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Online Facilitation of Early Childhood Education Preservice Teacher Field Experiences

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Walden University
2017

Abstract

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by

Catherine Rae Meier

MEd., Brenau University, 2004

BS, Western Montana, 1983

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Researchers have determined that field experience is crucial in education preparation programs, yet little information is available about field experience within online early childhood education (ECE) programs. Educators who work in online ECE programs need to understand how to facilitate field experience effectively. The purpose of this qualitative interview study was to understand the processes, procedures, and experiences of instructors who facilitate preservice teachers' field experience in online ECE programs. A constructivist framework was used to examine facilitation practices. Nine instructors from online ECE programs in the United States participated in 2 semistructured interviews that lasted approximately 1 hour each. A combination of a priori and open coding was used to support inductive analysis. Themes included communication, mentoring, collaboration, parity between online and live facilitation of field experiences, roadblocks, innovations, assessment, and reflection. Participants reported that a constructivist approach was crucial for online facilitation. Four key findings included an intentionality of design for parity between online and live facilitation, active engagement in responding to facilitation challenges, embedded constructivism in curriculum design, and a necessity for online options despite preference for live field supervision. Social change implications for ECE instructors include sharing of best practices to improve facilitation of field experience in online ECE programs and acknowledgement of need for research focused on quality of field experience. Enhancing the quality of field experiences could better prepare teachers, which would benefit young children in ECE classrooms.

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Dedication

I dedicate this to my mom, Raynita, whose steadfast belief in me is the most precious gift she has given me. I also dedicate this to my children, Willie and Amanda, and their families. “You don’t choose your family. They are God’s gift to you.” Desmond Tutu

Acknowledgments

To my friends and family who gave me the encouragement I needed when I wanted to give up: I am blessed to have each of you in my life.

To my dad, Frank Meier (1934-2014). In my last conversation with him, he asked, "When are you going to finish that Ph.D.?" and then stated, "I won't be around forever." I finished!

To Alice Eichholz, my chair. Alice has a special gift of knowing what students need and how to give specific encouragement, and I know I am one of MANY Ph.D. candidates who would not have come through this process without her steadfast role in the dissertation process. I consider myself fortunate to be included in Alice's group of finishers.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Helburn (1995) in a seminal study declared that childcare in the United States was poor to mediocre. Helburn urged those in the field of early childhood education (ECE) to seek ways to improve the quality of care that young children receive. This pivotal study spurred the movement for quality in early childhood care and education that, at the time of this study, was still strong (Gomez, Kagan, & Fox, 2015; Ritblatt, Garrity, Longstreth, Hokoda, & Potter, 2013; Whitebook et al., 2012). According to Yoshikawa et al. (2013), there is still room to improve as "the average overall quality of preschool programs is squarely in the middle range of established measures" (p. 6). One factor in this quest for quality is the preparation or professional development of early childhood education (ECE) preservice teachers (Gomez et al., 2015; Whitebook et al., 2012; Yoshikawa et al., 2013).

Although ECE preservice teacher education can consist of a medley of techniques from noncredit community training and college and university programs, more education is being required for ECE teachers, and more of them are obtaining degrees (Whitebook et al., 2012). Gomez et al. (2015) validated "the clear relationship between the importance of high-quality teaching and the outcomes realized by young children" (p. 170). The importance of field experience in applying knowledge to practice for preservice teachers is also established in the literature (Cohen, Hoz, & Kaplan, 2013; Ku, Kaufeld, Hess, & Sheehan, 2012; Whitebook et al., 2012), making it important to study

preservice teacher education degree programs and particularly one key aspect of these programs: field experience.

Field experience in ECE preservice teacher education programs at the associate degree level was the focus of this study. Field experience is essential to becoming a competent teacher and for preparing future teachers for a variety of challenges they will face as classroom teachers, as field experience is where preservice teachers practice teaching skills and learn how to apply theory to practice (Kopcha & Alger, 2014). Instructor supervision and feedback on future teachers' performance (observation and performance assessment) are important parts of the mentoring process during field experiences. Per Whitebook et al. (2012), variations in "objectives, intensity, and outcomes" (p. 2) are a problem in trying to research this topic, and most of the research has focused on the traditional face-to-face field experience. Traditionally, the course instructor monitored field experiences in a field site consisting of the early childhood program located on that college's campus, ensuring hands-on supervision and mentoring. Another relevant element that varies is the number of field experience hours preservice teachers are required to complete within the 2-year program.

According to Gomez et al. (2015), from 2005 to 2015 online degree programs have increased, and this includes ECE online degree programs. When taking fully online courses, preservice teachers can participate in field experiences from anywhere in the world, changing the dynamics and elements of supervision present in face-to-face field experience courses. Field experience is supervised, guided practice for the preservice

teacher, yet when the preservice teachers are at a distance, little is known about how these experiences are being facilitated. Literature about online field experiences has been sparse according to Simpson's (2006) meta-analysis. Cohen et al. (2013) stated in their meta-analysis that literature pertaining to field experience typically focused on specific aspects, but did not address online field experiences. Thompson, Miller, and Franz (2013) acknowledged that online delivery of preservice teacher education is increasing, and online preservice teachers tend to be nontraditional students who typically have more difficulty with course work than traditional students. Rock et al. (2012) noted that "supervising and supporting students' clinical experiences from a distance, which is the other critical component of effective teacher training, has posed some tremendous challenges" (p. 278). In this study, I examined the processes, procedures, and experiences of instructors who facilitate online field experiences in ECE preservice teacher education programs.

The importance of quality in preservice teacher education is evident in the literature review that follows in Chapter 2. Whitebook et al. (2012) described the similarities and differences between K-12 and ECE teacher preparation, concluding that there were similarities in these phenomena and the two fields can learn from each other. The literature review considered the broad subject, focusing on ECE preservice teacher education, field experiences, and ECE online teacher education. Quality in preservice teacher education programs was addressed as well. Social implications of this study include improving the quality of care and education for young children.

Chapter 1 includes the introduction to this study, the background and the problem statement, research questions, nature of the study, and conceptual framework. Assumptions, scope, and delimitations are presented to justify the methodology. The significance of this study focused on using instructors' perspectives to improve the ways field experiences are currently being facilitated.

Background

A long-standing practice in teacher education programs is the use of supervised field experiences as part of degree requirements (Southgate, Reynolds, & Howley, 2013; Whitford & Villaume, 2014). Referred to as professional experience, practicum, field experience, practice teaching, demonstration teaching, or student teaching, these practices are either stand-alone experiences or embedded in courses. Field experiences serve many purposes and are an essential component of preservice teacher education (Southgate et al., 2013). They allow preservice teachers to work in the field under supervised and mentored conditions. The knowledge learned in an ECE field experience course is applied in an authentic setting where knowledge becomes practice.

Customarily, course instructors (typically also serving as field supervisors) facilitate the experience with their physical presence at the field site for several observations and performance evaluations of the preservice teacher in action. The ECE preservice teacher is provided with immediate feedback and mentoring. Cohen et al. (2013) described research related to mentored field experiences as well as learning to

teach via methods course work. Field experience approaches identified in Cohen et al.'s meta-analysis included an apprenticeship approach and a personal growth approach.

Traditionally, facilitation takes place with the course instructor acting as the field supervisor in a model referred to as the triad model (Cohen et al., 2013). The triad consists of a field supervisor who facilitates the experience through overall management of the experience, observing the preservice teacher in the placement (classroom setting with young children), providing feedback on the performance of the preservice teacher, and facilitating managerial work with the mentor teacher and preservice teacher. The second person in the triad is the preservice teacher, or student taking the field experience course. The third person is the mentor teacher (the classroom teacher of the young children), who serves in day-to-day supervision, mentoring, and performance assessment roles along with the field supervisor (Cohen et al., 2013).

Fully online ECE degree programs require the traditional elements of field experiences to be transferred to online degree programs, creating processes and procedures to support online facilitation. Whitebook et al. (2012) described the problem from the current literature related to ECE preservice teacher field experiences as focusing on whether field experience is required for degrees, not how it is being facilitated. Whitebook et al. stated "much greater specificity about clinical experiences is needed for investigating the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches" (p. 2). Southgate et al. (2013) also concluded that more evidence is needed concerning the field experience component of online preservice teacher education. Rock et al. (2012) stated that distance

delivery of field experience poses challenges but offered no solutions. These gaps in the literature were the basis for this study.

According to Allen and Season (2013), there were 6.7 million college students in 2012 taking online course work, with 32 % of all U.S. college students currently taking at least one online course. With the increased demand for students to attend college online, institutions are offering fully online degrees. Online course delivery is replacing some traditional on-campus field experience courses, and facilitating this can be challenging (Rock et al., 2012). Without the ability to visit ECE preservice teachers' field sites physically, instructors must create new processes and procedures for online facilitation of preservice teachers in field experiences.

Field experience as a live experience is still offered in some ECE preservice teacher degree programs. For some colleges, online field experience courses are offered as a choice, while at others they are the only option for preservice teachers who complete ECE degrees. Online field experience courses present a challenge because of the complications associated with online facilitation, including supervision, observation, performance assessment, and mentoring of preservice teachers, and the difficulties associated with online communication and collaboration between the stakeholders in field experiences (Rock et al., 2012).

Problem Statement

Online course delivery has changed in the 21st century because of online course delivery as an added dimension to the physical college classroom's traditional model

(Kauffman, 2015). Because preservice teachers taking online courses no longer had to live in the physical area of the college they attended, new processes and procedures were needed to replace those in which the traditional physical presence of the instructor had been required. Per Southgate et al. (2013), field experience has historically been fraught with practical, theoretical, and political issues. Southgate et al. identified the need for more "evidence-based dialogue on the purpose of professional experience, its models of delivery, and evidence of outcomes" (2013, p. 13). According to Rock et al. (2012), online supervision involves other difficulties related to supervising and supporting preservice teachers in the field at a distance. The intent of this study was to explore the processes, procedures, and experiences of online instructors to inform the field and advance knowledge about facilitation practices among ECE college instructors. Researchers have observed that field experience is a valid practice that is here to stay (Cohen et al., 2013). However, Whitebook et al. (2009b) described lack of data on ECE field experiences, and studies have included only qualitative methodology with small sample sizes. Online facilitation of field experience has not been a focus of researchers addressing ECE preservice teacher education (Simpson, 2006; Rock et al., 2012).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative interview study was to understand the processes, procedures, and experiences of instructors who facilitate preservice teachers in online field experience. Results from the study may inform the field of how instructors bridge the gap between live and online delivery to facilitate these courses. The intent of the

study was to explore the processes and procedures (including communication, supervision, observation, performance assessment, and mentoring) that facilitation of online field experiences entails. Understanding how instructors currently use theory and research to implement their educational practices was also a focus during data analysis. Objectives included describing variations in processes and procedures regarding how field experiences are facilitated. Understanding how quality control of the field experience is ensured was an important consideration, and results may be used to improve quality control of online field experience facilitation. How the facilitator used theory, research, and best practices in facilitation was also addressed in the study.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the processes, procedures, and experiences of instructors who facilitate online ECE field experiences?

Research Question 2: How are constructivist learning theories and best practices being incorporated into facilitation of online field experiences?

Conceptual Framework for the Study

The heart of this conceptual framework was constructivist learning theory. The main objective of this study was to discover how ECE course instructors facilitate field experiences in the online environment. The postpositivist paradigm underlying constructivist theory framed my study because I explored participants' understandings and practices related to online field experience facilitation. In postpositivism, social reality is participatory and constructed differently by individuals who participate through

their unique understanding of events (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Constructivism was an appropriate framework for this study because it is a central theory in ECE (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009) and it provided the framework for many of the studies reviewed in Chapter 2. Constructivism is also a strong component in the apprenticeship theory aspect (Dewey, 1938) of field experience.

Maturation is a relative factor in constructivism, and the brain constructs knowledge by adding to prior knowledge. In postpositivism, scientific inquiry's focus is on multiple realities that exist when individuals interact in any social situation. Getting individuals to reveal their constructions of the lived experiences involved in online facilitation of field experiences was the purpose of this study, and the research questions addressed the essential realities of participants' practices and procedures. In Chapter 2, I provide an in-depth description of this conceptual framework.

Nature of the Study

I followed a qualitative approach using semistructured interviews. I investigated the processes, procedures, and experiences of instructors facilitating online field experiences in ECE courses. Nine instructors from across the United States responded to my request to participate, and each instructor participated in two 45-60 minute recorded phone interviews. Data were gathered from the instructor's viewpoint and analyzed using inductive methods to capture the multiple realities that exist in facilitating online ECE field experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Chapter 3 includes an in-depth description of the methodology. I conducted a qualitative interview study about online field experience

courses, focusing on facilitation and the use of theory and research to inform practice. Per Cohen et al. (2013), descriptive studies with no evaluative component were the main types of studies conducted in recent field experience research. The intent of this study was to explore practices among diverse ECE college instructors using online methods to facilitate field experiences.

