the development of their interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. A large portion of the literature discussed strategies that can be used in supporting, teaching, and assessing social-competency skills (Denham, 2006; Han & Kemple, 2006). Other studies discussed the effect of language impairment on social-competency skills, and on teachers' and parents' perceptions of social-competency skills (Honig, 2006; Kang, 2007; McCabe & Meller, 2004). These

studies all emphasized the fact that preschool environments are directly related to social-competency skills in general.

Children's ability to engage in sustained attention is important because social problem solving is related to some form of unexpressed creative skills and positive feedback from others (Murphy, Laurie-Rose, Brinkman, & McNamara 2007). This finding suggests teachers can be supportive by preparing environments to engage children in creative group activities and nurturing those creative and social skills through positive and warm responses.

Children's creative skills are critical to their development as fully functioning human beings (Fraser, 2000; Gardner, 1983). H. M. Marshall (1998) viewed social-competency skills as the effective use of language: social and emotional skills are used to interact with others. Social-competency skills also include children's ability to understand the application of social standards for social interaction in their communication approaches with their peers (Hussong et al., 2005).

Teacher–child relationships necessitate social interaction and communication. Social-competency skills entail the effective use of language, decision-making skills, cultural competency, cognitive skills, and interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. What was not given in the literature is how to provide preschool environments with tools and resources that can nurture the development of preschool children's creative skills and interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. This study provides early childhood teachers and administrators with a framework to prepare curricula that are creative and also focus on improving academic achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine strategies used by teachers in preschool environments to determine how preschool environments nurture the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills.

The Nature of the Study

The study used a qualitative case-study design to gain knowledge about how preschool environments impact the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. The study was conducted in the western United States. Nine teachers from five private preschools participated in the study. Data was collected from three sources: (a) comprehensive open-ended, structured and semistructured interviews; (b) documents from the schools and online websites, including newsletters, school policies, and curricula; and (c) artifacts of children's artwork, including photographs of paintings, drawings, and collages. A qualitative case study was used to gain a deeper perspective of how meaning related to the environment is socially constructed by the participants in interaction with their world (Merriam & Associates, 2002). I was the primary data-collection and -analysis instrument, which involved intensive fieldwork and the application of an inductive approach. This qualitative case-study approach allowed me to describe, discover, and probe for deeper meanings from participants' perspectives and analyze the data, identifying themes, recurring patterns, and categories using open, axial, and selective coding. Chapter 3 provides an in-depth explanation of the research design.

Research Questions

The study sought to answer two main questions:

1. How do preschool environments impact the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships?

2. How do preschool environments impact the development of preschool children's creative skills?

Conceptual Framework

The study is grounded in the overarching approach of Vygotsky's (1978) *sociocultural theory* and Torrance's (1964) *theory guiding creative talent*. Three major tenets of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory are social interaction, the zone of proximal development, and the role of language. Torrance's guiding creative talent theory discusses children's creative skills by relating how creative talent can be encouraged, the need for concern about children's creativity, identifying the creative personality, creative development, and goals for guiding the creative talent. Vygotsky (1978) theory stated that "social interaction is characterized as the relationship between the biological bases of behavior and the social conditions in and through which human activity takes place" (p. 124). Vygotsky attempted to understand how children's development is influenced by their environment, culture, and language. Vygotsky proposed that children interact with each other through social speech or language, the signs and perceptions that enable them to understand the physical and behavioral characteristics of preschool environments. As Vygotsky indicated, the environment, culture, and language are critical elements for children in establishing and maintaining relationships among teachers and peers; these elements also reflect the overall level of social-competency skills.

Vygotsky (1978) developed the concept of the *zone of proximal development* to define the potential and actual development of children. Potential development relates to

the activities that children are unable to accomplish independently, but would be able to accomplish with the assistance of a competent peer or an adult. Potential development, in contrast, relates to the tasks that children can accomplish by themselves. Potential and actual development are important because, based on Vygotsky's theory, children's may have acquired skills that are immature, which can be classified as potential development. However, these can be either creative or social skills or both and they can be cultivated to maturity with the support of responsible adults or peers. Children's actual development relates to the activities they can accomplish independently, which means that they can work on creative or social tasks where the demand for assistance is not as great as that needed during their potential development. The zone of proximal development is applicable to the study because it provides a framework to guide early-childhood educators in their attempts to understand the internal and external processes of children's development.

Torrance's (1964) theory was also used as a conceptual framework because it provides teachers with the skills to identify and support creative talent. In order for teachers to support creative skills, they must be able to identify the characteristics of creative children. Torrance believed that creative skills can be assessed through the lens of originality, fluency, flexibility, and elaboration of children's ideas: cognitive skills reflected in their communication and various activities. Torrance stated that assessing children's creative skills is a necessary step in identifying the specific abilities that children acquire that are considered to be essential elements in their development. Torrance indicated that the natural way for children to learn is to be able to employ their creative skills through drawing, dancing, painting, language, and music. These

opportunities help children develop critical-thinking skills and become fully functioning individuals.

As children participate in creative activities, they are able to express their internal desires, which contributes greatly to how they feel about themselves in relation to their capabilities (Torrance, 1964). Teachers can be valuable resources to facilitate the creative process through the kind of classroom culture they provide and their teaching approaches. Children need to feel that their creative aspirations are being acknowledged and supported in warm responsive preschool environments. In addition, children need to be able to express themselves using various media that include their abilities to use language effectively to communicate their ideas.

Teachers must be supportive of children's creative skills by encouraging children to explore, experiment, construct, and hypothesize (Torrance, 1964). Furthermore, teachers and administrators can show their concern by implementing effective approaches in the curriculum that can identify children's creative skills in music, art, sports, mathematics, and divergent thinking (Gardner, 1983). Figure 1 shows how relationships and creativity are influenced by society, culture, teacher's pedagogy, and the settings in which social interaction occurs. Vygotsky (1978) stated that children's abilities to interact in warm and supportive environments are germane to their development of social skills. In such contexts children are able to apply language effectively in communicating with peers and it is through these social interactions they learn about themselves and others. Bronfenbrenner (1979) indicated that societal values and beliefs also influenced how children feel about themselves, and their capabilities. The activities that occur in these settings impact their interpersonal and intrapersonal relations.

society values, beliefs, norms

early childhood settings

teacher-child relationships

creativity

sociocultural theory

guiding the creative talent theory
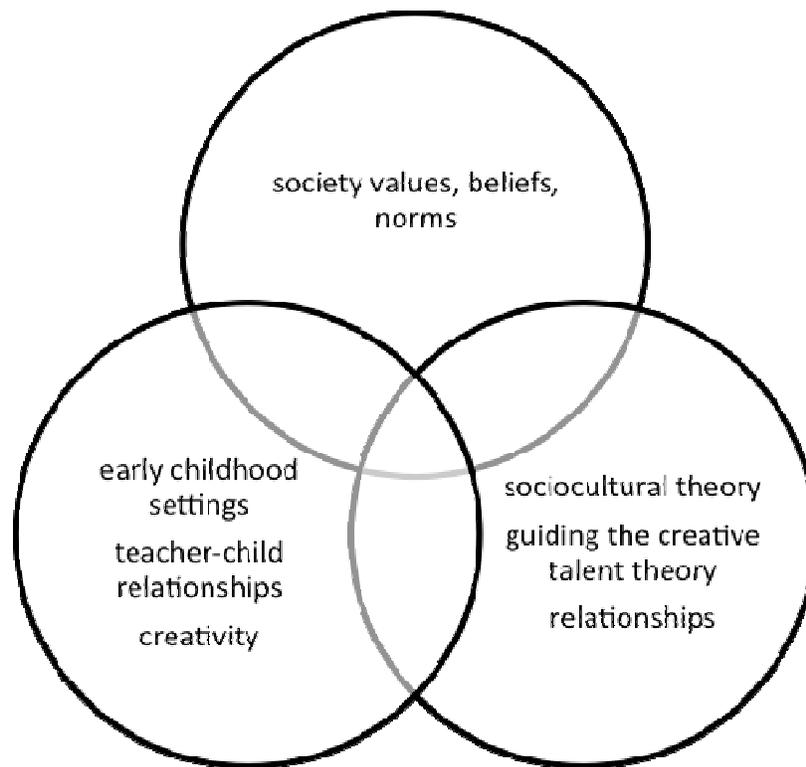
relationships

Figure 1. Interrelationships of elements in the conceptual framework.

Based on this figure the environments in which children interact can be nurtured through teachers pedagogy. Teachers support related to the development of social and creative skills can also be influenced by societal values and beliefs about relationships and creativity.

Definitions of Terms

The terms used throughout the study are defined in relation to the study content. Creswell (2003) asserted that it is important to define terms so that the reader can be clear about their meanings throughout the discussion.

Bodily kinesthetic intelligence. The ability to use one's body to perform difficult tasks such as gymnastics (Gardner, 1983).

Cultural competency. An individual who understands how to respect and value other cultures, enabling them to develop effective relationships (Han & Kemple, 2006).

Emotional development. Children's ability to control their emotions to a point at which they are able to use those emotions appropriately (Duffy, 2006).

Individuation. The second aspect of social development, which relates to how children view themselves and differentiate themselves from others (Hutchby & Moran-Ellis, 1998).

Intrinsically motivated. Activities and ideas that emerge naturally from the child that do not involve adult input (Gardner, 1983).

Language impairment. An individual's inability to use language effectively (McCabe & Meller, 2004).

Linguistic intelligence. The capacity to use language to convince other individuals, and to assist in remembering information (Gardner, 1983).

Logical-mathematical intelligence. The ability to engage in solving problems that are unrelated to communicative processes or a particular medium (Gardner, 1983).

Multiple intelligences. Gardner's theory (1983), which includes children's musical, mathematical, linguistic, and physical abilities.

Scaffolding. A term used by Vygotsky (1978) that involves the teacher's ability to help a child build on previous experiences and learning.

Assumptions of the Study

Four assumptions are associated with this study:

1. The principal of the school chose the most experienced teachers to participate in the study; therefore, it was assumed that these teachers

would provide more detailed responses to the interview questions. This

assumption is based on the notion that experienced teachers will have

more to share about best practices and classroom activities.

2. Early childhood teachers focused only on providing environments that

support children's academic achievement; thus paying little or no attention

to creative and social-skills development.

3. Supportive preschool environments enhance preschool children's self-

esteem.

4. It is assumed that the teachers will share their honest feelings and were not

influenced by my presence in the classroom during the interview sessions.

Scope of the Study

1. This qualitative case study included interviews with 9 teachers, a

collection of documents from five private preschools and their websites,

and artifacts of children's artwork from these private schools.

2. The study was conducted in five private preschools with only kindergarten

and prekindergarten teachers participation.

Limitations of the Study

1. This case study was limited to five private pre-schools located in

California. Public and Charter schools were not considered because it was

during the summer when the schools were selected and these schools were

not conducting classes in the summer.

2. The study's participants were all female teachers from only

prekindergarten and kindergarten preschool environments; the inclusion of

male teachers may have presented a different perspective (Cameron, 2001).

Significance of the Study

This study may provide various teaching strategies that can be applied in preschool environments to help teachers in nurturing the development of children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. The study may also provide teachers with the tools and resources to support and shape children's outlook on themselves, their peers, education, and their world. This study provides positive social impact in that it provides early-childhood teachers and administrators with a framework for preparing environments that not only promote academic achievement, but also nurture preschool children's creative and social-skills development.

When children develop interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, they can establish and maintain friendships; they can apply their ability to explore, discover, and apply their creative skills in preschool environments (Damon, 1988; Gardner, 1983; Hussong et al., 2005; Torrance, 1964). Bredekamp and Copple (1997) argued that preschool environments must be considered a community that focus on building creative skills and positive relationships among teachers, children, and parents.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to examine strategies used by teachers in preschool environments to determine how these environments nurture the development of children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. This chapter presented an introduction to the study, provided the problem to be examined, and the purpose and nature were described. Several studies were presented that outlined the

background of the study related to preschool environments, creative skills, and

relationships. A qualitative case study was discussed in how it relates to the nature of the

study. Two major questions were developed: (a) How do preschool environments impact

the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships?

And (b) How do preschool environments impact the development of preschool children's

creative skills?

 The study was grounded in the overarching approach of Vygotsky's (1978)

sociocultural theory and Torrance's (1964) guiding-the-creative-talent theory. In addition,

key operational terms used in the study were defined and presented, followed by a

discussion of the assumptions, scope, limitations, and significance of the study,

concluding with a summary. Chapter 2 explores current research relevant to the study and

the research questions. Chapter 3 presents the research method used in conducting this

study. Chapter 4 presents the data-collection and analytical procedures, and Chapter 5

presents summaries and interpretations of the findings.

Chapter 2:

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to examine strategies used by teachers in preschool environments to determine how these environments nurture the development of children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. Children's development is influenced by many variables. Among them are divorce, single-parent homes, and diversity issues (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Teachers must provide preschool environments that enable children to develop interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills (Torrance, 1977). This chapter presents a discussion of theories, ideas, and methods. Disconfirming literature is also presented.

The literature review entailed a thorough search of various online databases to locate peer-reviewed journals from the last 5 years. These databases included Ebsco Host database which contain ERIC (education), Education Research Complete, Academic Search Premier (a generalist database) ProQuest Central, and Academic Search Complete. In addition to online sources, libraries were used to provide more information in preparing the review. These sources included a variety of journals and scholarly books from California State University, University of Los Angeles California, and Los Angeles Public Library. Keywords and phrases used in the search included *academics achievements, creative skills development, language efficacy , social competence skills , preschool environments, interpersonal relationships, collaborative play, prosocial skills, social interaction, teachers' role in children's development,* and *fine arts*. I examined more than 60 studies; 50 were retained that were germane to the topic. For instance,

studies that provide in-depth discussion related to the environment, relationships, creativity, clear presentation of data collection, and analysis procedures were determinant factors in retaining studies to be used in this chapter. Those that contain minimal information were kept and used as supplemental sources if necessary.

The literature review was organized into four major sections and offered eight themes based on the two the research questions. The themes were developed from the literature and ranked by importance in substantiating the conceptual framework for the study. The first section presents varying perspectives, including a presentation of the perspectives of policymakers, practitioners, and the National Association of Education for Young Children. The second section presents an overview of social competency followed by three themes; *peer relationships, parents/teacher collaboration in social-skills development, and the role of language.* The third section presents an overview of teacher–child and peer relationships followed by two themes: *the role of the environment,* and *the role of materials.* The fourth section presents an overview of creative skills followed by three themes: *the role of play, fine arts, and the role of teachers.* In addition, two studies were presented that disconfirmed the dissertation study followed by a discussion of differing methodologies. The first section below entails three perspectives on the topic, including those of policymakers, practitioners, and the National Association of Education for Young Children.

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Varying Perspectives of the Study

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Policymakers' Perspectives

Although studies suggested that children's creative skills and interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships are critical to their development (Duffy, 2006; Fraser, 2000,

Gardner, 1983), there still remain conflicting perspectives of how preschool

environments can affect preschool children's development of interpersonal and

intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. The implementation of the No Child Left

Behind Act mandated that schools bear the responsibility for student achievement.

Schools are laden with time constraints and standardized testing; therefore, it becomes a

challenging process for teachers to support creative skills. American education

philosophy was guided by individual states and local schools, and it was not until the

Standards for Art Education was passed by Congress in 1994, mandating a set of

standards for the creation of music education in the preschool environments, that books

and pamphlets were developed to assist teachers with designing approaches to implement

these musical standards (Persellin, 2007).

Creativity and American education have always been at odds. Effective and

appropriate education nurtures children's ability to express their creative skills. The focus

in expressing creative skills relates to the ability of children to develop critical-thinking

skills in constructing, discovering, creating, and solving problems (Feldman & Benjamin,

2006). Vong (2008) conducted an ethnographic study on the impact of parental and

government influence on children's creativity in southern China. The study's results

indicated that there are gaps between parents' and practitioners' perspectives of creativity

and promoting imaginative skills in young children. Findings also showed that a

reciprocal relationship among the hierarchy of government is necessary to build strong

support for children's creative skills in southern China.

Practitioners' Perspectives

Several studies of early childhood practitioners' perspectives suggested that creating a new context for learning can be supported through creative movement, resulting in new opportunities to experience the world. Inclusive curricular integration and parent and community participation are important components of children's learning. Children must be encouraged to explore their communities creatively (Duffy, 2006; Fraser, 2000; Lorenzo-Lasa, Ideishi, & Ideishi, 2007). Children's creative skills are germane to their overall development and school can be a viable institution that can strengthen these creative skills (Duffy, 2006). However, teachers must be supportive of not only academic achievements but also of children's relationships and creative skills, particularly during the early years of development (Fraser, 2000).

National Association for the Education of Young Children's Perspectives

The National Association for the Education of Young Children developed a set of standards on teachers' pedagogy to provide preschool environments that can support the development of children's creative skills and interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. Standards 5 and 6 stated that teachers must have an understanding of group motivation and group behavior to create preschool environments that encourage social interaction and foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom (Ledoux & McHenry, 2006). During the early years, children need to be guided to develop healthy social skills. Based on the findings, teachers are responsible to provide children with the necessary tools to foster their interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. When children are encouraged to participate in group activities they will learn to develop their social skills and establish relationships with

themselves and their peers. The next section presents an overview of social-competency skills followed by three main themes. *peer relationships, parent–teacher collaboration in social-skills development, and the role of language.*

Overview of Social-Competency Skills

Social-competency skills are "the abilities of students to function in their primary environments and community by acquiring their needs and wants with the highest degree of independence" (Stichter, Randolph, Gage, & Schmidt, 2007, p. 219). Most times social-competency skills are learned, and help in responding to the preschool environments in which one interacts (Matson & Ollendick, 1988). When children are observed in their natural setting, they display behaviors that prove to be successful. According to Matson and Ollendick, "These behaviors which include their abilities to interact and apply their creative skills are reinforced and therefore are likely to be those which they continue to perform" (p. 9).

Social-competency skills can also be fostered through the development of curricula for school and parent training. Curricular development includes "how likely these skills are to enhance independence and mainstreaming into the larger society, how the curriculum can be coordinated with parents' training and efforts by other professionals, and how best to implement behaviorally based curricula" (Matson & Ollendick, 1988, p. 90). Curricula can be designed to support academics as well as social development and can also be supported by parental input.

Social-competency skills in 52 preschools were examined focusing on children's temperament, cognition, language, and demographic variables. A study found social-competency skills in these areas differed by development and individual differences in

childhood (Neal, Meyer, & Pomares, 2007), that is, children's social-competency skills are influenced by the social settings in which they interact. Based on these findings, children's perspectives about their abilities are shaped by their individual experiences, which may account for further differences in various aspects of their social-competency skills.

The differences in various levels of children's social-competency skills included children's ability to develop healthy relationships with their peers, to participate in the dynamic flow of social interaction, and to regulate emotions that produce a positive impact on their social interaction (Matson & Ollendick, 1988). Children begin to establish relationships with their peers at an early age through preschool environments that support social interaction, participation in various activities, using language, and applying emotions appropriately.

Because children's levels of social development vary depending on their age and their ability to understand their own feelings, teachers and parents can help children develop the basic skills necessary to propel their development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. When children participate in various activities that enable them to share, take turns, and negotiate, and enable them to apply their emotions appropriately, they are more likely to develop the social skills that help them in building relationships with other. Teachers must understand the importance of preparing environments that can nurture all aspects of children's development to enable them to establish positive relationships with their peers (Neal et al., 2007). Figure 2 illustrates various domains of social competency skills.
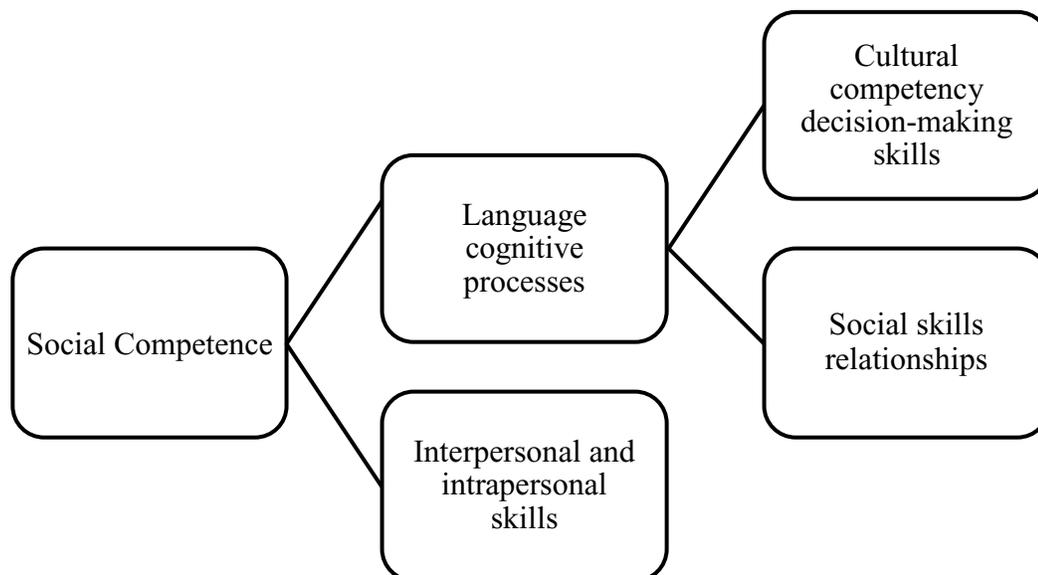
Figure 2. The relationship among language, cognitive processes, cultural competency, decision-making skills, and interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships.

Note that social competence provides the foundation for the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and cognitive processes. However, preschool environments must provide opportunities for children to participate in various tasks in which they can apply their decision-making and social skills.

Theme 1: Peer Relationships

The history of social skills and its development as a popular area for consideration by professionals began primarily with research on adults and provided a platform for working with children who are deficient in their social skills. Social learning creates the foundation on which the conceptual framework for social skills will develop (Matson & Ollendick, 1988). When children feel socially competent they are able to transition successfully in schools, their academic growth is enhanced, and they are able to develop healthy and long-lasting relationships with adults and their peers (Logue, 2007).

McLennan (2009) suggested other approaches to develop classroom relationships, including capitalizing on children's differences by providing a variety of classroom activities, reflecting on personal teaching strategies, preparing nurturing environments, collaborating frequently with families and other community members, and scaffolding children's learning. According to Heimes (2009, p. 94) "Relationships are very important as children learn about themselves and the world. As teachers, we want our children to be cooperative and supportive with their peers, while also experiencing success for themselves." The interaction among peers, teachers, and children can provide choices for children such that children can decide their own activity, where, when, and with whom they want to work (Katz & Chard, 2000). When children receive equal opportunities to work on projects and appropriate academic exercises, they are encouraged to participate in classroom activities that enhance their creative skills and prepare them to work on particular tasks.

A study conducted by Joseph and Strain (2003) examined a comprehensive socioemotional curriculum, focusing on a variety of programs that provide children with opportunities to build their social skills, develop effective use of language, promote decision-making skills, and provide intervention for 4-year-old at-risk children. "The ability to form and nurture positive friendships involves a complex interplay of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors" (Joseph & Strain, 2003, p. 65). These programs contribute greatly to the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills and a reduction of challenging behaviors for a wide range of children.

Socially competent children can readily learn strategies for interacting easily with their peers and can engage comfortably in creative processes and everyday experiences at

school and home. When children learn how to play with other children, recognize and express their feelings, behave in a friendly manner, use appropriate language when interacting with their peers, exercise self-control, and negotiate conflict in complex situations, they will promote healthier and more positive peer relationships (Joseph & Strain, 2003, p. 66).

During early childhood, peer relationships relate to children's perspectives of their educational achievement, transition in school, and psychological well-being in adulthood (Dong & Juhu, 2003). Appropriate social skills were taught to children who had low peer acceptance through a cognitive social-learning model that included enhancing skill concepts, promoting skill performance, and fostering skills maintenance or generalization. Enhancing skill concepts means that teachers can define the meaning of social skills and provide activities or creative projects for children to work together and assist each other. Fostering skills maintenance relates to children's ability to use newly learned social skills in their play activities. Parents and teachers are responsible to provide children with the appropriate tools and resources to help them develop socially (Bredekamp & Copple. 1997).

Theme 2: Parent and Teacher Collaboration in Social-Skills Development

Parent and teacher participation in assisting children in their social and creative development are equally important to each child's overall development. R. Moore and Gilliard (2007) conducted a qualitative case study focusing on preservice teachers' perceptions of culture on a Native American reservation. Data were collected through interviews, observing children in the Sulish and Kootenal Flathead Indian Reservation in Montana. The study was aimed at comparing the perceptions of preservice teachers with

those of caregivers regarding the presence of family and community culture in the early childhood curriculum at three tribal early care and education centers. Eight teachers participated in the study and the results suggested that although the physical environment of the classroom is relevant to cultural communication and ritual between early childhood teachers, it is also equally important to maintain ongoing communication among families, communities, and children about teaching in a culturally responsive and relevant context. Listening to families is a key component in working with them as partners in developing relationships, and supporting the learning skills of each atypical and typical child as they progress in their development (Ray, Pewitt-Kinder, & George, 2009).

Scully and Howell (2008) conducted a study that focused on preparation of a classroom community where teachers and parents can equally contribute by engaging in specific traditions, rituals, activities, and events that can help in the development of relationships. Teachers were able to reflect on their own memories and exchange information with parents related to friendships. Several limitations associated with this study included the lack of documentation of the sample size and the geographic location, which might have added more validity to the study.

Hollingsworth's (2009) study examined how adults support 12 specific friendships involving typical and atypical children. Data were collected through semistructured interviews with children's parents and teachers and interpreted by identifying themes and patterns, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study suggested that most participants described friendships as harmonious and relevant to children's emotional well-being and contributed to children's social development.

Preschool relationships emerge from various levels such as between teachers, between teachers and children, and between children and their peers and communities (Fraser, 2000). The Reggio Emilia approach has made early childhood educators more aware of how interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships deepen the meaning of experiences in the classroom. For instance, the materials in the classroom are no longer organized in isolation but rather are structured carefully to develop interconnection between the materials and children. This relationship strengthens the meaning of activities as they interact in preschool environments.

When children think about an idea in preschool environments such as understanding how dinosaurs interacted, other children become interested in the topic, participate in research, and bring their creative ideas to developing the topic (Fraser, 2000). When children develop their interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills they must be able to use language effectively to communicate. Preschool children need to be guided in the appropriate use of language such that they are able to engage in effective social interaction with their teachers and peers (Katz & McClellan, 1997).

Theme 3: The Role of Language

Children's ability to develop and use language effectively is embedded in a broader sociocultural context, thus their language skills are influenced by home, school, and societal expectations, which can positively or negatively affect language and literacy skills. Aesthetic experiences that provide rich and intentional communicative behavior and active engagement in creation, conveyance, and transformation are essential to the communicative process of the developing child (H. L. Johnson, 2007). The diversity and

variability of how children construct knowledge make aesthetic experiences particularly significant in organizing preschool environments. Children bring with them various perspectives, experiences, feelings, thoughts, and content. Aesthetic experiences can be used as a language through which children articulate their personal meanings by participating in and constructing art (H. L. Johnson, 2007, p. 317).

Language is an effective medium through which children convey information: therefore, the child's ability to interact effectively with peers is determined by the extent to which they use language appropriately to express emotions, and develop relationships with others (Katz, 1998). Reggio Emilia schools support children's ability to use various media to record and represent their ideas, predictions, hypotheses, and feelings (Fraser, 2000).

When children's work was observed in Reggio Emilia preschool environments, it revealed how they expressed, constructed, reconstructed, and revisited understandings of an activity or project. Children can express their feelings verbally, visually, and through dramatic play (Fraser, 2000). When teachers provide children with project activities, these children are able to develop their language and social skills. Katz (1998) argued that communication is critical to the creative processes of young children and enables them to derive meaning through art, communication, and interaction.

Pitri (2007) examined the relationships between art, language, and communication through the use of art books. Art is a viable instrument that can be used as language in communicating children's ideas and suggestions. Communication is the process of transmitting and receiving messages. It is through communication that children are able to understand and learn about the world in which they interact. The effectiveness

of communication is based on the abilities of the transmitter and the receiver, where both engage in a smooth, unobstructed channel of interaction.

Verbal communication helps children develop their social skills and consolidate their interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. If a child's ideas are too complex to express verbally, art can be used as an instrument through which their ideas can be transmitted. Artistic and verbal expression share a common symbolic element, and therefore can complement each other (Pitri, 2007). It is important for teachers to provide opportunities for children to use language and art in their daily activities to develop their comprehension and creative-thinking skills.

Children are communicators with a natural desire to discover and convey what they know, understand, feel, and imagine. Themes can be developed in art through creative and interactive stories that enable children to express their thoughts. Children use language to maintain meaningful relationships, construct knowledge, and challenge their learning. Language is essential for children to develop their cultural identities and to communicate and bond with families (Pitri, 2007).

Language reveals children's overall development of linguistic abilities and can be a relevant tool through which children can participate in classroom hands-on activities. When children are exposed to the use of various languages, they are more likely to feel a sense of belonging, and acknowledge other children as interesting and unique. Children can create events or creative projects relevant to their culture and use their native language to convey meanings. Teachers can use stories to help children in their uses of language, which is an important part of literacy-skills development. These stories must

provide the child with opportunities to be creative, experience joy, and expand their knowledge of the world (Gaffney, Ostrosky, & Hemmeter, 2008; Kirmani, 2007).

The significance of aesthetic experiences for children from the perspective of developmental psychology was explored (H. L. Johnson, 2007). Findings showed that art experiences in early childhood education are integral components of language and literacy processes. These experiences contribute greatly to children's language development as well as to their self-identity as active and engaged learners. Aesthetic experiences encourage social interaction that emphasize the contribution of the individual and preschool environments, as well as the ongoing exchanges between the individual and the setting.

Because children bring their own individual uniqueness culturally and biologically, it is important for them to be provided with various opportunities to enjoy and appreciate the aesthetic nature of preschool environments. This will enable them to use their perception, senses, and imagination, which in turn will provide them with new knowledge. In addition, the aesthetic nature of the preschool environment is a significant element in fostering a child's communicative abilities, and children's language development is shaped by the environment and all of the caregivers in it. As children engage in social interaction, such that they are able to apply the effective use of language in building their social skills, preschool environments in which these interactions occur must be conducive to social development. Therefore, teachers must be mindful of the messages that are being reflected in the environment (Fraser, 2000). The third section presents an overview of teacher–child relationships followed by two main themes: *the role the environment* and *the role of material.*

Overview of Teacher–Child and Peer Relationships

The interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships children develop during their early years are critical to their creative and social-skills development. The central phenomenon of relationship involves an intimate bond that children establish with parents, caregivers, and peers that enable them to experience caring first hand (Swick, 2007). According to Swick, "These attachments enable children to trust, and it is through the early nurturing and caring relations that children acquire a schema about how to care for self and others" (2007, p. 393). "Healthy relationships entail bonding, empathizing, learning caring norms, practicing care and peace, and using various pathways to learning and enriching these wonderful ways of living" (Swick, 2007, p. 281). Thus, relationships are a particular kind of connection or association developed between people, and the nature of those relationships affects the experiences and overall development of each individual.

The development of relationship building is based on popularity and friendship, emotion regulation, social knowledge, and understanding. Children who are able to manage their emotions in conflicting situations—when they can see the perspectives of others—they are more likely to develop healthier relationships with others (Katz & McClellan, 1997). Social dispositions, common social difficulties, shyness, aggression, and loneliness characterize children who may need some assistance working on their social skills (Katz & McClellan, 1997). Thus, the environment in which children interacts play a key role in their abilities to develop interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills.

Theme 4: The Role of the Environment

The structuring of preschool environments influenced the types and quality of relationships and social interaction that occur in the classrooms each day. Children's development is affected by societal values, laws, and beliefs (macrosystem); the home and school setting (mesosystem); the setting in which children interact with materials and objects and participate in activities and various roles in developing their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills (microsystem); and interactions in the workplace that affect the relationship between parents and their children (exosystem; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Interactions in these various settings influence how children perceive their self-identity and their capabilities. Children can develop their interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills as they interact in these various systems with support from teachers and parents.

The organization of preschool environments was addressed focusing on how teachers can adjust the preschool environments to accommodate children's various abilities. Churchill's (2003) study emphasized the importance of child-to-child relationships, teacher and parent relationships, and the impact of these relationships on children's development. A total of 58 parents and teachers participated in the study, which consisted of two waves 1 year apart. The purpose of this study was to determine whether the organization of preschool environments and interaction between children and teachers would be positively related to child and sociocognitive outcomes. Various instruments were used to measure parental behavior, the child's responsiveness to preschool environments, and teacher–parent expectations. The results showed that the strategies used by teachers and parents affected the children's behaviors, and children's

characteristics influenced their interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships with teachers. Moreover, teachers were more able than parents to easily detect which temperament each child had and were in a better position to adapt preschool environments to suit each child's personality (Churchill, 2003).

Kang (2007) and Strong-Wilson and Ellis (2006) conducted studies that presented Reggio Emilia's idea of preschool environments as a third teacher by demonstrating how teachers can readdress the messages that are reflected in their classrooms through the arrangement of materials, space, and equipment, to be reflective of children's perspectives. Reggio Emilia is the name given to a city in Italy, and like many other cities, one that was dismantled after World War II. In order to rebuild the economy, the women needed care for their children; women joined forces to provide quality learning experiences for their children and to provide childcare for working women. It was during this time the first preschools were formed in various parts of Italy. Reggio Emilia's preschools focused on children as strong and competent individuals who are capable of constructing their own knowledge, and preschool environments are considered to be the third teacher, providing children with opportunities to collaborate, explore, create, and build relationships (Fraser, 2000).

> The spaces that teachers create for children seem to hold enduring memories for them and have a powerful influence on what they will value later in life. Teachers must think carefully about their own values and how their decisions influence their arrangement of space, equipment, and materials in the classroom. (Fraser, 2000, p. 53)

Preschool environments must be reflective of children's feelings and promote social interaction (Duffy, 2006). Teachers can provide materials such as a pizza boxes, paper, colorful objects in transparent containers, wrapping paper, and different fabrics that perpetuate provocation to spark discussions. These materials can foster children's creative skills and imagination to help them sort out materials by texture, color, and shapes. Teachers can listen carefully to children's conversations as they engage in various activities and document children's learning using note taking, video recording, and sketches, and use this information to deepen the children's interests and investigation.

A child-sensitive preschool environment enables children to create their own world using materials they can manipulate or modify. Children also enjoy preschool environments with novel objects where they can explore and experience interesting events. "Teachers can examine classroom and schools for what they allow and what they prevent children from exploring and investigating" (Strong-Wilson & Ellis, 2006, p. 45). The classroom can become a favorite place for children if teachers provide opportunities that support their exploration, creative skills, autonomy, social interaction, and expression. Children are inherently social beings and constructors of education, and through the interaction between children and adults, they are able to engage in building relationships through the Reggio Emilia teaching approach.

Fontaine, Torre, Grafwallner, and Underhill (2006) employed the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale to assess center-based programs and determine how these preschool environments foster various aspects of children's development. The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale includes seven subscales that set standards for

program quality such as outside and indoor environment, language reasoning, books, materials, activities to enhance communication, language development and early literacy, learning and cognitive development, and interactions between adults and children. Findings indicated that the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale was an effective instrument that can be used for research and provide teachers, administrators, family providers, and other professionals with valuable information to improve programs while providing effective learning preschool environments for young children's overall development. Teachers were able to improve on their teaching approaches, curriculum designs, and social interactions with children when they understood the importance of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale standards for program quality.

Yuen (2006) conducted a study related to a classroom organization, carried out with 2,000 kindergarten students in Hong Kong. Data were collected through field notes, observations, archival documents, videotaped lessons, and lesson plans. Participants included 9 kindergarten teachers, and most learning activities were structured. The focus of the study included curriculum management through various sessions of learning activities, time allocation, teaching content, pace of learning, and structured activities. Yuen found that teachers maximized the use of space in and outside of the classroom, and students gained participation through routine and order. In addition, most learning activities were conducted using a whole-class-activity approach. Yuen also found that effective teaching in preschool environments was judged based on whether children actively participated in the learning process. In addition, the findings included whether children were provided with opportunities to foster their creative and cognitive skills. Although the purpose, methods, and procedures for this study were clearly stated, this

study's limitations included the lack of explanation about the procedures used to ensure validity during data analysis.

Children must also learn how to respect each individual child in preschool environments, as well as the teaching and learning that occur in those environments. Teachers are equally responsible for teaching academics and for assisting children in learning how to respect themselves and others (Miller & Pedro, 2006). Because children have different ways of demonstrating their creative skills or perspectives, it is the responsibility of teachers to provide children with opportunities to work together despite their ideas, traditions, rituals, and cultures. In addition, when children respect each other, they are able to understand, learn, play, and appreciate those with whom they associate and are more capable of gaining richer learning experiences and expanding their perspectives (Miller & Pedro, 2006).

Teachers are also responsible for successful teacher–student interaction and for creating positive classroom cultures. Communication that includes a positive tone is a powerful source of transmitting and receiving messages. The development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships is a key component of respectful preschool environments. When children observe teachers' interactions as well as the models established by adults inside and outside the classroom, children are more likely to respect and value other children's perspectives. In respectful preschool environments, teachers provide time for children to express their uniqueness or creative skills. Teachers can engage children in cooperative learning: children can work in teams of different levels and abilities and use a variety of learning materials to improve understanding of various subjects (Miller & Pedro, 2006).

Johansson (2004) examined pedagogical encounters from three dimensions of learning in early childhood education, including atmosphere, teachers' view of the child, and teachers' view of learning. Thirty teacher work teams from different preschools participated in the study. These teams consisted of 10 teachers and 450 toddlers between the ages of 1 and 3 years. The findings indicated that interactive classroom environments from the child's view of the world must be considered, and teachers must view children as capable and competent individuals who can construct their own learning. This suggests that teachers are intricately involved in the physical and psychological components of the child's experiences and the atmosphere must be composed of acceptance and encouragement.