Definitions

Early childhood education (ECE) degree programs: Associate degree higher education programs accredited by NAEYC (NAEYC, 2013). These could include early childhood education, childhood education, childhood education and family studies, or similar programs that train preservice teachers to teach in settings with young children, ages 0-8.

Field experience: A course in which preservice teachers complete hours teaching young children in ECE classrooms under the supervision of a mentor teacher in the classroom (Whitebook, 2012; Whitford & Villaume, 2014). This includes the terms practicum, field experience, practice teaching, demonstration teaching, or student teaching.

Instructors: Those facilitating ECE online program field experiences processes and procedures. Often, the instructor teaching a course in the program also acts as the field supervisor. Sometimes a field supervisor is assigned to preservice teachers and works along with the instructors teaching the course and the mentor teacher (Zeichner & Bier, 2013).

Preservice teachers: Those currently enrolled in ECE associate degree programs. They may or may not be currently working in an early childhood classroom, so preservice refers to the status of not yet attaining an associate degree in ECE.

Assumptions

One assumption was that field experiences are important factors in quality ECE preservice teacher preparation. The body of research indicates that problems exist in traditional facilitation (Kopcha & Alger, 2014), but there have been no studies dedicated to fully online facilitation (Simpson, 2006; Rock et al., 2012; Cohen, et.al, 2013). Another assumption was that theories and research related to facilitation contribute to quality preservice teacher preparation (Saracho, 2013; Whitebook et al., 2012).

Assumptions about the participants included that they were reasonably representative of the population because of a purposeful selection sample. Furthermore, all instructor participants were assumed to be teaching in a quality degree program because these programs incorporated NAEYC accreditation standards, a mark of excellence recognized within the field because of the stringent standards involved in attaining and maintaining accreditation (Hyson & Mitchell, 2015). However, I did not assume that the definition of quality was universal because there is disagreement in the literature about what constitutes quality (Hollins, Luna, & Lopez, 2014; Saracho, 2013; Whitebook, 2012). I assumed that in both K-12 education and early childhood education quality teaching results in improved achievement for the children. However, this assumption was not research based (Imig, Wiseman, Wiseman, & Imig, 2016). Data

collection and analysis focused on processes, procedures, and experience of instructors who were facilitating online field experiences, not on what constitutes quality preservice teacher education.

I also assumed that participants described their supervisory field experiences and practices accurately. I further assumed that participants were honest in their responses to interview questions because confidentiality was ensured and the participants were volunteers who could withdraw from the study at any time without ramifications.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this interview study included online facilitation of ECE preservice teachers' field experience course work. I focused on associate degree programs, excluding bachelor and graduate programs. Although I purposefully focused the research questions to online facilitation of field experiences, the comparison to instructors' experiences in live facilitation were included in the data based on how the participants reflected on their experiences.

A further delimitation was studying one viewpoint of the triad in field experience: field supervision. The purpose for limiting the viewpoint to instructors who were field supervisors was to gather evidence from one source of the triad with the understanding that subsequent studies could address viewpoints of other members of the triad. Focusing on one viewpoint made the data analysis more feasible and allowed for less ambiguity in analyzing themes and patterns. A meta-analysis of all three viewpoints could enhance the conclusions. The study was also delimited to a constructivist viewpoint, which is an

established framework in the field (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009; Jones, 2007; Katz, 1977).

Associate degree programs based on National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation (ECADA) (NAEYC, n.d.-a) standards constituted another delimitation. To ensure that quality programs were chosen for the study, I chose a purposeful sample from accredited programs, programs currently in the process of seeking accreditation, or programs that included the accreditation standards within their degree outcomes.

Limitations

Time was a limitation because a snapshot of current practices is only valid at the time the information is gathered, as college instructors continually revise and improve curricula based on changing needs, college directives, research findings, and changes in the profession. Another limitation related to participant qualifications for the study. Originally I planned to include only degree programs that were fully accredited by NAEYC ECADA (n.d.-b), but potential participants who responded to my invitation were not all accredited. Five were fully accredited, two were in the process of being accredited, and two were not currently seeking accreditation. The two who were not accredited revealed that they based their degree outcomes on the ECADA standards (NAEYC, 2011), including those related to field experience, and those seeking accreditation were close to submitting their applications and had already embedded these standards into their degree outcomes. After contemplating my original qualifications for participation, I

decided that as long as the ECADA standards (NAEYC, 2011) were central to the degree program outcomes, the data could be relevant. Therefore, I adjusted the qualification to NAEYC ECADA accredited programs, programs currently in the process of seeking ECADA accreditation, or programs that included the ECADA accreditation standards within their degree outcomes.

Significance

This interview study topic was needed to fulfill several purposes. First, a gap existed in the literature related to the perspectives of instructors facilitating online field experiences. Whitebook et al. (2009b) described the lack of research in the area of ECE field experience. Thompson et al. (2013) described the increasing number of online-delivered teacher preparation programs as having challenges. The available literature focused on themes in preservice teacher education such as quality higher education for ECE majors (Saracho, 2013), and research about preservice teacher education in general (Whitebook, 2012; Zeichner, 2012, 2014). Most of the field experience literature focused on traditional live course delivery of field experiences (Ammentorp & Madden, 2014; Caudle, Young, Fouts, & Wallace, 2014; Dang, 2013; Whitebook et al., 2012) or how to embed technology as an enhancement for live field experiences (Alger & Kopcha, 2011; Carrington, Kervin, & Ferry, 2012; Kopcha & Alger 2014; LaParo, Maynard, Thomason, & Scott-Little, 2012; Rock et. al, 2012; Rosen, Alexander, Blackwell, Bloom, & Woodham Digiovanni, 2011). The goal of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of how online field experiences in ECE are currently being facilitated. In

addition, it was important to address how theory and research informed current practices, as the publishing of existing practices may be useful to instructors planning new curricula, or may be used to improve existing curricula for field experiences. Finally, this study may spur more research addressing the perspectives of the other stakeholders in field experiences: mentor teachers and preservice teachers.

This study contributed to positive social change by providing information to online instructors about how others facilitate field experiences using an online course platform, with the expectation of improving online teacher preparation programs. I did not address whether preservice teachers should be able to earn degrees with fully online field experiences because many early childhood associate degree programs offer online field experiences in accredited programs, and preservice teachers are receiving fully online ECE degrees. There was little literature addressing online facilitation or delivery methods for ECE preservice teacher education involving field supervision. The knowledge gained from a selection of instructors participating in programs that adhere to ECADA accreditation standards (NAEYC, 2011) may lead to discussions about best practices in online field experiences. The collaboration that could result from these findings would be a starting point for helping prepare skilled ECE teachers for the 21st century workforce utilizing contemporary methods of online instruction.

The results from this study could provide improved instruction techniques, processes, and procedures. This is important for all stakeholders involved in field experience education online:

- instructors who facilitate courses,
- preservice teachers who may benefit from improvements to online instruction as a result of this study,
- mentor teachers who help facilitate these experiences,
- parents who place their children in classrooms that offer field experiences, and
- children who attend the classes where field experiences occur.

Summary

Online facilitation of ECE field experience was an important topic to study because of the gap in the literature regarding this type of facilitation. The purpose of this qualitative interview study was to understand the processes, procedures, and experiences of instructors who facilitate preservice teachers in online field experience. Constructivism was the conceptual basis for understanding the experiences of online instructors. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature related to the topic of ECE preservice teacher education, ECE preservice field experience, and online field service delivery. Chapter 3 contains information about the qualitative interview methodology.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Field experiences are considered to have more influence on the development of preservice teachers in comparison with other educational experiences, and are seen as key to producing competent ECE teachers (Cohen et al., 2013). Field experiences allow preservice ECE teachers to apply the knowledge they are learning in their course work, described by LaParo et al. (2014) as knowledge to practice. Previously taught only in a traditional face-to-face format, field experiences are now being offered online at a number of colleges (Rock et al., 2012).

In 2013, 32% of college preservice teachers took at least one online course, a number that increases each year (Allen & Season, 2013). One of the areas where online delivery is becoming more common is in ECE preservice teacher education degree programs (Rock et al., 2012). When members of a field experience (instructor or field supervisor, preservice teacher, and mentor teacher) are not in the same location, it is a different experience than when they can meet face to face. Without the ability to visit preservice teachers' placement sites physically, instructors must create new processes and procedures for online facilitation of preservice teachers' field experiences (Simpson, 2006). However, according to Simpson in 2006, there was little written or known about how field experiences are being facilitated online. Rock et al. (2012) added that problems inherent in the traditional approach exist in online facilitation. Per Kopcha and Alger (2014), online facilitation occurs when instructors use technology to enhance the field experience, and includes facilitation of both online and traditional courses when

technology is used. Rock et al. (2012) described a hybrid approach to learning, a combination of online and face-to-face facilitation. Online facilitation can also be defined as when the instructors and the preservice teacher do not typically interact face-to-face for any part of the field experience. The purpose of this qualitative interview study was to understand the processes, procedures, and experiences of instructors who facilitate preservice teachers in online field experience. The research literature that addressed the topic included three areas: ECE teacher preparation (Kopcha & Alger, 2014; Whitebook, et al, 2012; Zeichner, 2014), the role of field experience in ECE teacher preparation programs (Ammentorp & Madden, 2014; Caudle et al., 2014; Dang, 2013; Whitebook et al., 2012; Zeichner, 2012), and online delivery of education to preservice teachers (Alger & Kopcha, 2014; Carrington et al., 2012; Kopcha & Alger 2014; LaParo et al., 2012; Rock et. al, 2012; Rosen et al., 2011). I included the major components of field experience (supervision, observation, performance assessment, mentoring, communication, and collaboration) in this discussion.

In this chapter, I present the literature search strategy and the conceptual framework based on social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978), cognitive development theory (Piaget, 1953), and experiential learning theory (Dewey, 1938). The chapter includes a review of what is known and not known related to online ECE field experience in preservice teacher preparation, and closes with an identification of the gap in the research literature, which became the foundation for this study.

Literature Search Strategy

Google Scholar, with linked access to the Walden Library for article retrieval, was the key source of searching and finding literature pertinent to this study. ERIC and Academic Search Complete were the databases most frequently linked from Google Scholar. The Walden University Dissertation Database and Academic Search Complete were used to supplement the process, using key word searches. The search terms consisted of variations of the following terms: *early childhood teacher preparation*, *early childhood education field experiences*, *online early childhood teacher preparation*, and *online early childhood field experiences*. The terms *student teaching* and *practicum* were searched as well, as they are also considered field experiences. Finally, references were mined through the process of reading peer-reviewed research articles and accessing the reference sections of those articles

Because of a focus on fully online field experiences in the United States, every effort to narrow the research to these parameters was made. Strong themes emerged in the literature in regards to field experiences: ECE teacher preparation, field experience as key to teacher development, and the triad model of facilitation. However, literature in the specific niche of supervising online field experiences was sparse, requiring related literature (ECE teacher preparation in general, and field experiences) to be included.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework I used for this interview study concerning online ECE field experiences included Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, Piaget's (1953)

cognitive development theory, and Dewey's (1938) experiential learning theory. These three conceptual lenses were my choice for the study because of their strong ties to the pedagogy of ECE education teacher preparation (Branscombe, Burcham, Castle, & Surbeck, 2013; Bredekamp & Copple, 2009). These three lenses are important historically to the field of education because prior to them, the dominating ideas about how a person learned focused on didactic, teacher-centered teaching characterized by passively absorbing information from a source such as a teacher or book. Field experience by nature is neither passive nor teacher-centered, as the focus is on the preservice teacher's application of knowledge and skills in ECE field sites.

Constructivism as a conceptual perspective focuses on how people learn. Constructivists hold that people create knowledge and meaning from interactions between experiences and their reactions to the experiences. Learning occurs based on prior knowledge and experience that the learner uses to make sense of the new information (Vygotsky, 1978). Constructivism was a suitable framework for this interview study because learning through experience, being active creators of knowledge, and reflecting on those experiences as part of the learning cycle are embedded in the nature of field experience (Cohen et al., 2013). Dangel's 2013 meta-analysis supports the value of constructivism in preservice teacher education. Dillon et al. (2014) described the importance of socio-constructivist theory in preservice teacher field experiences

Social Constructivism: Vygotsky

Vygotsky's constructivist approach involved social aspects of learning within relationships (Vygotsky, 1978; Yardley, Teunissen, & Dornan, 2012). Vygotsky's theory focused on learning actively constructed by individuals, and this knowledge formation was greatly influenced by prior knowledge of the learner. Three of Vygotsky's theory components, social context of learning, the zone of proximal development (ZPD), and mentoring by a more-experienced other are presented in the following section.

Per Vygotsky (1978), learning occurs within relationships, and the social aspect has a fundamental role in the processes related to human cognition. Learning is not passive, but rather results from an individual's interaction with the subject material and exposure via social constructs. Cultural facets are critical aspects of the learning process, because the rules of culture and language are central in the acquisition of knowledge. Cultural rules guide the learner through the processes that result in cognition (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's emphasis on the social aspect of learning distinguished his theory from the others discussed in this paper; Piaget (1953) focused on cognition within the learner, and Dewey (1938) concentrated on the ideas related to preservice teachers being actively engaged in authentic learning experiences instead of passive rote learning. Dangel (2013) described constructivism as being an integral component to preservice teacher education.

The zone of proximal development (ZPD) was coined by Vygotsky (1978) to describe the space between what a learner has mastered and what this learner can achieve

with educational support, typically provided through an individual with expertise who mentors a less skilled individual through coaching or other forms of guidance. Alger and Kopcha (2011) stated that ZPD describes the roles of stakeholders in field experience courses. Within field experiences, the assumption is that preservice teachers are apprentices. Apprenticeship models are rooted in ZPD theory.

Scaffolding was the term coined by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) to describe what later became synonymous with Vygotsky's concept (1978) for the idea of using building-block mentoring techniques where it is the teacher's role to help preservice teachers progress toward understanding of a concept, leading to independence in the learning process (Dayan & Ziv, 2012). Scaffolding is what happens within the ZPD, when a more knowledgeable "other" coaches the learner. Trevethan (2014) discussed scaffolding as integral to the mentoring component of field experiences. Tondeur et al. (2012) described the value of proper scaffolds for preservice teachers during field experiences.

Cognitive Development: Piaget

Piaget's (1953) work in child growth and development revolutionized the understanding of how young children are viewed. Children were no longer expected to think like adults, but rather they were seen to construct knowledge and thought processes via complex stages of cognitive development throughout childhood; learning occurs through actively testing theories in the real world, and knowledge acquisition is a dynamic process. In Piaget's theory, children move through stages beginning at birth and

progress from limited, concrete understandings of the world to more complex, abstract thought. Children are egocentric at birth, but as they progress through Piaget's ages and stages, they become aware of the point of view of others, and this greatly affects the acquisition of knowledge. Because of the limits (concrete thinking and egocentricity) imposed on young children at their stage of development, young children make assumptions that tend not to be accurate. According to Piaget, cognitive development is the process whereby cognition is refined by a child's developmental growth toward biological maturation, based on construction through environmental experiences.

Piaget's (2003) work on intelligence included the capacity to adapt to novel circumstances. This adaptation occurs through assimilation of information and accommodation, where the knowledge is modified according to prior knowledge. During these processes, a learner goes through a state of disequilibrium as he or she takes new information and processes it with what is already known. The processes of assimilation and accommodation result in cognitive structure, and these processes occur throughout the life span of a human. Piaget described the result of this process as a state of equilibrium within the learner. Because learning is an internal process of adapting knowledge into what one already knows, Piaget's (1953) theory is related to the topic of field experience. When preservice teachers are engaged in learning by doing, they are actively assimilating and accommodating information through their field experiences in ECE classrooms.

Because ECE preservice teacher education was the focus of this study, the foundations of teaching practices were considered. According to Jones (2007), those who educate preservice teachers need to model what is expected of them in their future classrooms with young children; educators must practice what they preach. ECE best practices, called developmentally appropriate practices (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009), are based on Piaget's constructivist assumptions. Because of the strong link to constructivism and ECE education, it is common practice for preservice teacher education to mirror constructivist teaching practices used for young children (Katz, 1977). These practices often guide teacher preparation programs and there is an established link to the use of constructivist practice with preservice teacher education (Dangel, 2013; Dillon et al., 2014). Piaget's (1953) theories are used to explain the process of child growth and development, but are also relevant to how ECE preservice teachers are taught.

Experiential Learning: Dewey

Dewey's (1938) constructivist theory focused on active engagement with the environment as important to acquisition of knowledge, with reflection being a key part of the process. Per Dewey, experiential learning and reflection were especially needed when the knowledge to be learned was abstract in nature. Apprenticeship training, such as field experience, is experiential learning, which provided the final lens for the conceptual framework of this study.

Experiential learning theory is the process of actively learning through experience, and reflection is an important aspect of the process (Myers, 2014; Yardley et

al., 2012). In contrast, didactic learning is passive and not experience oriented, and is based on the premise that when teachers talk, people learn. Reflection is not required for didactic learning. Dewey (1938) introduced these ideas as part of needed educational reform. The process of reflection helps a learner understand new information when reflection "follow[s] after times of more overt action and [is] used to organize what has been gained in periods of activity" (Dewey, 1938, Kindle location 668).

According to Grossman (2011), Dewey was the originator of experiential learning, also referred to as the laboratory approach. Before this approach, preservice teachers spent considerable time observing other teachers rather than learning by experience (Grossman, 2011). Dillon et al. (2014) and Bergman (2015) described the important influence experiential learning has in preservice teacher field experiences, where the process of learning occurs when learners can apply theory to practice and then reflect on the experience. Dewey's laboratory approach is the basis for the traditional model of field experience. Gao (2015) described experiential learning as key "to nurture pre-service teachers into critically minded reflective professionals capable of teaching" (p. 435). Riojas-Cortez, Alanis, and Flores (2013) found that reflection on practice is important to bridging theory to practice.

Dewey's constructivist experiential learning theory relates to online teaching and ECE preservice teacher preparation. Bergman (2015) studied the use of audio and video recorders for reflecting on teaching practices. LaParo et al. (2012) link Dewey's experiential education theory to the use of videotaping for preservice teachers to revisit

their field experiences to reflect on their teaching practices. LaParo et al. (2012) described preservice teachers observing videos of them teaching, analyzing strengths and weaknesses, and receiving feedback on these reflections as key to becoming successful teachers. Therefore, reflection should be an inherent element in field experiences.

Rationale for Conceptual Framework

The nature of online learning differs from traditional education in that the learner must be self-motivated to succeed. It is not possible to just show up and passively listen to a teacher; the learner actively investigates the learning resources presented online and interacts with the information using technology as a means to communicate. The student must also actively participate in their learning. In Dewey's experiential theory, motivation and taking control of the learning process are key factors in successful learning.

In this conceptual framework, I focus on the principles of constructivism theory as described by Vygotsky (1978), Piaget (1953), and Dewey (1938). Key aspects that relate to this study of online field experiences are social construction of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978), the processes of assimilating and accommodating new information (Piaget, 1953), and the importance of learning by experience while incorporating reflection (Dewey, 1938). Together, these concepts support the apprenticeship aspects of field experiences for preservice teachers. In the literature review that follows, I present the nature of field experience by focusing on research related to the key topics related to

this study: ECE teacher preparation, ECE field experiences, and online delivery on ECE field experiences.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

By nature, field experience is a type of apprenticeship, as well as a form of experiential learning. In the cognitive apprenticeship model described by Alger and Kopcha (2011), the constructivist view of apprentice learning is internalized through experience with an expert. Historically, the triad model has been the preferred method of delivery for field experiences in education (Grossman, 2011). The model includes the field supervisor, preservice teacher, and mentor teacher. In the traditional triad method, the preservice teacher is placed in a classroom with children under the supervision of the mentor teacher, who also serves as the classroom teacher. The field supervisor is typically the college instructor for that preservice teacher. However, there are varieties of alternate ways to facilitate with a triad, including using the mentor teacher also as field supervisor or using an outside field supervisor who is not the instructor of the course (adding a fourth person to the triad). The duties of a field supervisor can vary as well. The field supervisor may spend a little time or a lot of time observing and evaluating and mentoring the preservice teacher. In the case of online facilitation, the at-a-distance field supervisor may not see the preservice teacher performing in the classroom unless videotaping of the preservice teacher is required.

Variations in implementation of the triad model typically relate to how much support the preservice teacher receives, and whether the variation follows the model of

theory to practice, or theory and practice integrated. In the theory to practice model, preservice teachers learn course work first, and then enter into field experiences (Dillon et al., 2014). Sjølie (2014) studied the concept of theory versus practice from the teacher's perspective, with the teachers consisting of graduate level teachers enrolled in a secondary education program. Findings stated that these teachers believed that there was a disconnect between theory and practice – that being a teacher means forgetting the theory you learned in school. In the integrated model, preservice teachers engage in field experiences throughout the period of their course work. Per Dillon et al., (2014) "Practicum experiences should be early, extensive, interspersed, and varied" (p. 99). In the traditional model, theory to practice was common, and preservice teachers did not complete field experiences until near the end of their course work.

It is logical to study all these aspects to understand how the traditional model of physical presence during field experiences can be adapted to an online platform. The nature of the triad conceptual model is historic because it has been a focus in preservice teacher education for decades (Ku et al., 2012). To begin the literature review, ECE preservice teacher preparation sets the stage for the two concepts that follow: ECE field experiences and online ECE field experiences the central focus of this study.

ECE Preservice Teacher Preparation

Historically, normal schools that were institutions dedicated to preservice teacher preparation, began operating in the mid-nineteenth century and have evolved into the present-day college and university models of preservice teacher education (Whitford &

Villaume, 2014). Even though ECE education was added as a mid-twentieth century phenomenon, the traditional model of preservice teacher education has been the basis for ECE preservice teacher preparation from the beginning, similar to the K-12 preservice teacher education model. However, Whitebook (2012) concluded that K-12 preservice teacher education is dissimilar to ECE preservice teacher education, but stated that sharing of best practices between the fields is possible. Preservice ECE teacher programs are varied, and there is little literature that compares and contrasts these programs (Whitebook, 2012). This discussion about quality ECE preservice teacher education is an attempt to address the uniqueness of the field and find commonalities in what constitutes quality.

Whitebook, Gomby, Belm, Sakai and Kipnis' policy report (2009a) reported about the differences between K-12 and ECE teacher preparation programs. Differences in terminology, delivery, requirements, licensure, fieldwork, standards, funding, wages, and teaching environments were some of the differences described. ECE preservice teachers are far more likely to attend college part time while working in the field than K-12 preservice teachers are. This report (Whitebook et al., 2009a) concluded that the differences have created divergent paths for research, although there was not the multitude of research on the topic of ECE teacher preparation that one finds in the realm of K-12 education. Findings indicated that alignment of career pathways may help in preparing excellent teachers for children of all ages. Even though there are differences and variations between the fields of ECE and K-12, research in each field has the ability

to affect or influence the other (Whitebook et al., 2009a). Recommendations included abandoning the view of these two realms as being separate, and finding commonalities in research agendas. This literature review included articles representing both early childhood and elementary preservice teacher education research.

Whitebook et al. (2009a) recommended collecting data about ECE teacher preparation, quality, and retention comparable to that of the K-12 education field. Whitebook et al. (2009b) described that "there are no comprehensive data about fieldwork experience among ECE teachers, with research on this topic generally restricted to small qualitative studies" (Whitebook et al., 2009b, p. 9).

Whitebook et al. (2012) authored the Center for Child Care Employment's report outlining four key dimensions for preservice teacher preparation in ECE: program content, clinical experiences, instructors' characteristics, and institutional contexts. Two large California universities with bachelor level ECE degree programs were the participants in this case study. The stated purpose of Whitebook et al.'s 2012 study was "To assess methodologies commonly employed in ECE higher education research as tools to compare variations in program content, clinical experiences, instructors' characteristics, and institutional support" (p. 14). Preservice teachers at these universities included those who transferred from a two-year program as well as those completing their full degree at the university level. Although the study's conclusions answered some key questions, findings included that because of vast variations in program implementation in these key dimensions, it was difficult to generalize about best practices

or quality. Finally, this study included recommendations to collect more information in the future to pursue evidence-based policy creation about preservice teacher preparation.

Another view about ECE preservice teacher preparation quality comes from Saracho (2013), who identified six key components of quality ECE preservice teacher education. Recruitment and selection, general education, professional foundations, instructional knowledge, field experience, and program evaluation were the six key components identified through a meta-analysis of 40 studies in the literature dating from 1989-2004. Additional findings included a strong correlation between the number of years of education and teacher appropriateness in the field, indicating that more and better education resulted in better teachers. However, components such as live versus online delivery, the number of hours of field experience within the years of education, and other variables such as the qualifications of the teacher educators were not considered (2013).