The child must be treated as a person with needs, wishes, and the ability to be understood (Johansson, 2004). In addition, teachers must strive to meet children on their own terms, to gain insight into the child's cognitive processes, needs, and individuality. Working with young children can be challenging for teachers and is quite demanding on teachers' competencies. Conflict sometimes emerges between teachers and children about assignments, materials, economic conditions, and daily interactions. In addition, working situations change, contributing to a lack of time, but also new challenges and knowledge.

Despite all of these changes, teachers remain responsible for creating preschool environments that will provide learning encounters for children. Learning encounters include children working like individuals or in collaboration and challenging themselves to explore, create, and expand their innovative ideas. External conditions and teachers' knowledge establish the foundation for the quality of an activity and cannot be separated from one another. Rather, they are interconnected and mutually influence each other. The

past and present, time, and space are all elements that impact children's learning and creative skills, and teachers' relationships with children. Therefore, these elements can be considered circular and inseparable interactive processes (Johansson, 2004).

Preschool environments must provide opportunities for "children's social, emotional awareness and skills to develop, where they are able to join with others to express their creativity and imagination" (Duffy, 2006, p. 52). This awareness also helps them develop the self-discipline and cooperative skills necessary for working together in groups. When children use their creative skills by employing their imagination, they are able to reflect and express themselves, which contributes to their social and emotional development. It is important for teachers to recognize the role of the wider community in developing children's creative skills; children are part of this wider community (Duffy, 2006).

According to Katz and Chard (2000), "Young children's creative development is probably best served by opportunities to interact with adults, peers, the environment and with a variety of materials" (p. 47). Creative skills are enhanced when children are able to explore a wide variety of roles in imaginative play and to experience art, music, and dance from different cultures. This suggests that young children's minds should be actively engaged in activities that require relevant content, vivid and engaging thought, and above all, group interactions through which they can explore, create, and learn from others.

Preschool environments must reflect the artistic and cultural values of children's learning whereby teachers provide opportunities for children to engage in group activities. Teachers must also prepare a classroom with materials and activities and

scaffold children's learning so that children can be of some assistance to their peers (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's classroom focused on the social context of children's development. When children interact in preschool environments they are able to develop their cognitive and language skills, which in turn enables them to culturally adapt by developing their social skills. As children interact in preschool environments, an assortment of materials must be provided to allow them to actualize their interpersonal and intrapersonal and creative skills. It is through the use of materials that children are able to collaborate, explore, create, take risks, learn about, and understand their own and other children's unique abilities (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

Theme 5: The Role of Materials

Active and creative learning require stimulating preschool environments, encouraging children to participate in various activities and to explore a wide variety of materials. The materials must be open ended to enable the child to transform the objects in many ways. There also should be many opportunities for children to present their ideas (Duffy, 2006). Children should be provided with paints, puzzles, scissors, blocks of various shapes and sizes, Legos, easels, brushes, collage materials, table toys, textured and plain paper, leaves, jars, boxes, egg cartons, various colors, musical instruments, and clay for indoors. In the outdoors, sand, water shovel, and various other outdoor materials enable children to expand their creative skills.

The resources should take on character and superhero roles, extend the range of scenarios children use, provide unstructured props to which children can assign various meanings such as lengths of cloth or scarves, and resources from a variety of cultures (Duffy, 2006). When there are various construction materials and blocks that can be used

in various ways, children can create a boat or train tracks from large blocks that can be relocated for imaginative play. Other materials that can be used are mark-making materials and equipment, written materials such as magazines, newspapers, car manuals, catalogues, and opportunities to use a variety of media to make connections and stimulate curiosity.

Children can work in groups with an interesting and plentiful supply of objects for counting and measuring as well as resources for pattern making to excite their curiosity. Maps, atlases, and interesting artifacts from the past can provide opportunities for social interaction, arouse curiosity, and stimulate critical thinking. A range of musical instruments can produce different sounds and encourage children to perform and watch others perform. When teachers provide instruments for children to explore, they are able to be creative, compose, dance, and record music.

Children should be provided with materials that enable them to work on projects because this is an effective approach to fostering their creative and exploratory skills (Katz & Chard, 2000). For instance, affording children the opportunity to make choices is an important characteristic of project work. When children work on projects, they are able to make their own choices on several levels, each with a different educational outcome. Children's choices may be procedural, aesthetic, and intrinsic, and these choices also contribute to their emotional, social, aesthetic, creative, and cognitive processes. When children are provided with a variety of materials they become more inquisitive and are likely to explore and develop individual or group-play activities and projects. The materials must provide opportunities for children to participate in various forms of play, applying their social, educational, and creative skills (Ashiabi, 2007). The

fourth section presents an overview of creative skills followed by three main themes: *the role of play, fine arts, and teachers' role.*

Overview of Creative Skills

Creative skills include the human intellectual ability to solve complex and genuine problems that children may experience and, when necessary, create a valuable product (Torrance, 1964). Intelligence is embedded in creative skills, which also entails the individual's ability to create a new problem. Children should be provided with opportunities in the preschool environments for them to gain new knowledge to enhance their abilities to create and solve problems (Gardner, 1983).

Creative skills can be expressed through linguistic intelligence, musical intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, bodily kinesthetic intelligence, and intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence. Children can express their creative skills through the use of language, music, and dance in communicating with their peers. For instance, children can create their own music by using different instruments, sounds, and movements, and as children engage with each other in these various forms of creative activities, they are able to learn from each other. Linguistic intelligence enables children to use language effectively such that they can develop relationships and work together in groups. In comparison, logical-mathematical intelligence enables children to discover various ways of creating and solving problems, whereas spatial intelligence allows children to determine their position in space or how space is occupied. In addition, bodily kinesthetic intelligence provides other ways children can use physical skills, such as dancing and sports.

Lastly, intrapersonal and interpersonal skills allow children to evaluate their relationships with themselves in relation to others; and as children feel good about themselves they are able to determine the good qualities of other children, learn and understand other children's feelings, and control their own emotions. Creative skills address the imaginative activity where original ideas emerge and focus on pursuing purpose, self-expression, and judging value (Duffy, 2006; Fawcett & Hay, 2004; Feldman & Benjamin, 2006). Teachers can adapt their teaching approaches to strengthen and promote these skills.

Theme 6: The Role of Play

The emotional and social impact of play on the developing child in the early childhood classroom was evaluated, discussing the roles of teachers in supporting play as a developmental and educational experience for young children (Ashiabi, 2007). When children engage in play they do it because of the joy they experience; they are able to create their own choices of events through their imagination and they are more able to enjoy the process rather than the outcome (Ashiabi, 2007). Emotional development is associated with children's ability to react to situations, whereas social development relates to how children interact with their peers to form relationships.

Play can be used as a vehicle for teachers to understand children's emotional and social development. In addition, playing with peers enhances social understanding and relationships that allow children to encounter and solve problems. Teachers can support play by scaffolding interactions, using strategies that facilitate social interactions among atypical and typical children. As children engage in teacher-guided play, the teacher could encourage children to assist less competent children by providing opportunities to

engage in group activities. Sociodramatic play is an activity that teachers must promote mindfully to foster children's creative and physical skills, while not intruding in their play activities. It is the teachers' responsibility to decide how to support this form of play with the right degree of involvement, such that teachers can observe and facilitate what children are doing to promote additional learning (Ashiabi, 2007).

Preschool environments must support various forms of play that can assist children in building relationships with each other. Play helps children feel socially competent. Knowledge of interactive skills can be further developed through cooperative play. When children interact during various forms of play, a meaningful relationship between the behaviors of each child appears. Children respond to the actions of others and the interchange is intrinsically motivated. Therefore, social play, cooperative play, or games yield valued outcomes for children in developing their social-competency skills (K. H. Rubin & Ross, 1982). When children are involved in constructive or dramatic play, they can use these social skills to create, role play, or assist their peers who are limited in their social-competency skills (Chen, DeSouza, Chen, & Wang, 2006; Dong & Juhu, 2003; Mayeux, 2003; Walker, 2004). Children learn much about establishing relationships, teamwork, and collaboration as they engage in social activities and develop creative projects.

A qualitative case study was conducted on the pretend-play abilities of 35 preschool children aged 4 and 5 years (Swindells & Stagnitti, 2006). The aim of this study was to investigate the relationships between pretend play and social competency skills. In this study, parents and guardians of children were interviewed regarding their child's social-competency skills. Findings suggested that children who were lacking in

pretend-play skills can be assisted with more creative play ideas from other children; in other words, children wait for other children to initiate play because they are limited in their play ideas. The study also found that pretend play is a viable indicator of children's social-competency skills (Swindells & Stagnitti, 2006). Pretend play occurs when preschool environments provide opportunities for children to experiment, explore, and interpret social situations using symbols (Vygotsky, 1978).

Play provides an excellent medium through which children's development can be evaluated. It is an enjoyable and motivating activity that appears to be instrumental in children's social and cognitive development (Swindells & Stagnitti, 2006, p. 316). This concept of play is important to note because it is through play that children build interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, display their creative skills, and analyze events from various perspectives. Play is also an activity that is intrinsically motivated, engaging, imaginative, occurs predominantly in the moment, and is free of constraints. Play can be used as a vehicle to cement relationships, teach children educational skills, and as a form of therapy to address complicated situations. Mize (1995) asserted that "The fabric of social interaction is formed through discrete behavior and there is a number of discrete skills that socially competent children use to initiate, maintain, and elaborate particularly during play activities" (p. 241). This findings suggested that children's interaction in the preschool environment can be supported through various forms of play. As children participate in various play activities they are able to build their social skills.

Play is characterized by encouraging "positive effect, free choice, non-literality, intrinsic motivation, and process orientation" (J. E. Johnson et al., 2005, pp. 14–15). The

positive-affect form of play means that it is usually fun and enjoyable, accompanied by smiles and laughter. Play is interpreted as being nonliteral because the usual meaning of objects and situations are ignored and replaced with new meanings. For instance, the child may substitute a piece of wood for a baseball bat or a piece of clay for a cookie. Play is considered to be intrinsic when the motivation occurs from within the player and when children focus attention on the activity itself rather than the outcome. Play is also considered to be process oriented (J. E. Johnson et al., 2005). These various concepts of play are determined from the child's perspectives, and as a result, children are able to develop their creative skills as they engage in constructive play, dramatic play, and symbolic or pretend play.

Children engage in constructive play around the age of 4 and the classroom is equipped with manipulatives such as large balls, clay, fingerpaints, toys, stringing materials, unit blocks, and puzzles that provide equipment to spark children's imagination during play. For instance, children may use their creative skills by stringing materials together or use clay to create different designs such as the letters in the alphabet, or to make cookies. During dramatic play, children use various objects to represent real-life experiences. For example, if any changes occur in the family such as a family member going through a divorce or a new sibling in the family, children will act out the role in this situation as a creative approach to address the situation. Symbolic play allows children to use various objects to substitute for other objects in their play activities. For instance, a child may use a ball for an apple or a feather for a paint brush. When children play together, they become more innovative in their ideas and suggestions and the roles they assign to each other (J. E. Johnson et al., 2005).

Children's knowledge expands and their social skills improve tremendously through play. For instance, children learn to share, take turns, negotiate with each other, and use their bodies creatively in games. Children's play sharpens cognitive and language skills, which means when teachers provide sensory materials such as water, sand, and clay, children are encouraged to explore, experiment, and use language to communicate effectively with their peers (Honig, 2007). Moreover playful songs foster children's brain development and children learn better and are more creative when the activities are relevant and meaningful to them.

Various materials can be provided for children such that they can participate in dramatic play such as housekeeping. Play allows children to learn spatial aspects, directions, and viewpoints in space. Cooking activities provide opportunities for children to work together, using their creative skills to learn about the texture and color of food. Furthermore, they learn how to measure proportions of food, which is a critical part of understanding mathematics. When children understand spatial interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships through play, they are able to evaluate boundaries and pathways and use spaces that will not hinder their creative skills. This suggests that if children are playing a game that involves movement in difficult locations, they are forced to use their bodies creatively to occupy the amount of space available to them (Honig, 2007).

Playing with toys allows children to engage in the critical reasoning required for scientific thinking and experimentation (Honig, 2006). For example, children learn how to mix liquids into solutions with different properties, and therefore are able to use their creative skills in combining various solutions to get specific outcomes. Furthermore,

children work together or alone to group objects by color, shape, size, and texture and determine how smaller groups are nested into larger groups. Play allows children to use their imagination, empowering them to realize they are capable of mastering certain roles and problems.

Play also promotes language mastery, which is a viable indicator of the development of social skills, and enables children to express their emotions by deepening their sense of serenity and joy. For instance, when children sprawl on the floor or in the sand, they giggle and laugh, demonstrating their joy in being part of an intimate social experience. When teachers and other adults support children's play, children feel a sense of security, independence, and self-confidence that ignites their creative skills (Honig, 2006). Forty preschool children participated in a free-play study to determine sustained attention and social-competency skills of typically developing preschool-aged children. Findings suggested that children who demonstrated high levels of social-competency skills were capable of developing sustained attention (Murphy et al., 2007). Children's ability to engage in sustained attention is important because social problem solving is related to some form of unexpressed creative ability and positive feedback from others. The ability to use objects creatively can affect peer interactions and thus social-competency skills. This means if a child is consistently banging on a chair, the ensuing friction disengages the child from cooperatively engaging in activities with peers (Murphy et al., 2007).

A quantitative study used various forms of play to explore the variables associated with children's shyness and social disinterest in early childhood (Coplan, Prakash, O'Neil, & Armer, 2004). The participants included two separate samples of preschool-

aged children. Sample 1 consisted of 119 children between the ages of 36 and 60 months, and Sample 2 consisted of 127 children between the ages of 36 and 66 months. The researchers concluded that children's shyness was a result of social incompetence, children's social anxiety, and their desire to interact socially, which contributed to their feelings of inadequacy. Although the outcome of this study was clear in providing teachers with a variety of domains to understand children's shyness, it was also limited in providing the consistent method and procedures used to conduct the study. Notably essential was that children can demonstrate their social and creative skills in music, dance, arts, and many other disciplines (Coplan et al., 2004). Teachers can create lesson plans and curricula that can support the arts to foster children's emerging skills that are not fully matured but can be cultivated with teachers' assistance (Vygotsky, 1978).

Theme 7: The Fine Arts

Leu (2008) examined early childhood music education in Taiwan using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological-systems theory. Children's ability to create music was affected by factors in the microsystem such as the adults' perception of children, child–adult interactions, the structure of the Taiwanese family, and the existing early-childhood education system. In the mesosystem, the quality of the child–teacher–parent relationship had a profound impact on children's musical abilities, and in the exosystem, teachers who were insufficiently musically trained negatively influenced children's musical growth (Leu, 2008). These findings suggests that music is a critical aspect of children's creative skills and children are most receptive to music in the first 6 years of life.

Childhood music experiences greatly influenced how children view their musical creative skills, and how they interact with the larger environment (Leu, 2008). Thus, children are competent in their musical abilities and can use music to participate in creating songs, dances, or poetry. Music also provides opportunities for children to learn about other cultures and other traditions. Many teachers, however, are left with the responsibility of integrating music into their classrooms without a music specialist because of lack of funding, contributing to their limited ability to support children's creative music abilities. In Taiwanese culture most music is planned and structured, which creates little or no opportunity for children to create during free musical play (Leu, 2008). However, with the introduction of the Reggio Emilia approach and other music methodologies, different perspectives of understanding children's learning and creative skills have been acknowledged.

An effective music curriculum depends on teachers' understanding of developmentally appropriate musical activities to engage children's creative skills (Leu, 2008). "It is the teachers' responsibility to nurture rather than repress the deeply rooted natural music abilities that young children inherit and to use their intelligence and creative imagination to foster its healthy growth from those roots" (Leu, 2008, p. 21). Music is meaningful to children when they are free to create and when music is embedded in all areas of the early-childhood curriculum. Furthermore, young children are not organized in their cognitive abilities: their thinking is more structured around the activities and projects provided for them. The most effective way to support the quality of music instruction in early childhood is to provide opportunities for teachers to engage in more comprehensive musical training.

Denac (2008) conducted a qualitative case study that examined how children's musical interests at home and school can be enhanced by providing systematic monitoring activities for these children. The group included children from 1 to 6 years of age and their parents. Data were collected by sending out 180 letters to randomly chosen kindergartens throughout Slovenia to explain the purpose of the research. Of preschool teachers queried, 159 filled out the questionnaires in the first phase. Children were interviewed and parents filled out the questionnaires in the second stage. The study's results suggested that the preschool period is relevant in encouraging and maintaining an interest in all music activities, because positive experiences can influence how children value music.

An investigation of early childhood curricula in England examined whether the creative musical skills of preschool children are supported (Young, 2008). Early childhood music professionals were interviewed to understand how children are viewed and understood a musical context in the early childhood education system. Results suggested that teachers must be trained to go beyond a conventional style of teaching music because they are more likely to condemn themselves to familiar exemplars of singing songs and performing rhythmic patterns, paying little attention to child-initiated, creative, and age-appropriate ways of engaging children to express their creative musical abilities (Young, 2008).

Children can be given opportunities to work in groups or alongside other creative adults. Music is considered to be a socially collective activity rather than a planned activity. When music is planned for children, their creativity is devalued. This approach constructs the child in a certain version of musicality: conforming to conventional

nursery music rather than individualized activities or activities that acknowledge their own musical identity (Young, 2008). There is a preconceived notion that to succeed in music children must have acquired natural musical abilities, and music for children will not be more than a pleasant pastime or a sociable activity directed for fun and relaxation. As a result, little importance is placed on children's learning and development through music (Young, 2008).

Learning can be supported through music in that children can better develop their social skills, language, or numeracy (Young, 2008). Teachers lack understanding of the possibilities and values of music education and lack awareness of the elements that contribute to good practice in music education. Rather than educate managers or education policymakers on the relevance of music in the early development of children's social and creative skills, teachers agree with managers on the standards they establish for children to develop their creative skills. Often the music teachers present to children is not embedded in their everyday experiences: therefore children turn to digital technologies that can afford them the music they desire (Young, 2008).

Lim and Chung (2008) conducted a study relating to current educational policies with emphasis on artistic expression in Korea to determine whether early childhood educators were provided perspectives to nurture children's musical self, focusing on a meaningful context. Lim and Chung found that educational policies failed to acknowledge the integration of musical conceptual development, expressive abilities, creativity, and communication. In order to understand how policies affect early childhood music, the authors analyzed the discourses and textbooks shared by early childhood educators and how early childhood educators regarded early childhood music education.

Data were collected through interviews, observations of kindergarten and daycare-center music activities, music-education textbooks, and instructional materials and analyzed by identifying themes and patterns and drawing conclusions. Findings suggested that children's ability to create music should be considered children's right to nurture their musical self. The value of expressiveness in music is deeply grounded in history and culture at different times and places.

Lim and Chung (2008) proposed that the focus of the national curriculum should be to ensure physical and mental health, as well as children's ability to use language effectively to develop healthy relationships, and children are able to employ their creative skills to solve everyday problems. Music education must be considered part of children's art experience and should be incorporated, along with other activities, into the curriculum (Lim & Chung, 2008). The Korean national kindergarten curriculum states that exploration enables children to realize their artistic elements and express their creative skills in music. As children engage in more of these direct experiences in supportive preschool environments, their intrinsic interests and capabilities will develop. The national kindergarten curriculum established a set of standards to guide early childhood teaching practices.

The impact of creative dance on the social-competency skills of a diverse urban preschool population between the ages of 39 and 62 months was assessed through an 8-week instructional program (Lobo & Winsler, 2006). Seventeen children from three classrooms and 2 teachers who had been working with Head Start children for 2 years participated. Data were collected from parent and teacher surveys and questionnaires and from experimental and control groups to which children were assigned. The study

provided credible scientific evidence for the utility of dance, music, and creative-movement programs in early childhood.

Children who participated in dance programs made significant improvements in their social skills and had significantly fewer behavioral problems. Children who did not participate in dance programs did not show much improvement. Children used their bodies creatively to express themselves verbally and physically and enjoyed themselves and each other, which in turn contributed to an increase in self-confidence. In dance classes, children shared the same special experiences and challenges that appeared to create bonds between them. Those children who were reluctant to take risks and hold hands before the program spontaneously held hands and enjoyed touching each other in appropriate ways (Lobo & Winsler, 2006).

Gibson (2003) conducted a longitudinal study aimed at an exploration of student teachers' prior experiences, existing knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and interests in the visual arts. Twice in the same year, 110 students enrolled in visual-arts education were surveyed through questionnaires. These questionnaires included ranking on a Likert scale and open-ended questions. Age, sex, residence, nationality, and education of the participants were considered. The study concluded that students must understand and participate in the practical and theoretical aspects of the visual arts. Results also showed that children enjoyed the content, and gained confidence in their own abilities. These students were therefore able to adapt their personal art learning to affect visual-art education in the primary grades.

Art provides a unique sense of satisfaction to quality of life and sense of well-being. Art provides a sense of intrinsic satisfaction that deepens everyday aesthetic and

personal experiences. Children learn a variety of skills and experience emotional and creative satisfaction from studying the visual arts. In addition, through art children are able to experiment, learn about their own capabilities, take risks, solve-problems, and build social skills (Gibson, 2003). Art is an integral element of the primary curriculum and contributes greatly to the overall development of the child.

Armistead (2007) prepared an evaluation of the fine-arts program of Kaleidoscope preschool, located in South Philadelphia. The purpose of the study was to determine how the program teaches music and other creative arts to 3- and 5-year-old children. The musical education, the number of children in the class, the organization of the classroom environment, and the quality and amount of learning materials were considered. Music studio, dance studio, and visual-arts studio were equally structured to foster children's artistic abilities. The study concluded that children work in many preschool environments and are able to identify patterns independently. The auditory, visual, and physical work in all of the art studios enhanced and enriched children's exploratory play. The curriculum guide coordinated learning activities across the various studies, which enabled children to create art-rich, integrated preschool environments that were challenging and provided opportunities for children's growth and mastery.

Armistead (2007) proposed that Kaleidoscope develop a creative curriculum that enables children to collaborate, fosters critical-thinking skills, accommodates children with various disabilities, and provides opportunities for children to engage in creative challenges that enable them to learn, progress, and understand the benefits of education. The curriculum should be designed with activities and projects to engage the whole child,

in which children are able to realize their highest potential as physical and creative beings.

Teachers are responsible to be flexible in their pedagogical approaches to accommodate the needs of all children. Teaching practices should embrace the cognitive, biological, and psychosocial components of children's development. Children must be provided with other avenues to share ideas and suggestions, develop critical-thinking skills, explore, create, and solve problems individually or in groups with the support of caring and responsive teachers (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

Theme 8: Teachers' Role

Although teachers are faced with time constraints, standardized testing, and educational policies that underestimate children's creative abilities while focusing on academics (Feldman & Benjamin, 2006), teachers remain responsible to assist children in developing their social and creative skills. Children must feel comfortable enough to share their experiences with teachers, and teachers, in turn, must be receptive and provide a degree of warmth that can support children's scholastic and social development (Ladd et al., 2006). The interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships that children develop with teachers during the early years may have important implications because children are capable of forming different types of relationships that reflect in their behavior.

Several types of behavior were evident in children when there is a lack of warmth and frequent disharmony between children and teachers. For instance, children can become incompliant, engage in angry exchanges, and have disciplinary issues. Teachers must encourage children to be self-dependent; to feel comfortable exploring or creating by themselves. A codependent teacher–child relationship is demonstrated when a child is

excessively in need of a sense of closeness, support, reassurance, or assistance from teachers during classroom activities (Ladd et al., 2006). These findings suggested that the degree of closeness with teachers and children should be closely monitored because children's sense of confidence can be greatly reduced when they rely on another individual for self-assurance. Children's development is influenced by their ability to develop social skills that are reflected in their interaction styles and classroom relationships. These skills enable these children to transition with minimal difficulty to other schools and grade levels (Ladd et al., 2006).

Wright, Bacigalupa, Black, and Burton (2008) suggested various procedures and activities that teachers can use to enhance storytelling with preschool children, including using specific prompts to facilitate creative thinking, and ways in which storytelling can enhance home–school relationships. Some limitations associated with study included a lack in providing the specific age group studied, the sample size, and the geographic location. Lara-Cinisomo, Fuligni, Daugherty, Howes, and Karoly (2009) indicated that teachers' beliefs of children's experiences are important because these beliefs determined their various teaching approaches, and hence, the quality of children experiences in the classroom. The results of this study showed that these teachers' beliefs reflect developmentally appropriate practices. Teachers must provide young children with opportunities to enhance their cognitive skills. Hence, the classroom culture must be designed to assist children to clearly represent their ideas by employing various media. When teachers understand the relationship between representation and exploration, they will be in a better position to help children function at their highest potential (Edwards & Springate, 1995).

Culture and creativity should be acknowledged as socially constructed variables such that the dynamic interaction of children engaged in various activities is supported by teachers and the culture of preschool environments (Faulkner, Coates, Craft, & Duffy, 2006). Teachers and other professionals must be trained to employ various methods and materials to foster the creative skills and cultural understanding of young children. Moreover, outside agencies and schools should develop partnerships to support and provide creative and cultural education that is beneficial to young children (Faulkner et al., 2006). More extensive research is needed to provide teachers with effective strategies to promote the creative talent of young children (Faulkner et al., 2006). A systematic assessment of curricular development must focus on learning models and assumptions implicit in the curriculum that promote pedagogy while fostering young children's creative skills.

Most often children attempt to meet their teachers' expectations, and as a result, influence their school experiences both academically and socially (Lane, Stanton-Chapman, Roorbach Jamison, & Phillips, 2007). Children who are able to perform well are more likely to establish close relationships with teachers. Teacher–child relationships are significantly relevant to the development of social skills that are necessary to perform successfully in the classroom. This is evident when children are engaged in group work or creative-art activities in which self-control and cooperative skills are equally important.

Teachers can support children's creative and interpersonal and intrapersonal skills by informing intervention designs, teaching desired behaviors when these children are entering preschool environments for the first time, and strengthening home–school

partnerships by clarifying expectations in the classroom setting. When these desires are shared between teachers, children, and parents, problem behaviors are greatly reduced, emotional regulation is enhanced, and positive adult–child relationships and peer relationships foster children's readiness to learn, explore, and create (Lane et al., 2007). Child-initiated learning, using materials and other resources in classrooms, can be an enriching learning experience for young children. For example, when teachers encourage children to participate in group activities, children develop their language and cognitive abilities (Montie, Claxton, & Lockhart, 2007). This is important to note because children's creative skills are based on their ability to develop new ideas, explore, solve complex problems, and create.

Researchers conducted a longitudinal study on 5,000 4-year-old children and their teachers in 15 countries and diverse cultures. The aim of this study was to identify classroom practices that are consistent with children's cognitive development and language skills. The results showed that preschool teachers' educational backgrounds and classroom practices affected how they orchestrated their classroom and learning activities (Montie et al., 2007). The findings also suggested that the use of language is relevant to creative ability and overall development of young children's relationships in preschool environments. Teachers provided opportunities for children to engage in free-choice, small-group, and individual activities. Most often, children chose activities that were relevant to their interests and at a suitable level. During free-choice activities, children were able to communicate with other children as they assigned roles to various activities (Montie et al., 2007).

The informed nature of children's free choice enabled teachers to engage children in conversations specific to their play and creative activities as well as introduce new vocabulary to children that was relevant to their interests. "Learning and creativity grow when situations pique children's interest and stretch their imaginations" (Montie et al., 2007, p. 25). The challenge for teachers is to plan so that each child is engaged in some form of activity that is relevant to their interest with little wait time.

When teachers engage children in creative music activities, they must organize preschool environments by ensuring enough materials are available to provoke children's imagination, to expand their thinking, and to create their own variations (Montie et al., 2007). An engaged teacher can facilitate and extend children's learning by first observing the activities in which children participate and how they communicate with their peers, and then offering specific comments or questions to extend their critical-thinking skills.

Chak (2007) reported a study conducted with 84 participants of whom 64 were preschool teachers and 20 were parents, to examine parents' and teachers' perceptions of children's curiosity and exploration and whether these characteristics were valued. Findings showed that teachers were more willing to provide opportunities to encourage these characteristics in children than were parents, who were more concerned about the appropriateness and educational benefits of children's curiosity.

Curiosity is a basic aspect of creative skills, which is often described as a natural and notable characteristic of young children's development: "Young children's curiosity and exploration are expressions of their eagerness to know and if 'nurtured' can be a motivational source for the acquisition of knowledge" (Chak, 2007, p. 142). Teachers can respond to children's questions at a more advanced level by encouraging them to explore

and provide explanations as they seek new knowledge. Teachers are a significant force in organizing preschool environments for young children, and therefore play a critical role in supporting learning and development in children's curiosity and exploratory behavior (Chak, 2007).

Studies clarified that teachers can set goals that encourage the ability of children to stay motivated through self-efficacy, self-motivation, changing negative thoughts, creating positive affirmations, visualization, and celebrating success. When social goals are embedded in routine activities, teachers assist children with their social skills (Macy & Bricker, 2007; Szente, 2007). These goals are important to children's development because as teachers encourage these various elements of children's development, children are able to make decisions, create, explore, and exhibit more control over their lives.

Kumtepe (2006) and Lau, Higgins, Gelfer, Hong, and Miller (2005) conducted qualitative case studies to investigate the impact of teachers' facilitation of young children's social interactions during computer activities. The sessions were videotaped to facilitate analysis of social interactions and behaviors of children. Teacher Impression Scales and systematic observations of children's social interactions using the Social Interaction Observation System were analyzed. The Teacher Impression Scale is a Likert-scale questionnaire that evaluates social skills associated with peer interaction.

The Social Interaction Observation System was used to evaluate 15 social-interaction behaviors such as positive and negative peer interactions; solitary, constructive, and parallel play; and linguistic interactions. Findings showed that atypical and typical children benefit equally from computer activities. Thus, children can be creative not only through free play but also through the technological opportunities

afforded by their teachers' pedagogy (Kumtepe, 2006; Lau et al., 2005). Socioeconomic, educational, and other differences in the conceptualization of socialization goals among teachers and parents may explain teachers' philosophies about creativity, relationships, or social interaction, and about young children's development (Achipal, Goldman, & Rohner, 2007).

King and Boardman (2006) revealed how teachers can support young children's development through personal independence, attitude about learning, social communication, social interaction with peers, and behavior. These components were also used to measure teachers' and parents' perceptions of the importance of personal or social skills before children enter kindergarten. A critical factor of teachers' role is establishing effective communication approaches with parents to enable teachers to learn more about children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills..

Ledoux and McHenry (2006) delineated six standards from the National Association of Education for Young Children that focus on the role of teachers. They addressed how teachers must understand the concepts and tools of inquiry of children's creative skills, and create environments that support these skills.

1. Teachers must understand and use a variety of teaching approaches to facilitate children's critical-thinking skills, particularly their problem-solving skills;

2. Teachers must understand the development, learning, and motivational elements of young children and how they can design learning opportunities to support students' development and acquisition of knowledge;

3.   Teachers must understand how social interaction among children influences children's development and learning and creates environments that are respectful, supportive, and challenging for all children;

4.   Teachers must understand how to use group motivation and behavior that encourages positive social interaction and active engagement in learning;

5.   Teachers must use knowledge of effective communication such as verbal and nonverbal communication and media to facilitate inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom; and

6.   Teachers must understand how to assess the intellectual, social, and physical development of children (Ledoux & McHenry, 2006).

Wallace, Abbott, and Blary (2007) discussed how teachers fostered children's creative or critical-thinking skills by encouraging children to pose mathematics problems in the classroom during a 5-day investigation. Wallace et al. addressed how teachers must enable children to see different ways of solving problems, moving away from the one-way concept of solving problems. When children are provided with opportunities to pose their own problems and teachers support exploration, problem solving becomes an intrinsic part of their learning.

Teachers can engage children in open-ended discussions by providing opportunities to allow them to articulate their thoughts and ideas about the preschool environments and assist them with the problem-solving process (Wallace et al., 2007). In the Wallace et al. study, children were shown an example from which to draw a diagram of the classroom they visualized, and the teacher walked around the classroom observing and commenting on children's work, reminding them to think about items needed for the

classroom. The questions posed by the teachers to elicit children's responses included, "Do you think that's enough?" "Does the teacher need different materials from the students?" "Does the teacher need more or fewer of certain items?" "How can you find out?" "What things does your classroom really need?" "Do you think you are finished?" "Are you satisfied?" (Wallace et al., 2007, p. 43).

The teachers facilitated children's concepts of the classroom diagram by engaging these children in discussion to determine the materials they needed and those that were not needed. This teaching approach enables children to work together in groups to expand their creative and social skills. In addition, children are able to take responsibility for their own learning (Wallace et al., 2007). This process further emphasized the critical role teachers play in children's learning. Effective early childhood educators must provide opportunities to stimulate children's critical-thinking skills.

Edwards, Gandini, and Forman (1998) confirmed that teachers must support the contributions of children, in particular when discussing complex and controversial social issues such as friendships and gender relations. These issues are evident and more meaningful to children when adult discourse includes a larger community. The value placed on children's contributions to the content of discussions and activities of the community is also apparent in the significance assigned to the role of social relations and social activity in their learning and development.

When teachers acknowledge each child's effort, children are encouraged to collaborate to share their ideas and materials. In addition, "the physical organization of any school environment indicates how children are viewed and the value that is assigned to the processes of teaching and learning that characterize the setting" (Edwards et al.,

1998, p. 266). Craft (2003) conducted a study that provided a framework for exploring creative thinking in early childhood using empirical observations from a number of nursery and early-childhood classrooms in England. Craft suggested that teachers must develop curriculum that provides opportunities for children to be creative. For instance, teachers can integrate new technology into the curriculum so that children can work collectively with each other.

Teachers must also understand that creativity is an ongoing process, in which adults and children can learn alongside one another; and teachers must understand the nature of creativity so they can understand how to employ their expertise to identify and support creative abilities. Craft (2003) indicated that when teachers understand creativity in children as a collective and lifelong-learning process, teachers will break away from the traditional role in which creativity is devalued and will focus on becoming brokers between knowledge and people. In addition, teachers will encourage collaborative learning and foster children's creativity as a way of forging future-orientated children, in order to lay a foundation from which children can be learn to become critical and flexible thinkers (Craft, 2003).

Burnard et al. (2006) conducted an exploratory study in three kindergarten settings. Participants included 2 teachers, 1 teaching assistant, and 3 core university-based researchers. The aim of this study was to identify the elements that determine "possibility thinking" as an essential factor in young children's learning. This study developed a framework that teachers could use as a guide to identify and support the creative skills of young children. Documentation of children's work and formal and informal interviews were used in the data-collection process. The findings from this study

included the *process*—how teachers present the questions and facilitate play; *process outcome*—originality, being imaginative, and taking risks; and *outcome*—purposeful action. The process of children's work demands more attention than the outcome because it is through the process that teachers will be able to identify, support, and encourage collaborative learning (Burnard et al., 2006).

Jeffrey and Craft (2004) conducted a qualitative case study to examine how teachers teach for creativity and teach creatively by focusing on empirical research from an early childhood preschool known for its creative approach. Relevance, ownership, control, and innovation were considered in the study because these components are significant to the creative process. Data were collected through qualitative methods consisting of interviews with the teachers, support workers, parents, children, and visitors. The research focused on the learners' experience of creative teaching, documented through intensive field work. The study revealed that creative pedagogies must be revisited for teachers to develop imaginative approaches to foster effective learning and exercise the ability to develop children's own creative thinking.

Creative pedagogy is evident when teachers teach creatively and teach for creativity according to the circumstances they consider to be appropriate, sometimes doing both simultaneously. Teaching for creativity may well arise spontaneously from teaching situations in which they were not specifically intended, and, according to Jeffrey and Craft, "teaching for creativity provides opportunities for learners 'to take ownership and control and are more likely to be innovative" (2004, p. 84). Csoti (2001) asserted that when children are given the opportunity to make their own choices they are more willing to participate when they can work together in activities that engage their minds. For

children to express their creative skills, teachers must provide those opportunities from the topic and activities chosen and by creating a classroom climate that fosters children's creative skills.

Early childhood educators play a crucial role in providing opportunities for children to work in communities where they can create, explore, and coconstruct knowledge (Fraser, 2000). The need to identify and support children's creative skills is often a constant challenge for early childhood educators because academics take precedence over the importance of creativity. This means that teachers must increase their effort to provide opportunities that are challenging, in which they can identify and support children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills.

Although studies have proven that interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills significantly influence children's development, preschool environments are equally relevant. These various components play critical roles in preschool children's ability to develop interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. The next section is a discussion of other studies focusing on how brain, cognition, and parent involvement affect the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills.

Disconfirming Studies

D. W. Moore et al. (2009) reported a quantitative study related to divergent thinking. The aim of this study was to learn how visual-spatial divergent thinking plays a critical role in children's creativity. The Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT) and the Thurstone Word Fluency test were used to determine divergent thinking. Production tasks were also provided that yielded scores for fluency, flexibility, and elaboration.

Participants were male and were selected from Craig's Lists. Findings showed that creativity correlates with size of the corpus callosum, which means that the smaller the corpus callosum, the higher the divergent-thinking scores. The study failed to consider the role of preschool environments in fostering divergent thinking, as the study focused on the function of the brain as a significant factor in the development of creative skills.

Sarsani (2008) conducted a study related to children of high and low creativity. The goal of this study was to examine the relationship between creative potential, cognitive and motivational variables, and social interactions in the classroom. The variables that were considered included students' interests, perceptions, and classroom experiences. The sample was chosen in two stages: the school was selected in the first stage, followed by students selecting students from those schools. Nine schools were selected from 98 schools and a total of 373 students including boys and girls were selected. There were variations in participants' age group ranging from 12 to 17 years. The Teachers Encouragement Scale was used to evaluate how teachers responded and supported students in developing their creative skills. The results of this study showed that even though teachers desired to assist children in developing their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills and creative skills, academic pressure is great when the school environment is guided by traditional concepts. In addition, the study revealed that although teachers attempt to provide opportunities for children to build their creative abilities, parents have a greater influence over their children and are in a better position to encourage the development of their social and creative skills (Sarsani, 2008, p. 169). Below are reviews of several studies that applied different methodologies in relation to the topic.