Another strand relative to ECE teacher preparation is the Principle of Congruity (Katz, 1977); a practice commonly demonstrated in ECE teacher preparation programs that ECE instructors often model. Katz used the term to describe teaching preservice ECE teachers by modeling the practices they will use with young children. Katz (1977) indicated that, "The way we teach teachers should be congruent in many basic aspects – but not all – with the way we want them to teach children" (p. 4). Adults and children bring different levels of development and experience to the table. Maximizing learning by example and acknowledging that some elements of teaching apply to all learners

constitute the core of the principle of congruity. Katz's first point follows with knowing what the preservice teachers already knows (ZPD) "differentiation of understanding according to knowledge" (p. 6), and assumes that the goal of education is to improve understanding. Next, Katz (1977) discussed the timing of preservice teacher education, which includes appropriate pacing to the learner's ability and acknowledgment of differentiated understanding based on experience, "a developmental view of the learner" (p 8). "Sociointellectual ambiance" (p. 9) relates to the connection between the teacher and the learner, as well as the learning environment.

Griess and Keat's (2014) narrative study concurred with Katz's (1977) description of intentionally teaching by modeling ECE pedagogy, described by Griess and Keat's (2014) as "practice what we preach" (p. 98). They also described utilizing differentiated instruction while teaching preservice and graduate level ECE teachers to meet the diverse needs of the young children in their classrooms, while modeling the practices ECE teachers will be using in their classrooms with young children.

Related to Katz's 1977 principle is the case study research of Oleson and Hora (2014), who focused on whether preservice teachers should be explicitly taught how to teach, or teachers will rely on teaching the way they were taught, which does not typically equate with teaching best practices. Although Oleson and Hora's 263 subjects were preservice secondary education teachers, the question about whether or not to intentionally teach how to teach is relevant. Their findings supported the idea that that if teachers were allowed to teach as they were taught, many teachers would not use

constructivist practices. Per Dillon et al. (2014), when beliefs about teaching are based on experiences as pupils, even when asked to perform teaching tasks based on the preservice teacher's current course work, it is difficult for preservice teachers to change their beliefs and let theory inform practice. They advocate for place-based preservice teacher education, where theory to practice is integrated and holistic.

Hollins et al. (2014), in the review of epistemologies in Pre-K–12 preservice teacher education, found that in a holistic approach to education "the practices in teacher preparation are a mirror image of practices for quality teaching" (p. 395). The definition of this holistic approach is the integration of theory, curriculum, and pedagogy within authentic settings "that are embedded in focused inquiry, directed observation, and guided practice" (p. 395). It is important to consider why and how preservice teachers are taught to teach. One of the themes that was discovered in this study was the extent that each instructor follows or does not follow Katz's (1977) principle of congruity, whether a holistic approach is used (Hollins et al., 2014), and whether teaching how to teach (Griess & Keat, 2014: Oleson & Hora, 2014) is incorporated into the curriculum.

Another element in ECE preservice teacher preparation is the changing of personal beliefs about teaching practices during the educational process. Caudle and Moran (2012) conducted a longitudinal grounded theory study of three ECE preservice teachers that extended into their first four years as in-service teachers. Findings revealed that beliefs were relatively unstable at the beginning of the study compared

with the end of study data. Participants were more tentative in teaching practices and developed into being more active in practices. Implications included fostering ways to help preservice teachers "make connections between beliefs and practice" (p. 38) and ensure that self-reflection is part of the process in course work and field experiences.

Jamil, Downer, and Pianta (2012) studied the topic of self-efficacy (confidence in teaching ability, rather than competence), using 409 elementary and secondary preservice teachers to complete self-efficacy pre-assessments upon entering field experience in their final year of bachelor / master degree programs, and self-efficacy post-assessments before graduation. Three aspects of self-efficacy were investigated: the degree of understanding about child development as related to appropriate teaching, the personality of the preservice teacher, and immersion into a master-teaching situation. The findings suggested that extroverted preservice teachers who felt competent in their understanding of child development felt more self-efficacy at the end of their degree program than those who did not. When preservice teachers received specific feedback about their performance of teaching, it added to feelings of self-efficacy (Jamil et al., 2012).

Literature I reviewed in this section for ECE preservice teacher preparation focused on the following themes: differences between ECE preservice preparation and K-12 preservice teacher preparation, components of preservice teacher educational programming, ways to prepare ECE preservice teachers, and the changes in personal

beliefs about teaching that occur during the education process. Next, the topic discussion narrows to discuss field experiences in ECE preservice teacher preparation.

ECE Teacher Preparation Field Experiences

Field experience has been used since the beginning of teacher education when preservice teachers attended Normal School to become teachers during the early seventeenth century (Whitford & Villaume, 2014). From the beginning, it consisted of a preservice teacher being placed in a laboratory-model school or in a public school classroom, and being supervised while they taught, much like other apprenticeship models in existence at the time. It provided the opportunity for preservice teachers to practice the art of teaching, bridge theory to practice, and helped prepare future teachers for some of the challenges they would face in the profession (Dillon et al., 2014). From the beginning of ECE preservice teacher training, field experience was part of the apprenticeship process. However, per Whitebook et al. (2012), variations in field experiences among degree programs are problematic: field experiences are not required in all programs; the duration, integration, rigor, or settings may be of poor quality. Whitebook et al., 2012 concluded "that particular areas of clinical experience require close examination: 1) learning objectives; 2) specific child characteristics, including targeted age group; 3) location; 4) intensity; 5) supervision; and 6) how it is structured in relation to the overall course of study" (p. 10). Zeichner and Bier (2013) discuss the problems with preservice teacher education in the US for elementary and secondary education as "the lack of connection between course work and clinical experiences" (p.

155), creating a disconnect between the theory learned in the college courses and actual practice in a classroom.

Catapano and Thompson (2013) used action research over a two-year period to investigate the impact of introducing early field experiences along with social foundations and educational psychology courses to help preservice K-5 teachers work effectively with diverse student populations. When early field experiences included diverse populations and were followed by debriefing sessions, Catapano and Thompson (2013) noted by triangulating preservice teachers journal entries with observation and assessment that these 10 and 12 hour experiences over multiple semesters were helpful in developing a positive teacher persona in regards to cultural differences. This study supported integrating theory and practice, as discussed in the conceptual framework above.

The triad model for field experience, where supervisors, on-site mentor teachers, and preservice teachers form the triad, has long been the norm within ECE preservice teacher education (Kopcha & Alger, 2014; Cohen et al., 2013). Although considered a key part of preservice teacher education (Kopcha & Alger, 2014; Ku et al., 2012; Whitebook et al., 2012), field experience has not changed much since its inception. Whitebook et al. (2009a, 2009b) completed a literature review along with interviews of 22 key players in the field of ECE (including teacher educators, administration, and researchers) as well as intensive interviews with 10 ECE teachers. Interviewees reported that field experiences were not always ideal, with too much observing instead of

teaching. The varying skills of mentor teachers were discussed, and findings included that "there is little systematic research on what the best mentor teacher or coach should do" (Whitebook et al., 2009b, pp. 9-10). Whitebook et al.'s 2012 report described challenges and lessons learned in regards to field experience. Conclusions concerning the field experience component revealed great variety among programs in regards to objectives, structure, and intensity of experiences, making it difficult to study the contributions of field experience.

According to Kopcha and Alger (2014), problems with the traditional triad model of field experience included providing preservice teachers' adequate access to teaching experts during the experiences and insufficient guidance when preservice teachers are moving from theory to practice. Kopcha and Alger's (2014) post-test, quasi-experimental study of 54 preservice teachers documented the efficacy of eSupervision, using technology to enhance field experience. eSupervision included the use of technology enhanced modules, tutorials, performance support, and discussions. Conclusions emphasized the importance of coaching and feedback via private discussion forums in the process (Kopcha & Alger, 2014).

The triad model of field experience comprises several components: supervision, observation and performance assessment, mentoring, communication and collaboration, reflection (Kopcha & Alger, 2014; Cohen et al., 2013; Southgate et al., 2013; Rock et al., 2012). These all occur between the three members of the field experience triad, in varying degrees by each participant. I describe these components of field experience in

the section that follows to illustrate the importance of this study's aim in informing the field about how these experiences are being facilitated in general and online in particular.

The field supervisor is the person in charge of supervision, and this typically is the instructor of the course. Mentor teachers supervise the preservice teacher day-by-day in the field experience classroom, but this is not the same supervision done by the field supervisor, who comes intermittently to observe and evaluate the preservice teacher's performance. Observation and performance assessment can occur between any of the members: the field supervisor typically observes and evaluates the preservice teacher at the site location at increments for face-to-face field experiences and could include online supervision via videotape; the mentor teacher typically oversees day-to-day supervision, and completes observations and performance assessments at increments during the experience. In addition, the preservice teacher will be observing and evaluating what they see the mentor teacher doing in the classroom. Mentoring may occur between the mentor teacher and the preservice teacher, and well as between the instructor and the preservice teacher. Communication and collaboration should be open between all three members of the triad. Reflection is a key component for the preservice teacher, and he or she should be reflecting about what they see, hear, do, and say. Literature pertinent to each of these areas in included below.

The traditional triad method is based on an apprenticeship model, but a cognitive apprenticeship model goes further by addressing more than what can be physically seen and measured; the cognitive processes involved in learning skills are also addressed

(Alger & Kopcha, 2011; Kopcha & Alger, 2014). Kopcha and Alger (2014) described the aspects of a cognitive apprenticeship as "modeling, coaching, scaffolding, reflection, and community-building" (p. 49). Experiential learning also describes the main intent of a field experience. Yardley et al. (2012) overview the conceptual perspectives related to experiential learning with a focus on providing ideal environments for these experiences. Although this research focused on medical student field experiences, the conclusions were relevant to field experiences in general (Yardley et al., 2012). Conclusions point to an important transition that must occur throughout the learning process, marked by increasing independence and self-direction within the experience. This concept was explored in data collection, identifying themes in how this progression was facilitated.

Supervision. Dillon et al. (2014) made a solid argument that there is a difference between what preservice teachers believe teaching should look like based on their experiences as pupils, and what they are being taught in their degree programs. They describe this as enacting "one frame (theory-in-use) while espousing another (espoused theory)" (p. 103). They advocate for supervision during field experiences to consist of supervisors heavily modeling desired teaching practices throughout the practicum experience and actively helping preservice teachers embrace theory-based teaching practices (2014).

Rock et al. (2012) tackled the issues involved in online supervising, and summarized current practices in online supervision by stating that "the most prevalent practice involved reliance on adjunct instructors, mentor teachers, or local experts to

provide traditional face-to-face supervision for online learning or distance education preservice teachers" (p. 280). Group supervision was another variety, where all the preservice teachers were placed in one school. Another variation consisted of telephone conversations between the supervisor and preservice teacher. Three-way discussions online between the triad were rare in the findings. Rock et al. (2012) listed problems with these variations, and the study piloted a unique application of using technology to coach from a distance. Rock et al. (2012) concluded that technology is a viable alternative for online field experiences, and this study focused on supervision, observation and performance assessment, mentoring, and communication/collaboration, five of the six identified components of field experience. This study's purpose was to test an innovative way to facilitate the supervision of field experience, using real time video and Bug in Ear (BIE) technology, which allowed the supervisor to give real time feedback to the preservice teacher (Rock et al., 2012). Findings about the method were positive in nature.

Range, Duncan, and Hvidston (2013) investigated instructor views on supervision and mentoring of early childhood, elementary and secondary preservice teachers. One research question sought answers to how instructors rate supervisory behaviors. A second research question focused on how instructors support preservice teachers. Findings supported that instructors highly value feedback to preservice teachers, and that the traditional triad model of observations and feedback sessions was the most common way preservice teachers were supported and mentored (2013).

Observation and performance assessment. This section focuses on observation and performance assessment of preservice teachers in a field experience. In a traditional field experience, the college instructors typically observe the preservice teacher at the placement site and complete a performance assessment while the preservice teacher works in the classroom with young children. Without the ability to be physically present to complete a performance assessment, a question arises as to how instructors facilitate these online observations and performance assessments.

Caudle et al. (2014) focused specifically on observation and evaluation of preservice teachers' strategies for guiding young children's behavior. This quantitative study included a sample of 11 undergraduate and graduate preservice teachers of prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade classrooms. Data were collected through observations of preservice ECE teachers and MANOVA analysis of the results. Behaviors coded as positive, neutral, or negative led to findings that revealed neutral modifications of behavior were frequent. Implications suggest that preservice teachers need more training in positive behavior intervention. Findings support using quantitative measurement of preservice teacher's actions instead of value judgments on the quality of the teaching by the supervisor. This indicates the possibility of isolating and quantifying desired behaviors as part of supervision (Caudle et al. 2014).

Joseph and Brennan (2013) studied the use of a portfolio of annotated videos on preservice teacher education. Teams engaged in discussion and annotation of videos of their peers with the goal of enhancing teacher/child interactions, using the CLASS as the

tool for evaluation. Instructors reported success, as it improved their ability to document change in preservice teacher's interactions with children. Preservice teachers acknowledged that the video and annotation process helped them visualize their growth in child interaction skills. The authors (2013) encouraged videotaping to be used as an enhancement tool for field experiences.