A Review of Differing Methodologies

A qualitative case-study methodology was chosen for this study to enable me to gain comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon in its natural setting. The social interactions of the phenomenon occur in a bounded system, which makes it plausible to use a qualitative case study. A bounded system includes institutions, programs, events, a process, or a social unit (Hatch, 2002). Merriam and Associates (2002) stated that "a case study is an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution, or community in a bounded integrated system" (p. 8). Other methods that were considered and rejected included ethnography, narrative, phenomenology, and quantitative. These methods were rejected because I was neither interested in studying the beliefs, values, and attitudes that shape the behavior of a particular group of people, nor the use of stories as a data source. The study was not conducted to understand the structure of an experience or to generalize the results to a particular population.

In reviewing the literature few studies were found that applied different methods relevant to the topic. For instance, Barrett (2006) conducted a longitudinal ethnographic case study of young children's musical abilities as composers, songwriters, and notators to determine the influence of children's invented song-making capabilities in the development of creative thought and activity in music. Data were generated over a 2-year period. Notational, verbal, and observational data were generated from two kindergarten classrooms. Barrett concluded that children's improvisational skills in inventing songs were often discounted in order for teachers to introduce fixed musical ideas through repetitions that were meaningless to children and irrelevant to their song making. In

addition, analysis of the data provided rich insight into children's musical thought and activity as composers and song improvisers. Barrett claimed that when children engaged in communicative practices they were able to develop or improvise songs spontaneously, and at approximately 18 months of age these communicative practices continued through about the age of 7.

A quantitative and qualitative 10-week study was conducted by Zachopoulou, Trevlas, and Konstadinidou (2006). Participants were 251 children aged 4 and 5 who were randomly selected to participate in a physical-education program. Data were collected with a preprogram and postprogram creative-thinking evaluation. Findings showed that children improved their creative fluency and imagination, and useful information was also provided for teachers to use in deepening their understanding of creativity, expanding the use of movement during the early years of children's development. Teachers can encourage and expand these valuable tools by giving children opportunities to imagine, explore, and discover, and provide children with time, resources, spatial interactions, and questions to stimulate their creative abilities (Zachopoulou et al., 2006, p. 291).

Goouch (2008) conducted a narrative study to examine playful practices and the influences that determine its existences in preschool environments. The study considered the nature of the story events as well as the context in which these stories were conveyed. Teachers' pedagogical approaches along with the architecture and spaces in which storytelling occurred were also considered. Findings showed that teachers' own values and principles about storytelling play a key role in shaping pedagogical strategies that support storytelling. In addition, the study found that as children engage in authentic

experiences, talk is a key feature of investigation, explanation, definition, challenge, instruction, reporting, and discussion. This means that as children participate in storytelling and teachers provide environments that encourage such activities, children will be able to develop their critical-thinking skills using stories as tools to understand themselves and the world in which they interact.

Yoo (2005) applied a quantitative and qualitative research design to investigate how children's literature can contribute to their development of literacy skills. This study is important because through literacy-skill development children will be able to learn how to apply words appropriately while developing their social and creative skills. The data collected used questionnaires, existing children's literature, and interviews with 10 teachers for the qualitative section, and Likert-type items on the questionnaire for the quantitative section. Questionnaires were distributed to 130 teachers in early childhood preschool environments in South Korea and participants came from early childhood settings from Seoul and Pusan. The results of the study suggested that teachers need to provide a print-rich environment that can stimulate the development of social, literacy, and creative skills.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to examine strategies used by teachers in preschool environments to determine whether preschool environments nurture the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. A review of the literature began with the introduction, describing strategies used to locate studies related to the topic. Eight themes were identified that were further explored in relation to the research questions. Varying perspectives of the topic were discussed in

relation to National Association for the Education of Young Children standards and educational policies. Teacher's role, the environment, and play in early childhood education were frequently discussed throughout the literature. Although the literature provided various studies related to the topic, what was not given were studies that show how to prepare preschool environments that nurture the development on interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. This study might fill the gap by providing teachers with tools and resources that may help them prepare preschool environments to nurture the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. When teachers understand the critical role of preschool environments, they can collaborate with administrators to provide preschool environments that support and nurture the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills.

The next chapter presents a discussion of the rationale and methods involved in conducting this qualitative case study. The specific strategies employed in selecting the participants, and a detailed presentation of the data collection and analysis are discussed.

Chapter 3:

Research Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to examine strategies used by teachers in preschool environments to determine how preschool environments nurture the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. This chapter begins by describing the rationale for choosing this study approach, the role of the researcher, the research questions, the research settings and participants, and how participants were selected. Methods used to gain access to participants, and procedures to ensure that ethical principles are adhered to in protecting the participants' privacy, are considered. Next, a description of the research design, data-collection methods, data-analysis procedures, and verification strategies is presented. Lastly, the pilot study is discussed to determine its relation to the dissertation study.

Rationale

A qualitative case-study methodology was chosen for this study to enable the researcher to gain comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon in its natural setting. Because the social interactions of children occur in a bounded system, which includes institutions, programs, events, a process, or a social unit (Hatch, 2002) it is plausible to use a qualitative case study (Hatch, 2002). A case-study method can be applied to this study because participants interacted in a bounded system; in this context schools are considered to be bounded systems. Furthermore, the participants were able to provide in-depth discussion of the social unit. Merriam and Associates (2002) stated that "a case study is an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such

as an individual, group, institution, or community in a bounded integrated system" (p. 8).

In addition, because the research questions in this study used the questions *how* to apply

to a unit of analysis, a case-study research method is a plausible approach. In the context

of this dissertation study, special attention was given to a particular situation by

observing and reconstructing the cases that were being studied through an overview, field

procedures, questions, and a guide for the report (Yin, 1994).

Because I used a qualitative case-study method I was able to develop open-ended

interview questions to probe more deeply into how a social or human problem is

interpreted by a group or an individual (Creswell, 2007). In addition, this method allows

me to pay closer attention to the interpretive nature of inquiry and situating the study

from the perspective of the political, social, and cultural context of the researchers, the

teachers, and the readers of the study" (Creswell, 2007, p. 37). Given the various forms of

case-study methods, the element that determines the differences in applying a case study

methodology to this study is the unit of analysis and the context in which that unit exists.

The application of a qualitative case-study data-collection instruments allows me

to collect data through observations, interviews, questionnaires, and archival documents

of the phenomenon studied in its natural or social context (Creswell, 2007; Hatch, 2002;

Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman 2007; Merriam & Associates, 2002). In this study, data

were analyzed inductively, resulting in a rich, thick description of the analysis. This

methodology further allowed me to analyze data by being involved in specific

observations, eventually detecting patterns and irregularities, and developing theories or

themes and categories that can be used to understand their interaction in the case study

(Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). Reliability and validity were established through

triangulation, which involved member checking and an audit trail, using multiple investigators and sources of data collection. An audit trail is a procedure whereby I clearly articulated the methods, procedures, risks, and benefits of the study to the participants prior to conducting the study. Multiple investigators allow the study to be viewed from different perspectives rather than merely through the lens of a single researcher.

Qualitative studies employ an inductive approach: the data are organized in an abstract format and the phenomenon is studied in a natural setting whereby documents, observations, and semistructured and structured interviews are typically used to collect data. For this study, interviewing teachers, collecting archival documents from the schools, and reviewing various school websites are the sole data-collection instruments,. Data analysis involves identifying themes and generating categories and patterns using various forms of coding (Merriam & Associates, 2002). By using various forms of coding, I was able to establish a variety of themes and categories to develop a deeper understanding of the perspectives of the phenomenon in its natural setting.

An ethnographic method was considered but rejected because ethnography focuses on the human, society, and culture that reflect the beliefs and values of an individual in a particular group (Hatch, 2002). A grounded theory was reviewed and rejected because it focuses on developing a theory that is grounded in the data, and this was not the intent of the selected study. A phenomenological study was not considered because it focuses on the essence of a phenomenon. Phenomenological studies address the meaningfulness of a particular experience to an individual (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Quantitative methods seek to resolve cause and effect and the use of statistical

analysis, such that derived results can be generalized to a specific population, and therefore were not considered (Merriam & Associates, 2002). The intent of the study was not to make inferences to a specific population, or understanding of cultural groups, neither was it intended to learn about the essence of an experience related to a particular individual. Therefore, a case study is an appropriate approach to employ because I was studying a case in a bounded system (Yin, 1994).

Research Questions

1. How do preschool environments impact the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships?

2. How do preschool environments impact the development of preschool children's creative skills?

The Role of the Researcher

I had not previously taught or conducted any observations at any of the participating schools. After the study's purpose was discussed with the directors, they provided names of teachers who might be interested in participating in the study. I sent e-mails to these teachers outlining the methods and purpose of the study, to request their voluntary participation.

It was important for the me to ensure that objectivity was consistent throughout the data-collection and analysis procedures, because I was the sole collection instrument. Therefore, plans were made to *bracket* personal impressions and feelings, while focusing intently on what was presented in the data. Bracketing is an effective procedure to use when collecting data for qualitative studies because it allows researchers to come to terms with their own biases. Bracketing is a process that involves separate documentation of the

researcher's feelings from the data in an attempt to ensure that the validity of the data is not influenced by any form of bias (Hatch, 2002).

The methods and procedures of the study were clearly articulated to the participants and the participants' specific concerns were addressed. At the completion of the analysis, opportunities were provided for participants to review their interview transcripts in detail to ensure that the information they provided was accurately documented and interpreted, contributing to the validity of the study. Frequent engagement in self-reflection was applied throughout data collection and analysis to maintain awareness of any personal impressions and, in particular, to be open in understanding the participants' perspectives during the interactions in a natural setting. The data analysis and collection were guided by ethical principles. Every attempt was made to adhere to the use of the appropriate methods and procedures that guide qualitative case studies. Participants were assured that their privacy would be protected during all phases of this study.

Research Setting and Participants

Participant-Selection Criteria

The criteria for choosing the participants were twofold:

1. The teachers must have been teaching prekindergarten or kindergarten children for 3 or more years and have taken a variety of early childhood education courses and therefore have acquired the knowledge and experience needed to provide environments that can support and nurture preschool children's development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. Connor, Hindman, Morrison, and Son

(2005) reported that teachers with more experience and education are more likely to interact with students in warm and responsive ways than teachers with fewer years of experience.

2. The children must be 3-to-5-year-old because this age group most often experiences difficulties building relationships and discovering their unique creative skills (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Teachers must have provided a classroom community that enables preschool children to develop to their highest level of cognitive, social, and physical skills (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

In selecting the five sites to conduct the study, a compilation of private preschools was provided by an early childhood instructor from a community college in California. Five preschools were contacted; some of the schools were willing to participate in the study but did not meet the criteria. Directors of two private schools were previously known to me and appointments were made to meet with them individually. After an explanation of the study to the directors they agreed to permit the study to be conducted at these two schools.

The directors were asked to refer other preschools that may have been appropriate for the study, and three other schools were suggested. I contacted the directors of the three schools but they were unwilling to participate. Other preschool sites were therefore considered, with directors who were willing to participate in the study; they provided a list with the names of teachers who they believed met the criteria to participate in the study. These sites were selected because of accessibility and proximity. The dissertation study was conducted during the 2009–2010 academic year. Participants included a

purposive sample of 9 prekindergarten and kindergarten preschool teachers from five private preschools in California.

A purposive sample was employed for this study because the focus was to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences of whether preschool environments impact the development of creative skills and interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships; therefore, the sample size was small. Creswell (2007) posited that a purposive sample is more appropriate when conducting qualitative research because using this approach allows the selection of individuals and sites that can provide in-depth responses to inform the research questions. Mason (1996) mentioned that specific attention is paid to data collection and analysis along with the process of sampling, because those variables are evaluated from an interactive stance in purposive sampling. In using purposive sampling for a study, allows me to understand at what particular point of the study it is appropriate to make decisions that are informed by theory, analysis, and interpretation.

Access to the Population

After the preschools were identified, I scheduled an appointment to meet with the directors of each school prior to the dissertation study. The purpose of this meeting with directors was to convey the intention of the study and determine whether I would be allowed to conduct the study at these particular sites. Data collection was not conducted during this meeting. After approval from the Institutional Review Board at Walden University, the participants were invited to participate in the study. Each director was provided with a letter of permission that outlined the methods and procedures of the

study; the Institutional Review Board received a signed letter from each director giving permission to conduct the study at that institution (see Appendix A).

Each director was asked to help by providing a list of the names of teachers who met the criteria for participation in the dissertation study. After the directors provided the names of these teachers, and approval was granted by the Institutional Review Board (# 09-18-09-0385661), an e-mail was sent to each teacher to invite their participation in the study (see Appendix B). Four of the letters were delivered in person to the teachers from Schools C and D because these teachers were unable to provide their e-mail addresses. An initial meeting was intended to be scheduled 1 week before the interview sessions, but the teachers were unable to attend the initial meeting because of time conflicts. However, each teacher had the option to discuss their concerns about the study over the telephone after having a week to review the e-mails that were sent to them. During this discussion, the teachers provided the time and location to conduct the interviews. The initial purpose of this telephone conference was to establish a working relationship with the participating teachers during the interview sessions.

Teachers were provided with consent forms to sign before participating in the interview sessions. I provided an e-mail address and a telephone number on the consent forms in case the participants wanted to discuss their concerns related to the study.

Ethical Protection of Participants

In following ethical principles, consent and permission forms were developed for the participants that outlined the exact methods and procedures, the risks and benefits associated with the study, and assuring participants' voluntary participation. On these

consent forms, participants were informed that they had the option to withdraw at any time if they felt uncomfortable for any reason during the study.

The strict guidelines of Walden's Institutional Review Board were followed by providing copies of the consent forms, a detailed description of the study, the strategy used to select participants, how data would be protected, who would have access to the data, signed data-agreement forms for archival documents, data-collection devices, and copyright permissions if necessary. The sites were respected and every attempt was made to conduct the study without disturbing participants. Participants were assured that the data would be entirely confidential, and rather than using the participants' actual names in the study, pseudonyms would be used for identification. The data would not be used for any form of publication without permission from the participants, would be kept in a safe place with locks and keys, would be destroyed after 5 years, and participants would be provided with copies of the results of the study. After the participants read the consent forms and I addressed all of the participants' concerns, participants were asked to sign the forms. Data collection was not conducted prior to participants understanding their rights and voluntarily signing the consent forms.

Creswell (2003) mentioned that "ethical considerations must be anticipated in the problem statement, purpose statement, data collection and analysis" (p. 65). In other words, ethical principles must be followed in all phases of the study and every attempt was made to protect the participants' privacy and well-being throughout the study. It was important to build positive relationships with the participants, guided by ethical principles to ensure that they did not feel betrayed. The most critical and fundamental aspect of conducting ethical research is to respect and protect the rights, needs, and values of

participants, and to reveal the actual purpose of the study (Hatch, 2002). Merriam and

Associates (2002) posited that "a good qualitative study is one that has been conducted in

an ethical manner and the validity and reliability of the study depends on the ethics of the

researcher" (p. 29).

Data-Collection Procedures

Data for the dissertation study was collected from three sources:

(a) semistructured and structured interviews, (b) documents generated from private

schools and online websites, and (c) artifacts of children's artworks. Key concepts used

as a framework hailed from the TTCT (Torrance, 1981a), Thinking Creatively in Action

and Movement, developed by Torrance (1981b), the School Social Behavior Scale

developed by Merrell (2002), and the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale

developed by Harm, Clifford, and Cryer (1998). The TTCT and Thinking Creatively in

Action and Movement are creative scale measurements focusing on originality,

collaboration, and flexibility of creative skills in adults and children. The School Social

Behavior Scale measures children's social interaction, evaluating various aspects of

social skills, and the Early Childhood Environment Scale evaluates the organization of

preschool environments, focusing on the organization of space and materials and teacher–

child relationships. These instruments were not implemented; rather key ideas were used

as a framework to guide the development of the interview questions, and the design of a

rubric to use in evaluating children's artwork.

School Documents

Documents were collected from five private schools in California and their

respective websites to determine consistency in the teachers interview responses and to

triangulate the findings. Documents can include written, oral, visual (such as (photographs), or cultural artifacts. In addition, public records, personal documents, and physical materials were available to me and the strength of documents as a data source was embedded in the fact that they already exist in the situation (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 13). Documents do not intrude on or adjust the setting in ways that my presence might and they are not dependent on participants whose cooperation is essential for collecting data through observations and interviews. Hatch (2002) mentioned that "documents can give the researcher a sense of history related to the context" (p. 119). This historical background helped me interpret the way people think and provided further insights, telling their own story independent of the interpretation of the participants (Hatch, 2002). These documents included newsletters, school policies, and curricula that were read and reread. The rationale for collecting documents, artifacts, and data from websites was to learn about (a) classroom relationships, including individual and group activities; (b) strategies teachers used in the environment to encourage children's creative-thinking attributes to foster four aspects of creative thinking (Torrance, 1964); (c) the structuring of preschool environments; and (d) the types of materials used in preschool environments. Torrance's (1964) four creative-thinking attributes are fluency (the production of a great number of ideas), elaboration (the process of enhancing ideas by providing more detail), flexibility (the production of ideas that show a variety of possibilities), and originality (the production of ideas that are unique or unusual).

Website Documents

These website documents were useful sources because the information they provided could be used to determine consistency in teachers' responses and to triangulate

the findings. In addition, these documents allowed me to see another perspective of the

social context of the institution, independent from the participants responses (Hatch,

2002). The website documents included curricula, newsletters, and school policies and

were examined online to ensure consistency in the information collected from the

schools. In addition, these website documents were also used to determine whether

additional information was posted on these sites that could be used to identify other

themes to inform the research questions. Because Schools C and D were unable to

provide websites, I was able to use only the curricula, newsletters, and school policies

that were collected directly from these schools.

Artifacts

These artifacts were useful sources because they could be used to triangulate the

findings in teachers responses to the interview questions. Children's individual and group

artwork was collected from Schools A, B, C, and D including paintings, drawings, and

collages. Artifacts were coded and scanned and are presented in Appendices C, D, E, and

F. Hatch (2002) suggested that archival documents can provide further insights into the

way people think. In addition, " they can tell their own story independent of the

interpretation of the participants" (Hatch, 2002, p. 119). When artifacts are collected as

separate data sources, they can reduce the amount of bias resulting from the intrusion of

the researcher or the measurement instrument. Furthermore, it would be difficult for

respondents to alter their behavior to conform their responses to what they think the

researcher would like to see. Merriam and Associates (2002) indicated that

> the human instrument has shortcomings and biases that might have an impact on
>
> the study and rather than trying to eliminate these biases or "subjectivities" it is

important to identify them and monitor them as to how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of data. (p. 5)

Although collecting artifacts can be a viable approach to apply in comparing other data sources, Hatch (2002) pointed out that they can also contribute to distorted views of evidence and social context. Therefore, it is incumbent on the researcher to go about making interpretations carefully, because interpreting meanings and significance of these types of data is heavily inferential.

The natural flow of school activities was not interrupted when collecting artifacts (Trochim & Donelly, 2008). When artifacts are collected as separate data sources they provide information that is not based on participants' beliefs. The presence of the researcher can influence how the participants respond during observations and their responses to the interview questions. I was given permission to create a self-designed rubric by adapting ideas from the 13 creative strengths noted in Table 1 from the TTCT to use as a framework to evaluate children's group artwork (see Appendix G). Each creative strength expresses specific creative skills that children acquire (Torrance, 1964). The letter abbreviations under the code section relate to each creative strengths on the left of the rubric. On the far right of the rubric is a presentation of the definitions for each code; each abbreviation code was developed using letters from the creative-strengths criteria directly adjacent to them. For instance, under the creative strengths list, the letters "CI" are related to colorfulness of imagery, and the definition to the far right indicates that the creative strengths are appealing and stimulate the senses.

Table 1

13 Creative Strengths Framework

Creative strengths	Codes	Definitions
Emotional expressiveness	EE	The types of emotions shown in the drawing
Storytelling articulateness	SA	The relationships between the objects
Movement and action	MA	The location of the object
Expressiveness of titles	ET	Emotion expressed in the title
Synthesis of incomplete figures	SIF	Connection of lines
Synthesis of lines and circles	SLC	Repetitions of lines and circles
Unusual visualization	UV	A view that is different from the usual.
Internal visualization	IV	Demonstrating something more internal
Extending of breaking boundaries	EB	The directions of lines parallel and vertical
Humor	H	Funny, playful
Richness of imagery	RI	Lively, vivid, vibrant
Colorfulness of imagery	CI	Appealing, stimulate the senses
Fantasy	F	Abstract, imagination

Note. Definitions were slightly modified for the purpose of this study and were used to guide the evaluation of aspects of creative skills demonstrated in artwork. Adapted from *Thinking Creatively in Action and Movement,* by E. P. Torrance, 1981a, Bensenville, IL, Scholastic Testing Services, and *Torrance Test of Creative Thinking,* by E. P. Torrance, 1981b, Bensenville, IL, Scholastic Testing Services. Used with permission.

Each child's individual and group artwork from the schools was identified with

pseudonyms and analyzed using the codes and definitions provided in the adapted rubric.

The aim of the adapted rubric was not to assign specific scores related to children's

creative strengths but rather to help me identify themes that could triangulate the findings

and inform the research questions. The creative strengths of the children's art projects

were evaluated by assigning appropriate letter codes that were consistent with the

creative-strengths criteria and definitions outlined in the adapted rubric,. The presence of

creativity was determined based on Torrance's (1964) four aspects of creative thinking.

When archival documents were analyzed, the relationship of the data to the other

data-collection devices were interpreted (Hatch, 2002). C. Marshall and Rossman (1989)

concurred that the review of documents provides richness in demonstrating the values

and beliefs of the participants in the setting. The greatest strength of document analysis is

that it is nonreactive; it does not disturb the setting and facts can be confirmed. More

detailed information about the use of the adapted rubric for data analysis is presented in

Chapter 4.

Interviews

Audiotaped self-designed semistructured and structured interviews were

conducted with the prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers. The purpose of these

interviews was to understand teachers' perspectives of how preschool environments

impact the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal

relationships and creative skills. Interviews were conducted with each teacher only once.

The time and day for the interview sessions was dependent on the teachers' schedule and

was discussed after Institutional Review Board approval.

Hatch (2002) posited participants need to have prior notice of the length of time

of interview sessions. Hatch mentioned that 1 hour is usually required and that extra time

might be agreed on between the researcher and the participants in unusual circumstances.

The time allotted to conduct these interviews was between 30 and 60 minutes. The

interview questions are listed below, and were designed by me to be open ended to ensure

that I would elicit in-depth responses to inform the research questions. These open-ended

questions were developed to ensure that I did not provide personal bias in formulating

questions that may have conflicted with the credibility of participants' responses. The

interview questions were designed based on the research questions and guided by the

framework of Hatch's and H. J. Rubin and Rubin's (2005) sample interview questions.

Interview Questions

1. In your opinion how important is a teacher–child and peer relationship?

2. What are your thoughts about the importance of supporting creativity in the early years of children's development?

3. What qualities do you feel are important in teachers' pedagogy in supporting creative skills in young children?

4. What are your thoughts about the organization of preschool environments?

5. How do you feel about the type of materials that should be used in and outside of the classrooms?

6. What kind of support do you think is needed to help in developing the quality and types of relationships you feel are important for children to build their creative skills?

7. What are your perspectives related to collaborative activities in the development of children's social and creative skills?

8. In your opinion, do you think that various forms of play are critical to the development of social and creative skills? Explain.

9. Can you explain the strategies you used to identify creative skills?

10. What is your opinion related to creativity-enhancing curricula?

Hatch (2002) reported, "the power of qualitative interview questions is that it gives the informants the opportunity to share their perspectives in their own words" (p. 106). Every attempt was made to establish a positive rapport with participants by being aware of my personal biases, and allowing participants to truthfully share their perceptions. I reinforced to participants that the interviews would remain confidential, and they would be provided with the responses of the interviews to determine whether there were any discrepancies between the information they provided and my interpretation.

H. J. Rubin and Rubin (2005) posited that semistructured and structured interviewing allows the researcher to probe deeply into the perceptions of participants to get a more comprehensive understanding of their experiences. Qualitative interviewing further allows the researcher to intentionally develop open-ended questions for participants in order for participants to provide richer and more complete information. Comprehensive interviews contribute to the researcher's ability to explore various topics to uncover the perceptions, feelings, or thoughts of the participants.

The interview questions were developed with respect for participants' privacy. Hatch (2002) argued that "qualitative researchers seek to capture participants' perspectives and therefore, the interview questions should be open-ended" (p. 102). This means that questions should be developed to uncover the participants' perspectives, allowing them to provide an extensive in-depth discussion of their experiences. Hatch mentioned that "when interviews are used along with observations it allows the researcher to explore more deeply participants' perspectives on actions observed by the researcher" (2002, p. 91). The interview questions were developed so I could explore

participants' views, interpretations, experiences, and interactions that are relevant properties of their social lives to inform the research questions (Mason, 1996). The data-collection devices included interviewing, collecting archival documents, and school and online website documents from the five private preschools.

Data-Analysis Strategies

Data were analyzed using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The qualitative analytical procedures also involved "reading through the field notes or listen[ing] to interview tapes, images, words to identify themes, recurring ideas or language and patterns of belief that help the researcher to respond to the research questions" (Rossman & Rollis, 1998, p. 180). Rossman and Rollis suggested the following to qualitative researchers.

> Keep your questions in mind. Remember what you are trying to learn about. Stay connected to the qualitative genre framing your study. . . . Be creative. Use metaphors, create images, draw pictures, use visual images, and draw concept maps. Think about how you might characterize what you are learning; What is it like? What images does it evoke? (1998, p. 173)

I used three types of coding procedures during data analysis to analyze interview responses, the schools and website documents. The artifacts were analyzed using the adapted rubric. The coding procedures were applied in chronological order for the interview responses and school and website documents.

Open Coding

Open coding was first applied to interview responses, and school and website documents, allowing me to examine, dissect, compare, categorize, and dismantle the data

into separate parts. The purpose of dismantling the data sets was to reorganize the data in new ways, and by using the constant-comparison approach, I was able to identify themes and patterns between data sets. Categories were formed after identifying patterns and themes in the data set. Open coding contributed to data reduction, intended to facilitate understanding of similarities and differences between the codes.

During open coding I was able to identify themes to link to the conceptual framework. Categories further delineated regularities in the setting or the participants involved in the study. Salient categories were identified that provided meaning relevant to the participants in the setting (C. Marshall & Rossman, 1989). As the categories and themes became clearer, the plausibility of themes were examined through a thorough evaluation of the data. The trustworthiness of the data was based in its credibility, usefulness, and how it informed the research questions.

Axial Coding

Axial coding was the next procedure applied to the interview responses and the school and website documents; I developed categories and evaluated them by examining how the conditions, context, and interaction of these categories could inform the research questions. A more comprehensive knowledge of the relationship between the categories, subcategories, themes, and patterns became apparent. Documentation of the themes generated from the categories and creation of diagrams demonstrated the relationships between the various themes. Each of these themes was coded with phrases or words that illustrated or amplified each of the categories. The data were color coded using a word processor, and chunks were bracketed that related to specific themes. Strauss and Corbin (1998) proposed that axial coding enables the researcher to reorganize the data in new

ways by making connections between categories. A major category was developed to determine the overall meaning of these relationships through the process of selective coding.

Selective Coding

Selective coding was the final process, in which I systematically organized main categories generated from the teachers' interview responses and the school and website documents, relating them to other categories, confirming those relationships, and providing an explanation for categories that were underdeveloped. In this study, all aspects of the coding components were evaluated to determine an overall explanation of these codes. The intent of the coding procedure for this study was not to develop a grounded theory but rather to enable me to derive a deeper understanding of experiences and interactions of the phenomenon in its natural setting.

The artifacts were evaluated using codes developed from the adapted rubric. Each code was related to a specific aspect of creative strengths and was assigned to areas of the artifact that reflected that specific aspect of creative strengths based on Torrance's (1964) creative strengths criteria. See Chapter 4 for more detail.

Discrepant Data

I made every effort to accommodate discrepant data by rereading all of the data set, not only to identify information that may have informed the research questions, but also to identify data that contradict the findings. I applied the same coding procedures as those used for the website and school documents to fully explain these findings. Hatch (2002) suggested that when data are discovered that are contrary to the findings, they

must be satisfactorily explained (p. 158). A more detailed discussion of the findings for discrepant/disconfirming data is provided in Chapter 4.

Memorandum Writing

Strauss and Corbin (1998) proposed that memorandum writing represents the abstract thinking of the researcher in the data-collection process. Memoranda was used during data collection and analysis, which include various forms of code notes, theoretical notes, and operational notes. In addition, I kept a record of various developments in the study, such as viable sources to document analytic ideas that can be systematically sorted into organizing themes. Memoranda help researchers determine how far along they might be in the analysis process and what elements need further development (Hatch, 2002).

<div align="center">

Verification

</div>

Reliability and validity are indications of whether the researcher's information has value. Merriam and Associates (2002) stated that trustworthiness is related to internal validity and reliability of the study. Internal validity refers to the assumptions that there is a relationship in the study and discerns whether this relationship is a causal one; whereas external validity refers to the assumption that there is a causal relationship between the constructs of the cause and effects, and discerns whether this result can be generalized to other persons, places, or times. (Trochim & Donelly, 2008).

Validity

Because I was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, the process of triangulation was employed using interviews and archival documents (Hatch, 2002; Merriam & Associates, 2002). Member checking was also employed to ensure validity,

which included interpreting the data and taking it back to participants for them to check

the accuracy of the interpretation (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Hatch proposed, "the

researcher must clearly describe the data and data sources so that the reader can make

their own judgments about the trustworthiness of the accounts in the study, but this is

especially important when archival documents are used" (p. 121). Validity can also be

demonstrated through an audit trail, which allows the researcher to articulate the methods

and procedures of the study. The findings provided to the participants were supported by

a rich, thick description, to place the study in a context that enabled participants to

determine the extent to which the study is trustworthy (Merriam & Associates, 2002).

Reliability

Creswell (2007) mentioned that reliability can be addressed by the provision of a

good-quality tape for recording, transcribing the tape verbatim, using multiple codes, and

also taking notes of the teachers' responses during the interview sessions. In using

multiple codes I was clear on the exact consistency of coding, that is, whether agreements

were seen in codes names, coded passages, or the same passages coded the same way

(Creswell, 2007, p. 210). Although reliability can also be established through the process

of peer review, peer review was not used for this study.

Reliability can also be demonstrated through an audit trail, ensuring that the

methods and procedures of the study would be clearly articulated (Merriam & Associates,

2002). An audit trail allows another individual to replicate the study by following the

same methods and procedures (see Appendix H). Triangulation allows the use of multiple

sources of data, which also contribute to the reliability of the study. Furthermore,

triangulating the data is a typical and valuable strategy used in qualitative studies. An

audit trail and triangulation were used for this study. Reliability was also established by showing how the study was guided by concepts and models, referencing the theoretical framework (C. Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the research design and to make necessary modifications prior to conducting the dissertation study. The pilot study was conducted from January 26, 2009 through February 5, 2009. For this study, two teachers were interviewed in their respective classrooms on two occasions, and archival documents of children's art work were collected from both teachers. The strengths of this pilot study were as follows: I was able to complete the Institutional Review Board application and learned how to follow ethical principles to protect the privacy of the participants. The consent and permission forms were clearly developed, and I understood how to develop interview questions and transcribe verbatim, how to analyze data by identifying categories, developing and interpreting themes, and how to gain access to the participants and the site.

The pilot study's results revealed that there were too many interview questions; and although each was designed differently, they elicited the same information. Therefore, the participants were providing the same responses to most of the questions. The intention in this study was to limit the number of questions to 10 and allow participants to elaborate on each question; additional questions emerged based on the teachers' responses. Hatch (2002) explained that interview questions should be open ended, allowing the participants to elaborate where they can provide rich, in-depth responses to inform the research question. I had developed too many interview questions

and it was therefore necessary to combine three or four questions that were related to the same subject in order to analyze data by developing themes and categories. Two 30–45 minute interview sessions were conducted, revealing that 30 to 60 minute interview sessions were needed for the dissertation study.

In conducting the dissertation study, nine prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers were selected; the sample size for the pilot study was too small to inform the research questions. In addition, the pilot study focused on teachers' perceptions and attitudes of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships' effect on 3 to 5 year-old African American preschool children. To eliminate bias from the dissertation study, children ranging from 3 to 5 years old of any ethnic or racial heritage were included. Observation as a data-collection device was used in the pilot study but was not considered for the dissertation study. Data collection for the dissertation included three sources: (a) interviews, (b) school and website documents, and (c) artifacts of children's art projects.

Summary

Chapter 3 presented the methodology, providing justification for the particular type of paradigm employed to conduct the study. Among the methods reviewed were phenomenology, ethnography, and narrative, because these method address individual experiences, the behavior and beliefs of different cultural groups, and the use of stories for data collection. However, these methods were rejected because the purpose of the study was to probe deeper into participants' perspectives about a specific phenomenon. The study is qualitative in nature and the participants were studied in a bounded system; a case-study methodology was applied. It is important to always protect participants'

privacy, so specific steps were taken to do so, including the use of pseudonyms as forms of identification rather than participants' names.

Because I was the sole data-collection instrument, a discussion related to bracketing my personal impressions and assumptions was necessary to enhance validity of the study. Because I utilized a qualitative case-study method in conducting the study, I was able collect data through school and website documents, artifacts, and interviews, which were used to triangulate the findings in Chapter 4. Various coding procedures were presented that were used during data analysis, including open, axial, and selective coding; discrepant data were discussed in relation to how I would make the necessary accommodations. It is important to protect the confidentiality and privacy of participants; thus, specific guidelines relating to ethical principles were discussed for all phases of the study. Lastly, the pilot study was discussed, identifying areas of strength and limitations in the research design that informed the dissertation study.

The findings of this study are discussed in Chapter 4, analyzing the qualitative data through the development of themes and categories. Inconsistencies and consistencies in the findings are considered and figures and tables are provided to clarify the findings. Chapter 5 concludes the study by presenting an overview of why and how the study was done, an interpretation of the findings, implications for social change, recommendations for action and further study, a reflection of my experience in the research, and an overall summary of the study.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of the study was to examine strategies used by teachers in preschool environments to determine how these environments nurture the development of the children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. This chapter presents data-collection and -analysis strategies, which entailed data management, an overview of researcher's bias, evidence of data collected, data analysis and emerging findings, a discussion of how the findings informed the research questions, discrepant data, evidence of quality, and a summary of the findings.

Data-Collection Procedures

A qualitative case study was used to examine how preschool environments impact the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. Data were collected from three sources: (a) 30–60 minutes of structured and semistructured interviews with nine teachers; (b) school and website documents, including newsletters, curricula, school policies; thematic units and observation checklists and (c) artifacts, including children's artwork, such as paintings, drawings, and collages. The goal was to provide early childhood teachers and administrators with a framework for preparing curricula that are creative and that focus on improving academic achievement.

The sites were chosen because of proximity and accessibility to me. The teachers were chosen using a purposeful sampling approach because they would need to provide in-depth information to inform the research questions (Creswell, 2003). To be selected, teachers must have been teaching preschool children for 3 or more years and have

previously taken a variety of early childhood education courses. These criteria would indicate that they had acquired the knowledge and experience needed to create preschool environments that could nurture the development of children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills.

Documents

At the completion of the interviews, each teacher was given a list of additional data that were needed. Each teacher agreed to make documents and artifacts available within a week. Teachers were informed that the timeline could be modified if more time were needed. A week later, e-mails were sent and phone calls were made to check on the status of the documents and artifacts. Not all schools could provide the thematic units and observation checklists. Although all teachers said that they observed the children to identify their various skills, only one teacher had documented this observation. Observation checklists and thematic units were not collected because teachers were unable to provide these items.

The rationale for collecting documents and artifacts, as well as data from the websites, was to learn about (a) classroom relationships, including individual and group activities; (b) strategies teachers used in encouraging children's creative thinking based on Torrance's (1964) four criteria of creative thinking—fluency, elaboration, flexibility, and originality; (c) the structure of the environment; and (d) the types of materials used in the environment. Although the creative strength of Torrance was used to ground the data collected from these sources, the teachers were not instructed to categorized their list of strategies to Torrance's four creative strengths criteria during the conducting of the study.

Website documents. These documents (curricula, school policies, and newsletters) were useful sources because they helped triangulate the findings with the school documents, artifacts, and the teachers' interview responses (Hatch, 2002). They can provide information about the content and context of the environment or the phenomenon being studied.

School documents. These documents included curricula, school policies, and newsletters. These documents were useful resources because they could be used to triangulate the findings from all data sources (Merriam & Associates, 2002). When documents are used as a separate data source they can provide a historical context for the environment in which the phenomena interact and do not interrupt the daily flow of activities in the institution (Hatch, 2002). The school and website documents provided information related to relationships, learning materials, learning environments, the philosophy, vision, and mission of the school, and teaching approaches. Other areas that were discussed in these documents included staff-development procedures, finances, parent involvement, and tuition. I was only interested in finding information that could inform the research questions.

Artifacts. The artifacts were useful sources because they could provide information independent of participants' responses and the school and website findings, and could be used to triangulate the findings (Hatch, 2002). Children's art projects, including photographs of children's paintings and collages, were provided by teachers with the exception of teacher A9, who was unable to provide photographs of children's group and individual artwork. According to Hatch (2002), "archival documents can

provide further insights into the way people think and can tell their own story independent of the interpretation of the participants" (Hatch, 2002, p. 119).

The artifacts were rich in colorful presentation; there were a variety of different images reflected in these artifacts. Children seemed to invest much time in developing paintings, drawings, and collages. This conclusion was determined from the rich colorful and detailed presentation of these artifacts. Most of the artifacts were developed during group activities.

Interviews

The interviews were useful to uncover the meaning structures that participants used to organize their experiences and make sense of their worlds (Hatch, 2002, p.91). Because these meanings are usually hidden when conducting direct observation and are not readily expressed in archival documents, qualitative interviews are viable tools for bringing these meanings to the surface (Hatch, 2002).

Institutional Review Board approval was granted and teachers were contacted by phone and sent e-mails inviting them to participate in the study. Teachers responded in 1 to 2 weeks from the date of receiving the e-mails with their decisions on the scheduled time they would like to participate in the interview sessions. Teachers' concerns about their participation in this study were addressed by phone: for instance, some teachers wanted to discuss in more detail the nature of the study and the time of the interviews to avoid conflicts in scheduling. They also wanted to know whether they had the flexibility to reschedule should an unexpected event occur. This was a necessary step to build a working relationship with the study's participants.

A total of nine teachers participated in the study: two teachers were selected from each prekindergarten or kindergarten class from five private preschools. One teacher agreed to participate but later withdrew because of conflicts with family responsibilities. The director of this specific preschool was asked if another teacher might be willing to participate and suggested that I could contact other teachers from this preschool. I met with other teachers from the school and, after discussing the nature of the study, 1 of the other teachers who also met the criteria for the study volunteered to participate.

All interviews were conducted during each teacher's lunch break. Teachers were asked to review and sign the teacher consent forms at the time of the interviews because I was unable to schedule a preliminary meeting with them prior to the date of the interviews. Participants were reminded that their privacy and confidentiality would be protected in all phases of the data collection process. Letters and numbers were used to identify participants and private schools. A copy of their signed consent form was given to each teacher. Teachers were also informed that interview interpretations would be available to them to be reviewed at the completion of the study. The interview questions provided in Appendix I were intentionally designed to be open ended, allowing participants to candidly provide in-depth responses about their perceptions of relationships and creativity (Merriam & Associates, 2002).

Each interview session lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and each teacher provided in-depth responses to the interview questions. The tape recorder malfunctioned during one interview and the teacher and I rescheduled for the following week. Other devices were made available to document teachers' responses should some of the

teachers have felt uncomfortable being recorded. All interview sessions were recorded and transcribed verbatim immediately after the completed sessions.

After conducting the interviews, the recordings were played several times to ensure accurate documentation of teachers' responses. I had been concerned about whether teachers were honest in sharing their perspectives. These teachers really focused on answering the questions, although they occasionally ventured to address unrelated issues. The interview questions are provided in this chapter along with portions of the teachers' responses. A detailed description of themes is provided in the findings to inform the research questions.

During the interview sessions, all teachers were eager to provide and share information. They were patient and seemed to respond to the interview questions candidly. The interviews were conducted during the teachers' lunch breaks in each teacher's respective classroom, office, or lounge, depending on each teacher's choice. During the interview sessions I felt uncomfortable that the teachers had to schedule these sessions on their lunch breaks, and I was also concerned that my presence might have affected how teachers responded to the questions.

I was careful to recognize my own personal biases and frequently engaged in self-reflection, documenting my personal impressions throughout the interview sessions. Teacher A7 indicated that she was nervous and was hesitant to participate even though she originally agreed. Although she was offered the opportunity to express her feelings about participating in the study, she seemed to be really concerned about whether she was prepared for the interviews based on earlier discussions related to the study. I was willing to allow her another chance to express her feelings again before actually conducting the

interviews. As the interview session began she became more relaxed, and even though

she sometimes addressed issues unrelated to the interview questions, I carefully

redirected the focus to the interview questions.

Data Management

A locked file cabinet was labeled to assemble the data collected. Coding links

were developed to provide easy access to consent, permission, and agreement forms,

archival documents, interview transcripts, and memos. In addition, a separate computer

file was created using abbreviation codes for easy access whereby all coding that entailed

similar abbreviations were printed and merged together. Paper copies of each teacher's

interview transcript were printed and the recorded tapes with the teachers' responses were

stored safely in a file cabinet. All documents were filed separately according to their

nature; distinct letters were used to identify each school. Other files were used to save the

research log and reflective journal (see Appendix I, Table I2 for data-collection devices

used in this study).

Researcher's Bias

In ensuring that researcher's bias minimally affected the validity or reliability of

the study, personal impressions and feelings were bracketed throughout the data-

collection and -analysis processes. Hatch (2002) proposed bracketing to allow the

researcher to document personal biases separately, so they do not interfere with the

credibility of the study.

Evidence of Data Collection

All data for the interviews were collected between September and November 2009 (see Appendix I, Table I2, which presents the private preschools, types of documents collected, and date of collection of the data from all teachers).

Data Analysis and Emerging Understanding

Data analysis entails a systematic approach to ensure that the themes and categories can provide a deep understanding of the phenomenon to inform the research questions. I employed color and letter coding to assist in data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). By using this type of coding I was able to identify themes and categories and determine the similarities and differences among these themes and where they could be positioned in an overarching category. Data analysis began by identifying themes and categories immediately after the first set of data were collected. These analytical procedures involved "reading through the field notes or listen[ing] to interview tapes, images, words to identify themes, recurring ideas or language and patterns of belief that help the researcher to respond to the research questions" (Rossman & Rollis, 1998, p. 180). The constant-comparison method developed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) was used to compare and contrast the relationships among the findings in the data collected.

Constant-Comparison Methods

The constant-comparison method was an effective approach for this study because I was provided with flexible options in identifying relationships between various themes in order to encompass them in larger categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This method was used to compare and contrast the responses of the participants to derive a deeper understanding of their perceptions of classroom relationships and creativity.

Coding Process

Coding allowed the use of specific abbreviations in interpreting the data. After the first interview, I transcribed the interview verbatim, and the coding process was immediately applied. This coding process entailed bracketing large sections of the data by assigning different letter codes (see Appendix J), and abbreviations were provided with a definition for each code (see Appendix K). These codes were developed based on the research questions and were used to analyze the interviews collected from all teachers. During the coding process the emergence of new information was accommodated through the development of new abbreviations.

A thorough review of the data was conducted to determine where to classify new insights from the data. This coding process was repeated until the data were completely saturated. Copies of the interviews and coding abbreviations from each teacher were printed and saved separately in the file cabinet. These alternative steps were necessary to keep evidence of the data and also for backup in case there was a computer error. Various codes were examined to identify the relationships between the themes and were merged into major categories. By using multiple codes, I was clear on the precise consistency of coding, that is, whether agreement was seen in code names, coded passages, or the same passages coded the same way (Rossman & Rollis, 1998).

Memo Writing

During the coding process, a memorandum was used to document various forms of code. Theoretical and operational notes were documented throughout the data-collection and -analysis process, and the emergence of themes and other concepts were documented during this process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I used the memorandum as a

tool to help provide a systematic approach in identifying the themes and patterns that could be useful during data analysis.

School-Document Analysis

During the school-document-analysis procedure, the newsletters, school policies, and curricula for all schools were read and analyzed using open, axial, and selective coding. Each document was revised several times. Any discussions related to preschool environments, relationships, and creativity, and that also reflected Torrance's (1964) four aspects of creative thinking—fluency, elaboration, flexibility and originality—were coded.

Large sections of the data that showed any form of the factors listed above were bracketed. During axial coding, themes and patterns were identified. Letter abbreviations were applied to the emergence of recurring themes, and patterns and these themes were systematically placed under major categories at the final stage of selective coding. Although contrary and new information often emerged during this process, such as staff-development procedures, parent involvement, finances, and school tuition, this information was not coded because I was only interested in gathering information that could inform the two research questions. This coding procedure was followed consistently to maintain clarity in the analysis and the presentation of the findings. A sample excerpt of coded data from School B's curriculum appears in Appendix C.

Websites-Document Analysis

During the website-document-analysis procedure, the newsletters, school policies, and curricula for all schools were read and analyzed using open, axial, and selective coding. Any discussions related to preschool environments, relationships, and creativity,

and those that also reflect Torrance's (1964) four aspects of creative thinking—fluency, elaboration, flexibility and originality—were coded.

Large sections of the data that showed any form of the factors listed above were bracketed. During axial coding, themes and patterns were identified. Letter abbreviations were applied to the emergence of recurring themes, and patterns and these themes were systematically placed under major categories at the final stage of selective coding. While contrary and new information often emerged during this analysis, it was not coded because I was only interested in gathering information that could inform the two research questions. These coding procedures were followed consistently to maintain clarity in the analysis and the presentation of the findings. A sample excerpt of coded data from the curriculum for School E is provided in Appendix D.

Artifact Analysis

Hatch (2002) suggested that archival documents can provide additional insight into the way people think. In addition, " they can tell their own story independent of the interpretation of the participants" (Hatch, 2002, p.119). D. W. Moore et al. (2009) claimed that the TTCT is an effective instrument to measure creativity in divergent thinking of children from various age groups. These artifacts were analyzed by applying the codes related to the definitions in the adapted rubric, based on the 13 creative-strengths criteria (see Appendix L).

During the artifact-analysis process I observed small samples of the art projects, which included collage and painting, and applied the letter codes provided in the rubric to those sections that showed evidence of any of the 13 creative-strengths criteria (see Appendix E) for coded sample copies of School A and B children's art projects. After

these criteria strengths were determined based on the rubric results, they were merged across schools to identify patterns and themes.

The results of the creative outcome of these artifacts were determined based on Torrance's (1964) four aspects of creative thinking: fluency, flexibility, elaboration, and originality. For example, if the art projects expressed the repetitions of circles and lines and connections of lines as determined by the results of the rubric evaluation, this artwork might be showing aspects of flexibility. Should the artwork expressed colorful images or lively and vivid images, reflected by the results of the rubric evaluation, these art projects might be showing aspects of elaboration. See Appendix F sample-coded copies of School C and D art projects.

Interview Analysis

The analysis procedures were applied immediately after the first set of data collection using open, axial and selective coding. During open coding the data were dismantled. The purpose of dismantling the data sets was to reorganize the data in new ways, and use the constant-comparison approach to identify themes and patterns between data sets. Large sections of the data that showed any aspects of social and creative skills development were coded using letter abbreviations. The next step was the application of axial coding to develop categories and evaluate them by examining how the conditions, context, and interaction of these categories could inform the research questions. A more comprehensive knowledge of the relationship between the categories, subcategories, themes, and patterns became apparent. Selective coding is the final process that allowed me to systematically organized main categories generated from the teachers' interview responses, relating them to other categories, confirming those relationships, and

providing an explanation for categories that were underdeveloped. In this study, all aspects of the coding components were evaluated to determine an overall explanation of codes. The intent of the coding procedure was not to develop a grounded theory but rather to enable me to derive a deeper understanding of experiences and interactions of the phenomenon in its natural setting.

Research Findings

The findings for the websites and school documents, artifacts, and interviews are presented through diagrams and themes from all data sources that inform the research questions. Every effort was made to provide a systematic presentation of the findings . After the themes and patterns were identified, several studies were provided from the literature review and used throughout the analysis to support the findings.

Findings From School and Website Documents

Letters were used to identify each school for privacy protection. Excerpts from some of these private schools' online websites and/or school documents, including school policies, curricula, and newsletters, are provided wherever necessary. Schools A, B, C, D, and E are presented, along with specific documents from which the data were retrieved. Themes developed for Schools C and D were generated only from school documents, because these two schools were unable to provide online website documents. Several subthemes were developed based on the main themes derived from all schools and were discussed according their importance informing the research questions.

RQ 1. Research Question 1 asked, How do preschool environments impact the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships? Four major themes and subthemes were identified (see Figure 3).
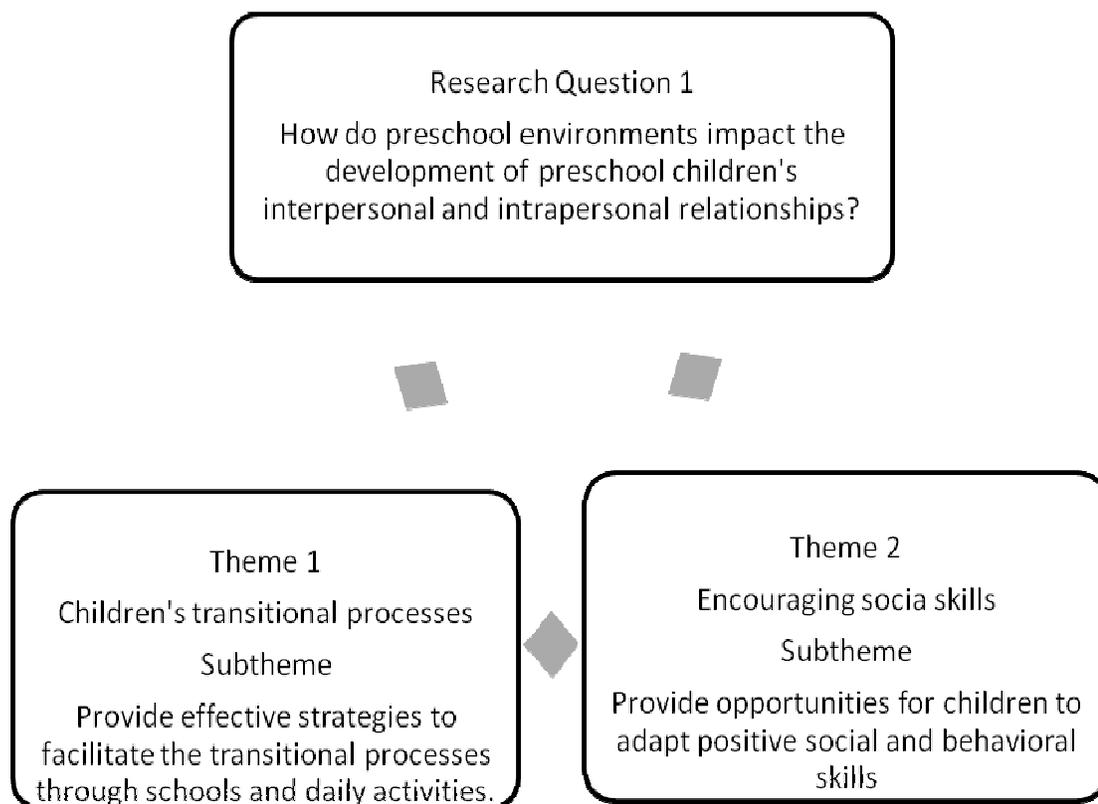
Figure 3. Themes for RQ 1.

Theme 1: Children's transitional processes. The evaluation of the school and

website documents showed that the transitional processes in preschool environments

seemed to be an important aspect in the development of preschool children's

interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. The information in these documents

indicated that helping children, encouraging them to learn how to adjust to new situations

or settings can be useful in facilitating transitional processes. As documented in School

E's curriculum, "Our kindergarten program introduces the skills needed to ensure a

smooth transition to grade school through developmentally appropriate skills building

and project based tasks." School E's curriculum further stated that,

as children enter the larger world of school and community they begin to compare themselves to others in their abilities to perform tasks, to make friends and to be in control. The way they see themselves in this comparison will either motivate them to further achievements or frustrate them into giving up.

Dong and Juhu (2003), suggested that when children developed socially competent skills, they were able to transition with minimal difficulties into other schools or grade levels, their academic performance improved, and they were able to establish and maintain long-lasting relationships. Schools C and D policies stated that "our curriculum has a developmental approach to early childhood academic education, creating and ensuring a solid foundation for future academic learning."

Based on the information noted in School A's school policies, it is very important for teachers to assist children with activities to help them develop transitional skills. Several discussions in these documents illustrated other ways teachers can be helpful during the transitional processes. For instance, as documented in the online website of School A's school policies mission statement, "Provide a Christ-centered environment that fosters a child's individual growth by meeting his or her needs and by building important foundations for their future spiritual, physical, social and academic pursuits."

Theme 2: Encouraging social skills. School E's curriculum stated that various opportunities were provided for children to develop positive social-behavior skills. Based on the evaluation of these documents, social skills are encouraged and supported in preschool environments. These findings reflect that when teachers encouraged children's social skills they were more able to develop interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. For instance, School E curriculum further stated that, "adults provide many varied

opportunities for children to communicate." According to this curriculum "Children learn self discipline as they learn respect for themselves, others and their environment." Lane et al. (2007) revealed that when desires are shared among teachers, peers, and parents, problem behaviors are greatly reduced and social skills and peer relationships are enhanced such that children are able to learn, create, and explore.

As noted on School B's online website document, "Encourage playing together and sharing. When two children are fighting, 'He has the truck now; next it will be your turn. You can play with the boat.' However, [ensures] that the second child receives his turn." The interaction among peers, teachers, and children can provide choices for children such that children can decide their own activity, where, when, and with whom they want to work (Katz & Chard, 2000).

Summary of themes for RQ 1. Based on the school and website documents it seems that preschool environments may be relevant in facilitating the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships.. Preschool environments can provide opportunities for children to develop their transitional skills through their participation in various activities. This assumption is supported by the information provided in the curricula and school policies of all schools.

In addition, confirmed with the information derived from these documents, it seems that encouraging children's social skills involves reinforcing certain disciplinary actions. The curricula noted that preschool children's ability to transition to the larger communities, and other schools as well as between school activities are very important, and teachers ensure that children are able to develop the skills that will contribute to a smooth transition in these areas.

Logue (2007) indicated that preschool environments can be relevant in presenting activities to assist children as they transition in schools. "Socially competent children can readily learn strategies for communicating easily with their peers and can engage comfortably in the creative processes and everyday experiences at school and home" (Joseph & Strain, 2003, p. 66). Children are able to apply themselves to additional academic challenges and transition into various grade levels with little difficulty when they develop transitional skills.

Dong and Juhu (2003) suggested that during early childhood, peer relationships relate to children's perspectives of their educational achievement, transition in school, and psychological well-being in adulthood. This findings indicated that the relationships children develop during their early years have a lasting effect on their abilities to extend themselves into the larger society, to be inspired in educational pursuits, and to develop positive self-concepts.

When children develop transitional skills they can adapt to challenging situations, develop various perspectives, and apply themselves appropriately in social situations. The interaction among peers, teachers, and children can provide choices for children such that children can decide their own activity, where, when, and with whom they want to work (Katz & Chard, 2000). Children's levels of development are influenced by their abilities to develop social skills that are reflected in their interaction styles and classroom relationships. These skills enable children to transition with minimal difficulty to other schools and grade levels (Ladd et al., 2006).

RQ 2. Research Question 2 asked, How do preschool environments impact the development of preschool children's creative skills? The research question was used to guide the interpretations of the themes for Research Question 2 (see Figure 4).
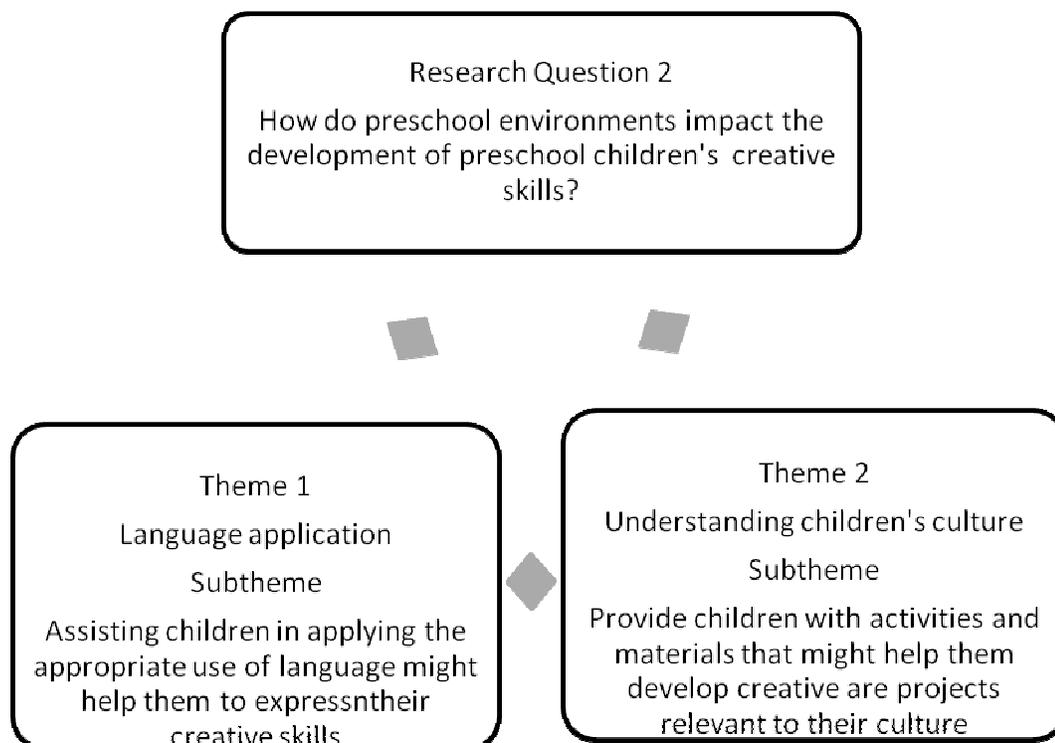
Figure 4. Themes developed for RQ 2.

Theme 1: Language application. According to the information presented in these documents, when opportunities are provided in preschool environments to help children to apply the appropriate use of language, they are more able to express creative ideas. Based on the school and website documents, language application seems to be a relevant factor in preschool environments to help children with creative-skills development. For instance, School E's curriculum indicated, "Support the child's home language because language development is central to general cognitive development, children need to have access to learning concepts through the language they know." Language is an effective

medium to transmit information and the effective use of language is determined by the

child's ability to use it appropriately in expressing their emotions (H. L. Johnson, 2007;

Katz, 1998; Pitri, 2007). The findings also showed that language skills are influenced by

home, school, and societal expectations and can be used to help children communicate

original ideas, thus sharing creative ideas. As documented in School B website

documentation, "our school has an international a multicultural population. We cherish

children and families from various backgrounds." Communication is critical to the

creative processes of young children and enables them to derive meaning through art,

communication, and interaction (Katz, 1998).

   Theme 2: Understanding children's culture. Teachers provide children with

activities and materials that may help them develop creative art projects relevant to their

own culture. Based on several of the websites and school-document evaluation, some

preschool environments focus on understanding children's culture, which is also

important to the creative process. The School E curriculum stated that,

   multicultural education is more than teaching information directly. It means

   providing a classroom that includes materials depicting people from many

   different places doing many different things. It is also encouraging children to act,

   think and talk like members of their own culture.

   Teachers need to value and support all aspects of children's development. It is

through understanding and learning about the diverse nature of families that teachers can

provide preschool environments that can foster preschool children's cognitive, social, and

physical development (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Duffy, 2006). In addition, the School

E curriculum stated that "teachers believe that it is valuable for children to be able to

generate their own ideas, figure out answers for themselves and try out a variety of solutions until they find out what works." School A's policies stated that "experiences with many different types of materials which allow children to explore and discover, concentrate and carry out plans, develops motor skills and controls, and helps the child express feelings of happiness and anger as they create and recreate."

Summary of themes for RQ 2. The information in the school and website documents showed that preparing preschool environments with the appropriate resources and support can be helpful in the development of appropriate social and creative skills. These skills are necessary to help children apply language effectively to communicate with others. School E's curriculum emphasized the importance of applying a multicultural approach to meet the needs of a diverse body of students: as noted in School E's curriculum, "provide opportunities to help children understand other cultures by providing multicultural materials and allowing these children to participate in various multicultural activities, which may enhance children's creative skills" (Duffy, 2006). Although there were no in-depth discussions in Schools A, B, C, and D's websites and school documents related to the cultural aspects of children's social and creative-skills development, they noted that they accommodate the cultural aspects of children's creative skills by providing open-ended materials that children can use creatively.

Artifact Findings

Table 2 presents the school and artifact evaluation along with the outcome of each school's creative strengths. School E was unable to provide art projects and therefore this school is not listed. Codes were applied to these artifacts after they were evaluated and the definitions in the rubric were applied that were consistent with each artifact's creative

strengths. The presence of creative skills was then determined based on Torrance's

(1964) four aspects of creative thinking. Table 2 interprets the creative strengths of

School A, B, C, and D's results based on the rubric evaluation.

Table 2

School Artifacts Evaluation

Schools	Art projects	Creative strengths (coded)
A	Painting	CI RI SLC SIF F EE UV EB
B	Painting	CI RI SLC SIF F MA UV EB
C	Collage	CI RI SLC SIF F H UV EB
D	Collage	CI RI SLC SIF F EE UV EB

Note. The code definitions are provided in the adapted rubric. CI = colorful images; RI = rich imagery; SLC = synthesis of lines and circles; SIF = synthesis of incomplete figures; F = fantasy; EE = emotional expressiveness; UV = unusual visualization; EB = extending boundaries.

In Table 2, CI refers to the presence of colorful images that are appealing and

stimulate the senses. RI refers to the presence of richness of imagery that is lively, vivid,

and vibrant. SLC refers to the presence of a synthesis of lines and circles or repetitions of

lines and circles. SIF refers to the presence of a synthesis of incomplete figures and

connections of lines. F refers to the presence of fantasy, abstraction, and imagination. EE

refers to the presence of emotional expressiveness and the types of emotions shown in the

drawing. UV refers to the presence of unusual visualization, a view that is different from

the usual. EB refers to the presence of extending or breaking boundaries in the directions

of lines that are parallel and vertical. The creative strengths common in all school

outcomes were merged across schools in Figure 5 to identify patterns based on rubric

results.

School A
Painting

Creative strengths
Colorfulness of imagery
Richness of imagery
Repetions of lines and circles
Connection of lines
Abstract, Imagination
The directions of lines
parallel and vertical
Unusal visualization

School B
Painting

School C
Collage
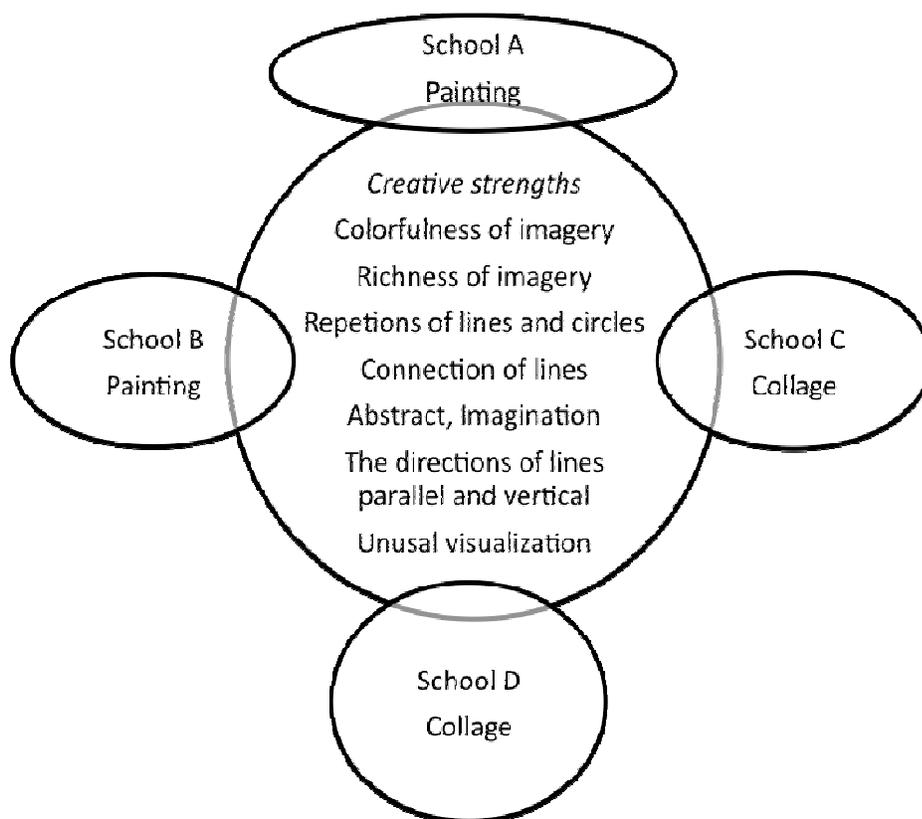
School D
Collage

Figure 5. Creative strengths across schools.

As determined by the results, creative-strength outcomes for all school art projects

reflected colorfulness of imagery, richness of imagery, repetitions of lines and circles,

connections of lines, abstraction, imagination, and unusual visualization. In applying

Torrance's four aspects of creative thinking to these artifacts, the results seem to show

evidence of fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. The presence of fluency was

interpreted through the different approaches and ideas these children used that reflect

their feelings in their development of the artifacts. Flexibility was expressed through the

approaches used related to the directions of lines and circles. For instance, some lines are

repetitive, whereas others may be parallel or vertical. Originality was expressed through

unusual visualization, which included artifacts that demonstrated abstract and imaginative

ideas. Finally, elaboration was interpreted through the presentation of colors, richness of imagery, vividness, and liveliness.

After the results were analyzed and grounded in Torrance's (1964) four aspects of creative thinking, the literature was reviewed to locate other studies that also used the TTCT. Studies were conducted to examine the purposes, content area, norm reliability, and validity of the TTCT-Figural and found that the TTCT-Figural is not only used to identify gifted children's abilities but also is a valuable instrument to nurture and support creativity among all students (Kaufman & Baer, 2006; Kyung, 2006). Other studies (Finkel, 1975; Foster & Penick, 1985; Golovin, 1993; Justo, 2006; Ogletree, 1996; Smith, 1983) found that although creativity could be evaluated applying Torrance's four aspects of creative thinking, environmental factors also can impact creative outcomes. Environmental factors include the organization and presentation of materials that encourage creative-skill expression, as well as the teaching approaches applied to accommodate the creative abilities of all children. The authors pointed out that the environment plays a key role in children's abilities to express their creative skills because their self-identity and capabilities are also reflected in their interaction in the environment. Based on the artifacts, evaluation, and literature review, five themes and their respective subthemes were identified, grounded in the literature, and used to support the artifact findings.

Research Question 1 included two themes and two subthemes. Research Question 2 entailed three themes and three subthemes. The research questions provided the framework to guide the interpretation of the findings.

Themes for RQ 1. Research Question 1 asked, How do preschool environments impact the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships? (see Figure 6).

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┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│         Research Question 2          │
│   How do preschool environments      │
│   impact the development of          │
│   preschool children's interpersonal │
│   and intrapersonal relationships?   │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘

┌────────────────────┐        ┌────────────────────┐
│      Theme 1       │        │      Theme 2       │
│ Cooperative learning│        │ Children's self-concept │
│      Subtheme      │        │      Subtheme      │
│ Grouping children  │        │ Provide opportunities │
│ together enable    │        │ for children to     │
│ them to build      │        │ develop positive    │
│ social skills      │        │ self images        │
└────────────────────┘        └────────────────────┘
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Figure 6. Themes developed for RQ 1.

Theme 1: Cooperative learning: Grouping children together as they engage in various tasks helps them to build social skills. Foster and Penick (1985) conducted a study that used the TTCT to identify creative thinking in young children. The results of the study suggested that although TTCT results are relevant in learning about children's creative skills, the creative results also can be impacted by environmental factors. Foster and Penick indicated that when children engage in small-group cooperative activities they can build social skills that may enhance the development of creative skills.

Theme 2: Children's self-concept: Providing opportunities for children to build positive self-images might enhance their creative skills. Justo (2006) suggested that children's creative-skills capacity influenced how they view themselves in preschool environments. According to Justo, if children view themselves as positive social beings they will be able to develop the necessary skills to contribute to their creative abilities.

Summary of themes for RQ 1. In reviewing the literature, I was able to explore few studies to ground the artifact evaluation results that were relavent to the impact of preschool environments on the development of classroom relationships and creativity. These studies indicated that cooperative learning and children's self-concept may be relevant to their development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. When childen participate in cooperative learning, they are able to share creative ideas, build social skills, and learn more about themselves and others.

Furthermore, children are able to interpret situations from various perspectives that enable them to make critical decisions that might enhance their social- and creative-skills development. Based on the results of these studies, preschool environments may be relevant in supporting the development of these skills when teachers reinforce cooperative learning that may help children develop positive self-concepts. Children learn about social responsibilities during cooperative learning where they can apply their creative skills, develop new ideas, explore these ideas together, and apply them in supportive preschool environments.

Themes for RQ 2. Research Question 2 asks, How do preschool environments impact the development of preschool children's development of creative skills? The

research question was used to guide the intrerpretations of the fndings for Research

Question 2 (see Figure 7).
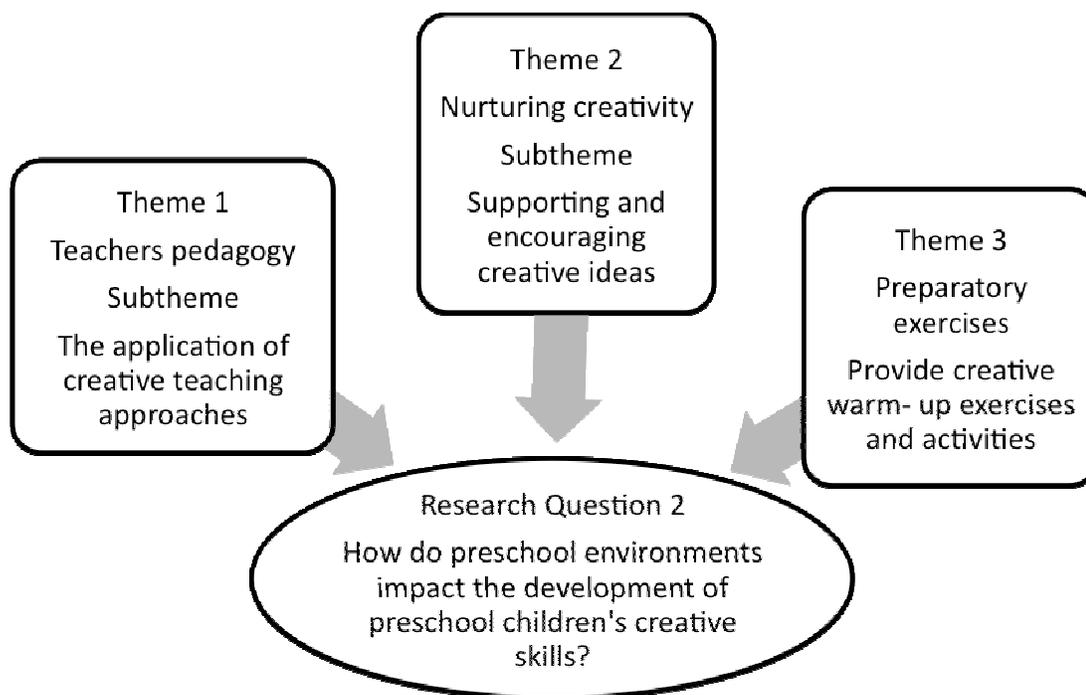
Figure 7. Themes developed for RQ 2.

Theme 1: Teachers' pedagogy: The application of creative teaching

approaches, in which the teacher is able to adapt a classroom culture to facilitate

creative-skills development, is relevant to creative processes. Finkel (1975) applied the

TTCT to identify imagination and creative skills in children using activities, role play,

creative expression, drama, and art, and found that students exhibited a high level of

creativity in learning when teachers encouraged creative behavior in preschool

environments.

Theme 2: Nurturing creativity: Supporting and encouraging creativity is

important to help children actualize all of their creative skills. Creative-skills

development can be nurtured through the types of curricula and the relationships children establish with their teachers. The findings support Ogletree (1996), indicating that maturational readiness and a nurturing curriculum, along with less emphasis on academics, having the same teachers, and using art instruction, are effective approaches to apply in nurturing creativity.

Theme 3: Preparatory exercises: Providing creative warm-up exercises and activities help children participate, as part of facilitating the creative process. Findings are in agreement with Smith (1983) who emphasized that when children are provided with materials to engage in warm-up exercises that include physical and cognitive activities, they are able to apply themselves more creatively to engage in independent and social tasks.

Summary of artifact themes for RQ 2: Nurturing creativity, teachers' pedagogy **and** *preparatory exercises.* These themes were found to be relevant to the creative process. Although studies (Finkel, 1975; Ogletree, 1996; Smith, 1983) suggested that TTCT can be important to identifying creative-thinking abilities of young children, these studies also suggested that the nature of environmental elements can be a significant factor in the development of creative skills. According to these findings other factors to consider in the environment that can impact creative development are the abilities of teachers to nurture creativity. In addition, teachers must be able to support and identify creative children's characteristics, apply varied teaching approaches, and encourage children to develop creative ideas.

Interview Findings

The purpose of the study was to examine strategies used by teachers in preschool environments to determine whether preschool environments nurture the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. After the interviews were transcribed, themes and categories were identified using similar coding keys to those used in the documents analysis to inform the research questions. The aim in using similar coding keys in both documents and interview transcripts was to provide consistency in coding procedures and demonstrate more clarity in the interpretation of the findings. Figures are provided that present the relationships of each theme to the research questions. The participants were asked a variety of questions during the interview sessions to examine their perspectives on how preschool environments impact the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills.

The first part of this discussion presents each interview question in sequential order, accompanied by brief portions of teachers' responses deemed appropriate to inform the interview questions. At the end of the interview questions, the first research question is presented and additional in-depth responses are provided based on the teachers' responses and are applied where appropriate to inform Research Question 1. Research Question 1 entails five themes followed by an overall summary. At the end of the findings for Research Question 1, Research Question 2 is presented along with additional in-depth responses from the teachers that are applied where appropriate to inform Research Question 2. Research Question 2 entails four themes and an overall summary.

Interview Question 1. In your opinion how important is a teacher–child and peer relationship?

Teachers' responses. All teachers felt that teacher–child and peer relationships are critical to children's development. Teacher A1 reported, "They are extremely important because if you have a good relationship with a child they are going to participate in the activities involved." In addition Teacher A9 mentioned,

> In my opinion I think it is very important in early childhood especially for children to have with adult and people of their own age that's help them develop a sense of community and they need somebody they can rely on somebody they can relate to somebody they need to be able to feel comfortable with.

Researcher's reflection. Based on these teachers responses they seemed to view relationships as central to children's overall development. They believed that good relationships allow children to develop trust, participate in various social tasks with others, and become aware of their own and other people feelings. Teachers in turn can provide opportunities for them to share their feelings in a supportive setting.