Mentoring. In Vygotsky's ZPD theory (1978), an individual who has expertise mentors a less-skilled individual through coaching or other forms of guidance, and this describes the roles of the stakeholders well in field experience courses in relation to the study. In Rock et al.'s (2012) study of online supervision during field experiences, mentoring the preservice teacher in real time was the focus. Rock et al.'s 2012 BIE technology is an example of using technology as part of supervision. BIE technology allowed instructors to give feedback to preservice teachers in their placement sites via a videoconference tool, such as Skype. Using the BIE, a Bluetooth headset, the instructors gave real time feedback while the preservice teacher was working with young children, mentoring him or her at a distance. The cost is under $150.00 for this technology, so it is feasible to embed this type of mentoring in field experiences. Per the authors (Rock et al., 2012), this technology holds promise for improving the ability to facilitate online field experience.

Bringing theory to practice is key to mentoring in a cognitive apprenticeship model for ECE field experiences. Alger and Kopcha, (2014) described the differences between a traditional mentorship and a cognitive apprenticeship by stating "the skills that

a novice must learn are not fully observable – rather, the focus is on learning the underlying cognitive processes that others have come to master" (p 49). This 2014 study focused on using technology enhanced cognitive apprenticeship (TECA) to improve field experiences for graduate level secondary education preservice teachers. Their version, called eSupervision included the use of video, discussion forums, and technology-based performance support. They concluded that the use of eSupervision was effective in field experiences.

Liu, Tsai, and Huang (2015) researched the use of technology in the relationship between the mentor and preservice teacher (mentee), specifically integrating technology use into teaching practices. They found that preservice teachers typically seek uses of technology in teaching practice, where mentors typically use it only for finding instructional materials. This created a situation where mutual learning could occur as preservice teachers mentor their mentors when it comes to technology integration in teaching.

Reese (2015) used virtual mentoring via Skype and video to study the effects of this type of mentoring on preservice music education teachers. Although virtual mentoring was characterized as different from traditional mentoring by Reese, and some technical issues were described in the study, virtual mentoring did prove to be a valuable tool for overcoming some of the problems related to face to face mentoring. These problems included the remote location of the study and lack of a sufficient number of qualified mentor teachers in the area to mentor preservice music education teachers.

Communication and collaboration. Ku et al. (2012) gathered both quantitative and qualitative data in a study of the triad model in elementary preservice teacher program. The data were gathered with an evaluation survey and exit survey given to all three members of the triad (173 preservice teachers, 173 mentors, and 50 field supervisors). An additional survey was administered to the mentor teachers and field supervisors. The first two surveys consisted of open-ended surveys, and the personnel survey used in part three was qualitative. Data were analyzed in SPSS through ANOVA and *t*-test. The qualitative portion was analyzed though thematic analysis. Based on the outcomes of the study, changes to the college program focused on building stronger partnerships between the stakeholders and reducing the competitive nature of the experience. "The biggest barrier reported by the cooperating teachers was lack of communication with the teacher education program, [and] preservice teachers' lack of communication with the field supervisor" (p. 1931). Recommendations to make changes included more specific structuring of roles, focus on work samples, increased communication between the triad, and changes to the evaluation procedure to include open-ended questions. If difficulties in communication are reported in face-to-face field experiences, then what does adding the online aspect of online course delivery create in regards to communication?

Ammentorp and Madden (2014), and Dang (2013) studied the effects of pairing two preservice teachers with one mentor teacher during field experiences. The collaborative nature of the pairing preservice teachers in these studies facilitated student-

centered pedagogy and followed constructivist learning theory. Facilitating collaboration in field experiences emphasized the importance of collaboration among teachers and was found to be a positive aspect of field experience (2014; 2013). Dang (2013) reported growth in development of the preservice teachers from the 2013 study. Ammentorp and Madden (2014) described the following concepts as important for effective paired placement: "scaffolding, building relationships, differentiation, problem-solving, purposefulness, self-reflection, [and] collaboration" (p. 148).

Ammentorp and Madden (2014), Dang (2013), and Ku et al. (2012) contributed to the understanding of the framework for the topic facilitation of field experiences in online course delivery because these studies evaluated the relational aspects of field experiences. Focusing on the quality of the relationships was an important aspect of the semistructured interviews for this study of facilitation of online field experiences. Plans to gather data on online supervision and perceptions about the quality of the relationships in online field experience are key to gathering relevant data. Therefore, this literature informed an important aspect of this online facilitation study.

Given that field experience has documented issues when implemented in its traditional sense, adding the online component creates a situation where specific research must ensue. In a traditional field experience, the members of the triad have the ability to meet face to face to implement the experience to facilitate supervision, observation, performance assessment, mentoring, communication, and collaboration. This is not always possible in online education scenarios, and processes and procedures must change

to reflect the inability for the three members of the triad to be physically in the same place at the same time.

Reflection. Reflection is an important aspect of constructivist practices, a key in many mentoring models, and is common in the implementation of field experiences. Schön's (1983) theory, reflection in action, described an important process for the learner in the mentoring situation. Reflection was not thought of as being as rigorous as scientific observation, but Schön disagreed with this premise and his theory helped reflection on action and reflection in action become an important part of the learning process. Myers (2014) described the importance of reflection during field experience in order for preservice teachers to link theory to practice.

Ritblatt et al. (2013) used a mixed method to investigate ECE preservice teacher preparation using a conceptual model consisting of knowledge, reflection, and practice. Course work was intricately woven into field experiences and reflection allows for integration of theory to practice in this model that was implemented at a four year ECE program. A group of 73 ECE preservice teachers was participants in the study, and data included syllabi, reflections, and quantitative scores on experiences and perceptions gathered during exit interviews. Findings illustrated high satisfaction among preservice teachers using this integrated approach.

Thomas and Packer (2013) also emphasized the importance of reflection in field experiences and offered strategies to increase the effectiveness of preservice teacher reflection. Preservice teachers' roles may be shaped by the influences of their field

experience environment, but competent reflective skills result in growing competence. Thomas and Packer's study introduced the CAR-Keys method, where reflection in and on action is the context. Attention to detail, critical reflection analysis, and evaluation are highlighted in the model. (2013, p. 7) This CAR-Keys model teaches preservice ECE teachers about critical thinking methods, how to intentionally consider factors affecting progress, and then to revise future teaching practice based on the reflection. Future research is necessary to test the efficacy of implementing this approach in ECE field experiences.

Online Field Experience

The theme of online field experiences is defined broadly in the literature to include any identified way to deliver course work for field experiences using technology. No study was found that specifically addressed fully online delivery of field experiences. However, the use of technology to enhance field experience is documented in the literature, and is discussed in this section.

Thompson et al. (2013) focused on three preservice teachers who failed an online method of education course (not a field experience course) in a fully online elementary education degree program and subsequently took it as a live experience. Their study focused on elements important to successful online delivery, Garrison, Anderson, & Archer's (1999) Community of Inquiry model: cognitive, teaching, and social presence. Cognitive presence refers to constructing meaning through communication; teaching presence refers the design, process, and facilitation of learning; Social presence refers to

projecting of personalities in learning. However, the study did not specifically address field experience or how these three elements from the Community of Inquiry model could be applied to field experience course work.

Maxwell, Romano, and Rycik (2012) discussed the use of videotaping to enhance elementary preservice teacher field experiences. They describe three types of using video tape in field experience: Type one is where the preservice teacher uses video tape of their interactions in the classroom to assess and reflect on their field experience; this is the most common use of videotape (2012). Type two is a vicarious experience where preservice teachers view other teachers and preservice teachers as they are teaching (usually live feeds). Type three is where field experience is simulated using a computer program (2012). Preservice teachers in the study watched video of the prior term preservice teacher's first day of field experience to help them prepare for their first day. Findings revealed the videos were a positive influence on the current preservice teachers (2012).

Simpson (2006) conducted a seminal literature review about how online-delivered field experiences are being designed for preservice teachers, with emphasis on how the phenomena can be implemented online. The difficulty of trying to provide equal experiences for online and live field experiences was examined. Some administrative problems identified were reflective practice and communication issues, shared dialogue and experiences difficulty, and finding quality placement sites. Supervision creates a number of problems because it is preferable to have supervisors who are familiar with the

course work to help facilitate theory to practice. Cost, travel, and time were identified as the key issues to supervisor's visitation and lack of visitation is associated with weakened field experiences. Training and alignment of institution course work for the mentor teacher can be weak or non-existent. Simpson (2006) described some trends in management of online field experiences to include residency experiences for preservice teachers, establishment of base schools for field sites, training for mentor teachers, and technology-enabled supervision and communication, but other questions arise about the effectiveness of the methods, and whether these technology-infused solutions will benefit all field experiences, not just online experiences. Alger and Kopcha (2009) described literature that documents the flaws of field experience, but state that there is not clear evidence to show that using technology can mend some of these issues.

Alger and Kopcha (2014, 2011, 2009) coined the term eSupervision to describe the use of web-based tools in face-to-face field experiences. Using Moodle, the authors added web-based instruction and assignment submission, discussion forums and chat rooms, resource documents, web cams for video conferencing, and a video recorder for preservice teachers to record themselves teaching a lesson. Although this study was conducted with preservice teachers in live courses, and the web-based material was used in addition to the physical presence of the field supervisor, Alger and Kopcha offered rich ideas that could be integrated into fully online field experiences.

LaParo et al. (2012) described the use of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) developed by Pianta, LaParo, and Hamre (2008) to assess preservice

teachers' ability to apply theory to practice authentically, using videotape of the preservice teachers to score teaching vignettes. CLASS has tested as reliable and valid as a tool to assess teacher's interaction with young children, and includes infant/toddler, preschool, and elementary versions. A pool of 91 preservice teachers over four years used videotaping and the preschool version of CLASS. Findings show strong agreement that the process of reviewing videos of themselves helped preservice teachers analyze, reflect, and learn from the experiences. It was also beneficial in helping preservice teachers learn to receive feedback and for instructors to use the CLASS results to design individual plans for preservice teacher improvement as well as using the data to drive overall course work improvements. Per LaParo et al. (2012), "Teaching is a complex enterprise…, [so] the use of video affords the opportunity to examine one or more specific areas and lessen that real-time complexity….increasing opportunities for reflection and construction of connections and future directions" (p. 225). Although this study (LaParo et al., 2012) focused on preservice teachers in face-to-face field experiences, it is an interesting concept to consider for online experiences as well. Productive and frequent reflection for preservice teachers using video in online experiences may have similar positive results as it did in this study.

Rosen et al. (2011) described the importance of integrating technology into field experiences because teachers need to be able to use these technologies, citing technology-literacy as an important part of successful participation in the digital age. Carrington et al.'s (2012) comparative case study integrated technology in relation to field experience

courses, using computer simulations with first year and final year preservice teachers in field experiences during a bachelor degree education program in Australia. This simulation software featuring role-playing of a Kindergarten teacher was presented to preservice teachers in a bachelor degree teacher education program, allowing them to make decisions about what was happening in the classroom. Preservice teachers used this simulation software for one hour in a lab situation, and then had access to the software throughout their preservice education. Findings showed that both first year and final year preservice teachers gained from the simulations, and that the final year preservice teachers did not have to rely on as much background material to be successful, indicating a higher level of identity as a teacher as they progressed through course work. Access to this type of software could enhance fully online field experiences as well, contributing to preservice teacher's confidence in their decision-making ability (Carrington et al., 2012). In 2013, Muir, Allen, Rayner, and Cleland (2013) conducted a pilot study using eight elementary preservice teachers. The research was based on a simulation program called Second Life. Findings included that the program was deficient in portraying all aspects of teaching pedagogy, but it did prove valuable according to the preservice teachers in helping them link theory to practice (2013).

Kaufman and Ireland (2016) described the use of several video simulation programs currently being used in preservice teacher education. They concluded that "simulations can serve as candidate assessment tools, provide opportunities to practice specific skills and interpersonal behaviors and help to develop dispositions to support

effective teaching" (p. 267). Specifically, simulations can supplement field experiences through preservice teacher practice of the "practice, feedback, reflection and repeated practice" (p. 267) model of these simulations.

Badiee and Kaufman (2014) researched the use of video simulations to enhance preservice teacher elementary and secondary education in Canada. Their computer program ClassSim, was designed to augment field experiences and the population included 22 preservice teachers. Although there were issues with the technological aspects of the program, Badiee and Kaufman's (2014) findings indicated that the simulation program was a useful tool for preservice teachers.

Fully online field experiences as a distinct phenomenon were not found in the literature studied by this researcher. However, the use of technology as a tool in field experience was a theme in the literature presented above. These studies illustrate ways that technology can aid in the supervision, observation and performance assessment, mentoring, communication and collaboration, and reflection in online field experiences.