Interview Question 2. What are your thoughts about the importance of supporting creativity in the early years of children's development?

Teachers' responses. Teacher A3 reported,

> It is important to support creativity because in each one of us I think we are creative and if we did not support that the children will grow up thinking they are not which is not true and we want to encourage them to believe in themselves and not feeling that their creativity they have is not important because it helps their self-esteem so I really encourage that their creativity.

For instance, Teacher A4 indicated,

> I think its very important for children to create and for them to be encouraged to
>
> create for them to be dramatic or make up their own stories or do art projects and
>
> be able to do them in their own way and express themselves.

Researchers' reflection. The teachers similarly agreed that children's creative skills are important and that they can contribute in various ways to support these creative skills. Teachers mentioned that they encourage children's creative skills by providing dramatic-play activities inside and outside of the classroom. Children participate in different roles and occupations and are able to express these roles creatively.

Interview Question 3. What qualities do you feel are important in teachers' pedagogy in supporting creative skills in young children?

Teachers' responses. Teacher A5 believed, "Well I feel letting the child set their own space build spontaneous self development I let them work at their own pace and they are developing themselves what they can do." According to Teacher A6,

> They should learn to allow the child to express themselves in their own way the
>
> teacher is able to find out what is hidden in the child, what they like to do, what
>
> they like to create and want to promote to develop their creative inside of them.

Researchers' reflection. These teachers believed that they should not always provide children with solutions, instead allow them to develop the skills to solve problems among themselves and with their peers in a warm and supportive setting. According to these teachers children must be able to sort things out themselves with very little teacher involvement. This approach will help the child to feel more competent and develop their critical-thinking skills.

Interview Question 4. What are your thoughts about the organization of preschool environments?

Teachers' responses. According to Teacher A8,

I personally don't work in a center where everything is being broken down into centers but I do believe in them I believe that each center should have a dramatic play area, a science area, a writing area, a math center, I believe in centers.

In addition, Teacher A7 reported that "A lot of visual the environment should have a lot of visual its good for the kids to see that brings out curiosity in them."

Researchers' reflection. These teachers believed that the environment should be organized to allow children easy access to materials, children can develop various skills, and children can choose whether they want to work independently or in groups. Some believed that there should be specific locations for children to engage in various activities of their choice. The teachers explained that preschool environments should promote independence and group activities to enable children to develop socially and creatively.

Interview Question 5. How do you feel about the type of materials that should be used in and outside of the classrooms?

Teachers' responses. Teacher A7 revealed, "I think the material should be something that kind of entices them to acquire thinking types situation where they are using their little mind to manipulate things, create things." Teacher A8 further indicated that, "I think that kids are very creative with things like play dough, money, shaving cream, cotton, even just paper is great material to be creative."

Researcher's reflection. Teachers agreed that the materials used in preschool environments should be flexible enough to allow children to manipulate them in various

ways. Based on these teachers responses, the materials used inside and outside the classroom should serve multidimensional purposes. This diversity will allow children to express various levels of their creative skills. The teachers indicated that these types of materials will help children use cognitive and social skills and provide varied solutions and creative ideas in different ways.

Interview Question 6. What kind of support do you think is needed to help in developing the quality and types of relationships you feel are important for children to build their creative skills?

Teachers' responses. Teacher A1 stated that "I think in order to foster any types of relationships is done in a whole family approach, the parents need to support the teachers in their decisions and not to go against the teachers." Similarly, Teacher A9 indicated,

> The children supporting them, I think being able to make connection with each child, they need to feel that you are a person that wouldn't look down on them and that they can trust you, as long as they can build that trust in you and they feel comfortable.

Researchers' reflection. These teachers believed that even though parents' involvement with children is important in supporting children's creative skills, they agreed that teachers need to be able to make personal connections with each child because children spend most of their time in teachers' care. They believed that in order to make connections, teachers need to provide children with warm, positive, and constructive responses.

Interview Question 7. What are your perspectives related to collaborative activities in the development of children's social and creative skills?

Teachers' responses. Teacher A4 mentioned that, "Well, I think developmentally it certainly depends upon the age of the child." Similarly Teacher A7 revealed,

I like that, I encourage that it helps them to come out of their selfishness that they usually operate with until they are about 5 years old, that kind of play helps them to learn consideration for those around them.

Researchers' reflection. Although some teachers believed that collaborative activities are important to the development of each child and strongly encouraged it, Teachers A3 and A7 believed it could be problematic. Those teachers who supported collaborative activities indicated that children are able to work with others in collaborative tasks, which in turn can build their social and creative skills. In addition, Teacher A9 and Teacher A4 indicated that the developmental stage of the child must be considered when encouraging them to participate in various activities that might not be at their developmental level.

Interview Question 8. In your opinion, do you think that various forms of play are critical to the development of social and creative skills? Explain.

Teachers responses. According to Teacher A2, "I saw them you know learning that from each other and playing that out and with their creative skills. I see that when they get the Legos out and the Lincoln Logs they start building things." In addition, According to Teacher A6 "Yes, I think the child learn from dramatic play how to express themselves, they have an imagination they do this role play and I think that's very important for them."

Researchers' reflection. Teachers felt that play in all forms is important. They believed that various forms of play build children's cognitive, social, and physical development. They believed that children learn to negotiate, take turns, feel empathy, and learn about their own capabilities through various playful activities. Based on these teachers' responses, they provide opportunities for children to participate in all forms of play.

Interview Question 9. Can you explain the strategies you used to identify creative skills?

Teachers responses. According to Teacher A5, "Well what I do is I don't remember strategies what I do is I observe and evaluate the situation or the fact and that's how I am able to know the type of creative ability that the child has." Teacher A1 revealed that "my strategy is mainly observation to identify creative abilities it could be expand in a number of ways, it could be how a child respond to a question are they thinking outside the box?"

Researchers' reflection. These teachers believed that observing children is the key component in learning about and understanding the creative and social-skills levels. The teachers mentioned that they observe children as they participate in various activities. However, although these teachers mentioned that observation is the key component in indentifying children's creative and social skills, only 1 teacher was able to provide an observation checklist of children's progress.

Interview Question 10. What is your opinion related to creativity enhancing curricula?

Teachers' responses. According to Teacher A2,

Well I prefer creative enhancing curricula, I am artistic myself that anything else

and there are so much that children need to know before they ever get to

kindergarten and if you are their first experience to learning and if its creative it's

more fun and it's not so threatening.

Researcher's reflection. These teachers believed that it is important to implement

creativity enhancing curricula that help children develop original ideas, create, problem

solve, and experiment to determine outcomes. Some of the teachers mentioned that

providing creativity-enhancing curriculum allowed them to be more flexible in their

teaching approaches, particularly when they exhausted their own ideas. Teacher A7 said

that even though some teachers might not be creative they should act as if they are to

facilitate children's creative skills.

Although teachers greatest intention seemed to be to nurture the development of

children's creative skills and interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, they also

mentioned that demand for academics among parents and administrators makes it

difficult to devote the appropriate amount of time to support these skills. However, some

teachers indicated that they modify the curriculum occasionally to accommodate

children's social and creative-skills expression. These teachers believed that the

implementation of creative curriculum, particularly during the early years of children's

development, can be a viable tool in helping them develop critical-thinking, problem-

solving, and social skills.

Relation of interviews to RQ 1. How do preschool environments impact the

development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships?

During the in-depth interviews teachers were asked a variety of questions to examine the

strategies they used in preschool environments to nurture preschool children's

development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. The teachers' responses to

Research Question 1 contributed to five main themes (see Figure 8).
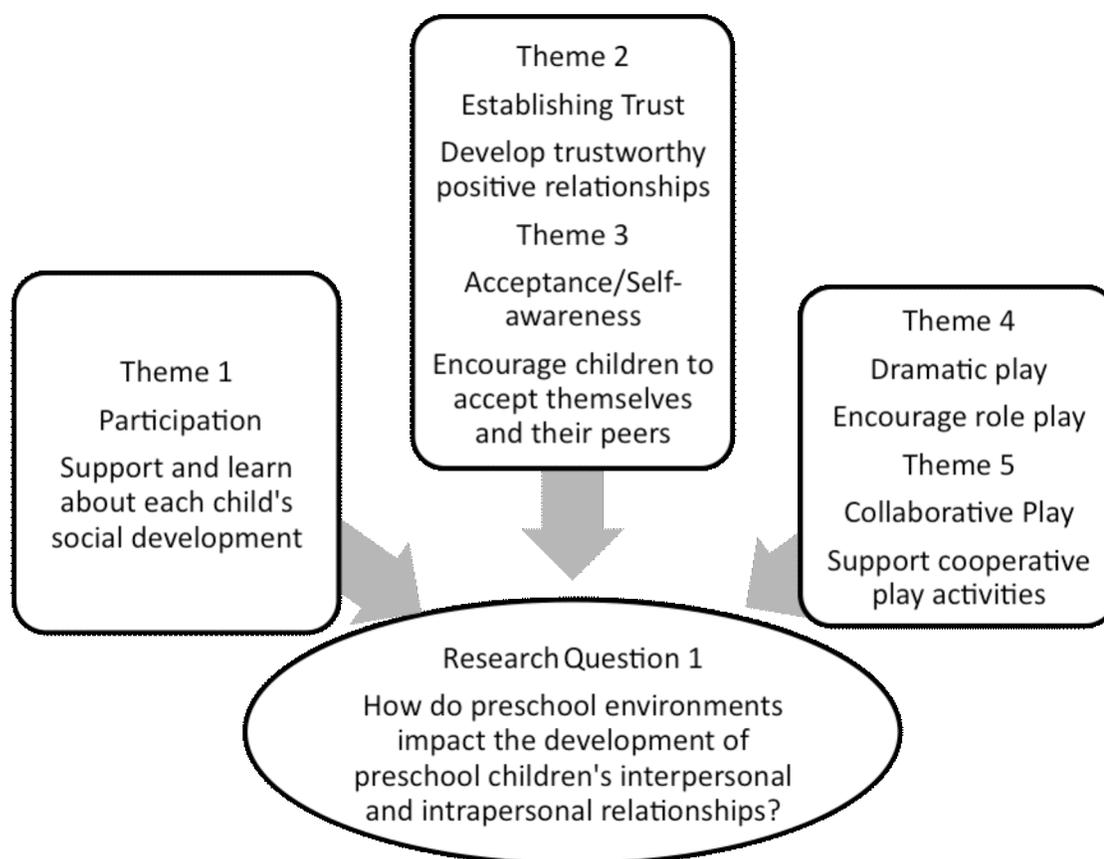
Figure 8. Diagram of themes for RQ 1.

Summary of interview themes for RQ 1. How do preschool environments impact

the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships?

The research determined the following overall beliefs about how preschool environments

impact the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships.

Summary: Theme 1, participation RQ 1.

1. Teachers believed that in preschool environments participation with warm and responsive teachers will help children build their social skills.

2. Teachers believed that participation in preschool environments required the teachers' abilities to listen and understand the capabilities of each child and provide social tasks to assist them in building relationships.

3. Teachers believed that participation embodied teachers' support of emerging skills that are not fully matured but are evident in the developing child, enabling the child to develop their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.

4. Teachers believed that participation with teachers and peers in preschool environments should be based on encouraging children's ability to explore more deeply their own interpersonal and intrapersonal development.

These teachers' overall beliefs about preschool environments and the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships included the theme *participation:* providing preschool environments in which teachers can participate in active listening, engaging children in activities to support their emerging skills, and providing warm and responsive feedback, thus providing social tasks to help them develop interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships.

Participation in preschool environments between teachers, children, and peers is an essential component in teachers' abilities to understand the capabilities of each child, such that they can support each child's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Teachers believed that allowing children to participate in

various activities with teachers and peers are critical in enhancing interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships In the words of Teacher A1,

> I don't think teachers should be there to constantly give answers, but when the children not participating in an activity, I think that teachers could help direct the kids' thinking in a positive way. I can. I think that a teachers' response can maybe just by them going over and manipulating with the stuff as well can a child that doesn't know how to manipulate, with the project they'll sit there and use it as an example.

Teachers believed that because children spent most of their time in early childhood environments, it is incumbent on teachers to provide preschool environments that can facilitate social tasks. The teachers said this will help them be more proactive in building interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. According to the teachers, these children are encouraged by positive responses from teachers and peers. Therefore as children engaged in activities in which they could participate or contribute to the task at hand, they were able to develop interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. For instance, Teacher A3 explained,

> I think they are very important for the child development and also for the teachers. I think if you have a great relationship with a child you will be able to help him better and excite him to think. Well, it is good idea they do group projects, and not only I mean each person participate, and also it helps them develop socially. It helps them develop their vocabulary and it creates relationships between children and it shows them a view, a view of the real world. That how it is in the world. I mean they would know if they want to develop as

adult they are going to have to work with peers and having colla, colla, I can't say

the word, and having collaborative activities is really helpful and we actually like

that.

Teachers believed that when children participate in social tasks, they build

interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships that help them in self-expression. They

mentioned that it is importance to support children's relationships. As these teachers

revealed, in order to enable children to excel to the highest level of their potential

development, opportunities must be provided in preschool environments to allow self-

expression of children's thoughts and ideas. Participation among teachers, children, and

peers could enhance children's development; they can learn from each other and teachers

can facilitate their learning. According to Teacher A4,

> I think it's really a good thing to start at an early age because it shows that it could
>
> be a lot of fun and think it. I mean like I said, we don't live in a vacuum and they
>
> need to learn how to interact with each other work together. But I think it's a good
>
> beginning to being creative together, you know, putting two heads together.

Teacher A2 agreed that as children engage in social activities, teachers must be

attentive to children's capabilities to nurture interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships.

Teachers can nurture these children's skills in many ways, by helping them interpret

things from different perspectives. In the words of Teacher A2,

> You have to be able to be adaptable, and, and recognize when something is not
>
> working and the ability to think on your feet and be able to change. If you try to
>
> force something to them in, in a fashion or a way they don't get, you are just, you

are annoying them and you are just frustrating yourself. So I think being able to adapt and think on your feet.

Teacher A5 revealed that children like to engage in discussion with their peers about their activities, and thus provide opportunities where this discussion can take place in the lesson plan. This teacher believed that this is important because it allows children to participate, be more inquisitive, express their creative adventures, and at the same time, question and learn from each other. This teacher indicated that these types of discussions are conducted twice per week when they have time in the lesson plan. In the words of Teacher A5,

> In my class now we have rap session because they always want to talk, so when you have a time when all the children, and they tell the whole class in a little circle. And they tell things that happened and what they like and what they do, so yes, that's how they grow together. And they ask the children question then they learn, because they tell the vacation they have, you know, a lot of different things. So that's good. So we call that our rap sessions. We do that two times a week, sometimes more if we have time, if the schedule allows it. I let them just do it because they love that.

Teacher A6 believed that teacher–child and peer relationships are important but more important to this teacher is how and when teachers should participate in facilitating children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships through the provision of social activities, because each child is at a different developmental stage. Children have different skill levels, as this teacher pointed out, and children can learn mathematics by using objects creatively. According to Teacher A6,

I think it's important for teachers to know what the child like, if a child dislike

something then you shouldn't force that child to do it. Try to find out what that

child likes and then you can compromise and try working with that child to build

their self-esteem and what they want to learn.

Teacher A9 indicated that all teachers contribute something different to these

children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, but overall this teacher indicated

that most important is the teachers' ability to provide an environment that shows love and

care to help children grow into wonderful people. According to Teacher A9,

I wouldn't pinpoint anyone as more important than any others. I think every

teacher is different: they all have different qualities but sometimes we all are

loving, we all are caring. Children are our number one priority in the field of

working with children. I think, we all grow and become these wonderful people.

Like eventually they grow up but I don't think there is one specific quality that

that each teacher has.

Summary: Theme 2, establishing trust. RQ 1. The research determined that

teachers can prepare preschool environments that promote *trusting relationships* by

providing opportunities for children to engage in positive social experiences.

1. Teachers believed that preschool environments should support trusting

    teacher–child and peer relationships that allow children to share their

    feelings with teachers who provide supportive social tasks that may

    enhance classroom relationships.

2. Teachers believed that preschool environments should support trusting

    teacher–child and peer relationships that allow teachers to respond to

children in a nonjudgmental way, thus enabling them to actualize their

social skills.

3.   Teachers believed that preschool environments should support trusting

teacher–child and peer relationships allowing children to experiment by

engaging in social tasks that may enhance social development.

These teachers' overall beliefs about preschool environments and the

development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships include the theme

establishing trust. The teachers indicated that they believe that teacher–child

relationships should allow children to express themselves and experiment, and teachers in

turn support their abilities through positive, nonjudgmental encouragement.

According to the teachers, preschool environments should support trusting

teacher–child relationships, which will create the foundation for closeness, love, and

understanding of others and their feelings. Teachers mentioned that equally important are

the teachers' abilities to enable these children to trust them and to share their feelings

without being judged. The teachers reported that in order for children to be able to trust

their relationships with teachers and peers, teachers must trust that children are competent

individuals who can actively coconstruct their own learning with teachers they can trust.

As Teacher A1 explained,

With that relationship that goes on, that can happen where the child left to just

handle the task by themselves. It may not be able to reach its fullest potential on

getting all different activities, and let the child be able to come up with what is the

best possible solution or be able to explore in deeper detail.

Other teachers discussed similar beliefs about children trusting their teachers: they believed that they can feel comfortable in a safe setting and teachers are not being too critical, and thus not stifling the children's self-expression. Teacher A2 believed that if children repudiate their feelings early in their lives in their interaction with their teachers, they will be unable to trust and this could also affect their social skills as they grow. According to Teacher A2,

> You are one, the one they haven't had. They haven't been alive long enough to have that many relationship and experiences meeting people, so it's important that your relationship with them be one that they trust you, that they feel that they can approach you and they are not afraid of you, because when they are young and they are first learning things, if their first experiences with you are those of harsh judgment—critic, being too critical—you will shut a child down from the very beginning to learning if they feel if it's going to be bad, if they are not going to, quote unquote, do what you want them to or achieve the goal, if they don't do it right they will be afraid to try.

Teachers believed that in preschool environments, trust establishes the foundation for positive relationships and shapes children's outlook on their education and social and creative development. Therefore, they agreed that teachers must be aware of the messages they transmit in their communication with children. Children should feel that the preschool environment is fun and is a setting where they feel safe with responsive trustworthy adults. In the words of Teacher A4,

> I feel that a very positive, especially a very positive first relationship in preschool . . . the child is going to think that school is fun and the teachers are there to

support them, and they care about them—and I think that is definitely a must—for the beginning of a child's school experiences. I think that is very important that the teachers are really listening and care about what their child have to say. It has to be fun, and I think that the teacher needs to encourage the child by encouraging laughter and encouraging being relaxed.

Teachers felt that trust embodied their abilities to get the best out of children by the type of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships they established. These relationships allow children to excel to the highest level of their interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. They mentioned that children should be able to share ideas. Teachers believed that when children trust their teachers and peers, they are able to share their views and respond to questions in an intelligent manner. For instance, Teacher A7 mentioned,

Because you, you don't want to stifle theirs, you always want to encourage the child and let him know that you are creative too. You don't let them know that you may not have that, but you always let him know that he does. And I like to see that in you show me what you have show me what you can do, so as I say, even though you may not be that creative, always expect it in a child and try to encourage him to bring out his creativity.

One teacher mentioned that the teacher–child relationship is similar to the parent–child relationship: trust is an important component in establishing a bond between individuals. As this teacher indicated, when children feel that they can trust, they feel comfortable sharing their thoughts. Teacher A8 indicated that,

Teacher–children relationship: I think that you and the teachers are like a second parent to the child, so the child should look at you like a second parent. The child should feel comfortable with coming to you asking you things or telling you things. It should be like a mother-son and mother-daughter relationship as for children relationship with each other.

Similarly, Teacher A9 believed that teachers should help children build a sense of community such that children can develop interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships with someone on whom they can rely. In this type of setting, as this teacher emphasized, children are able to take chances in expressing themselves, try new things, and receive encouragement from their teachers. This teacher indicated that children look for approval from their teachers when they engage in a new task; therefore it is important for teachers to be cognizant of their responses as they provide feedback to these children. The type of responses children received in preschool environments can either enhance their abilities to experiment or to isolate them. Teacher A9 explained,

The children, supporting them, I think being able to make a connection with each child. They need to feel that you, you are a person that wouldn't look down on them. If they feel that they can trust you, as long as they can build that trust in you and they feel comfortable, and as long as they feel they have a good relationship with you and that give the children an edge where they can feel they are not going to feel they're being judged or they're being watched all the time. And everyone will feel that they might can try something new, to be creative.

Summary: Theme 3, acceptance/self-awareness RQ 1. I determined that preschool environments should encourage children's *awareness of themselves* and others and this is critical to their self-esteem and the approach they use to interact with others.

1. Teachers believed that preschool environments should support children's acceptance of themselves and other children's differences, which helps to engage them in social tasks that may enhance their interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships.

2. Teachers believed that they are responsible to provide preschool environments to help children accept and appreciate other children's differences by providing opportunities for them to express themselves.

3. Teachers believed that when children become aware of their own capabilities they are more able to engage in social tasks where they can share original ideas.

Teachers' overall beliefs about preschool environments and the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships include the theme *acceptance/self-awareness,* which they indicated should enable children to actualize their capabilities and appreciate and learn from other people's differences, which in turn helps build a positive self-image. A study cited in the literature (Gardner, 1983) supported these findings.

Teachers believed that when children become aware of others, this awareness enables them to be proactive in their social development. Children are able to demonstrate empathy by caring about others and helping their less competent peers. Teachers believed that through peer relationships, children are able to grow, learn, and support each other. For instance, Teacher A1 reported,

That is extremely important too because it is, is not they don't only learn from the teachers or their parents, but they tend to learn more from their peers themselves, you know, and they want to see how something is done. They are watching what are their neighbors doing, what are their friends doing. . . . With the social and creative skills I am a teacher. I don't like to give the child a point A or point B project. I want them to be able to create along the way and come up with their own solutions and so with that it allows them to interpret life and it allows them to see that there are other points of views out there in a safe realm.

Teachers reported that children become aware of others when they interact in a social setting. They emphasized that it is through these interactions that children are able to learn how to share, negotiate, treat other people, and see other people's ideas. These teachers believed that children are also able to stop thinking selfishly and reach out to help others. Teacher A2 claimed that,

With their peers that's very important because those are the beginning lessons on how you learn to treat other people and experience how you get treated … that they learn to be accepting of each other, each other's differences, that not everybody has to be the same because everybody isn't the same and those differences makes us each special and unique. And they are, it's not something to criticize someone over or to single someone out over.

Teachers believed that when children work on various activities they also develop emotionally and experience a vital phase of their lives when they interact with their peers. These teachers believed preschool environments are critical for the development of early

social skills with which children are able to solve problems together. In the words of Teacher A4,

> To be able to work out how to problem solve with people and to get along with your peers is extremely important to everything else in life. It is extremely important to all relationships in life, so peer relationships are actually some of the most important part of the school. It's a good start for developing social skills, and, you know, how they get along with their peers. It's really, you know, is what makes you happy in life, having being surrounded by people is very important.

Teachers mentioned that children will be able to make connections with new elements, share new ideas with each other, and develop interdependent relationships. According to these teachers' responses, children will be able to engage in discussions in which they can express themselves. They believed that peer relationships can be a viable approach for children to understand concepts that may not be evident in teachers' pedagogical approaches. As Teacher A5 reported,

> I think encouraging children to interact with one another in the development of socialization and creativity enable them to form an interdependent relationship while exploring and combining known elements in new ways. Well, like when you encourage them, they interact, and they are working together. That helps them during their development for socialization which means socializing with other children and being creative among themselves and sharing their creativity with one another.

In addition, Teacher A6 reported that peer relationships enhance children's self-esteem and teachers can be a viable force in facilitating their interactions. This teacher

mentioned that they can provide activities that foster children's self-awareness and awareness of others in a social setting. In addition, this teacher believed that social development is a skill and therefore is important to provide that skill for children, with the tools enabling them to apply interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships by engaging in social activities. In the words of Teacher A6,

> By encouraging the children to learn what they are capable of doing and the activities that build up their self-esteem, self-awareness, taking on other tasks to see if they can do that, socialize, develop social skills with their peers, that's very important, and it's very important for them to learn to communicate with their peers and get along with their peers, and that's social development as a skill, and if they have that, I think that they can do whatever they choose.

Teachers mentioned that it is important that children do not feel alone, and children are able to share their thoughts, ideas, and activities with others, thus reducing the self-centered thinking that is so prominent during the early years of their development. In the words of Teacher A7,

> I like that. I encourage that. It helps them to come out of the selfishness that they usually operate in up until they're about 4 or 5 years old, Or that kind of play helps them to learn consideration for those around them. They are learning acceptability, learning how to accept, accept the company so to speak, as oppose to "I have to take this over here, accept the company there." Which they learn socialization by accepting the company around them, being considerate of the person that is around them.

Teachers stated that when children are aware of themselves and others they are able to value their existence as part of something larger than themselves. They believed that in this way they can contribute to a cause or task in which they can support, love, and help each other. According to Teacher A8,

> I think that even, even grown up as teenager it is important for the peers to want you or feel wanted by your peers. So I think that by them interacting, especially at a young age, with people of their age, their own peers, it is good for them socially. . . . It's good to teach them to share.

Teacher A9 similarly stated that children need to be aware of themselves and others, and in the relationships they build during the early years, create the foundation for them to be able to respond in a positive way to their peers and answer their own needs. As reported by Teacher A9,

> Kids do group activities: but we do group activities are very important for kids to do. I think it gives them a sense of family if we're all in a classroom where they work together. We are there to support each other and love each other. It helps them know that there are others around you. For socially, they might keep their act together, be aware that maybe they are working right next to you, and creatively they feed off each other. One might have an idea and the next person might say, "I've done that too. This is what I do differently." They can share ideas.

Summary: Theme 4, dramatic play. RQ 1. I suggest that preschool environments should provide opportunities for children to engage in *dramatic play* that enables them participate in role play, thus fostering their interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships.

1. Teachers believed that in preschool environments children participate in dramatic play, enabling them to build social skills.

2. Teachers believed that they play a critical role in providing preschool environments that may foster various forms of play activities to assist in building classroom relationships.

3. Teachers believed that children engage in various play in preschool environments to address many of their own life situations.

4. Teachers believed that children are able to actualize themselves in various roles, which in turn helps them to learn about responsibilities.

Teachers' overall beliefs about preschool environments and the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships include the theme *dramatic play,* which they mentioned provides opportunities for children to engage in all forms of play such that they can creatively and socially address life's past and current events and educational challenges. Additionally, they indicated that dramatic play contributes to children's ability to negotiate, share, take turns, and actualize themselves in various occupational roles.

The teachers explained that various forms of play help children express the events or situations that are ongoing in their lives creatively. They emphasized that children are able to act out different roles and create their own unique world in which they choose to interact. Teachers believed that children learn about each other and are able to negotiate, take turns, and discover new ideas as they engage in dramatic play. Teachers believed that they should provide the types of materials needed to help children express their own distinct creations independently or in groups. In the words of Teacher A2,

I remember last year we had the kids, the boys especially, we had all our wooden blocks up and they build a city with roads and we bought the cars out and we had other children in the dramatic-play center with the dolls, and they combined. They came together: they put the dolls in the cars and they taking them through the city and the children in the dramatic-play area were coming up with a story of what they were doing and it came together in both of those areas and make for a wonderful learning, creative experience for them all together. So organization is important.

In addition, Teacher A2 indicated that children enjoy play acting their family dynamics. They will pretend they are the parents and the children and assign roles to each child to address situations in their lives. This teacher pays specific attention to this type of play because it enables teachers to find other aspects that influence interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. Teacher A2 continued,

Yes, yes, yes, they are especially. Well, at least I remember my class last year. They were a lot. They were very much into the dramatic play and I saw children working out their own family dynamics through the dramatic play and taking on the characteristics of their own family members, acting out, seeing what the other children, and working out skills, how to deal with, you know, when your parents telling you, you know, you have to do this, and I watch them go from ordering each other to stopping and explaining to each other, "ok, you have to lay down now because you are little and you need more rest," where in the beginning was, "yes you have to go to bed now."

Teacher A3 indicated that it is through play that children develop their problem-solving skills. This teacher mentioned that as children participate in these play activities, they also use their imagination and thus are able to be share responsibilities for various roles. This teacher further reported that a prepared preschool environment can help facilitate the development of children's social development. Teacher A3 reported,

I definitely think that play is very important in the lives of children and that how they grow, how they develop socially, it seems like just playing. I do not know how it is in the house in playing. They get to develop, like I said. They develop their vocabulary as they usually talking to their friend and also they problem solve while they playing and they use their imagination. They get really creative when they play, so play is definitely very important and socially definitely, yeah, they learn how to get along and negotiate with their friends.

The teachers believed that all types of play are important to children's development, based on the teachers' responses. Teacher A4 pointed out that it is equally important to use literature for children to express themselves as they participate in dramatic play, such that they can also develop critical-thinking skills that are connected to deeper learning. This teacher also stated that family dynamics are a typical component in which children actualize themselves to address life situations. Teacher A4 stated, "I think dramatic play is very important. I think that not just dramatic play but I think all of the types play is very important part of growing and becoming creative and them expressing themselves."

Children are able to create their own play without the assistance of a teacher, and therefore the freedom that they have to create helps them build interpersonal and

intrapersonal relationships with their peers. These teachers agreed that children can engage in outside and inside play and are able to learn from each other in both environments. These teachers mentioned that they participate in play activities as a facilitator to extend the experiences the children acquire during play. According to Teacher A5,

Through play children interact and they use their creativity, so while they working together, they work together plus they are able to create various things, and they also learn through play. Well, they have more free play when they go outside, so what they do, what I see with their creativity while they play out there, they make up all different types games and various games that they make up with their peers, and they play.

Teacher A6 concurred that children enjoy role play and in particular acting out the roles of their family members. This teacher mentioned that children see teachers as role models and also attempt to act out the roles of the teachers. This teacher further believed that this role-play activity influences their creative development and provided examples of some of the role plays that children initiate during dramatic play. Teacher A6 explained,

Yes, I think the child learn from drama play how to express themselves. They have an imagination. They do this role play and I think that's very important for them. Too, sometimes kids do role play, playing by cooking, acting like their mom at home cooking.

Teachers indicated that they discussed the importance of freedom with these children during their play activities and provided a playhouse area in the outside

environment to facilitate the dramatic-play process. In this type of setting, Teacher A7 stated that children are able to make choices while teachers engage them in the critical-thinking process by asking them questions. Teacher A7 reported,

> They are free to play creatively, whatever comes to mind that they want to do in a play situation. They are free to do that and a lot of time their creativity comes out in that play, so I think it is important that they allow to do that. We have in here on Friday, we call fun day Friday is fun day, so they are free to play in whatever way they want.

Teacher A8 mentioned that dramatic play is a reflection of what children already learned and therefore indicated that children can only develop their critical-thinking skills in presenting dramatic play like a game, which involves asking questions, unless they are learning from each other. However, this teacher also concurred that children enjoy role play as part of their social and creative development; teachers fostered their creative thinking by asking them questions related to their play. According to Teacher A8,

> Dramatic play: I don't, I don't think that it's learning, I think that it's what they have learned and what they have seen because when they put on a fireman suit you could see them acting like a fireman. "Give me the hose. Oh the building is on fire." You know, stuff that they seen before and when they play mommy and daddy they act like mommy and daddy.

Teacher A8 further indicated that dramatic play is sometimes conducted only in the inside environment and believed that dramatic play can also be conducted outside with large play equipment. This teacher believed that children can more deeply access their interpersonal and intrapersonal development. This teacher pointed out that children

can act out family dynamics as well as other situations, such as going to the grocery store.

Teacher A8 stated,

> I think outside too is a good pace for dramatic play because you can get to do a lot
> of things outside. I think most people, I always see them inside. I never see a
> dramatic play outside. But if you have, if you look, you have the house outside
> and then the kids are thinking of going home. Sometimes you see them on the
> bike. "Oh, I'm going to the grocery store." Or they play their little games and
> stuff: "Oh, I am going home." It will be, will be cool for them to have a dramatic
> play outside it. Like no big reason. I think it will be cool. I think they will enjoy it.

Similarly Teacher A9 agreed that children enjoyed role play and it is through

dramatic play that they are able to express their emotions, solve problems, and present

new ideas, and because the experience is not guided by an adult, it is more meaningful to

children. This teacher believed that this experience also allows children to develop their

social skills. According to Teacher A9,

> They are talking to each other. They are bringing up new ideas, different types
> play, whether inside or outside. It does help children with their social and
> creation. They do, they get very involved in their dramatic play and sometimes
> they may be on it for a week. It just depends on how involved they were in
> dramatic play.

Summary: Theme 5, collaborative/cooperative play. **RQ 1.** The research

determined that teachers believed preschool environments should be supportive of

collaborative play activities to allow children to share creative ideas with each other.

1. Teachers believed that preschool environments that promote collaborative-play activities allow children to build relationships by engaging in social tasks.

2. Teachers believed that preschool environments that promote collaborative-play activities allow children to see new perspectives of their peers' contributions to the process.

Teacher A3 and A7 believed that collaborative activities can be problematic because some children might experience difficulty in sharing. However, the majority of teachers' overall beliefs about preschool environments and the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships included the theme *collaborative play,* They believed this activity would enhance children's abilities to participate in reciprocal relationships, exposing them to other perspectives and creative ideas while they engage in social tasks.

These teachers believed that play in all its forms should not be undermined because it creates the foundation for all children's social development, particularly in the early years. As they indicated, cooperative play is more prominent among preschool children and therefore these teachers make it a priority to provide inside and outside environments that are conducive to various forms of play. These teachers believed that through cooperative play, children share ideas socially, which in turn fosters their cognitive skills. Teacher A1 explained,

But once they start developing along the way and start becoming in cooperative play, now they are going to be able to practice what they thought in their heads and put in down into play down to their fingertips, and they are going to be able

then experiment and use the skills that they have internalized and be able to work

things out together.

Teachers said that they incorporate different activities related to the same themes

that contribute to the social interaction among these children. It also provides some

cohesiveness that enables children to collaborate. They mentioned that even though the

activity might be different, themes are consistent. As children work or play together they

are learning from each other. Teacher A2 reported,

Oh I think my perspectives what it is, collaborative activities are like building

blocks. We, whatever we working on our themes for that week, we have different

activities that build on the same thing. It may be the art activity centered around

the letter that week and we have the snack time: the letter B this week. We did

Bears.

Teacher A2 reported that children collaborate in their play activities by sharing

their ideas and building various projects with the materials provided. This teacher felt that

teachers can learn much about children's social skills by watching their movements and

actions as they interact with each other. Teacher A2 continued,

I see that when they get the Legos out and the Lincoln Logs they start building

things and even though it may not look like to you like maybe it doesn't look like

a space ship to you but it does to them. And they'll turn to one another and say,

they go, "that's look great."

Teacher A4 thought that the developmental stage of children must be considered

when addressing collaborative activities because some children may not be at the stage

where they may want to engage in group play or activities. However, this teacher

believed that collaborative activities are important socially and emotionally to the developing child. According to Teacher A4,

> Well I think developmentally it certainly depends on the age of the child. Right now in the classroom that I have right now the children are at the point where they just starting to work with their peers so some can do it very well and some have troubles doing it. But it is, it's really important socially and emotionally for their development to work together collaboratively. I think it's really a good thing to start at an early age because it shows that it could be a lot of fun.

Children learn through play, reported Teacher A8, and according to this teacher, these children should learn the difference between free play and group activities and further, learn how to interact with each other through play. This teacher agreed that learning should be incorporated with play. Teacher A8 explained,

> I don't think they should be limited to what they could do. I think they should be, always be out there is a group activity. They should know the difference. But when it is just on a daily, they should be free without limit.

Teachers agreed that collaborative activities allow children to share, negotiate, take turns, and demonstrate empathy with others. Children can be proactive in their peers' social and creative activities by pushing them to the next level of their learning.

Relation of interviews to RQ 2. How do preschool environments impact the development of preschool children's creative skills? During the in-depth interviews teachers were asked a variety of questions to examine the strategies they used in preschool environments to nurture preschool children's development of creative skills. In relation to Research Question 2, teachers' responses congregated around four main

themes. Each theme is presented in Figure 9, followed by a detailed description of

teachers responses.
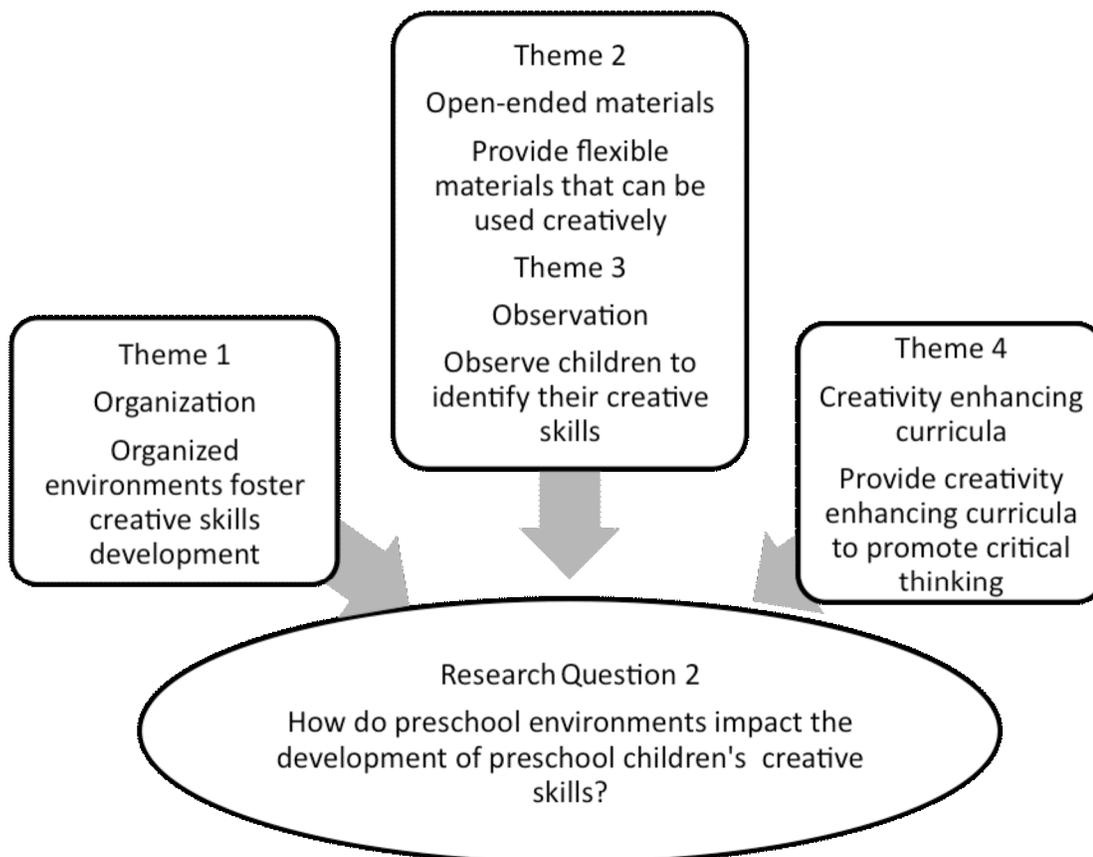
Figure 9. Diagram of themes for RQ 2.