Summary and Conclusions

A concise summary of this review begins with ECE teacher preparation and concludes with the niche of teaching field experiences in an online format. Major themes include quality, the triad model of field experience, the components of a field experience, and the use of technology to enhance field experiences. What is known stemming from this literature includes the fact that field experience is a critical component of ECE preservice teacher prep, that the current triad model has identified problems, and that

some literature shows the promise of using technology to enhance field experience. What is not known is how fully online field experiences are being implemented.

Studies of preservice teacher preparation for kindergarten through high school teacher education are abundant in the literature, but studies of ECE preservice education in two year colleges are sparse (Whitebook et al., 2009a), a gap in the literature. When viewing literature about ECE teacher preparation, it is not always generalizable to use data from K-12 studies, since the two fields have dissimilarities (Whitebook et al., 2009a). Some of these differences include the developmental differences of young children attending ECE programs, the differences in the programs (care giving as well as academic instruction), and the variety of program types available in the ECE sector (multi-age programs, center-based programs where children are separated by age, family child care, full day or half-day programs, etc.). In addition, the fact that in ECE there are many levels of education requirements for teachers in the field (community education, certification, two-year degrees, bachelor's degrees, etc.) is dissimilar to K-12 education.

Prior research focused on some aspects of field experience, but little research focused on the unique aspects from the instructor's perspective of fully online delivery of field experiences in ECE. This deficiency leaves a gap in that instructors are facilitating phenomena not yet studied. This study focused on understanding what instructors are currently doing to facilitate and supervise is the beginning point for future research about best practices in online field experiences. Reporting about what works and what is not

working, as well as describing different ways to facilitate online field experiences, is valuable information.

Rock et al. (2012) and Simpson (2006) agreed in their findings about how sparse the literature is on fully online field experiences. Most of the studies in this review focus on literature about field experiences in general. Cohen et al.'s 2013 meta-analysis studied 113 articles about field experience, but did not report any data related to whether the studies were live or online practicum experiences. This study added to the literature on the topic because data were gathered from the instructors who are actually facilitating online field experiences, rather than looking at the literature relating to traditional field experiences and applying these practices to online field experiences.

Some of the issues found in the literature can be summarized as follows: preservice teacher education research may or may not be generalizable with the elementary school preservice teacher research. Hyson et al. (2009) generalized that quality needs to be improved in preservice teacher education programs and that quality ECE preservice teacher education is linked to accredited degree programs and expansion of instructor's knowledge (Hyson et al., 2009), but it is still not clear exactly what constitutes quality. Whitebook et al. (2012) asserted that not enough comparison and contrast has occurred in order to generalize. "There is no accepted and agreed-upon standard for what constitutes a high-quality program of study for ECE practitioners" (p. 1). Whitebook et al. (2012) discussed four key dimensions (program content, clinical experiences, instructors' characteristics, and institutional contexts). Saracho's (2013) list

of components (recruitment and selection, general education, professional foundations, instructional knowledge, field experience, and program evaluation) differs from Whitebook et al. (2012). Because of these conflicting ideas about what constitutes quality preservice ECE teacher education, no assumptions about quality preservice teacher education were made in this study during data collection. Data collection and analysis focused on processes, procedures, and other ways instructors are currently facilitating online field experiences in degree programs.

By focusing on how online delivery of field experiences occurs, this interview study research provides a body of writing that can be applied by instructors teaching these online experiences, addressing a serious gap in the literature. Hyson et al.'s (2009) research included the instructor point of view, and concluded that instructors perceived great differences in ECE preservice teacher preparation programs, and therefore it is difficult to define what an effective program looks like. This revealed two gaps that this dissertation addressed. Part of the problem was that there is not a lot of research about the differences in ECE preservice teacher preparation, and this research clarified practices in regards to online facilitation of field experiences from the perspective of those interviewed. Other gaps this dissertation addressed are a disparity in research from the instructor's perspective, and lack of research at the two-year college level.

In Chapter 2 I focused on the literature themes of ECE preservice teacher education, ECE preservice teacher field experiences, and using an online platform to facilitate field experiences. A gap in the literature was established concerning online

facilitation of ECE field experiences. Other gaps identified included a lack of research from the ECE instructor point of view, and sparse research at the two-year college level. Chapter 3 follows with a discussion of the research methodology employed for this study, composed of the following five sections: research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, issues of trustworthiness, and chapter summary.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative interview study was to understand the processes, procedures, and experiences of instructors who were currently facilitating preservice online field experience courses. Understanding how instructors currently use constructivist practices to facilitate online delivery of field experiences was a focus during data analysis. When instructors share learning processes, procedures, and experiences that work for their online field experience, ECE professionals gain the ability to transfer these innovative ideas into their current practices to improve facilitation of online field experience courses.

Chapter 3 is organized into the following five sections that compose the research method for this study: research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, issues of trustworthiness, and chapter summary. The research design and rationale includes the research questions, central phenomenon, and a description of the research tradition along with a rationale that supports the design for this study. The role of the researcher focuses on what my role was during the study, followed by ethical considerations regarding this research. The methodology section includes logic for selecting participants, research protocol, data collection, and data analysis. Issues of trustworthiness are detailed next, focusing on qualitative credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, followed by a discussion of ethical procedures. A summary concludes this chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

The two research questions (RQs) addressed during this study were developed to investigate how online facilitation of ECE field experiences was currently being accomplished by college instructors in the United States.

RQ1: What are the processes, procedures, and experiences of instructors who facilitate online ECE field experiences?

RQ2: How are constructivist learning theories and best practices being incorporated into facilitation of online field experiences?

The central focus of this study was on online delivery of ECE preservice teacher preparation courses that involved practical application of knowledge and skills being learned by ECE preservice teachers in a classroom with young children. *Field experience* was used to refer to a number of these apprenticeship college experiences. These experiences are also referred to as *practicum*, *practice teaching*, *demonstration teaching*, or *student teaching*. The sample chosen included associate degree programs in which online field experience courses are offered. This sample was limited to degree programs that have national program accreditation from NAEYC, those in the process of becoming accredited, or those who embrace the ECADA standards (NAEYC, 2011) in their program outcomes. This helped ensure that quality programs were included in the sample, and that field experience was a required component of the degree program. NAEYC (2011) requires field experience as part of their ECADA accreditation process

and as part of their program standards. Themes emerged from comparison and contrast of data obtained from these programs about how field experiences are facilitated online.

The data collection technique chosen for this investigation was qualitative semistructured interview. The interview design was appropriate due to the inductive nature of the topic; this design helped me identify practices that were being used by instructors currently living the experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Although the participants came from diverse situations, online field experiences were the central focus of data collection, and this information was easily gathered in a relatively short period through semistructured interviews.

Triangulation, according to Denzin (1978), is "the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon" (p. 291). Triangulation was used to mitigate subjectivity of data analysis and strengthen the rationale for the qualitative interviewing methodology (Jonsen & Jen, 2009). I relied on "within-methods triangulation" (Jonsen & Jen, 2009, p. 126) consisting of multiple methods and data sources throughout the processes of method design, data collection, and data analysis (Jonsen & Jen, 2009). Methods of triangulation included the use of nine different settings where the participants worked, two interviews at intervals of 7 to 10 days instead of one interview per participant, and exploration of nine perspectives on the phenomenon. Data sources included the interview data and use of a research journal throughout the duration of the study.

According to Maxwell (2013), alignment of theory, approach, and methodology creates a cohesive conceptual framework. I used the conceptual framework for this study to embrace the issues, theories, and literature related to the topic. I chose the methods to complete the "how." I considered trustworthiness to examine ways to ensure accurate conclusions. Together, these items formed the study. Empirical inquiry that addressed experiences within their real-life context was used to capture the diverse practices to facilitate field experiences in online formats.

Role of the Researcher

My role in data collection was to locate a purposeful sample that because of the small field of potential participants could be generalized to the field of ECE preservice teacher preparation and to conduct semistructured interviews. I was the sole person who conducted the interviews. Therefore, I was an observer, not a participant, in the study.

Although I am an instructor in a community college ECE preservice teacher program, I had no personal relationships with participants chosen for this study. I knew some of the participants because I have worked at community colleges in three states. There were no inequitable power relationships involved in the study design.

I have taught and currently facilitate fully online field experiences. However, there was no judgment as to what constitutes quality online field experience facilitation; instead, I sought to mitigate personal bias by objectively exploring processes, procedures, and experiences of instructors currently facilitating online. I did not collect any data in

my personal work environment, so this was not an ethical concern. I employed transcript review, member checking, and my research journal to limit bias during this study.

Methodology

The methodology chosen for this study was qualitative interviewing using semistructured interviews. Per Rubin and Rubin (2012), interviewing is a naturalistic way to gather information from the source of the knowledge. The purpose of the study was to understand online field supervision from the perspective of those living the experience.

Participant Selection Logic

I used a purposeful sample because the participants needed to fit specific criteria: college instructors who teach online ECE field experience courses. This purposeful sampling strategy was based on Maxwell's (2013) five goals: (a) attaining representation and ordinary features of the sample, (b) sufficiently representing the sameness of the population, (c) deliberately selecting participants who could best answer the research questions, (d) determining comparisons of differences in participants, and (e) choosing participants who could best establish productive relationships with the researcher. All these criteria were met through the purposeful sample.

Because the population was defined as ECE instructors at a 2-year college who teach at least one fully online section of an ECE preservice teacher field experience course, I used purposeful sampling along with a snowballing technique to recruit nine participants. Bigger was not necessarily better in relation to the sample size, and balancing the five goals was central to the selection plan. I sought eight to ten participants

for the study, with the possibility of adding more if necessary for data saturation. This process resulted in a sample size of nine.

Diversity of sample helped me support the conclusion that people across different demographics respond similarly, making the findings more convincing. This fulfilled Maxwell's (2013) first goal. Sample diversity included the following factors: (a) region of the United States where the college is located (U.S. Census Bureau designated regions), (b) size of community population and college student population, (c) number of ECE preservice teachers currently enrolled in the program.

To establish that the programs had credibility regarding field experience supervision, I added a criterion that participants must come from programs that used the NAEYC (2011) ECADA standards for outcomes. Participants were chosen from associate degree programs that have NAEYC ECADA accreditation, those in the process of attaining this accreditation, or those who apply these program standards to their program outcomes. A list of accredited programs is available to verify those who were currently ECADA accredited (NAEYC, n.d.-b).

When recruiting the sample, I used a member-only LISTSERV from the nonprofit organization Associate Degree Early Childhood Teacher Educators – ACCESS to Shared Knowledge and Practice (ACCESS). I obtained permission from ACCESS to post my invitation for research participants on the ACCESS LISTSERV. Once potential participants responded, I obtained their informed consent. I also used a snowballing technique suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) to locate participants who qualified

for the study. Data saturation was met using the LISTSERV as an initial point of contact with potential participants, and snowballing to enlarge the sample size until a satisfactory sample of nine was attained.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation consisted of a researcher-designed interview protocol (Appendix A) used in association with digital audio recordings of the phone interviews, transcriptions of the data, and safekeeping of data. Transcribed data and audio recordings were housed on my password-protected personal computer with a daily backup to safeguard data. Additionally, cloud storage was used as an additional backup to ensure that data were not lost.

I piloted a first draft of the research questions when I completed an assignment for my advanced qualitative course, where students were asked to conduct mini interviews to test their research questions. RQ1 interview questions were effective and did not change much from the first draft. RQ2 interview questions required more revision. I observed that the people I asked about constructivism could not adequately describe how they embed constructivism. In the final draft of my interview questions, I scaffolded participants with questions about constructivism, including communication, collaboration, mentoring, and reflection. I followed these guided questions up with a final question addressing other ways participants embed constructivism in fully online field experience courses.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

An announcement to recruit participants was posted on the ACCESS LISTSERV. Snowballing was used to enlarge the pool of participants. A convenience sample of nine participants was chosen from those in qualifying programs who agreed to participate. I noted the following demographics as reflecting diversity: geographical location, program size, institution size, and institution location (urban/rural). Because diversity of participants was not fully possible from the pool of those responding (10 participants responded, and one was not able to complete interviews due to her demanding schedule), a convenience sample of nine respondents was used. This step satisfied Maxwell's (2013) third, fourth, and fifth goals: The convenience sample did find participants who could answer the research questions; Demographic data determined differences in participants sufficient to provide sample diversity; volunteer participants did establish productive relationships with the researcher.