Summary: Theme 1, organization. RQ 2. Teachers believed it is important to

organize preschool environments to foster children's independence, social, and creative

skills.

1. Most teachers believed that organized preschool environments should

    support creative skills.

2.   Most teachers believed that organized preschool environments should

provide opportunities for children to exercise their independence

creatively.

3.   Teachers believed that they are responsible to provide the types of

preschool environments that will foster children's independence and

provide opportunities for children to express their creative skills with

others.

Most teachers' overall beliefs about preschool environments and the development

of creativity include the theme *organization,* which focuses on the effectiveness of

designing spaces in the environment to promote social and creative development, which

in turn enables children to experiment, explore, and create independently or in groups.

Teachers mentioned that the organization of preschool environments plays a

critical role in the development of preschool children's creative skills. Teachers indicated

that preschool environments should be divided into various centers where children have

options to engage in different activities, explore, and create work independently or in

groups. Few teachers felt that providing materials that enable children to participate in

various activities are more important than providing centers. Teacher A1 reported,

> The way you organized the classroom most definitely affect the way the children
>
> behave. If you organized the classroom where there is free association and the
>
> kids can explore the classroom, obviously they are going to have more creativity
>
> and be able to venture out and be able to manipulate the materials that you
>
> presented in their own way to where a classroom that is limited and closed off is
>
> going to foster the children's' learning in another way.

These teachers explained that when children's independence is supported in organized preschool environments, they are more willing to think creatively. Therefore, teachers are responsible to provide a classroom culture that promotes independent thinking. Teacher A1 continued,

> I am highly creative. I think that kids should be given that chance to explore and create. It allows their imaginations to develop and if we stifle that creativity then later on in life they only going to be operating within the realms of the parameters that were given to them. And if we have to get a cure for something, they have to think outside those parameters.

Similarly, Teacher A2 warned that one has to be aware that the classroom organization does not provide so may stimuli that children feel overwhelmed. Teacher A2 believed that in an overwhelming environment, children's creativity can be stifled. This teacher mentioned that teachers must be cognizant of how they use space and their philosophy about children's creative development, because teachers' belief about children's development is reflected in their classroom culture. In the words of Teacher A2,

> The classroom, right: I, I really think that it is important to have an organize classroom does not necessarily breathe creativity and it's not a good ground for learning. Too much stimuli is overwhelms them and if you like in our room, we have centers, we have a dramatic-play center, we have a block center, we have a science center. And it also allows the child not to feel like they have to do this at this time. They have the freedom to go to which area in the room interest them. And what's really fun at the same time is when you can combine those areas.

As teachers explained, organized preschool environments promote children's abilities for overall self-expression. They believed that teachers should participate as facilitators by providing other ways for children to explore, create, and solve problems through the structuring of their classroom. According to Teacher A3,

> The materials? Or art activities you mean? Yes I think that it should be organized, but more so accessible to the children so they could easily get to it when they want to, and that is exactly how my classroom is set up. If they want to do some art, they know where the things are.

> In addition, Teacher A3 believed that teachers should allow children the opportunity to think and create independently unless they ask for some assistance. As children develop their independence they are more able to actualize various aspects of their lives. This teacher believed another important aspect of organized preschool environments relates to how the teachers respond to children as they engage in their activities. Teacher A3 further explained, "We don't want them to feel that what they are doing is wrong because I really feel that there is no right or wrong way of doing art, so its very important to just let them express themselves."

Teacher A4 believed that preschool environments should be adaptable to the needs of the children. This means that teachers should design preschool environments that can be changed to reflect what children are learning and have a desire to learn. A static preschool environment does not promote critical thinking, social development, or creativity, and therefore teachers must be mindful of the many ways preschool environments can be designed to help children develop their cognitive and social skills. In the words of Teacher A4,

Having a relaxed atmosphere so that creativity can blossom, because if it's not

relax and it's not fun then you can't really, then you can't be creative. If it is a,

you know, a stringent environment and nobody is laughing and having a good

time, it's not very conducive to creativity.

Teacher A4 also agreed that autonomy is an essential component in the child's

development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and can be supported by

responsive and caring teachers. According to this teacher, these children also learn to

make choices and discover other things about themselves; and it is through classroom

experiences that they are able to develop these skills. Teacher A4 continued,

I think it's very important for children to create and for them to be encouraged to

create. For them to be dramatic or make up stories or do art projects and be able to

do them in their own way and express themselves such as the school that I am in

right now the classroom?

The majority of teachers agreed that preschool environments should be divided

into various centers that adhere to the different abilities of each child. They also

maintained that children need to be provided with options so that they can make choices

about which activities or projects they would like to undertake. In the words of Teacher

A5,

In my opinion it's very important because it takes the teacher, the child, and the

peers working together to build a healthy nurturing and learning environment.

That's all I have. . . . The environment should consist of the emotional, the

cognitive, the social, creativity, physical, and language and with all of those

together, that's a great organization for a learning environment because you have

the cognitive which is the learning, the social which they learn how to socialize

with their peers, creativity which they create things on their own, physical, and

their language.

Teacher A5 believed that children's independence is an important aspect of their

development and teachers should create preschool environments to promote spontaneous

activities. In this way children are able to work at their own pace while at the same time

having the option to work in groups and share ideas. Teachers can also learn about each

child's capabilities in an organized setting. Teacher A5 explained,

Well I feel by letting the child set their own space, build spontaneous self-

development. I let them work at their own pace and they are developing

themselves. What they can do in addition to what I've shown them and

spontaneous, you know, is just at the moment, so that's what I mean by that. They

become, that help them sometimes, even though you push the child to do better,

when they are at their own pace it depends on the child, that they, they working

on their own space.

Teachers believed that preschool environments should cater to the learning

abilities of each child and provide the appropriate setting to accommodate each child's

learning style. The preschool environment should foster critical thinking, motivating

children to explore, hypothesize, solve problems, and dig deeper into cognitive skills. For

instance, according to Teacher A7,

A lot of visuals. The environment should have a lot of visual. It's good for the

kids to see that. Brings out curiosity in them, and also, a lot of time when they see

things, they want to emulate things that they see. For instance, if they see this

board, just creative play and drawing and coloring, they might decide they want

do balloons.

Teacher A9 agreed that the activities that occur in preschool environments shape how children interact, their ability to explore, and their development of social and creative skills; the accessibility of the materials allow them the opportunity to engage in various activities. This teacher believed that for children, preschool environments are like a second home and children need to feel comfortable so they can move freely to create, socialize, and experiment. Teacher A9 explained,

> To me the environment has a lot to do with how a child feels, how they work, and
> their motivation for being at school. I always try to make the environment as
> homely as possible so they could be comfortable, because this is their most,
> because this is their second home, so they need to be like this is their space, so
> things need to be at their level so they could do things by themselves, so they
> don't have to always call for help.

Teachers further believed that if preschool environments are organized such that children are free to explore, and materials are accessible to them, teachers will be able to assist them with various skill levels. Children should be free to explore and create in a setting where teachers are responsive to their needs. Teacher A6 reported,

> My environment set up separate. I have separate, how do I put it? Separate
> learning experience. I might set it up, like I might have a table with toys, I might
> have a table where they can draw, paint. Everybody has a choice to pick what
> they want to do. They are for different activities. I think that the environment, you
> should make the learning environment inviting by providing materials for them

that they can use to create, construct a center for them, an area where the child can have space to paint, to cut, to glue, and to mold clay, put decorations on display, and give them praises and positive feedback for their effort in trying so hard.

Teachers agreed that the organization of space and materials in preschool environments play a critical role in shaping how children view themselves, their relationships with peers, and their perspectives on their overall development. Teachers believed that they also play an important part in facilitating the activities that take place in preschool environments to help children acquire and maintain their independence. In addition, teachers believed that the organization of preschool environments help them in understanding the capabilities of each child. Most teachers agreed that the organization of preschool environments must be reflective of the artistic and cultural abilities of children's learning whereby teachers provide opportunities for children to engage in group activities (Faulkner et al., 2006).

Summary: Theme 2: open-ended material. RQ 2. The research suggests that teachers need to be aware of providing a *variety of materials* in the preschool environments for children to apply in different ways.

1. Teachers believed that materials should be open ended for children to engage in social tasks that may enhance their creative skills.

2. Teachers believed that the materials should be open ended such that they can be used inside and outside socially to develop children's creative skills.

3. Teachers believed that the materials should be open ended, while at the same time they should be developmentally appropriate, allowing each child to engage in social activities that support creative skills.

4. Teachers believed that even though the materials are open ended, they should also be made accessible, within reach of each child. A study cited in the literature (Katz & Chard, 2000) is congruent with the findings.

Teachers' overall beliefs about preschool environments and the development of creative skills includes the theme *open-ended material,* which means materials should be flexible in their applicability to allow experimentation, and should be displayed where they are easily accessible to each child. Children should be also able to use the materials creatively outside or inside, as they choose.

According to teachers, these types of materials promote children's creative and social development. Teacher A1 explained,

I believe whatever is used inside could be used outside and whatever is outside can be used inside. Legos can go in the mud, mud can come onto the classroom floor. It doesn't hurt. It could be washed off. I firmly believe that everything can be clean. Children can be washed and I think that if you offer materials that would normally be inside on the outside it allows for more creativity and for them to experiment, learning in a different way.

Even though Teacher A2 felt that certain materials belong outside, this teacher also believed that at the same time creative skills could be actualized when children have that option. This teacher mentioned the importance of allowing the child to see different

perspectives in using these materials. Children can then see that the use of materials can be multidimensional, serving many purposes. Teacher A2 declared,

> Well I think it's, I understand that there are certain materials that are better suited to the outside, but it's fun and it's really creative. You can bring those materials in and vice versa because if you give the child, you can show the child there is more than one way of looking at that item or this material, that it can be more than one thing.

Teachers believed that the materials in preschool environments should not only be open ended, but also should be presented with easy access for each child. Children should be able to choose the type of activities and materials they need to demonstrate their creative abilities. They believed that children feel empowered when they are able to make their own choices, when materials are easily accessible to them. As Teacher A3 stated,

> Like I was saying, the things that should be accessible to the children and whatever materials we used inside we also use outside. We have both, even though we outside with the children, we always offer them the time. I mean, they know that they could go to the easel to paint, or to the table to do some pasting, cutting. We always offer these activities outside. You would always have a child that will say, "I can't do it. This is not right." But "no, that's your project. Yes you can, you can do it and do it whichever way you feel like."

Even having insufficient money to invest in purchasing a variety of interesting materials, indicated by Teacher A4, this teacher also believed that teachers can be creative in the way they present the materials to make them more interesting to the

children. For instance, according to this teacher, things can be adjusted seasonally to accommodate the needs of each child. In the words of Teacher A4,

> The same in the classroom and outside of the classroom, which is good because if the children are not using some materials and not showing an interest in them we can definitely put those away and take out things that are better going to be more interesting for them, and you know, exciting for them to use. I think that we feel pretty confident that we have good materials.

Teacher A5 believed that there are some materials that can be used for multidimensional purposes. However, this teacher felt that materials that require children to use their large motor skills should only be used outside. As Teacher A5 explained,

> Ok, inside it should be small-child size furniture and creation of a small-child size environment in which each can be competent to produce overall self-running small-children world, and the outside equipment should be safe, child friendly, and allow them to be creative.

Similarly, Teacher A6 agreed that the materials should be easily accessible so that children can engage in group activities or other independent activities and are able to challenge themselves creatively and socially. In addition, this teacher explained that these materials should be flexible enough to help these children's understand their capabilities. Teacher A6 stated,

> I think all materials should be ok. All materials should be at the child age level. It shouldn't be above their level. Say, for example, if the child shows signs that they can do more then you put activities out there for that child, so he could continue

learning, but if you have another group that is not at that level then you have

materials for him or her to work up to that level, up to the highest level.

Teachers believed that equally important are the presentation of the materials in

the social setting. They mentioned that children need to understand that there are various

ways of finding solutions and flexible materials provide them with the opportunity to find

solutions. Teacher A7 mentioned that these materials should ignite curiosity; that children

should be able to manipulate them as they engage in various activities. In the words of

Teacher A7,

> Something that kind of entices them to acquire thinking type situations where they
>
> are using their little mind to manipulate things, create things, as opposed to
>
> outside things that are more outgoing for them. Also, they can use outside things
>
> that also are manipulative but on a wider scale than inside. They can be more
>
> loose with the outside materials, develop developing more of their larger motor
>
> skills. It doesn't call for a lot of concentration.

Teachers felt that even though materials should be open ended, it is equally

important for teachers to facilitate the creative processes by asking questions. As a result,

children explore. perceive, interpret, and transmit what they learn. These teachers agreed

that when children engage in social tasks, being asked open-ended questions is key to the

development of their critical thinking. Teacher A8 claimed that,

> I think that kids are very creative with things like play dough, money, what else,
>
> shaving cream, cotton, even just paper. Paper is great material to be creative, like
>
> for story time you can give extension or give them an hour at the beach and let

them finish. You will hear all kinds of creative things by the end of the day: chalk, bubbles, water-tables apparatus, play house.

These teachers also believed that the materials must be developmentally appropriate, enabling each child to feel comfortable as they work independently and in group activities. Therefore, they agreed that providing a variety of materials for each age group will provide opportunities for each child to participate in various activities. Teacher A9 stated,

Having a variety of materials available to them to be involve in play and each child is very different, so they going to have different skill level. So keep that in mind as well different materials. Just set them out. Its always good to have both indoor and outdoor play in case they want to bring some toys outside and vice versa, but it is, its great to have both just in case the children have the choice to have the combination.

Summary: Theme 3: observation for RQ 2. The research suggests that through *observation*, teachers are able to identify the students' creative skills levels.

1. Teachers believed that it is by observing children in preschool environments as they engage in various tasks that teachers are able to identify each level of creative skills.

2. Teachers believed that observation is the key to helping children develop critical thinking for social tasks that may enhance creative development.

3. Teachers believed that observation allows them to provide other ways of strengthening children's creative skills.

These teachers' overall beliefs about preschool environments and the development of creative skills include the theme observation, which means that this approach helps them support children's creative skills. Observation also provides challenging tasks to allow children to expand on their creative skills and teachers help children who maybe limited in their abilities (Torrance, 1964).

Teachers emphasized that in addition to the organization of preschool environments and the provision of open-ended materials, it is equally important for them to observe children to identify and support their social and creative skills. Teachers believed that it is through observation that they are able to identify the strengths and limitations of children's creative-skills development to better support them.

Teacher A1 stated,

My strategy is mainly in observation: to identify creative abilities, it could be, it could be in an expand number of ways. It could be how a child respond to a question. Are they thinking outside the box? Or are they only regurgitating what the teachers said? Are they coming up with their own ideas? If it's art, are they coming up with their own projects and taking the projects a step further in another direction? Or are they strictly doing what's being told to them? And for me it is done a lot of just observation in the child responses.

Teacher A2 indicated that the best way to understand the capabilities of the child is to observe. Even though this teacher does not believe in assessment, the teacher does believe that observation can be instrumental in learning about the child. As this teacher pointed out, less conversation and more active listening are important to help teachers understand each child. Teacher A2 reported,

My personal preference is observation. You learn so much by just shutting up and watching and you see so much more of just observing. I discover a lot just by simple observation, well, by watching them and just observing. I am able to see, ok, this one isn't holding the crayon this way and are they moving from the shoulder down? Have they, have they develop other small-motor skills strong enough now to be able to use that crayon or pencil and begin the early stages of writing**.**

Teachers believed that while observing is important, although most of them were unable to provide documentation of children's progress, it is equally important to document children's work. By adopting this approach, teachers are more able to monitor children's progress as they develop social and creative skills. Some teachers mentioned that they do not look for anything special; they just want to observe them to see what they are capable of doing. According to Teacher A4, "Journaling, listening to children you have to be a good listener. Interacting with them asking them questions and listening to their answers and observe them and then provide them with the tools to be creative or to be inventive."

Teachers revealed that while observation is an essential component in understanding children's development, it is equally important to be mindful of the developmental stage of the child. Some children may have a short attention span and may not be able to attend to one specific activity for a long period of time. It is during this time that teachers may want to engage in conversation with the child to help guide them to an activity of their interest. In the words of Teacher A7,

I guess as I observed, they may take a book and put it aside if they didn't like the

content of this book. Inside objects tend to make them think more creatively and

they make decisions about things that they want to do with inside things in their

playing. It's like they decide how they want to do a certain thing as opposed to

outside they just kind of do things. . . . Inside, I think inside objects bring out

more creativity in a different way: it's a more subtle atmosphere.

Teachers agreed that they must support children in expressing their own unique

qualities and encourage them to more deeply discern the meaning of their own

experiences by the type of feedback teachers provide. Teacher A8 stated,

Like my kids: with these kids I guess if I try to think back to when we first start

doing things like that because certain kids, some kids might say its just somebody

wrote on it, somebody scribble scrabble. Now what you see is like, use your brain.

What do you think? What do you think it is? And now, when you say "what do

you think it is" and then when you say "what do you think it is" that's when you

get them in the process of what you are looking for.

Similarly Teacher A9 reported that observation is the key to understanding the

social level and creative abilities of the child. This teacher believed that it is important to

attempt to reach out to each child to assist them in identifying those particular skills. As a

result, teachers can have an idea of the creative skills and development of each child by

the activities they choose. According to Teacher A9,

I think observation is a key aspect in identifying creative ability. Talking to the

child to help them identify their creative sides, so we have to have time to reach

out. It helps everybody to see what a child is able to do and how creative a child can be and I think observation is the key.

Teacher A6 thought that if children are given the opportunity to express themselves in their own way, teachers are given the opportunity to find out more about the child. This teacher pointed out that through observation teachers can learn more about the child, such as what they like to do, what they like, and the activities that will help them develop their creative skills. Teacher A6 reported,

> They should learn to allow the child to express themselves in their own way. The teacher is able to find out what is hidden in the child, what they like to do, what they like to create. Want to promote, to develop their creative inside them. If we let them make their own create instead of telling them what to do, they will develop their self-esteem and that will open them up to other creative and influence other children to do things that are creative and have their self-esteem themselves.

Teachers believed that they can be intricately involved in helping children develop healthy social and creative skills by providing opportunities for them to explore and ask questions. In this way teachers believed that they will be more able to observe and extend children's' creative and social abilities.

Summary: Theme 4, creativity enhancing curricula. RQ 2. The research determined that teachers believed that preschool environments should provide a *creativity-enhancing curriculum* that enable children to express their creative skills.

1. Teachers believed that curriculum should provide children with opportunities to create.

2.	Teachers believed that children build self-esteem when they engage in independent or social activities that may enhance their creative skills.

3.	Teachers believed that a creativity-enhancing curriculum helps them be flexible in their classroom practices, helping them provide social tasks that may enhance creative skills.

4.	Teachers believed that a creativity-enhancing curriculum helps children develop critical-thinking skills such that they can explore, build relationships, and solve problems.

Teachers' overall beliefs about the theme of creativity-enhancing curriculum included allowing them to be flexible in their teaching practices, which in turn builds children's self-esteem and fosters creative skills and social development. Teachers believed that it is important to provide a curriculum in the preschool environment that allows children not only to learn through books, but by being practically involved in their own learning, through their creative capabilities. Furthermore, they agreed that learning should be active and when children engage in creative-skills development they are more able to think critically, to explore, and to create and build relationships. In the words of Teacher A1,

I think that creative curricula allow the teacher to be able to expand on an idea and present it in a way that's more meaningful, where the child can participate in and can actively get hands on and get dirty in the project. The more meaning it has to them, rather than just doing paper and books, when you can sit there and expand on it for instance, like in my language this week we are doing the letter B. And we are eating baked bananas, and we are having bread and butter every day.

Teachers indicated that children can build self-esteem from a creativity-enhancing curriculum and encouraging it can help children prepare themselves as they develop further in their lives. Teacher A3 explained,

> I think it's really good. I encourage it. One of the main reason why: its boosted their self-esteem and confidence, which will help them succeed later in life. That. I believe, that if you feel good about yourself, that would help you in anything you do in your life later, so it's really important implement it. It is important to have a developmental creative curricula. I feel strongly about it even in the classroom.

Teacher A4 believed that a creativity-enhancing curriculum is a very important part of the teacher's classroom activity because it is by applying creative skills that children discover their happiness. This teacher believed that children are able to engage in dramatic stories about events that occurred in their lives. According to Teacher A4,

> I think that is very important. I think that the creative part of everybody need to be expressed, not only in children but in adults. So I think starting out with allowing a child and encouraging a child to be creative is a very important part of teacher's job in the classroom. Similarly Teacher A2 stated,

> Well I prefer a creative curriculum. I am more artistic myself than anything else and there are so much that children need to know before they ever to kindergarten. And if you are their first experience with learning and if it's creative, it's, it's more fun. It's not quite so threatening if the experience they have is creative; then they don't feel like they could do it wrong.

Teachers mentioned that although the curriculum provides rigid lesson plans, teachers accommodate children's creativity by allowing them to make choices on some activities. In the words of Teacher A5,

Oh well the curriculum here we choose, but there is other things that we do. I let them choose what they want to do like mostly like art and crafts. And during the creativity time they get to choose whatever they want to do. So yes, they do. I let them choose what they like. It's not good when the teacher has to tell you, tell you, tell you. I like to give them to give me their opinion on things they like to do.

Teacher A6 indicated that activities should be challenging to children to help them advance to the next level. Teacher A6 believed that preschool environments that promote creativity-enhancing curricula prepare children to develop their decision-making skills and use their imagination. As reported by this teacher, children also learn to think independently without teachers' assistance. According to Teacher A6,

How they create activity is very important to support their childhood and challenge. Like say, for instance, their brain, their left brain is working and they creative. "Oh let's do this and something different" to show them, such as painting. Some might want to paint. Some might want to draw something. Somebody might want to cut and glue something together or somebody might want to do a stack with the blocks and stack them. That's creative: they created something on their own without the teacher telling them what to create or feel and that encourage the child to use their imagination.

Teachers believed that some children may be withdrawn and it is the teachers' responsibility to help children discover their creative skills. Teacher A7 believed that as

teachers work with children, children are able to actualize their creativity. In the words of Teacher A7,

> Creative curricula? I like creative curricula. I like it. I don't like to stick to just that but I think, I think it's good because it gives you the things to draw upon. You can get ideas from a curricula using your own creativity. Along with that you can come up with some really good plans sometimes. So I do like creative curricula. I do like that. But sometimes you just rock your brains because you are looking for something creative to do and sometimes you just kind of run out and when you have that curriculum to draw from.

Teachers explained that creativity-enhancing curricula should be incorporated into the lesson plan. Teacher A8 provided an example of the strategy used in accommodating creativity when the teacher attended school. This teacher believed that children should be able to build on their creative skills through a creativity-enhancing curriculum. According to Teacher A8,

> Like how do I feel it should be incorporated? I feel that it should be like a subject. Just like you have math and science and things like that, it should be. When I was in school we have creative writing where we used to be able to just write whatever we wanted to write, and it was like there were no wrong or right answer as long as you wrote. We came in every day and we will just write. We will probably have to write a paragraph and sometimes we will have a subject on the board that you have to write about and everybody have their own opinion. Everybody see things differently.

Teacher A9 similarly agreed that creativity-enhancing curricula are important to children's creative and social development because they help children think in innovative ways. This teacher reported that it is equally important to provide the resources to assist children by creatively designing curricula. In the words of Teacher A9,

> If children are not provided materials and opportunities to be creative and to think outside the box, you know, feel free and explore. I think children shut down a lot, shut down emotionally and physically and mentally, that are unable to do these things, and so that's why it's very critical in the early years from birth to 5 that children are provided opportunities to be as creative as possible and given the materials that are necessary for them to be creative.

See Appendix M for raw data.

Discrepant or Disconfirming Data

Discrepant data are interpreted as evidence that contradicts what has been proposed in the findings (Hatch, 2002). In such cases the data has to be recoded, ensuring that all inconsistencies in patterns are being considered. In this study I carefully read, reread, and analyzed the data and found some inconsistent responses in the findings and found several discrepancies in the data sources in relation to the findings, as discussed below.

Interview Responses

Based on the nature of the research questions and teachers' responses, information from the schools, websites, and artifacts, the responses can be grouped into two categories: those data-source findings that supported the beliefs that preschool environments can impact preschool children's development of interpersonal and

intrapersonal relationships and creative skills, and those that did not support the findings. Data that does not support the findings was determined to be discrepant data (Hatch, 2002).

Several discrepancies were apparent in teachers' responses that contrasted with the findings that although teachers felt that the organization of preschools environment is critical to the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills, some teachers did not think it was necessary to have various centers to enable children to engage in various activities. Some teachers felt that most important is providing children with open-ended materials in the environment that can serve multidimensional purposes. Fraser (2000) suggested that it is important to provide a variety of materials to allow children to explore all their creative and social skills and teachers must prepare preschool environments to enable children to build those skills.

I also thought that all teachers would have agreed with the concept of providing environments that encourage children to participate in collaborative activities, but teacher A4 indicated that when children engage in collaborative activities this could be problematic, because one child may always want to be the leader or the boss and this could create problems with other children taking directions from that child. Teacher A7 said, "Sometimes I believed group activities limit them because you may have two kids and it's hard for them to share , they might say one minute they want to do this and the next minute they are not sharing." In another instance teacher A7 provided a contradictory statement when she said that " I don't think they should be limited to what they could do; I think they should always be out there in group activity." Vygotsky

(1978) emphasized that teachers should scaffold children's learning by allowing them to collaborate in various activities where the more competent child can be of some assistance to the less competent. In addition, some teachers felt that teachers should not tell children what to do and how to be creative; rather they should provide open-ended materials and allow children to experiment and explore and derive their own solutions. Teacher A8 claimed to provide examples to use as a model to help children think creatively. Other teachers indicated that teachers should allow children to create freely rather than providing preexisting models of projects.

School and Website Documents

At the completion of document analysis, I was interested in data that supported the findings, as well as those that were contrary to the findings. Data that were contrary to the findings would have needed to be explained (Hatch, 2002). However, at the conclusion of the documents analysis I did not find any discrepancies that were contrary to the findings, needing to be explained or documented.

Artifacts

At the completion of artifacts analysis, I was interested in data that support the findings as well as those that were contrary to the findings. Those data that were contrary to the findings would have needed to be explained (Hatch, 2002). However, at the conclusion of the artifacts evaluation I did not find any discrepancies that were contrary to the findings, needing to be explained or documented.

Evidence of Quality

The purpose of the study was to examine strategies used by teachers in preschool environments to determine whether preschool environments nurture the development of

preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. Validity was established through an audit trail, member-checking, triangulation, and coding. By using multiple codes I was clear on the precise consistency of coding, that is, whether agreement was seen in code names, coded passages, or the same passages coded the same way (Rossman & Rollis, 1998). During member checking the interview transcripts were transcribed verbatim and taken back to participants, providing them the opportunity to review the accuracy of my interpretations of their responses (Merriam & Associates, 2002). In triangulating the data, various sources were used to collect and analyze the data, including in depth-interviews and collecting documents which include newsletters, school policies, curricula and artifacts of children's artwork which include painting, collage and drawings. Hatch (2002) mentioned that triangulation allow for verification of information from other sources.

Summary

This chapter addressed three major components: how the data were collected, documented, and analyzed. The chapter also described the findings of the data. A detailed discussion of data-collection procedures was presented along with evidence of the quality of the data, followed by the methods employed for data analysis. In addition, the systems used for data management and reflection were considered. The findings related major areas in preschool environments that were perceived as relevant in supporting and nurturing the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills.

A list of themes were identified that reflected how preschool environments may impact the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal

relationships and creative skills. Nine themes were identified based on the interview responses: (a) participation with children enabled them to learn about children's creative and social skills; (b) responding to children in a warm and responsive way enables children to establish trust; (c) providing opportunities for children to accept others enables them to become aware of their own creative skills; (d) organized environments are conducive to the development of social and creative skills; (e) open-ended materials encourage critical thinking; (f) observation allows teachers to learn more about children's social and creative skills; (g) providing children with opportunities to engage in dramatic play enables them to engage creatively in acting out real-life situations; (h) encouraging collaborative play enables children to learn how to share, take turns, negotiate, and solve problems together; and (i) providing a creativity-enhancing curriculum allows children to explore, experiment, hypothesize, and think creatively.

Based on the websites and school document and artifacts analysis, nine themes were identified related to the two research questions: The documents contributed to four themes: (a) children's transitioning processes, (b) encouraging positive social behavior skills, (c) language application, and (d) understanding children's culture. The artifacts evaluation contributed to five additional themes related to the two research questions: (a) cooperative learning, (b) children's self-concept, (c) teachers pedagogy, (d) nurturing creativity, and (e) preparatory activities.

The findings showed that for children to be fully functioning human beings, opportunities must be provided in preschool environments to facilitate creative skills and the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. Therefore, based on the findings, applying the interpretation of these findings to the preparation of preschool

environments might contribute to the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. This might help them transition into other schools and contribute to academic achievement.

Chapter 5 provides an overview, an analysis and interpretation of the findings, a discussion of implications of the findings, recommendations for action, recommendations for further study, a discussion of the reflections of my experiences in the research process, and a concluding statement.

Chapter 5:

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Overview

The purpose of the study was to examine strategies used by teachers in preschool environments to determine how preschool environments nurture the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. Preschool environments are seen to impact the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills through an analysis of information from three data sources: (a) semistructured and structured interviews, (b) school and website documents, and (c) artifacts of children's artwork.

Purposeful sampling was used to select 9 female teacher-participants in this study from five private preschools in California. The analysis included open, axial, and selective coding and in addition to the adapted rubric evaluation yielded 18 relevant themes. Inconsistencies in the participants' responses were identified and explained in data analysis.

A summary of each finding is discussed in this chapter, in order of importance, based on the data described in Chapter 4. The study is grounded in the conceptual framework of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and Torrance's (1964) theory of guiding the creative talent. The summary discusses how the themes inform the research questions and substantiate previous studies. The 18 identified themes provide insights into how preschool environments impact the development of classroom relationships and creativity.

The qualitative study was guided by two main research questions:

1. How do preschool environments impact the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships?

2. How do preschool environments impact the development of preschool children's creative skills?

Interpretations and Conclusions of Finding

Eighteen themes were identified from the analysis of three sources of data: (a) semistructured and structured interviews, (b) websites and school documents, and (c) artifact evaluation. The interpretations of the findings are presented in Table 3 for each research question, inclusive of all data.

Table 3

Interpretations of the Findings

Research questions	Findings
How do preschool environment impact the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships?	Themes based on teachers' responses for RQ 1 Participation Establishing trust Acceptance/self-awareness Dramatic play Collaborative play Themes based on teacher's responses for RQ 2 Organization Open-ended materials Observation Creativity enhancing curricula
How do preschool environments impact the development of preschool children's creative skills?	Themes based on websites and school documents analysis for RQ 1 Children's transitioning processes Encouraging social skills Themes based on school and website documents for RQ 2 Language application Understanding children's culture Themes based on the artifact analysis for RQ 1 Cooperative learning Children's self-concept Themes based on the artifact analysis for RQ 2 Teachers' pedagogy Nurturing creativity Preparatory exercises

Note. RQ = Research Question.

RQ 1

How do preschool environments impact the development of preschool children's

interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships?

Participation was determined to be relevant to how preschool environments impact the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. Based on the interview responses, teachers agreed that teacher–child and peer relationships are critical to the social process of children's development, and teachers make every effort to provide preschool environments that support social tasks. Torrance (1964) maintained that teachers can encourage children's self-awareness, uniqueness, and openness to other perspectives, to enable children to build healthy interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships.

According to Torrance's theory, "Teachers should encourage children to develop 'purpose and value, holding to purposes, utilizing opportunities, accepting limitations, and recognize the value of their own talents" (Torrance, 1964, p. 142). The teachers in this present study believed that participation provides opportunities for children to develop their social skills by engaging in group activities. Based on the responses to the interview questions, teachers demonstrated their participation by allowing children to expand on their ideas, by suggesting open-ended questions to facilitate the creative process.

Torrance (1964) advised that educators, teachers, and legislators should demonstrate their concern by designing a methodological approach that can identify the special skills or talents that children can apply in mathematics, art, music, sports, and divergent thinking. Torrance's theory suggested that participation among teachers and children should be encouraged, because children are always seeking opportunities to explore, and therefore need outside encouragement to develop interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, even while they are confident in their own reality.

In addition, this study's findings support Vygotsky's (1978) theory, further emphasizing that social interaction among teachers and peers is an important aspect of children's development and children who participate in more advanced activities have enhanced social and cognitive skills. Individual behavior is shaped by the engagement of their interactions with others, which in turn supports their social skills. The participants in this study indicated that it is very important socially and emotionally for children to work together because children will be able to learn from each other. Participation includes identifying the child's likes and dislikes and working with the child to develop their social and creative skills.

Torrance's (1964) theory of guiding creative talent included five core facets: the role of assessments, the need for concern about children's creativity, identifying the creative personality, creative development, and the goals for guiding the creative talent. Torrance emphasized how teachers can participate in the creative process by encouraging children to become more self-aware of their creative skills and appreciate their own unique skills. Torrance's theory suggested that in order for teachers to be able to measure creative skills, it is important to understand the creative process, which is comprised of planning, discussing, exploring, creating, problem solving, and deriving solutions to an immediate problem.

The teacher participants indicated that they encouraged children by expressing to their students how they value their effort in attempting new tasks. Teachers believed that when children are encouraged through praise, they are more likely to confront challenging tasks and participate in their own social development through social activities. The teachers reported that they developed a warm and responsive classroom

culture, enabling children to be more expressive by participating in group art projects, which, in turn, helped them develop socially.

The findings are further consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development, presenting that teachers or a responsible peer can participate in the preschool environment by assisting children with their potential development. This assistance will allow the emerging skills they acquire to surface, building on their intrinsic capabilities that are not fully matured. The zone of proximal development promotes the undeveloped emerging skills that are not evident but that can be actualized through positive and supportive classroom relationships (Vygotsky, 1978).

Teachers reported that in preschool environments, *establishing trust* with teachers and peers is equally an essential component in the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. Based on interview responses, teachers in the present study believed that they should be receptive so that children can share their feelings without being judged or disdained, and if children are unable to share their thoughts, it hinders their creativity and stifles their social skills. These findings are congruent with Ladd et al. (2006), who explained that the value of trust in healthy relationships is extremely important and when there is a lack of warmth in children's interaction with teachers and peers, children can become more incompliant and engage in angry exchanges.

Although children may need trustworthy relationships and closeness to teachers, this closeness should also be monitored, because their independence can be greatly affected if they demand excessive closeness. The teachers in the current study realized that trust helps children feel good about themselves and each other. According to these teachers, trust helps children believe that their thoughts and feeling are valued.

Furthermore, these teachers reported that learning about each child's capabilities allowed them to respond to children in a more caring and loving way, allowing children to be able to actualize their fullest creative potential.

These findings are congruent with Vygotsky's (1978) theory, which emphasized that human behavior is deeply embedded in the relationship between the individual and history. Children's social behavior can be shaped by interactions with others who are responsive to the development of their social skills. As a result, children are able to advance their social skills and emerge to the next step of learning.

Studies by Faulkner et al. (2006), Vygotsky (1978), and Edwards and Springate (1995) found that the concept of trust is embedded in teachers' knowledge in understanding the elements of children's culture that is meaningful to them. In addition, Faulkner et al. (2006) explained that culture and creativity should be recognized as socially constructed components, whereby the dynamic interactions among children, as they engage in various activities, are supported by teachers and the classroom culture. The present study's results indicated that establishing trust among teachers, children, and peers creates the foundation on which children can actualized their fullest creative skills without being fearful of teachers' responses. The teachers reported that they provided opportunities for children to engage in social tasks and they encouraged group activities and a process facilitated through warm and responsive praise.

During interview sessions, teachers maintained that they provide preschool environments to help children with *acceptance and self-awareness* of others to help them work together, learn about each other's feelings, show empathy, and reduce the selfishness that is most often displayed in this age group. These findings were consistent

with Gardner (1983), who stated that children's intrapersonal skills are embedded in their ability to analyze emotions externally to other individuals and to interpret the intentions and motivations of others. In contrast, children's interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are supported by their abilities to develop an awareness of self whereby they can analyze emotions and use them in a constructive way to guide their actions. Miller and Pedro's (2006) study implied that teachers are responsible to promote respectful classroom environments that reflect positive teacher–child interactions.

Based on teachers' responses, it is important to understand the temperament of each child and their developmental stage because understanding these elements helps them determine which activities or materials will be appropriate for social development. Joseph and Strain (2003) declared that "the ability to form and nurture positive friendships involves a complex interplay of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors" (p. 65). Joseph and Strain confirmed that socially competent children easily can learn various approaches to interact with their peers and participate in social processes and everyday experiences at school and at home. For instance, these children knew how to be friendly, use language appropriately, recognize their feelings and express them appropriately, and negotiate conflict in difficult situations.

Three components of Joseph and Strain's (2003) study included teachers' abilities to assist children in enhancing their self-concept, promoting skill performance, and fostering skill maintenance. The results of this study are consistent with the findings in the present study in which participants mentioned that they support acceptance and self-awareness, by providing appropriate activities to help children challenge their own

creative capabilities through social tasks, work effectively with others, and use appropriate language to communicate with their peers.

Pitri (2007) and Katz and Chard (2000) suggested that when peers communicate verbally they are able to develop the social skills needed to solidify relationships. Children have an intrinsic desire to transmit what they know, understand, feel, and imagine, and it is through interactions with their teachers and peers that they are able to express themselves. The result of these studies indicated that interactions among peers, teachers, and children can provide children with opportunities to work in groups or by themselves, deciding when and where they may want to engage in their own social activity. Children's ability to choose provides them the opportunity to participate in projects in which they can work independently or in groups.

The present study's findings suggested that children's social and emotional awareness skills can be developed to enable them to join with others to express their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. This awareness helps children develop self-discipline, engage in group activities, and apply their imaginations. Duffy (2006) stated that children are better able to express themselves when they become more aware of their capabilities, which in turn contributes to their social development.

Teachers in this study agreed that all forms of play are essential components in children's overall development. Through *dramatic play* children are able to consolidate their emotions and create their own world. Although teachers felt that all forms of play are important, they also emphasized that dramatic play allows children the opportunity to engage in role play, learn how to negotiate, see things from various perspectives, share, take turns, and build social skills.

Ashiabi's (2007) work supported the findings that children engage in play because it is a joyful experience, enabling them to make independent choices, use their imagination, and control the process of the play activities. When children play with their peers, they are able to develop social skills, and play allows children to encounter, solve, and compromise on problems that may develop during the process. Teachers can guide children in their play activities to assist the less competent child by providing opportunities for them to engage in group activities.

Teachers indicated that dramatic role play enables children to act out family dynamics together, pretend to be different characters in complex situations, and manage their responsibilities as they position themselves in various occupational roles. Swindells and Stagnitti's (2006) confirmed that children who are limited in their dramatic-play abilities can be assisted with suggestions from their peers. Vygotsky (1978) submitted that pretend play emerges when the environment is designed to provide opportunities for experimentation, exploration, and interpretation of social settings.

Based on teachers' responses, the present study found that various forms of play allow children to identify their interpersonal- and intrapersonal-skills development. They believed that the interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships that children developed through play will help them in their overall development. It is through play that children are able to actualize what they learn. As reported by J. E. Johnson et al. (2005), during dramatic play children use a variety of objects to represent past and current life experiences. For instance, if a change occurs in the family such as the birth of a sibling, divorce, or marriage, children will position themselves in the various roles to address these events.

Children's knowledge and social skills expand through play such that they are also able to use their bodies creatively in various games. In addition, Honig's (2007) and Swindells and Stagnitti's (2006) studies are congruent with the findings, suggesting that dramatic play or pretend play can also be supported by teachers using the housekeeping section of preschool environments, where children can learn spatial aspects and directions and see different perspectives. These studies emphasized that play enables children to develop critical-reasoning skills that are required when they engage in scientific ventures. In addition, play promotes mastery of language, which is essential to communicative and social processes. The teachers in this study applied similar approaches to facilitate children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships.

Because play is intrinsically motivated, children are able to focus on the process of the activity rather than on the end product. As teachers indicated, various forms of play are presented from the child's perspectives, and therefore children are more able to expand their social skills as they engage in dramatic, constructive, or pretend play. The teachers further reported that dramatic play enables children to creatively act out family dynamics and create their own perspective of the world in which they interact.

In addition to dramatic play, most of the participating teachers noticed that when children engage in *collaborative or cooperative-play* activities they are more likely to develop social skills. It is through collaborative play that children can demonstrate their abilities to work in groups, and teachers assist them in developing group projects or activities. Findings from K. H. Rubin and Ross's (1982) study supported the results, emphasizing that cooperative play helps children feel socially competent in building relationships with others. When children interact during collaborative-play activities,

different behaviors of these children emerge. This finding means children are responding to interactions with others, and because of this intrinsically motivated exchange, it becomes clear that cooperative play yields valued outcomes.

Ashiabi (2007), Honig (2007), and Vygotsky (1978) held that collaborative play helps teachers understand the level of children's emotional and social development. Based on teachers' responses and results of the present study, playing with peers enhances the social dynamics in relationships and allows children to solve problems on their own. Honig (2007) reported that children engaged in collaborative play during cooking activities gain opportunities to work with others and use their creative skills to understand the texture and color of food.

Children also learn how to measure proportions, which is an essential component of creativity and problem solving. This study's results were further supported by Standard 5 and 6 of the National Association of Young Children's Education, which stated that teachers must provide an environment that fosters collaborative activities, active inquiry, and supportive social interaction (as cited in Ledoux & McHenry, 2006). As Miller and Pedro (2006) pointed out, children are equipped with unique skills to express their interpersonal skills and teachers need to provide opportunities for them to engage in group activities in spite of their ideas or cultural heritage. This will help them respect, value, and appreciate each other's contributions, thus gaining a richer learning experience.

Even though most of the study's participants espoused that collaborative or cooperative-play activities are important, two teachers felt that collaborative activities could be problematic because children may have a difficult time sharing or following

directions. However, the other teachers indicated that most children are able to learn from other children, and teachers should encourage collaborative-play activities or projects.

Edwards et al. (1998) contributed to the value of the results, stating that when teachers recognize each child's effort, they should facilitate the process by providing collaborative activities. These types of activities can be provided in the classroom through the choice of materials that are available. Finally, Burnard et al. (2006) formulated that "possibility" thinking plays a critical role in the social and creative process, and teachers facilitate play through "process outcome," which includes imagination and taking risks. Based on teachers' responses, this is a viable approach to encourage learning through play, because it is through this process that teachers are able to identify and support collaborative play to help children develop their interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships

Children's transitioning processes are relevant to the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. Preschool environments can be viable in providing activities to help children as they transition in schools (Logue, 2007). Children are able to apply themselves to further academic pursuits and various grade levels with little difficulty when they develop the necessary transitional skills. In addition, *encouraging social skills* are important to help children learn self-discipline and how to get along with others (Joseph & Strain, 2003). Children develop the skills to manage and control their emotions appropriately through the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships (Gardner, 1983).

Cooperative learning contributed to preschool children's interpersonal intrapersonal relationships development. For instance, children can learn about

themselves and each other, as they participate in cooperative activities, and teachers can scaffold children's learning (Vygotsky, 1978). The intention of implementing the TTCT was to determine whether various aspects of creative-strengths criteria are reflected in children's artwork, and whether preschool environments influence children's creative skills in relation to the development of these artifacts.

The findings from this study suggested that the process of grouping children should be encouraged in elementary classes. Vygotsky (1978) indicated that teachers should scaffold children's learning, grouping children into social-task activities in which the more competent child can be of some assistance to the less competent. Therefore, applying the zone of proximal development enables these less competent children to emerge with skills to advance to the next level of learning. Additionally, *children's self-concept* is significant to the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. Torrance (1964) believed that teachers and administrators should be concerned with encouraging children to develop creative self-awareness; teachers in turn should create opportunities for children to apply these skills.

RQ 2

How do preschool environments impact the development of preschool children's creative skills?

An organized environment was determined to be relevant to the creative process. Based on most teachers' responses to the interview questions, it was necessary to provide centers to determine organized preschool environments. However, two teachers believed that providing open-ended materials is a better indicator to determine whether organized environments can foster independence and creative development. The teachers reported

that organized environments promote exploration, critical-thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. The results of studies (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Churchill, 2003; Miller & Pedro, 2006) emphasized that the support children receive from school and home environments shaped their outlook about life, themselves, and others.

As confirmed by teachers' responses in the present study, it is important for children to interact in preschool environments that are carefully designed to foster the creative skills of each child. Teachers play an important role in establishing such environments. Churchill (2003) supported the concept that strategies used by teachers and parents in the classroom impact children's attitudes and actions, environments that should be adapted to accommodate each child's temperament. Children's independence is critical to how they perceive their own capabilities; they should be provided with various opportunities to express their creative skills. In addition teachers in Churchill's study agreed that they can support children's development through personal independence, motivation to learn, social communication, and social interaction with their peers, further supporting the present study's results.

The majority of teachers explained that they helped children by giving them choices and dividing the classroom into centers where each child can choose activities. They believed that children also have the choice of working together in groups or by themselves in these centers. In addition, the results of the Edwards et al. (1998) study similarly supported the findings, confirming that the Reggio Emilia environment is designed to promote classroom relationships as well as the independence of each child, through the organization of the materials. Reggio Emilia is a teaching method that promotes creative learning for young children. This method focused on a preschool

environment as the second teacher, allowing teachers to provide children various opportunities that enable them to express their creative skills using a variety of media. In this type of environment, children are viewed as strong and competent, capable of constructing their own knowledge. Edwards et al. indicated that the environment is considered to be the third teacher and children should be able to explore, create, and solve problems, expanding on their social and creative abilities. According to Fraser (2000),

> The spaces that teachers create for children seem to hold enduring memories for
> them have a powerful influence on what they will value later in life. Therefore, it
> is important that the teachers think carefully about their own values and how their
> decisions influence their arrangement of space, equipment, and materials in the
> environment (p. 53).

The teachers stated that in preschool environments children should be able to express their creative skills. Teachers believed that they should facilitate this process by allowing each child to take risks and develop critical thinking as they engage in various activities. These findings are consistent with Craft (2003), who suggested that creativity is an ongoing process and is also considered to be a collective process in which both teachers and children can participate, and in which the teacher becomes a mediator between balancing knowledge and empowering people. Based on teachers' responses, children's motivation develops from the encouragement they receive from teachers as they engage in various activities. However, children must also learn how to value the skills they acquire and those of their peers. The teachers agreed that they serve a critical role in helping children learn to apply those skills that are consistent with Jeffrey and

Craft's study, emphasizing how teachers can teach to allow children to express four essential components that create the foundation for the expression of children's creative abilities: relevance, ownership, control, and innovation.

The present study's results also supported Csoti's (2001) suggestion that when children are given the opportunity to choose, they are more willing to engage in individual and group creative activities. As discussed earlier, some of the teachers in the present study stated that they provide centers that focus on specific activities. They mentioned that providing centers can expand children's options to choose the activities that are relevant to them. Csoti reinforced that children are encouraged when teachers allow them to make choices about the topic and activities, and create a classroom culture that fosters children's creative abilities.

The teachers felt that the type of materials, in particular *open-ended materials,* allow children to manipulate them to express their ideas and thoughts in whatever way they choose. As these teachers mentioned during their interview responses, children should be able to use inside and outside materials simultaneously. As such, these teachers provided an array of materials to enable children to be flexible in their choices. Fraser's (2000) and Katz and Chard's (2000) studies are consistent with the findings, stating that the materials should be open ended to enable the child to modify the objects in various ways. When children are provided with open-ended materials, many other opportunities are evident to help them express innovative ideas. As Fraser mentioned, some of these materials should include paints, puzzles, blocks of various shapes, scissors, brushes, collage materials, table toys, Legos, paints, leaves, egg cartons, musical instruments and many others that allow children to explore.

Katz and Chard (2000) indicated that providing children with open-ended materials enables them to work on projects, and is an effective approach in identifying their creative skills. The teachers in the present study realized that as children engage in various activities they are able to make choices based on the materials provided. According to Katz and Chard, these materials allow children to make choices that are procedural, aesthetic, and intrinsic, and these choices enable them to develop emotionally, socially, and creatively, and enhance their cognitive skills; a viewpoint that is directly congruent with the present findings. In addition, open-ended materials contribute to the exploratory and inquisitive nature of the developing child. The results of Katz and Chard's (2000) study further supported the provision of open-ended materials, which enable children to explore a wide variety of roles in imaginative play, and to experience art, music, and dance from various cultures. Children are then able to engage their minds in activities that have meaningful content, and are vivid and intellectually stimulating.

The results of the present study are similarly congruent with Gibson's (2003) conclusions, emphasizing that art provides a unique sense of satisfaction to the quality of each child's experiences and sense of existence. Furthermore, art provides a sense of intrinsic satisfaction that deepens the children's everyday aesthetic and personal experiences, greatly contributing to the overall development of the child. Teachers posited that when children interact with various types of materials, they are able to engage in social interaction, share, negotiate, understand each other's feelings, and develop creative ideas.

The teachers in the present study explained that children's developmental level is considered throughout their teaching practices and in part through the materials they provide in preschool environments. Some teachers discussed various materials they use to facilitate the creative experience. Findings emphasized the importance of providing learning experiences that are active and creative, requiring preschool environments to have a stimulating atmosphere where children can engage in various activities and where they are encouraged to explore and create (Katz & Chard, 2000).

Although many of the teacher participants were unable to provide documentation of children's work as they engaged in various forms of activities, the majority stated during the interview sessions that *observation* is the key component to learning about children's creative-skills development. Torrance's (1964) and Vygotsky's (1978) theories concluded that concrete observations should be used to measure young children's creative skills, viewpoints supported by the results. Torrance (1964) formulated that observing children in a social setting where they are engaged in authentic activities is an essential approach to helping teachers identify children's creative skills. By observing children, teachers were able to learn about the personalities and temperaments of each child, and therefore could adapt the environment to promote each child's creative development. Based on teachers' responses, when they were actively engaged in observation, they were able to identify and support the unique skill of each child, and help them advance to the next level of learning.

Children's temperament can be an effective indicator in identifying their level of creative-skills development (Torrance, 1964). This is important for teachers to know because personality factors significantly impact creative and social-tasks processes, and

are only evident when the child is willing to take risks. It is also relevant to observe children to understand and learn about their creative personalities (Torrance, 1964). In addition, results from Kang (2007) supported the findings for the present study, suggesting that in the Reggio Emilia preschool environment, observation is an essential component that allows teachers and parents to adapt the setting by distributing materials that enable children to work together as a team. Children are also able to express themselves independently. Teachers listen to children and adjust their lesson plans to accommodate their ideas and needs.

Teachers revealed that through observation, they are able to identify visual, aural, and tactile learners, and provide the assistance children need to help them challenge themselves through materials provided or by asking them open-ended questions. Katz's (1998) study confirmed that observing children's work in the Reggio Emilia preschool environment revealed how they expressed, built, reconstructed, and revisited their knowledge of a project or activity. The teacher participants in the present study believed that when they observe children, they can facilitate the creative process by providing other ways to extend learning experiences and therein offer suggestions or ideas to help children think critically. Montie et al. (2007) supported the findings, suggesting that an engaged teacher can facilitate learning by observing the activities children choose and their communication approaches and by offering specific suggestions or questions to extend the communication and thought processes.

Wallace et al. (2007) supported the importance of teachers' observations in understanding and supporting children's development, reporting that as teachers walked around the classroom, they were able to observe and comment on children's work,

reminding them to think about items needed for the classroom. The Wallace et al. study demonstrated how teachers can present specific questions to elicit children's responses as children think about these items. This method supports the approach the teachers applied in the present study to encourage creative-skills development.

During the interview analysis, teachers claimed that the most effective way for them to learn about children capabilities is through observation. However, I was surprised that although these teachers mentioned that they observed children to learn about their social and creative development, the majority of teachers were unable to provide documentation of children's progress. These documentations might provide further insights that may enable them to see systematic progress of these children's work. Documentation of children's work in the Reggio Emilia preschool environments are critical to learning about the progress and capabilities of each child (Edwards et al., 1998).

During the interview sessions, all the teachers believed that implementing a *creativity-enhancing curriculum* is very important to facilitate the ability of children to express their intentions and original ideas. However, some of the teachers mentioned that although they had a prescribed curriculum, they usually modified it to accommodate children's creative skills. They believed that all curricula should provide opportunities for children to express their creative skills.

Armistead (2007) emphasized that children can benefit from a creative curriculum through collaboration, developing their critical-thinking skills, providing ways to accommodate children with various disabilities, and encouraging children to engage in the creative process. Armistead argued that the curriculum should be designed to promote

a variety of activities to engage children in challenging creative projects in which they are able to actualize their highest potential as physical and creative individuals. This view was supported by the present study's findings. Bredekamp and Copple (1997) reported that the curriculum should be designed to promote all elements of the child's biological, cognitive, and psychosocial development.

Faulkner et al. (2006) supported the findings, revealing that more extensive research should be conducted to help teachers develop the skills needed to promote young children's creative talent. These findings also include providing a systematic approach to curricular design, and focusing on learning models that are conducive to the development of children's creative skills and interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. The teachers concurred that the curriculum should allow opportunities for creative expression, and therefore supported the importance of a creativity-enhancing curriculum, especially during the early years.

Ledoux and McHenry (2006) outlined a list of standards that are provided to guide early childhood practices, and argued that teachers must understand the concepts and tools of inquiry in children's creative skills, and design curricula and lesson plans to accommodate those needs. This study also suggested that teachers must understand the motivational components of children's learning and development and provide a curriculum that supports these components. The study participants agreed that a balance of teacher-guided activities and allowing children to explore preschool environments are important. They mentioned that when children are unable to express their creative skills with the materials provided and teachers' encouragement, their critical thinking is stifled.

Therefore, these teachers further believed that they should be supportive sources in helping these children develop their social and creative skills.

The findings are further consistent with Craft (2003) and Lim and Chung (2008), supporting the development of a framework that can help teachers explore creative thinking. For instance, Craft suggested that teachers must develop a curriculum that equally adheres to the creative aspects of children's development. For instance, introducing new technology into the classroom is a possible approach to helping children work collectively. Lim and Chung's study revealed that curriculum focuses on children's abilities to apply the appropriate use of language to developing healthy relationships, and thus employ their creative abilities to everyday experiences.

Leu's (2008) study supported the results of the present study, proposing that the music curriculum depends on how teachers understand developmentally appropriate practices and their applicability to creative music activities. Based on teachers' responses, they provide children with a variety of developmentally appropriate materials that enable them to explore, experiment, and create. Torrance (1964) postulated that children can express their creative abilities through art, music, dance, and sports, and teachers can guide and support their creative abilities by encouraging children to pursue value and purpose.

Language application was determined to be relevant in preschool environments in preschool children's development of creative skills. Findings are supported by Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, suggesting that language plays a significant role in children's abilities to transmit and receive information in a social and personal context. Vygotsky claimed that language helps children solve problems, think to modify

compulsive behaviors, and engage in social interaction with teachers and peers. Because children bring their own individual uniqueness culturally and biologically, it is important for them to be provided with creative and social opportunities to enjoy and appreciate the aesthetic nature of the environment (Fraser, 2000).

Understanding children's culture in preschool environments may be a viable component to help teachers in nurturing preschool children's development of creative skills. Vygotsky (1978) indicated that children's social skills are embedded in their cultural values and beliefs, and it through the analysis of the environment and biological factors that one is able to understand children's interaction in a social context. The findings were consistent with studies (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Miller & Pedro, 2006) emphasizing that preschool environments must teach children how to treat each other respectfully and engage and assist each other in social activities while learning to value their peers' cultural traditions and beliefs.

The findings in the school documents indicated that understanding children's culture, helping children with transitioning processes, language application, and encouraging social skills are important to their creative-skills development. The curriculum collected from School E provided more comprehensive information related to the provisions of multicultural activities in the environment, thus helping children of diverse backgrounds exercise their creative and social skills. I was surprised that teachers did not discuss in more detail how culture and children's home language can impact their development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. Vygotsky's (1978) work indicated that social interaction among children takes place in a

social context and their language and culture determine how they interact in those settings, advancing to higher levels of learning.

Teachers' pedagogy is relevant to the occurrences of the creative process in preschool environments. Torrance (1964) clarified that teachers can participate in the creative process by encouraging children's self-awareness, uniqueness, and openness to other children's ideas, resulting in healthy interpersonal relationships: "Teachers should encourage children to develop 'purpose and value, holding to purposes, utilizing opportunities, accepting limitations, and recognize the value of their own talents" (p. 142).

Gardner (1983) and Torrance (1964) supported the importance of *nurturing creativity,* and suggested that teachers should be able to facilitate the creative process by encouraging children's creative ideas, providing children with opportunities for them to explore, discover, create, solve problems, and interpret solutions from different perspectives. Curiosity is a fundamental aspect of creative skills, often described as a natural and notable characteristic of young children's development: "Young children's curiosity and exploration are expressions of their eagerness to know and if 'nurtured' can be a motivational source for the acquisition of knowledge" (Chak, 2007, p. 142).

Preparatory activities included warm-up activities and materials, preparing children to participate in creative processes. When children are provided with various activities, with materials in an environment where they can engage in warm-up activities prior to using creative processes, they are more able to think critically and develop original and creative ideas. Csoti (2001) indicated that an environment that allowed children to make their own choices contributes to their willingness to participate when

they can work together in activities that engage their minds. For children to express their creative skills, teachers must provide those opportunities through the topic and activities chosen, and by creating a classroom climate that fosters children's creative skills (Duffy, 2006).

During the artifact analysis, *preparatory exercises* were considered to be major aspects of the creative process. I also became aware that during the interview sessions, as teachers discussed various ways they support children's creative skills, they did not discuss in any great detail the types of warm-up activities they provided for children to prepare them to embellish their creative pursuits. This is important because studies (Duffy, 2006; Torrance, 1964) emphasized that teachers should be facilitators of the creative process to help children develop the skills needed to explore, experiment, and create.

The present study is based on the conceptual framework of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and Torrance's (1964) theory of guiding the creative talent. The results of the study determined that the creative and social aspects of children's development must be considered for them to function like creative and social human beings. The findings supported that children's creative skills and interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships can also be nurtured in preschool environments that support participation and establish trust, acceptance/self-awareness, dramatic and collaborative play, and organization. In addition, provisions of open-ended materials, observation, creativity-enhancing curricula, children's transitional processes, social-behavior-skills activities, and language-application activities further support the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. Understanding children's

culture and cooperative learning, supporting children's self-concept and teachers'
pedagogy, and nurturing creativity and preparatory activities also contribute to the
development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills.

Implications for Social Change

Bredekamp and Copple (1997) posited that preschool environments should be
approached as communities, considering children's cultures and families. Such a
community reflects a context in which knowledge can be acquired to support the social
and creative skills of each child. The relationships children develop in the early years
shape their perspectives about themselves and their peers, as well as the community in
which they interact. Preschool environments must provide opportunities in which
children are able to build their social and creative skills with support and encouragement
from warm, responsive teachers (Duffy, 2006).

Positive social impact of this study is that it provides early childhood teachers and
administrators with a framework for preparing environments that not only promotes
academic achievement but also nurture preschool children's creative and social skills
development. This study may also help children's transitional processes into schools and
contribute to their academic achievement.

In addition, this study may provide teachers with various strategies that can be
applied in preschool environments so teachers can nurture the development of preschool
children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. Teachers may
also be provided with resources and strategies to support and shape children's outlook
about themselves, their peers, education, and the world in which they interact. Parents
and community members can also benefit from this study by working with teachers and

administrators, sharing ideas related to improving preschool environments to support creative and social-skills development.

Recommendations for Action

In addition to the contribution of these findings to the body of existing knowledge, teachers, administrators, policymakers, and parents can benefit from the findings of this study. The teachers mentioned that they needed more support and resources from administrators and policymakers as well as other teachers. Rather than focusing entirely on academic performance, stakeholders can design curriculum around topics and projects that are relevant to children; in which they are able to explore, experiment, and solve problems independently or in group settings.

Some teachers stated that they need more professional-development classes to help them develop skills to determine how to identify creative skills in young children. Providing workshops and educational programs that focus on shaping these teachers' awareness of preparing creative preschool environments can help in bridging the gap. Teachers also mentioned that parents' participation could be a viable approach to social and creative experiences that occur in school. The home environment could be an extension of the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. Therefore, classes or seminars need to be designed for parents, to help them to be supportive of preschool environments and children's social-skills development, and how to identify the characteristics of the creative child.

Teachers, administrators, and policymakers might be able to engage in regular discussions to maintain connections with early childhood educators in keeping current with various teaching practices. Finally, although teacher participants agreed that

children's social and creative skills should be at the forefront of their learning experiences, most of these teachers were unable to provide documentation of children's work. Teachers can be more supportive in understanding and learning about each child's capabilities by observing and documenting children's work to track their progress (Fraser, 2000). Jeffrey and Craft (2004) posited that creative teaching embodied teachers' abilities to use imaginative approaches with the intention of developing young children's critical-thinking skills and behavior.

Recommendations for Further Study

The purpose of the study was to examine strategies used by teachers in preschool environments to determine whether preschool environments nurture the development of preschool children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. The 9 participants in this study were selected from five private preschools. Further study can be conducted on this topic involving a larger sample, selecting participants from the kindergarten and prekindergarten preschool environments of public schools to determine whether there is a difference in teachers' perceptions of how preschool environments may impact preschool children's development of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills and creative skills.

Future studies can be conducted examining Montessori's and Reggio Emilia's curricula, selecting a larger sample of teachers to determine how preschool environments nurture creative and social-skills development. The Montessori method focuses on a "prepared environment," so called because the materials and activities in the environment are organized to facilitate independent learning and exploration by the child (Richardson, 2000) with minimal teacher assistance. The Reggio Emilia method refers to the

environment as a "third teacher," where materials and space are organized to foster social and creative-skills development (Katz & Cesarone, 1994). A comparison of Montessori's and Reggio Emilia's methods to those of other private, public, and charter schools can provide other perspectives of how preschool environments are prepared to nurture creative and social skills.

Because this study focused on the analysis of only art projects, collage, paintings, and drawings as a reflection of children's creative and social expression, children can express creativity in different ways. Therefore, future studies can also be conducted to investigate other ways in which children can express creativity, including how storytelling, dance, and dramatic-play activities can foster these skills. Gardner (1983) pointed out that children's creativity can be expressed through multiple intelligences which include linguistic, musical, mathematical, spatial, and bodily-kinesthetic.

Researcher's Reflection

Through the process of conducting this study, I learned how personal bias and preconceived ideas can affect conducting research. Although I had completed various courses, conducted observations in various early childhood environments related to creativity, cognitive, and social development, I had not thought to assess or discuss the impact of personal bias during this process. For this study I made every attempt to reduce bias in data collection and analysis by engaging in frequent self-reflection, documenting and assessing bias at every phase of the study.

I will be more aware of these biases in conducting future studies. I also learned that teachers' responses to the interview questions may have been influenced by my presence in the classroom. Some of these teachers indicated that they have never

participated in an interview session of this magnitude. Every effort was made to help teachers feel comfortable throughout the process and provide them with other options, including participating in telephone interviews rather than in person.

My perspectives on various issues have changed as a result of conducting this study. Although teachers may have attempted to provide environments that support the development of classroom relationships and creative skills, necessary resources and assistance are not immediately available to them. I have also seen, as a result of this study, that if teachers observe as well as provide documentation of children's work, they might be better able to provide environments with activities that nurture the development of social and creative skills. Finally, this study helped me to understand that developing workshops and providing seminars for teachers may be a valuable approach to help them learn how to design creative preschool environments that may nurture the development of creative skills and interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships.

Summary

The teacher participants in this study explained that they need more support from not only other teachers but also from policymakers, and they need a curriculum designed to be flexible enough to allow children to develop critical-thinking skills, produce original ideas, and create and solve problems. The teachers believed that applying a creative approach to curricular design can enhance children's uniqueness, build their self-esteem, and confront further academic challenges.

Teaching for creativity and teaching creatively are essential for children's development, but equally important is how these components are embedded in social development (Jeffrey & Craft, 2004). Children's overall development is shaped by their

early experiences with teachers and peers in preschool environments (Duffy, 2006; Fraser, 2000; Gardner, 1983). It is important for teachers to recognize the critical role they play in fostering those relationships that embody children's creative abilities.

A better understanding of the perceptions of teachers related to the impact of the preschool environment on social and creative skills can help in closing the gap of frustration that grows from teachers' adherence to strict curricular procedures and lesson plans. Policymakers, administrators, and teachers can collaborate to ensure that children's development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills will be at the forefront of their learning experiences.

Based on the results of the study, preschool environments play critical roles in children's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills. These environments can be prepared to nurture the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and creative skills through the 18 themes discussed in this chapter. Studies (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Churchill, 2003; Edwards & Springate, 1995; Szente, 2007), claimed that it is important for teachers to understand that effective teaching embodies cognitive, biological, and psychosocial components of children's development; therefore teachers are responsible to seek the appropriate knowledge needed to allow them to nurture all aspects of children's social and creative skills.

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Appendix A:

Letter of Permission From the Director

Date: September 8 , 2009
A request for permission to conduct a case study with teachers from your institution

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am writing this letter to practitioners who teach 3- to 5-years old prekindergarten/kindergarten children. I, Petronella Cameron, the researcher, and a Ph.D. student of Walden University's Early Childhood Education program is conducting a qualitative study to examine teachers' perceptions and attitudes of how classroom relationships play a critical role in the creative abilities of preschool children. This study will begin once I have obtained Institutional Review Board approval from Walden University. The data collection includes 30 minutes to 1 hour of audiotaped interviews of two teachers and the collection of archival data of children's art projects, creative checklists of children's work, newsletters, school policies, curricula, and thematic units.

A list of the interview questions for the teachers will be provided for your review, if requested. These interviews do not have to be conducted during school time. The time and location of the interviews will be established by the researcher and the teachers. Teachers will be asked to sign consent forms that will be collected by the researcher before the initiation of the study. The researcher will also provide a copy of the Institutional Review Board approval form before conducting the study. The researcher will not engage in any form of data collection prior to receiving that approval.

In order to protect the confidentiality of the participants, pseudonyms will be used to identify the participants and the school. The data will be destroyed after 5 years. If there are any questions or further concerns, please contact me at 310-674-7165 or via e-mail at pc6190@yahoo.com. You can also contact the Chair of my dissertation committee via email at teresa.lao@waldenu.edu. Please sign the letter on the following page to give the researcher permission to conduct the study with teachers from your institution. Thanks in advance for allowing me to conduct this study with teachers from your institution.
A copy of the signed letter will be provided for your records.

Appendix B:

E-mail Sent to Teachers

Hello prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers:

My name is Petronella Cameron and I am currently a PhD student at Walden University. I have already discussed this study with the director to acquire her permission to conduct the study because this study will be conducted with teachers from the directors' institution. The director provided me with your email and is aware of your possible participation in this study.

My dissertation is a qualitative case study to examine teachers' perceptions of how interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships can affect the creative abilities of preschool children. The purpose of this study is to provide teachers and administrators with other perspectives of children's development, and thus to help inform curriculum. Studies have shown that children's creativity excels when children are provided with valuable and positive relationships, particularly in the early stages of development.

This qualitative study includes a 30 to 60-minute of audiotaped open-ended face-to-face interview, collecting archival documents that include creative checklists of children's work, thematic units, school policies, newsletters, curricula, and children's art projects. I am looking for teachers who have 3 or more years experience teaching prekindergarten/kindergarten.

If you intend to participate in this study, I will need to meet with you to conduct face-to-face interviews. The amount of time involved with the interviews is intended to be 30 to 60 minutes but also will depend on the amount of information you have to share. Even though the interviews are intended to be in person, you can contact me by phone or email with any follow-up questions you have. The researchers' intention is not to disrupt the school schedule and therefore will schedule the interviews to accommodate the time and location that will be conducive to all participants. Our dialogue will be guided with respect and ethical principles and the researcher will not attempt to probe into any aspects of personal issues unrelated to the dissertation topic. Pseudonyms will be used to protect your confidentiality and your school's name.

Please note that this study must first be approved by the research ethics committee (Institutional Review Board) at Walden University. All information provided will be strictly confidential and the results of this study will not appear in any report unrelated to this study.

Thanks for your acceptance in wanting to participate in this study. I am looking forward to working with you.
The researcher can be contacted via email: petronella.cameron@waldenu.edu or by phone 310-674-7165.

Best regard
Ms. Cameron

Appendix C:

Sample Coded Excerpt From School B Curriculum

Week of: 10-12-09 School B curriculum
10-16-09 Curriculum Theme: **Caring and Sharing**

Curriculum	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Arts & Crafts	"Caring" Heart		Painting Pals TPC	Blooming Friend-ship TPR	We paint TPR together
Music Creative Movement	Music with Davis TPR		Bean Bags	Rythmn Sticks	Gym with coach Lola
Language Arts	Share TPR and Take Turns		Now It's Your turn	Let's Do It Together	Caring TPR Friends
Science Cooking Math	Magnetic Gears		Shaving Cream TPC	Number Bingo	Light Table
Fine Motor Manipulatives	Cutting		Beading	Pouring	Adding Sand

Appendix D:

Sample Coded Excerpt From School E Curriculum

School E Curriculum

Emergent Curriculum
Awareness of alternatives and the basis of choices distinguish the competent teacher from the merely intuitive one.

- Elizabeth Brady

At the Children's Center we believe that children learn best when they are involved and interested in the topic. The best cognitive curriculum *emerges* from the child's interest – it is not solely dictated by teacher interest. Teachers build the curriculum "…experience by experience, idea by idea, as the topic evolves while the teachers and children investigate it together."[4] This does not mean that teachers just wait to see what the children want to do each day. They plan curriculum based on careful observation of what children are interested in and how best to extend their learning. Teachers build curriculum that explores different topics in depth as children's understanding of the topic grows. Teachers set up experiences for children that require questioning, investigation and problem solving. Teachers believe it is valuable for children to be able to generate their own ideas, figure out answers for themselves, and try out a variety of solutions until they find one that works. Teachers act as facilitators of this process, aiding children in their discoveries and providing a wealth of experiences to add to the child's knowledge of the world. Teachers bring the world to children through their planning while allowing children to make discoveries for themselves and to take the project in a new direction as interest dictates.

One effective method to plan for in-depth projects that emerge from the child's interest is to use a curriculum web. Webbing is a way of organizing curriculum that addresses:
- ❖ What children need and/or are able to do
- ❖ What children are interested in
- ❖ What children "need to know" in order to explore the topic
- ❖ What experiences that children are having that can be expanded upon

For an example of how to use curriculum webs please see the appendix.

Anti-Bias Curriculum
There are only two lasting bequests that we can leave to our children;
One is roots; The other; wings.

- Unknown

"Multicultural education includes teaching children about their own culture – their ethnic heritage. It also means exposing children to other cultures and helping them to be comfortable with and respect all the ways people are different from each other. It is teaching children how to relate to one another and how to play fair. Multicultural education encourages children to notice and think about unfairness, and challenges them to do something about the unfairness toward people in their world.

Multicultural education is more than teaching information directly. It means providing a classroom that includes materials depicting people form many different places doing many different things. It's creating and maintaining an environment that says everyone is welcome here. It is also encouraging children to act, think, and talk like members of their own culture.

Appendix E:

Coded Sample School A and B Copies Of Children's Art Projects

Appendix F:

Coded Sample School C and D Copies Of Children's Art Projects

School C - creative strengths codes
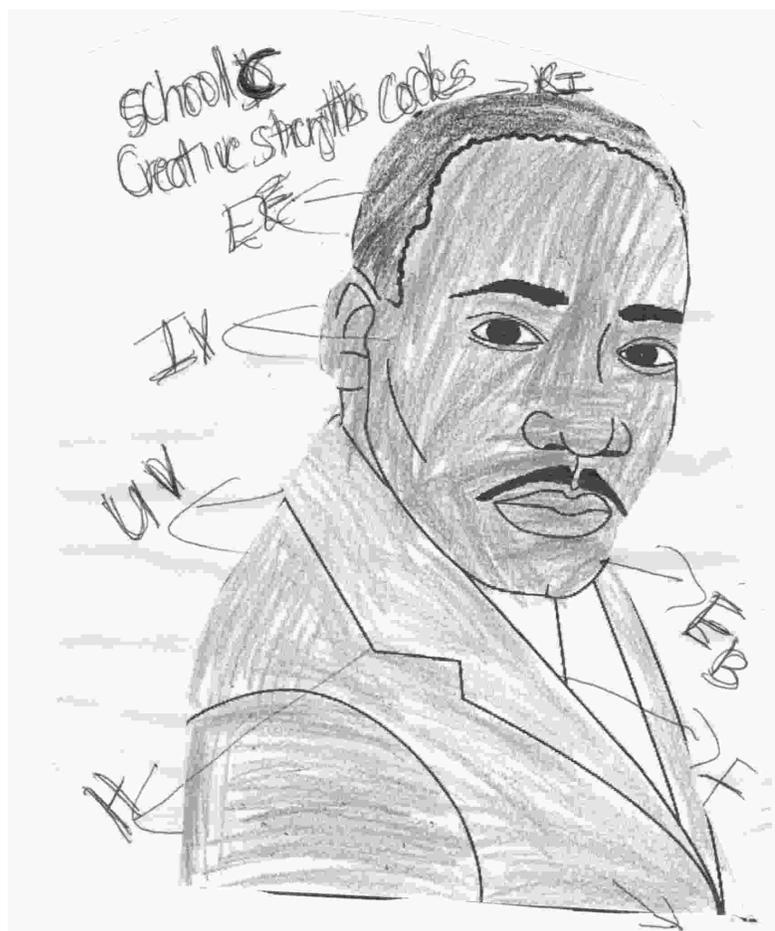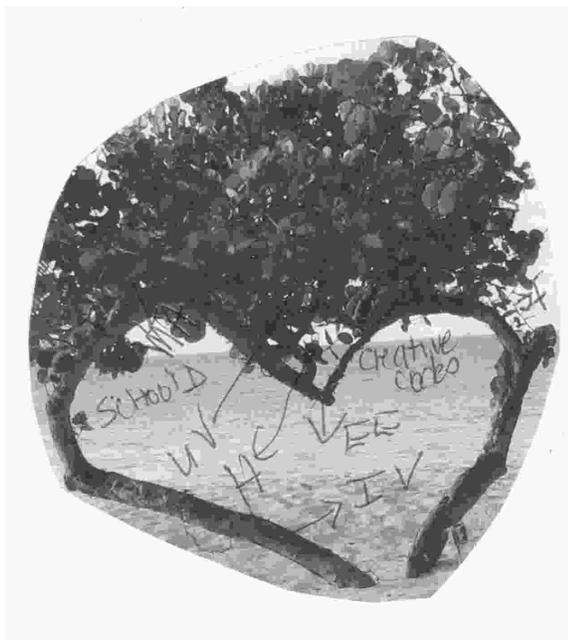
Appendix G:

Permission to Use the TTCT

SCHOLASTIC TESTING SERVICE, INC.