I conducted and recorded two consecutive semistructured phone interviews of about 45-60 minutes per interview for each participant. Informed consent was obtained from each participant. Using an interview protocol as a basis for the interviews (Appendix A), transcription was completed by a commercial transcription company who signed a nondisclosure agreement. Verification of transcripts was completed when I listened to each recording and checked the accuracy of each transcript. Member checks were conducted to clarify answers after the interviews, allowing both the interviewer and interviewees to clarify answers. These important steps ruled out the possibility of

misinterpretation of the interviewee's perspectives and gave credibility to the conclusions. Debriefing and follow-up consisted of sending the transcriptions to each interviewee to verify that the contents were accurate. Interviewees had the opportunity to add to, or clarify any portion of the interview. I wrote field notes during the interviews, which were included as part of the research journal.

Transcribing included creating a full and accurate text copy of all the questions and answers (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Nonverbal events such as laughter were included as they influenced the interpretation of the data. Notable quotes were isolated when they summarized a key theme emerging. Each transcription included a summary of main points, details about time and place of interview, length of interview, and name of interviewee in order to identify each artifact.

Follow-up procedures were minimal, as there were no follow-up interviews. For incentive, $25.00 Amazon gift cards were presented to participants for their participation when they exited the study, upon completion of their second member check. A summary of the results of the study was sent to all participants after the dissertation was approved.

Data Analysis Plan

Rubin and Rubin (2012) described a seven-phase cycle for data-analysis that includes transcribing, coding, sorting, comparing and summarizing, integrating, generating conclusions, and generalizing the interview data. During coding and writing memos, words or phrases were identified to code ideas throughout the interview transcripts, as suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2012). Because this was inductive analysis,

the focus was on discovering various ideas, not trying to narrow down the ideas into lesser classifications. The research journal was used to clarify during the data analysis the process.

Sorting and resorting included gathering all references of each coded idea so the nuances about the idea could be viewed as a whole, reassembling coded data to discover evolving themes and patterns, and data were grouped by code (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Reassembling and disassembling was repeated numerous times during the process. The use of levels of codes helped to shape this assembly stage and reflecting on the research questions helped to guide the assembling of data (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Comparing and summarizing means looking for themes and patterns, and this was completed by the researcher manually through digital and paper copies of the transcriptions. Any discrepant cases were addressed in the data analysis by recognizing that facilitating online field experiences in any novel ways was significant data that became part of the conclusions. Combining occurred as a complete picture of the themes began to emerge.

According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), contiguity involves testing of concepts during analysis. This means you are connecting concepts, instead of focusing on finding similarities and differences in the responses. Again, novel ways to facilitate online field experiences were identified, even if they did not constitute a pattern or theme. Generating conclusions described writing about the identified themes and included figures and tables, as this was the central analytic section (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). It involved writing chapter 4 and 5, narratives inspired by all the elements of the conceptual framework into

the report of what the analysis conveyed about the topic. It was based solely on the data, not drawn from the literature (Rubin & Rubin, 2012), drawing overall conclusions and capturing the significance of the entire research work. Conclusions were directly related to interpretation of the data. Generalizations (key findings) were a result of these processes, a synthesis of the reassembled data (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness for this study was comprised of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described credibility as internal validity. Per Rubin and Rubin (2012), qualitative interviewing connects credible results to solid evidence within a tight context. I gathered evidence from knowledgeable individuals, and the questioning was based on first-hand knowledge of the phenomenon. By using confirmation and clarification probes during the interviews and by allowing interviewees the opportunity to review their answers and make revisions if necessary after the interviews, credibility was increased (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Within-methods triangulation (Jonsen & Jen, 2009) was also used to establish credibility by using multiple methods and data sources throughout the method design. Methods of triangulation included the use of nine different settings where the participants worked, completing two interviews at intervals of 7-10 days instead of one interview per participant, and documenting nine perspectives on the phenomenon. I kept the time between interview one and two at a minimum so the information was still fresh in the interviewee's

memory. Data sources included the interview data, and use of a research journal throughout the duration of the study.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) equate transferability with external validity and describe it as applicability in different contexts. Because the interviewees were instructors at the colleges where the field experiences occurred, the data were credible, and this aspect increased the possibility of transferability. A purposeful sample and rich descriptions were built in to strengthen transferability. The measure of transferability ultimately lies within the readers who decide if the study has truth that can be applied to their contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The subjects of this study were instructors who teach online field experiences, and the likely readers will be instructors teaching online field experience, establishing similar conditions for applicability.

Dependability is equated with reliability or consistency in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). How the researcher arrived at the results is one aspect of this concept. An audit trail consisted of detailed journaling of my thoughts and actions throughout the research process to establish this segment of dependability. Stability and change are subjective in qualitative research, as the phenomenon is typically not stagnant. Although some instructors may teach the same course the same way for multiple years, it is more typical for course work to change based on the positive and negative experiences of the instructor. Capturing what works and what does not work regarding the phenomenon for each participant at a particular time established dependability within that space and time.

Confirmability is related to researcher's role and ability to mitigate bias. Considering my role as researcher is one way to boost confirmability (Rubin & Rubin 2012). I am a member of the group I interviewed because I currently teach online field experiences at a community college. This helped me cross boundaries during the interviews because of professional camaraderie, but I needed to be continually aware that my experiences could cloud the process. To mitigate the possibility of bias, self-reflection about this was included in the research journal.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical concerns were addressed through informed consent and approval of the Walden University IRB for use of human subjects in my research. Walden University's IRB approval number for this study is 06-23-16-0231635a and it expires on June 22, 2017. This process included obtaining agreements to gain access to participants or data through IRB application, treatment of human participants, and treatment of data. The recruitment process began after IRB approval and consisted of first obtaining a letter of cooperation from an early childhood professional organization that serves two-year colleges called ACCESS, and then recruiting participants using ACCESS' member LISTSERV. No ethical issues were found during this recruitment process.

Treatment of human subjects was based on the fact that there were no vulnerable populations represented in the sample. There was no power differential within the interview plan since the population did not include my coworkers, and I am an ECE instructor at a two-year college just as my participants were. Participants had the ability

to withdraw from the study at any time, and participation was voluntary. For incentive, $25.00 Amazon gift cards were presented to participants for their participation after the second member check was complete. No ethical issues such as withdrawing from the study occurred.

Treatment of data specified that data reported publically included the use of pseudonyms to protect confidentiality. Protection of confidential data included secure computer data storage and backup storage, with password protection and passwords accessible only to me. Data will be kept for a period of five years because future research may be based on this initial study; it may be important to reference the original data for a prolonged period.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I outlined the research design and methodology of this research study, along with a rationale for the design. My role as a researcher was also addressed. Participant selection culminated with a sample of nine instructors who were currently facilitating online ECE field experiences across the United States at the time of the study. Semistructured interviews were the method of instrumentation. The procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection were outlined. The interviews were recorded using digital audio recording technology. Transcript review and member checks occurred after the interviews were transcribed by an Internet-based transcription company. Data analysis was based on Rubin and Rubin's seven-stage cycle (2012). Trustworthiness was sought through application of Merriam and Tisdell's (2016)

principles concerning validity and reliability, which were summarized in the paragraphs above discussing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Ethical procedures followed Walden University's IRB guidelines and this study was approved with an expiration date of June 22, 2017. Chapter four follows with thorough reporting of the results from the data collection and analysis, including research questions, setting, demographics, data collected, data analysis, trustworthiness, results, and summary.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative interview study was to understand the processes, procedures, and experiences of instructors who facilitate preservice teachers in online field experience. The population studied included nine instructors who currently teach online field experiences in associate degree level college programs in the United States. My aim in answering RQ1 was to gather the current processes, procedures, and experiences from instructors who facilitate online ECE field experiences. For RQ2, I focused on how constructivist learning theories and best practices were being incorporated into facilitation of online field experiences. Chapter 4 presents the results of this study, including my narrative and tables, and includes the following sections: research questions, setting, demographics, data collected, data analysis, trustworthiness, results, and summary.

Setting

My population consisted of a purposeful sample of nine ECE college instructors who taught at least one fully online field experience when they were interviewed. Eight of these instructors were full-time faculty at 2-year colleges throughout the United States, and one was at a 4-year university that also offers an associate's (2-year) degree. All nine participants were able to complete the steps outlined in Chapter 3. Originally I had 10 participants, but one dropped out because she was amid submitting ECADA accreditation paperwork and felt she did not have the time to commit to my study. I used my research journal to make tables of these demographics to organize details about each participant

and become familiar with the characteristics of each location, college, and degree program. This demographic data and the tables aided in my data analysis. To my knowledge, there were no personal or organizational circumstances that influenced participants or their experience at the time of study and that could have influenced my interpretation of the study results.

Demographics

The convenience sample of nine participants in this study included college and university faculty who teach at least one online section of an early childhood field experience course at the associate degree level. All of the participants were women. The regions where the participants live were varied: Five participants were from the Midwest, two were from the South, one was from the West, and one was from the Northeast. The population of the counties in which these colleges were located ranged from a rural population of 29,000 to a college in a suburb of a major city with a population of 395,000. Demographic information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographics of Participants

Instructor Pseudonym	College Population	# of ECE Preservice Teachers	Field Site Hours	ECADA Status	Field Site Qualifications	Mentor Teacher Qualifications
Ann	47,450	100	200	Accredited	State license with no violations	AA preferred, but not required
Bev	32,000	316	360	No	QRS based; will work with family childcare	Degree / Experience Combination
Cate	13,000	80	300	No	QRS is new in the state, so not yet part of qualifications/ accredited preferred	State licensed as director
Deb (A.A.S.)	7,000	50 total of A.A.S. and A.S.	132	Accredited	State licensed – accredited preferred; no family childcare	Degree / Experience Combination
Deb (A.S.)	See above	See above	462	See above	See above	See above
Elle	5,700	214	100	Accredited	QRS based / Approved List of Sites	Approved Mentor List
Fay	5,000	25	120	Accredited	QRS based	ECE Degree
Gwen	1,500	65	225	In process	QRS based	Not enough degreed teachers in the area, so based on QRS too.
Hope	21,000	208	420	In process	QRS based	Degree / Experience Combination
Ivy	2,000	140	310	Accredited	QRS based; allows family childcare	AS or better

Eight instructors represented colleges or universities, but Ann worked for a statewide online college consortium. Within the consortium, 15 feeder colleges participate, and the consortium served 47,500 preservice teachers last year. The college sizes of the other eight participants ranged from a rural college with only 1,500 students to larger colleges in the suburbs of major cities. The largest student population was 32,000. All except Deb's school were on a semester system.

Ann's online consortium was an interesting demographic. Each of the 15 feeder colleges awards degrees, and the consortium offers classes that are transferrable to all member institutions. Everyone but Fay worked for 2-year community/technical colleges; Fay worked at a state university, but it offered a 2-year early childhood degree in addition to higher-level degrees. All of the participant colleges offer ECE degrees of A.A.S., A.S., or both. The size of the ECE preservice teacher population at the programs was an average of 133 preservice teachers, with the highest number of ECE preservice teachers at 316 and the lowest at 25.

The ECADA accreditation status of the participants was relevant as an indicator that the ECE degree included field experience and that it embraced the accreditation standards related to field experience. Within Ann's online consortium, nine of the 15 colleges were ECADA accredited, including the college where Ann was based. Of the other participants, four were currently accredited, two were in the self-study process of submitting the accreditation report, and two were not currently accredited.

All participants stated that their programs offer online field experience course work. Six of the programs offer fully online ECE degrees. The other three schools offer a combination of live, hybrid, and online course work. The learning management system for online course work most often used was Desire 2 Learn (four colleges). Two colleges use BlackBoard, and three use Canvas, eRacer, or Moodle. Although all the participants stated their programs offer fully online field experiences when they agreed to participate in this study, three actually require limited face-to-face time during the course. Elle's program requires biweekly seminars and an orientation for preservice teachers, and Ivy's program requires a live orientation for mentor teachers and preservice teachers. Cate described a live orientation for preservice teachers who live in the area, and she reported that she follows up using chat with the preservice teachers who are not in the local area.

The number of field experience hours required of the preservice teachers varied by program. The shortest requirement was 100 hours in an ECE classroom over the course of the associate degree program. The longest was 462 hours. The average number of hours for preservice teachers in a field experience was 263. Fay described a unique procedure in which the field hours are concentrated into three or four weeks instead of spread out throughout the term.

The regulations used to determine qualification as a field site (early childhood classroom where the preservice teacher completes the field hours) were also varied, but seven programs used the state's Quality Rating System (QRS) as the basis for field site qualification, with 3 stars or the equivalent the minimum requirement for qualification.

Ann and Deb were requiring state licensing, but not relying on their states' QRS systems. However, Ann checked to be sure there were no licensing violations on record for field sites. Elle's program allowed preservice teachers to use approved sites only within the college district; no out-of-district preservice teachers were accepted into her degree program. Bev occasionally used videotaping or a field supervisor from the preservice teacher's area to complete observation/performance assessment, but completed most of the site observation visits herself. The qualifications for mentor teacher varied as well, but most included a combination of earned degrees and experience in ECE. Everyone preferred the mentor teacher had an ECE Associate's Degree or better, but most stated this was not always possible, so sometimes mentor teachers were approved on a case-by-case basis.