Celebrating Achievement Since 1953

Permission is granted to Petronella Cameron to use the list below in presenting the ways in which a rubric was developed as adapted from the Interpretive Manual for the Torrance Tests of Creatgive Thinking, Copyright Scholastic Testing Service, Inc.

Scoring for Creative Strengths
- A. Emotional Expressiveness
- B. Storytelling Articulateness
- C. Movement or Action
- D. Expressiveness of Titles
- E. Synthesis of Incomplete figures
- F. Synthesis of Lines (or Circles)
- G. Unusual Visualization
- H. Internal Visualization
- I. Extending or Breaking Boundaries
- J. Humor
- K. Richness of Imagery
- L. Colorfulness of Imagery
- M. Fantasy

Appendix H

Interview Questions

1. In your opinion how important is a teacher–child and peer relationship?

2. What are your thoughts about the importance of supporting creativity in the early years of children's development?

3. What qualities do you feel are important in teachers' pedagogy in supporting creative skills in young children?

4. What are your thoughts about the organization of the preschool environments?

5. How do you feel about the type of materials that should be used in and outside of the classrooms?

6. What kind of support do you think is needed to help in developing the quality and types of relationships you feel are important for children to build their creative skills?

7. What are your perspectives related to collaborative activities in the development of children's social and creative skills?

8. In your opinion, do you think that various forms of play are critical to the development of social and creative skills? Explain.

9. Can you explain the strategies you used to identify creative abilities?

10. What is your opinion related to creativity enhancing curricula?

Appendix I:

Audit Trail

What are teachers' perceptions and beliefs about classroom relationships, the environment, play, and creativity?
This audit trail was developed as a presentation of the procedures taken to conduct this study.

Data Collection
1.   Schools were chosen from a compilation of private schools from a community college in the United States and were also referrals from two directors from two private schools.
2.   After the schools were identified, appointments were made to meet with the directors to provide names of prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers.
3.   After IRB approval e-mails were sent out to some of the teachers. Some were also delivered in person by the researcher to the other teachers who did not have access to e-mails.
4.   The e-mails sent out outlined the procedures of the study and the criteria for selecting the participants.
5.   A follow-up phone call was made to each teacher to determine whether they had received the e-mail and to schedule interview sessions at a time and place that was convenient for them.
6.   During the phone discussion participants were able to address any possible problems before their participation in the study, because they were unable to attend the initial meeting.
7.   Participants were asked to sign the consent forms before participating in the interview sessions.
Interviews:
Nine teachers participated in the study where two teachers were selected from 5 private preschools. Table I1 presents the date, time, and location of the interviews.
8.   The teachers were provided with a list of 10 semistructured and structured interview questions to examine their perceptions of classroom relationships and creativity. As the teachers responded to the questions the researcher followed up each response with probing questions for further clarification where necessary.
9.   Each interview was recorded using a tape recorder and were transcribed verbatim.
10.   Each transcript was delivered in person to each of the teachers for confirmation of interpretations.

Document Analysis
Each participant was asked to provide the curriculum, newsletters, school policies, creative checklists, thematic units, and some samples of children's art projects. Most teachers were unable to provide thematic units and creative checklists. Table I1 presents the time, date, and location of documents collected.

Artifact Analysis
Children's artworks were analyzed based on the 13 creative strengths criteria, codes and definitions used in the adapted rubric.

Table I1

Teachers' Interviews Schedule

Teachers participants	Date of collection	Interviews location	Interview length (minutes/hours)
A1	28/09/2009	Preschool church office	40 minutes
A2	01/10/2009	Preschool church office	30 minutes
A3	25/09/2009	Preschool lounge	50 minutes
A4	15/10/2009	Preschool classroom	35 minutes
A5	12/11/2009	Preschool classroom	30 minutes
A6	12/11/2009	Preschool classroom	35 minutes
A7	28/09/2009	Preschool classroom	40 minutes
A8	29/09/2009	Preschool classroom	40 minutes
A9	09/10/2009	Preschool classroom	35 minutes

Note. Table I1 presents the teacher participants, date, interview locations and scheduling for each interview. Each participant is identified by the use of letters and numbers for privacy protection.

Table I2

Sources, Documents, and Date of Collection

Sources	Documents						Document retrieval dates
Private preschools or online websites	Thematic units	Curri-culum	Creative checklists	News-letters	School policies	Arti-fact	Date retrieved /collected
A	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Sept/Oct 2009
B	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Sept/Dec 2009
C	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Sept/Dec 2009
D	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Sept/Oct 2009
E	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Sept/Oct 2009

Note. Each school is identified by letter to protect schools' privacy. All documents with "yes" listed were provided from the teachers and online websites whereas the other documents with "no" listed were unavailable.

Online Websites

School A www.OurSaviorWeschester.com

School B www.UPNS.NET

School E www.calstela.edu

School C and D websites were not provided.

Data Analysis

Interview Transcripts

1. Immediately after the interviews each teachers' responses were transcribed

   verbatim and placed in a filing cabinet and a flash drive.

2.   After all interview responses were transcribed, each transcript was reread several times to identify recurring themes; a list of codes and definitions was developed to use during data analysis.

3.   After all data were coded, the researcher grouped all the passages with the same codes together. New codes were developed to accommodate new information that emerged during the coding process.

4.   A memorandum was developed to note various forms of code notes, theoretical notes, and operational notes as well as themes that may have been apparent during the coding process.

5.   As the researcher engaged in data-collection and -analysis procedures, personal feelings, thoughts, and biases that emerge were bracketed to maintain objectivity throughout the study.

6.   At the completion of the analysis of all the transcripts, the researcher revisited the transcripts to ensure that all data were included.

7.   After all data were grouped together according to codes, themes were developed and each code was grouped into categories to address each research question.

8.   These coded transcripts, along with the interview tapes, were saved in an alphabetically labeled filing cabinet, a computer file, and a flash drive.

9.   The coding procedures were conducted until the data were completely exhausted.

Document Analysis

Each document was analyzed using the same codes as the interview transcripts. Several specific excerpts from some of the teachers' responses were used to support the themes identified in these documents.

Artifacts

The art projects from each school were analyzed using the coding procedures provided and definitions provided in the adapted rubric. Creative strengths were merged together across schools and themes were identified and supported by several studies from the literature review

Data Interpretation

1. After the document and interview analysis, three themes for each research questions were identified. In Chapter 4 a visual presentation of each of these themes were provided along with specific excerpts from teachers' responses to support the themes that inform the research questions.

2. The research questions were repeated in Chapter 5 along with a synthesis of the themes and were supported by several studies from the literature review.

Validation of the Study

1. Triangulation, which includes data collection, involves collecting documents and teachers responses to specific interview questions.

2. Member-checking was conducted, which involved taking the transcripts back to the participants for them to check the accuracy of the interview interpretations.

3. Various forms of coding were applied to address all components of the data.

Appendix J:

Coding Transcript Examples

Interview responses transcribed verbatim for Teacher A6

The teacher is identified by the use of letter and number

Name of Teacher Location Date Time (Minutes/Hours)
A6 Preschool 12/11/2009 35 minutes

Interview Questions and Responses
In your opinion how important are teacher–child and peer relationships?

Teacher A6 Responses*:*

I think its very important because the child has to have developmental language and social skills and to interact with others especially with his or her own peer group I feel that in their peer group he or she will learn how to share, play, communicate verbal feelings uum with other kids of their own age uum with the kids of their own age uum they learn more as a teacher they might be able to achieve where they have too many barricades in language and development and train them to speak with their own they plan language and activities and they interactive with one and another when they interact with me I could teach them how to learn to interact with each other to be kind to each other **(TPR).** *Example ok yeah and example when they learn how to spell if I give like an alphabet say for instance we have an alphabet and I say I am going to give you a letter A if I say apple then I say ok I say A Apple could you give me word that start with A or could you give me an object that start with A do you know a color that start with an A and have them to interact and its fun and learn to use their language* **(TPCI).**

What are your thoughts about the importance of supporting creativity in the early years of children's development?
Teacher A6 Responses:
How they create activity is very important to support uum their childhood and challenge like say for instance their brain their left brain is working and they uum creative oh let's do this and something different to show them like such painting some might want to paint some might want to draw something, somebody might want to cut and glue something together or somebody might want to do a stack take the blocks and stacked them that's creative they created something on their own without the teacher telling them what to create or feel and that encourage the child to use their imagination **(TPC)**

What qualities do you feel are important in teachers' pedagogy in supporting creative skills in young children?
Teacher A6 Responses:

> *They should learn to allow the child to express themselves in their own way uum the teacher is able to find out what is hidden in the child what they like to do what they like to create want to promote to develop their uum creative inside of them if we let them make their own create instead of telling them what to do they will develop their self esteem and that will open them up to other creative and influence other children to do things that are creative and have their self esteem themselves* (**TPCI***) I think its important for teachers to umm its important for teachers to know what the child like if I if a child dislike something then you shouldn't force the child to do it try to find out what that child likes and then you can compromise and try working with that child to*
> *build their self esteem and what they want to learn* (**TPTI**).

What are your thoughts about the organization of the early-childhood learning environment?
Teacher A6 Responses:

> *Ok if you put the child learning environment on track like on a map, map it out then that child found out uum how do I say it then their foundation they would find a foundation and then that child will enter that school and they would have a choice on what they want to learn and that school should have materials and tools and other things so that child could learn on their level* (**TPE)** *What I mean by their level is like if they like uum if they come in and they don't have self-esteem of their learning then you try to make that environment fun and have materials where they can get involve and want to learn and create things that are going to make them happy and excited to come back and want to do something else different* **(TPE)**

Appendix K:

Code Abbreviations and Definitions

Table K

Codes and Definitions

Codes		Definitions of codes
TPR	Teachers' perceptions of relationships	Teachers attitudes and beliefs about the environment and relationships
TPC	Teachers' perceptions of creativity	Teachers' beliefs and attitudes about how to encourage creativity
TPTI	Teachers' perceptions of teachers' involvement	Teachers beliefs about how teachers should participate in children's creativity and social development.
TPCI	Teachers' perceptions of children's independence	Teachers' approach in allowing children the freedom to express themselves
TPPD	Teachers' perceptions of professional development	What teachers need to do to further their education
TPER	Teachers' perception of the environment	Teachers' beliefs about the organization of the classroom environment and relationships
TPM	Teachers' perceptions of material	Teachers' views, beliefs, and attitudes about the materials used inside and outside of classroom
TPS	Teachers' perceptions of support	Resources and support that teachers believe are necessary to enhance their involvement
TPP	Teachers' perceptions of play	Teachers' beliefs and attitudes about play
TPPI	Teachers' perceptions of parents involvement	Teachers' beliefs about parents participation in the development of children's social and creative skills
TPOC	Teachers' perceptions of observation	Teachers' beliefs and attitudes of the purpose of observing children
TPCS	Teachers' perceptions of children's safety	Teachers' beliefs and attitudes about safety
TPA	Teachers' perceptions of assessments	Teachers' beliefs and attitudes about assessments
TPCD	Teachers' perceptions of curricular design	Teachers' beliefs and attitudes about curriculum design
TPL	Teachers' perceptions of learning	Teachers' beliefs and attitudes about learning
TPFA	Teachers' perceptions of fine arts	Teachers' beliefs and attitudes about music

Appendix L:

Adapted Rubric From Torrance

Creative strengths	Codes	Definitions
Emotional expressiveness	EE	The types of emotions shown in the drawing
Storytelling articulateness	SA	The relationships between the objects
Movement and action	MA	The location of the object
Expressiveness of titles	ET	Emotion expressed in the title
Synthesis of incomplete figures	SIF	Connection of lines
Synthesis of lines and circles	SLC	Repetitions of lines and circles
Unusual visualization	UV	A view that is different from the usual.
Internal visualization	IV	Demonstrating something more internal
Extending of breaking boundaries	EB	The directions of lines parallel and vertical
Humor	H	Funny, playful
Richness of imagery	RI	Lively, vivid, vibrant
Colorfulness of imagery	CI	Appealing, stimulate the senses
Fantasy	F	Abstract, imagination

Note. Definitions were slightly modified by the researcher for the purpose of this study and were used to guide the evaluation of aspects of creative skills demonstrated in artwork. Adapted from *Thinking Creatively in Action and Movement,* by E. P. Torrance, 1981a, Bensenville, IL, Scholastic Testing Services, and *Torrance Test of Creative Thinking,* by E. P. Torrance, 1981b, Bensenville, IL, Scholastic Testing Services. Used with Permission.

Appendix M:

Raw Data

Research Question 1: Theme 1 Participation, Teachers' Responses

In the words of teacher A1,

They are extremely important because if you have a good relationship with a child they are going to be more willing to participate in the activities involved. You know them personally and more comprehensively, you know when they are having a bad day and they are not going to want to do something. Not that they're just rejecting the project itself. It just makes it the more personal. You are with the child. The more you know them, the better you are to be able to help them with their specific needs, what they need to have the best education possible

Teacher A3 explained,

And they get all excited and talk about it and it helps them socially. But the other downside of it is that we have, I mean, not a downside but we always have to be on top of it and encourage everybody's participation. And they each have their own personalities and some of them are leaders and others do not have so much confidence but follow what the others do. So we all go to encourage and make sure everybody takes part in the project and the only down, I mean its not really a downside, its just that as teachers we have to make sure that everybody participates and nobody gets left out because the ones that have stronger personality take over and want to tell them what to do or where to put it, whatever they are doing.

According to Teacher A4,

Two heads are better than one. In terms of their creative skills, I've seen a lot with older children because I have taught kindergarten. So in kindergarten I really saw a lot more of that working together to be creative. I've seen very positive things with that where one idea builds on another idea and they encourage each other and its really a very positive thing. It's a very positive outcome to that

In the words of Teacher A2,

It's so important. The world we live in is so its becoming so much more technologically advanced. Technology is changing every day, every hour. Sometimes if a child isn't taught to be creative, to learn to think outside the box, you're not you gonna raise children that grow up to be people that can't, let's say, solve: come up with the cure for cancer, for AIDS. Those things are gonna be discovered by someone who can think in a different way and think about things more creatively, because it's obvious: through all the years now we haven't been able to solve these problems with the way we are doing things

now. If a child is taught it's alright to be creative and approach a subject or a problem in a way that is maybe not quite the standard, or the old, say, the standard way of approaching it, then we are not gonna find these new answers and we are not gonna discover these new ways of doing things unless we are able to be creative in our approach to it, because we're gonna have to be. Otherwise you're not going to discover these new things.

Teacher A2 explained,

Important qualities: the ability to think on one's feet. When you are approaching or using any activity with children, you have to be able to look and see if the way I'm doing this or the approach I am taking, is it working for them? Are they getting what I'm trying to teach them? And if they are not, we have to be able to change it and try it a different way, be adaptable, because not every child is going to learn the same way. Children learn audibly, visually, you have tactile learners, and you have children that are combinations of two and three of them together and one child you might be able to sit down and go, "ok this is one and one this makes two" and look at it visually. Another child, one who looks at it visually, might be able to get it. The next one looks at it and gives you a blank look: "I don't understand." That child needs to be the one that takes something physical to hold. Here is one ball, here is another ball, this together makes two balls.

In the words of Teacher A6

For example if you have math and that child is having a hard time in counting, then you would put objects there to show him: This is one object. Go find me a number, put it under that object. If its 10 objects, they would count those objects and ok then go and find me a number 10 and put it up under that object, so they would know that this in 10 objects and this is number 10. I also have them to count him or her, to count that object and then they will know that 10 means 10 objects to that number.

Teacher A7 mentioned,

It's kind of difficult because oddly enough, some teachers are not creative. They teach extremely well but they are not necessarily creative. And I have experienced that here for the first time in a long time.

If you are going into it, you have to go into it from the heart; you can't go into it from the mind, thinking that you have so much to teach somebody. Definitely not for the money, so it has to be or needs to be almost a passion. If you feel that you have something important to [give] these kids and you have the ability to pull things, especially our kids. Our kids, it's there but you have to have the desire to bring it out. To me it's a very rewarding field.

According to Teacher A9,

I wouldn't pinpoint anyone as more important than any others. I think every teacher is different: they all have different qualities but sometimes we all are loving, we all are caring. Children, are our number one priority in the field of working with children, I think, we all grow and become these wonderful people. Like eventually they grow up but I don't think there is one specific quality that that each teacher has.

Research Question 1: Theme 2 Establishing Trust, Teachers' Responses

In the words of Teacher A4,

Well teacher–child relationships and peer relationships, of course they are very important. Teacher spends a lot of time with children and they actually spend a good part of their waking hours with them. So I feel that especially a very positive first relationship in preschool is really, really important because it really sets the stage for the rest of their schooling.

Teacher A7 mentioned,

If you want to get certain things pulled from a child you are going to have to have a good relationship, because it is very important in children. Good relationships are very important; good relationships with each other. If you're teaching, if you trying to teach them something, you want answers you want to see where he is, how he is understanding those things given the information. If you don't have a good relationship with them you're going to have a problem

Teacher A 9 explained,

It helps them to be sure when they will glance up a little to see what the reaction will be, just to double check that everything is ok for them. You want to encourage them to try. As long as they know that you are there and you're not going to be mad, you are not going to be upset if it didn't turn out the way you wanted it to, its still ok. The kids need to hear that I am proud of what you've done. I am glad that you try.

Research Question 1: Theme 3, Acceptance/Self-Awareness Teachers' Responses

In the words of Teacher A1,

Is their friend getting in trouble for doing something? Is their friend getting praised for behaving a certain way? And it it is extremely important for that instantaneous feedback of how their relationship is going, even with just the interaction of each other, it gives them that chance to be able to experiment with real-life situations in a pretend manner, and they can find if the response back, if what they did was good or bad and it just gives them the chance to practice life.

Teacher A2 explained,

That's one thing I do with the kids: if one is being singled out, then I will bring the group together and say, "do we like it if someone makes us feel that we can't play with them or do we like it if someone makes us feel that we are not good too?" So that it isn't just what's the right word there, so they are not singling each other out and saying "you can't play with me because I don't like this about you" or "I don't like that about you."

In the words of Teacher A 4,

Peer relationships, those are very important too. Those are just as important, I think. Peer relationships for a child especially help the child to fit into the world. You can't live in a vacuum, so children need to develop those social skills at school. That's why preschool is very good for children.

Teacher A5 reported,

And then they form interdependent relationships while they are exploring different things and new ways. That kind of give them their creativity and their independence side too, and development also with social skills.

In the words of Teacher A6,

I think its very important because the child has to have developmental language and social skills and to interact with others, especially with his or her own peer group. I feel that in their peer group he or she will learn how to share, play, communicate verbal feelings with other kids of their own age. With the kids of their own age they learn more than a teacher might be able to achieve, where they have too many barricades in language and development, and train them to speak with their own. They plan language and activities and they interactive with one another. When they interact with me I could teach them how to learn to interact with each other, to be kind to each other That's very important because I feel like if the children interact together they learn from each other. Sometimes when a teacher can't get across to that child and they're playing in a group with other kids, they pick up learning sometimes and talk to their peers instead of coming to their teacher, and their peers can help them in that manner together

Teacher A7 mentioned,

They are building something and another one will add in a whole different area of which the other one is going. He may be going straight up and this kid has the idea of putting it to the side or at the back, so they they get ideas, creative ideas from each other and they accept it they learn to accept other ideas.

Teacher A9 indicated,

As I told my kids, don't fight over my things. You guys keep on fighting, I will take it away. then they're ok. "Can I see this?" "Can I see that?" And its like going back and forth and it's a good thing for a little . . . one but not too long. They are just like babies. They have a short attention span. That's how it is for sharing. That's how it is for prekindergarten kids.

Research Question 2. Theme 1 Organization, Teachers' Responses

In the words of Teacher A 1,

And so depending upon what you are trying to present to the children and what type of response you are expecting back, definitely responds to the way you going to organize the classroom. . . . [Researcher asked for clarification.] I think so. . . . I know that in my classroom we had different centers where the kids can go around and explore what they have. My kids, they need to participate and have little things that they can go in and so I know that they have been in each center. We have little check-off lists that they sign into, but they can sit there and say, for instance, they want to be at the science table and discover more things at the science table, during their free time they can go back and explore that a little bit more or if they need more sensory exploration they can go over to the water table and they can stay there a little bit longer. In that way they are also meeting their intrinsic need as well.

If something needs to be created or problems solved, they have to go outside the parameters. And so allowing a child to create is highly important because it allows them to discover new opportunities and new dimensions to practical situations. I believe that children should be given a little bit of everything I think that they need to have a realm of different projects given to them and different things that they can experiment with all at the same time. In that way they can have different angles of approaching.

According to Teacher A3,

Well I work in a developmental school so I choose to work in this type of school. I believe it's best for the children. And there are different types of early-childhood organizations out there, like Montessori, but I think it should be as an organization. I really don't know how how I would really answer that, but I'd rather work in a developmental setting for the children rather than a more academically oriented setting for early childhood. But there are different types out there.

Teacher A3 further explained,

I don't know exactly how to explain qualities for that, but I think the teachers should let the children express themselves and what I mean by that is, when you have an art activity, not keep the samples or tell them how to do it or what to do with it, and then you could give them a more general idea of what the project is about without telling them

how to do it, so its very important. And then teachers sometimes tell each other to correct what they doing in the art work, which I think is wrong, because we want to let the kids.

In the words of Teacher A4,

Environment is more conducive to an open area where the children can move more freely and my coteacher and I really like that, so I think that its definitely a better design in the environment than it was last year. I mean, we are able to do that. We are able to change it around, which is good. It helps the children as far as it provides more space for them to move more freely and to have the space to feel that they can be either close together with one another or have some space to be a little bit more, to do things on a more individual basis.

Ok the organization of the classroom? I think that I like the autonomy. I feel like I have a lot of autonomy. Especially in a lot of preschools, I think there's dependence on the preschool, unless there is specific preschools, there is a lot of autonomy.

Teacher A5 reported,

Well, that's on Question 5 for the setting up of the environment. It should be child friendly, it should be set up for children with nice colors and whatever activity you will be teaching that the environment should be set up where you have a library for the child. You should have a play area for the child. You should have a work area. And all these areas should be separate. You should have everything on the child's level so the child could get it themselves: not things up too high where they can't reach it and, yeah that's about it. Everything at the level of the child. You should display different learning materials around the classroom and colors, numbers, the child's birthday, and their names. Children like to see their name on things and you should have their names on their lockers and their desks also so they can identify with it, to know that it theirs and it belongs to them and the lockers should be at the level where the child could reach everything and have access to everything that they need.

For some children it's the best. For some they do have to get a push, but some of my children that I have worked with, that I see work at their own pace where they were kind of behind the other children, but when I let them do their own pace then they gradually move up to where the other children are. So working at their own pace only works for some of the children, not all of them. And then their self-development, because some of them, you know, they feel that they are not ready. I don't care what you do with them. They are not going to excel in whatever they are doing, but when you see that they are the type of child—you have to know the child's personality and you have to know what type of child they are—and once you know then each individual is different, then you know. Because myself, my learning technique is not the same for everyone I have to divide it up into what is best for that child.

Teacher A7 mentioned,

So things that they can see visually, that they can be inquisitive about, and to make imprints, for lack of a better word, in their little minds, exposure to things that they have access—books, puzzles, learning-type games, and still fun-type games and toys— so exposure to things on their level. That's a good setting for them

Teacher 9 explained,

should be with the child in thought where the materials are set up with the thought of the child and how the child can freely move from one activity to the next. Actually, we like when they are working, when they are playing, the block area if they are playing in that area, whether from there they are going to the art table, those sort of things. [Researcher asked for further clarification.] They are divided up into different areas in the classroom; they are not sectioned off quite like in squares, but they are designed to confine in one area, but at the same time it's all contained into one area.

Teacher A6 reported.

The first thing I do, I put out materials for each child to recognize their own ability of learning on their own and learning to create in an environment to explore. What I mean by explore is if I put materials out where they are free to explore, they are creative. By using bubbles, by blowing, and they create assignments to blow bubbles to see how it develops, how they make it. I try to make the environment for them flexible, where they can work at their own space to develop their own skills and not to push them where they feel like they can't do it. I want them to feel free to express themselves through their work and think about what they are doing without me having to tell them what to do. Let them just be able to think for themselves.

Research Question 2: Theme 2, Open Ended Materials, Teachers' Responses

Teacher A1 reported,

For instance you can use the wood blocks inside the classroom for building a castle or a bridge. Outside it could be a ramp to walk on. One of my favorite things I do, I do mud outside is just a place to sit there and to explore and make mud pies. You bring it into the classroom and put some pigs in it and is now a mud bath for farming.

Teacher A2 explained,

A ball can be more than just something to kick outside if you bring it inside: it can be the planet Mars in your science experiment or it can be the snowball in your dramatic play if you want to, or it can be the puzzle snowball for making the snow man. So being able to exchange both inside to outside I think its important to be able to do, because bringing it in shows children that there is more than one way of looking at something, and its not that everything only has one purpose.

In the words of Teacher A4,

Well I think that we have a lot of interesting materials that we used in the classroom. It will be nice to have more money to purchase things that you see that could be interesting, but sometimes you don't even need money to do that. You just need to use your imagination and provide those materials and I think that we have a lot of great materials inside and outside of the classroom. We have bikes for the kids outside that they really enjoy. We have play equipment that they enjoy and water and nice tables. We can change things around. You know, we can change things around by season or we can change things around as needed.

Teacher A5 indicated,

The whole school I work in, the outside equipments is the outside and the inside, but one thing: if its something like the water table, you could use that inside and outside. Like the jungle gym, the bikes, because mostly outside they be using their large motor skills and inside is mostly the small ones. But like the jump ropes and balls, no not inside, but the balls you could you can play a passing game with them. Yes, you could. Some of them could because I know with a ball you could. No jumping in the building. You couldn't use a jump rope, but with the ball you definitely can and with a water table, yeah.

Teacher A6 explained,

If you show them a lower level then they might want to try to go to the next level. Now they need to challenge them a little bit more with materials that is more advanced for them, but if that child is not advanced then you give him materials that he can build up to that level.

Teacher A7 mentioned,

In here the books are at their disposal, the puzzles are at their disposal, the toys are at their disposal. We don't always pull out all the toys all the times. We may put out some that normally we don't pull out so that we don't have the same thing all the time.
I experienced that here, but if the teacher, she has the mindset that the child is creative, she can entice him. She can encourage him to bring out this creativity, although she may not be that creative, if you understand what I'm saying.
With their creative abilities a lot of time they can share each others' ideas, even though without realizing they are sharing it. That's, that's what I see more than anything else: when there is a group, a lot of time I see them imitate with blocks.

Teacher A8 reported,

I think if you put a certain amount of materials on the table and you lay them out—papers and pencils and crayons and chalk and glue and cut out and things like that—and just let the child use their own brain, use their own personalities and just be creative and just watch them, how they put it together. More like being creative. Or you can start like have a story started like on Fridays. With my kids I give them the sentence: they run with it. They make up their own story. I give them a picture: they say what they think the picture is, what the picture looks like. It might not even be a picture. Like it's not a picture like, "oh this is the actual apple." It's a picture that doesn't make sense. You know what I'm saying? Like I have these flash cards that I just have scribble scrabble and the kids say what it is: they just make up their own things and its crazy and its funny. Its like to see what they come up with out of it. Its like it's fun for me. I might get like, "oh, it's a bear." Or I might get, "oh, it's a car." And I don't see any of it but the kids see all types of things and like the creative part of it, it's fun.

Teacher A9 indicated,

The types of materials that should be in and out of the classroom, they should be age appropriate for one thing. If they are not age appropriate, they should not be around the children at all, depending on what age group you're working with.

Research Question 2: Theme 3, Observation, Teachers' Responses

In the words of Teacher A1,

I have hidden black paint underneath them so that when they experiment with it, it turns grey. Next thing you know they were just there sitting playing with the grey shaving cream and then I am watching it and it starts going up the hands and up the arms. Next thing you know its over the whole front of the shirt and I let them go. Next it's all over the face. Next you sit there and see the child is grey from the waist up, as the child then turns around to me, puts their hands together and went, "teacher Missy, look I am an elephant now." In a creative experimentation the child was able to experience and full heartedly take in the grey and become an elephant, and when you don't have that creative exploration, that learning, that whole love that takes place in that part doesn't exist.

In the words of Teacher A7,

Strategies I used? I observe. I am an observant person so I try to observe them. Observing each of the kid to see if there is specific ability to do something that I see in that child in this area, so I don't see too much creativity there but I just try to observe to see what I see in the child. At their age they are all pretty similar. They all tend to take toward the same thing. You see one kid in one area for a while and next time he is absorbed in whatever is over here, so I am not seeing at this point so that I can say that I really have, other than observing them. I don't really look for skills in 2 year olds. I look for habits, and this child may like a particular type of things or this child may be just not interested in, I might say, "let's try the puzzle," but that child have an interest in that kind of thing.

Teacher A8 stated,

I think that we should give them at least 20 minutes to just sit there and just do whatever they want. I mean, as long as they are not hurting anybody as long as they are not endangering themselves they should be fine. I know that my kids, right before lunch everyday we have food sharing and I hear all types of things and sit back and watch, and as I listen to some of the stuff that they say and some of the stuff that they say a lot of, it is from what they've seen, what they've heard. So it's like people too—mothers and fathers and sisters, brothers, grandma, grandpa—have to watch what they expose their children to because in their creativity it comes out.

Teacher A9 explained.

We get to know each kid depending on what they are actively doing. For example, if they are doing water colors and the kids tend to use the water colors using their fingers and they want to see how the water colors would come out—whether it would be different, whether it would have different shapes or strokes. We do document it and we do write it. We write down what happens and take pictures as well that we post in the classroom.

Research Question 3: Theme 1 Dramatic Play, Teachers' Responses

Teacher A 4 stated,

The music, the music is very important to have in the class. I think its very important to use literature and to express themselves. When they do dramatic play themselves they I think that it is critical. I don't think that there is one specific area that is more important than the other, although dramatic play is probably a very important one, because that shows family dynamics, and its kind of interesting to observe what they've done

According to Teacher A5,

And when I say "what you guys over there doing," "oh, we are playing super hero" or "we are playing mom and dad." You know different things that they make up out there. That's their play and that's the side of their creativity that I see. And they even play like they're babies. I see them crawling around. They play they're babies and just all different things, mothers and fathers, they like role play out there. That's what they do a lot of, role play.

Teacher A6 stated,

Sometimes they'll learn much watching TV, watching their parents, their grandparents, how they cook. Watch other role models, and they play that part and they how they learn when they grow up how to run their own household by watching other people, role model, and that's how they learn from their teachers: by listening to their teacher, then a

role model for them. What are the activities? They like to take chalk and they like to create things all over the playground by writing, trying to write the teacher's name, drawing the teachers. They draw teacher's house. They see their teachers as role models: by watching their teacher acting, like their teacher changing names to teacher and the teacher with the kids, sometimes they take, like for instance, math. They would take the color blocks stack it and they say, "oh that's four," or they'll take it, read it. They'll take pictures and then they will put the work under the pictures or they will take a child who wants to be a nurse or a doctor and they have the toothbrush and the toothpaste and they all have a smiling face to show how white their teeth are and they have a happy face, and I just stay there and watch them and they'll go "didn't I tell you to stop that?" "That's what my teacher says," or they will take their time and do an impression of the teacher or impression of their grandparents or mother. This is funny. Its funny and I think this is part of expressing their environment they created and learning how to have free expression, how to be free.

Teacher A7 reported,

There is a lot of they like to keep their own things in their own space. Now that's why I say that they are free. . . . We have these things here and we will take out different toys. We will just put them all around. We have the playhouse area outside so we have the playhouse. Girls of course, they take on the mother's roll. The little boys want to be the truck drivers with the cars and things. We have animals so some of them want to, we don't really have a name for it, some of them will say they want play in the kitchen because there is a lot of dishes and there is a stove. Some of them—we'll call that kitchen—they want to play in the kitchen or some will say playhouse, I want to play in the playhouse. That is about how far we go as names for it—if they are with the animals I would say, "do you guys want to go in the jungle?" And here is all the animals but they never say "oh I want to play in the jungle." You know, its just the term that I used because most of the animals are jungle animals because of the elephant and the lion and all those kind of things. Definitely so, creative play I think give them an opportunity to relax their minds and themselves and to be themselves in a controlled setting. I should say with a supervised setting.

Teacher A8 mentioned,

When they play police officer, whatever they've seen or whatever they've heard about police officers is going to come out through play. So unless you are in it with them and making it like a game or asking them questions, it's not really learning at the time of their play, unless they are learning from each other. But the big picture is, they are telling you what they have seen or what they have learned or what they think about certain people.

I think outside too is a good pace for dramatic play because you can get to do a lot of things outside. I think most people, I always see them inside. I never see a dramatic play outside. But if you look, you have the house outside and then the kids are thinking of going home. Sometimes you see them on the bike. "Oh, I'm going to the grocery store."

Or they play their little games and stuff: "Oh, I am going home." It will be cool for them to have a dramatic play outside. Like no big reason. I think it will be cool. I think they will enjoy it.

Teacher A9 stated,

If they have freedom to take their toys indoors and outside at the same time, the children are able to be more creative in their play. For example, if they are playing dress up inside and have a baby and all of a sudden they want to go for a walk in the morning, they can take the baby outside and they can put the chairs outside and there are lot of changes involved as they go. I do, I think different types of play are very important for the kids to learn, especially with their creativity: outdoor play, learning, an open mind. What kind of game can we play? We are going on a train, we are going on a trip, we are firefighters today. Its always an open-ended experience for them. It always brings new ideas to them, makes them think creatively and socially as well. Children are problem solving to solve conflict.

Research Question 3: Theme 2, Collaborative Play, Teachers' Responses

Teacher A1 explained,

Most definitely the different forms of play with the child's cognitive level allows them to be able to experience where there cognitive levels is in life. And you have the parallel play where they are still being very egocentric about themselves, but thinking that they are playing with someone else. They are going to start developing their creative skills and how to handle different situations and how to interact with them, but still not interact with them.

And it comes to the part where, you know, they are going to go from being so egocentric to being able to see, "ok, well you have a different set of opinions and sometimes I got to get in order to get along with you." Its not going their own way.

Teacher A2 reported,

They painted them brown or beige or black and they put buttons and belts and these things. At snack time they have brown brownies and bananas. It's a totally different activity but they collaborated together and, you know, outside we play different games with balls, and you know it was a physical activity but it still had that same element of, you know, collaborating with the other activities in the class. So it works like a building block and makes a little bit of cohesiveness to the whole lesson plan. And so they were exchanging ideas with each other, increasing their verbal skills and, you know, developing critical thinking and learning from one another, which I thought worked really well because they, "Hey that's not something I thought of before." And when you see that light goes on when they exchange their ideas, they are learning from one another

and learning socially. This is what this person can have to offer to me, and look what I can offer to them.

Can you show me how to do that too?" And they start to build a little cluster of kids together and one showing the others how to make the wings on theirs, what kind of pieces fit together to do that, and then some other person in the group will. This one could be standing on top and so then they will add little people into it and just expand from there, and you see that by watching them, seeing how they they play and how they do their arts and their movements, the action they show, and you also see their social skills. The way they interact is usually the way they speak to one another. Do they have the ability to put into words or they getting frustrated?

Teacher A8 explained,

In fact, they are not school age yet so we shouldn't—some of us treat them as they are school age. I know my age group, they are getting ready to be school age so I have to prepare them for that, but most of the kids are not about what they can learn like writing, spelling words. Not that it's about them learning to be free, learning how to interact with one another, just like free learning, like learn through play. And they let the kids play and they are asking questions. If they are building stuff they're suppose to be like, "what is it?" "Oh it's a house. "Who lives in it?" You know, just ask questions about it. I don't' necessary believe in that but when its free play and things like that I believe in that, like asking questions. I don't believe in just letting them sit there and play, but at the same time it's just like we have to understand that these kids are here to have fun and we are here to take care of them and we're here to incorporate learning
with play.

Research Question 3: Theme 3, Creativity Enhancing Curricula, Teachers' Responses

Teacher A1 reported,

It's something we are going to be baking brownies, we are going to be experimenting with brown and black and blue paints. The more things that you can bring in and give them examples and let them experiment with it, the more they are going to grasp, the more they are going to enjoy it. They are going to love it and more, they are going to understand it.

Teacher A4 mentioned,

Creativity actually leads to happiness; when you are creative you are happy because you are doing something that feels really good, and you are producing something, perhaps, or you are producing a written work, you know, or a painting, or being dramatic on a story. All of that has to do with creativity and I think that's really important. My opinion of

having a creative curriculum is probably exciting and interesting to me is one of those things that is important.

Teacher A2 stated,

Soon enough, when they get to school they are told that's not right. "That's wrong. This is not the outcome you're suppose to get." If their early experience is creative where its open ended, and it doesn't have to be what you come up with, doesn't have to look just like whatever its called.

Teacher A7 mentioned,
I do like that, but sometimes you just rock your brains cause you are looking for something creative to do and sometimes you just kind of run out, and when you have that curricula to draw from

Curriculum Vitae

EDUCATION

M.A. California State University, Los Angeles, 2007

B.A. University of California, Los Angeles, 1997

TEACHING EXPERIENCES

Early Childhood Intern February 2007 at University of La Verne, Los Angeles, CA