Deb stated her program did not allow family childcare as field sites, as there was not someone to supervise and mentor the preservice teacher. The seven ECADA sites all required that field experiences take place in at least two different age settings, so the same classroom could not be used for all of the required field experiences. Gwen's program encouraged preservice teachers to use multiple sites during each field experience so preservice teachers could see the diversity of programs available in their area and actively look for what does and does not represent quality within each site. The requirement for moving from site to site presented challenges in locating quality facilities. However, Ivy stated that all the centers in her county met the minimum 3-star requirement, so quality of field site was not an issue for her preservice teachers. Ivy's

program also allowed the use of family childcare as field sites, using Child Care Resource and Referral employees or directors from other programs as mentor teachers. The preservice teachers and family childcare providers met with their assigned mentor once per week. Bev described individualizing the assignments and requirements to meet the needs of family childcare providers.

Demographics of the preservice teachers, as reported by participants, included many living in rural areas. Participants also reported a high percentage of preservice teachers who were not technically preservice because they worked in the ECE field already and needed to earn their degree for their job. Participants also described a higher percentage of preservice teachers living in low-income households than students in other programs at their colleges.

Data Collection

Nine college instructors participated in two semistructured interviews that lasted approximately one hour each. The time between the two interviews for each participant was kept short (most interviews were about a week apart) as part of the credibility process to keep what was said fresh in my memory and that of the participant. This was accomplished with everyone but Cate, who was on vacation between the two interviews, resulting in additional weeks between the interviews. The telephone interviews were recorded digitally using a digital recorder as the main device and an iPad app as a backup in case of technology failure.

There were no unusual circumstances encountered in the data collection process, and the only variation in data collection from what was expected related to participant requirements. Originally, I had intended to choose participants from programs that were currently accredited by ECADA. However, I was not able to obtain a sufficient sample with this criterion, so I changed the requirement from currently accredited to currently accredited, in the process of becoming accredited, or embracing the ECADA standards (NAEYC, 2011) as part of their degree outcomes.

The data collection process began with obtaining a letter of cooperation from ACCESS, an early childhood professional organization that serves 2-year colleges. ACCESS granted me permission to recruit participants using their member LISTSERV. Following IRB approval from Walden University, I sent a LISTSERV-based recruitment invitation to instructors who met the inclusion criteria for the study. I reposted the invitation once. The first 10 teachers who fit the criteria were accepted, and nine returned signed consent forms to me. Next, I scheduled and conducted recorded telephone interviews during the summer of 2016. I used two digital audio-recording devices for each interview and an Internet-based transcription company called Vanan Services, from whom I obtained a nondisclosure agreement, to transcribe the data. I checked the transcribed data using the original recordings to confirm accuracy. Inaccuracies were corrected based on my understanding of the interview responses, and I sent participants copies of transcripts via email for checking. Several participants made corrections and clarifications to the transcript. There were a few phrases difficult to transcribe, and the

participants clarified these sections. All participants were given the opportunity to check their transcripts, and all but two of the 18 interviews were returned with comments.

Data Analysis

Rubin and Rubin (2012) described a 7-phase cycle for data analysis, which I used to analyze my data. The steps included transcribing, coding, sorting, comparing and summarizing, integrating, generating conclusions, and generalizing. The transcription process was described in the previous section. During coding, words or phrases were identified to code ideas from the interview transcripts, as suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2012). Because this was inductive analysis, the focus was on discovering various ideas, not trying to narrow down the ideas. One overarching theme, constructivist practices, was interwoven throughout the data. Words and phrases pertinent to RQ1 included *online components*, *processes*, *procedures*, *supervision*, *observation*, *performance assessment*, *innovations* (successes), and *road blocks* (challenges). When documenting findings for RQ1 in my research journal, I noted that each of the nine participants reported that they had thoughtfully planned for successful facilitation of online field experiences. Words and phrases identified as pertinent to RQ 2 included communication, mentoring, collaboration, reflection, and other constructivist aspects. My research journal described my impressions of these words and phrases, and my overall impressions of the responses to RQ 2 were that all nine instructors conveyed a sense of competency in their understanding of constructivism, and all felt they were embedding constructivist practices into their facilitation of online field experiences. To guide the participants into thinking

about constructivist practices that could be present in their facilitation of online field experience, the interview questions for RQ 2 were divided in questions about communication, collaboration, mentoring, and reflection, all aspects identified as constructivist in the conceptual framework. This was followed by a final interview question asking them to describe other constructivist aspects of their facilitation. See Appendix A for the interview protocol.

Sorting and resorting included gathering all references of each coded idea so the nuances about the idea could be viewed as a whole, reassembling coded data to discover evolving themes and patterns. Data were then grouped by code (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) and how they related to the two research questions. Reassembling and disassembling was repeated numerous times during the process. The use of levels of codes helped to shape this assembly stage and reflecting on the research questions helped to guide the assembling of data (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Major inductive coded units consisted of the following concepts: Processes and procedures, live versus online facilitation, roadblocks / challenges, successes / innovations, and constructivist aspects. Concepts, coding, and themes are outlined below in Table 2.

Table 2

Concepts, Coding, and Themes

Concepts	Code Words	*Themes*
Processes/ Procedures	Process; procedure; discussions; online modules; corrective action; communication; progression of field experience within degree program.	*Online Components*
	Supervision; mentor teacher presence; lab school.	
	Videotaping; site visits; live streaming platforms (Skype).	*Performance Assessment*
Live versus online facilitation	Online facilitation parity with live facilitation; need for online facilitation; preference for live facilitation.	*Parity*
Roadblocks / Challenges	Roadblock; challenge; technical issues; site approval procedures; cheating; instructor/preservice teacher relationships; observation issues.	*Roadblocks*
Successes / Innovations	Successes; innovations; completion rate; quality improvement in local childcare; videotaping; online materials; communication procedures.	*Innovations*
Constructivist Aspects	Open / closed communication	*Communication*
	1 way / 2 way / 3 way communication	
	Instructor mentoring	*Mentoring*
	Mentor teacher mentoring	
	Peer mentoring	
	3 way collaboration	*Collaboration*
	Instructor / mentor collaboration	
	Instructor/ preservice teacher collaboration	
	Peer collaboration	
	Self-reflection	*Reflection*
	Reflective journaling	
	Embedded, intentional	
	Self-assessment	
	Individualization	

Themes that emerged through data analysis include *Online Components, Performance Assessment, Parity Across Experiences, Roadblocks, Innovations, Communication, Mentoring, Collaboration,* and *Reflection*.

The research process included documenting the coding process using colored markers that I used to highlight and make notes within the paper copies of the transcriptions. Color-coding by units was the way I was able to isolate the individual responses to each of the code words. The notes in the margins were part of my researcher journaling effort, and these highlights and notes were further analyzed when this information was added to a document that separated responses by theme.

Comparing and summarizing means looking for themes and patterns. I manually worked through digital and paper copies of the transcriptions to complete these processes. Digital copies allowed me to search each transcript for code words using Microsoft Word's search feature. Paper copies were the most successful, as color-coding the units and themes were most effective for me. Major concepts that were present in the interviews pertinent to RQ 1 included processes and procedure unique to online facilitation, the degree that live field experiences and online field experiences were equitable, challenges faced by online facilitation, and innovations that helped make the experiences work for the interviewees. Major concepts that were present in the interviews pertinent to RQ 2 included ways the triad communicated, how collaboration was or was not embedded, how mentoring the preservice teacher was accomplished, and other ways constructivist teaching aspects were embedded in online facilitation of field experiences.

Patterns, defined as responses that were repeated in the data were included. All nine identified the relational aspect between the instructor and the preservice teacher as a roadblock in online field experiences for RQ 1. Another repeated response to RQ 1 was the fact that Gwen and Hope stated they had concerns that when fully online, preservice teachers may be cheating by not completing the work themselves. Hope stated that a capstone final project deterred cheating because, "it's going to catch up with them when they do their capstone final projects…That's when they have to kind of prove themselves, and they're interviewed, live by a person, and I think if they can't keep up with that, they're going to fail."

Discrepant cases were addressed in the data analysis by recognizing that facilitating online field experiences in any novel way was significant. Therefore, no discrepant cases needed to be addressed as such, and all cases contributed to the conclusions of the study. A novel (discrepant) response for facilitating online field experiences was that only one respondent stated there was not equity in how online and live field experiences were facilitated. This instructor stated that preservice teachers participating in face-to-face field experiences were visited eight to ten times by the instructor for observation, mentoring, and performance assessment during a semester; however, in the online field experiences, there were no instructor visits, and no procedures such as videotaping were used to take the place of these visits.

The report process I used to move inductively from coded units to larger representations included using the concepts and themes described above and integrating,

or combining them in relation to the two research questions. This occurred as a complete picture of the themes began to emerge. My research journal documented integrating by me summarizing the notes I was writing in the margins of the paper copies of the transcripts.

Instructors teaching online ECE field experiences shared multiple ways they planned and executed processes and procedures. According to Deb, the process is in-depth, and "we start reaching out to them about a month before the term starts." She uses a formal process for ongoing email, phone, and Skype conversations throughout the field experience. There was also an intentional attempt to make live and online field experiences equitable in eight of the interviewees' data. Although some of the participants are only teaching online field experiences currently, only one has never taught field experiences live at some time in their careers. All instructors described constructivist practices intentionally included in facilitation of online field experiences creating themes and patterns for RQ 2. Per Bev,

> I've really designed [field assignments] with an eye towards the student constructing their skills in, in each of the goals and competencies of the course… Every assignment builds on the one before and it's going to help you learn how to do something… Then they reflect… [and receive] feedback So I see everything, all these activities they do within those courses, as very intentionally constructive in terms of building on the prior knowledge, practicing, and reinforcing it.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

According to Rubin and Rubin (2012) qualitative interviewing connects credible results to solid evidence within a tight context. I obtained evidence from knowledgeable individuals and the questioning of instructors was based on their first-hand knowledge of the phenomenon. I also increased credibility by using confirmation and clarification probes during the interviews, and allowing interviewees the opportunity to review their answers and make revisions or clarifications after the interviews, (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

The purposeful sample of instructors who currently teach online field experiences from varied settings throughout the United States strengthened transferability. Conducting two in-depth interviews per instructor resulted in rich description that strengthened transferability. The measure of transferability ultimately lies within the reader; he or she decides if the study has truth that can be applied to their context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The subjects of this study are instructors who teach online field experiences, and the likely readers of these findings will also be instructors teaching online field experience, establishing similar conditions for applicability.

Member checking and transcript review were important steps in maintaining the dependability of my research. I sent the transcripts to a commercial transcription service, but carefully verified them myself by listening to the recordings and checking for accuracy for each of the 18 transcripts. Each participant was sent copies of their two transcripts to check for accuracy from their perspective. How I arrived at the results is another aspect of dependability. An audit trail consisted of detailed journaling of my

thoughts and actions throughout the research process to further establish dependability. These thoughts are documented in the section above as I described the use of my research journal. Stability and change are subjective in qualitative research, as the phenomenon is typically not stagnant. Although some instructors may teach the same course the same way for multiple years, it is more typical for course work to change based on the positive and negative experiences of the instructor. Capturing what works and what does not work for each participant at a particular time establishes dependability within that space and time, and I was able to do that in the interviews that were recorded.

Confirmability is related to the researcher's role and ability to mitigate bias. Considering my role as researcher was one way to boost confirmability (Rubin & Rubin 2012). I am a member of the group I interviewed, as I also teach fully online field experience course work. This background knowledge helped me cross boundaries during the interviews because of camaraderie, and although I did not share my practices related to the topic during the interviews, my knowledge of practices helped me develop clarification probes for questions during the interviews. Self-reflection about bias was also included in the research journal. Using constructivism as a conceptual framework kept the interview questions cohesive and helped in establishing confirmability.

Results

The results from the interviews with nine participants are summarized below by research question. Coded words and phrases as well as themes that emerged are included in the two sections below. Quotes from the interview transcripts are used to illustrate the

results. RQ 1 focused on processes, procedures, and experiences of instructors who facilitate online ECE field experiences, and RQ 1 was the focus of interview one. A significant finding was that indeed these nine instructors felt they were successful in facilitating field experiences online. Other findings include parity between online and live field experiences reported by eight out of nine interviewed. The focus of RQ 2 was how constructivist practices were being incorporated into facilitation of online field experiences, and this was the focus of interview two.

Research Question 1: Facilitation of Online Field Experiences

Six major themes emerged through data analysis that relate to RQ 1. They include *online components, observation/performance assessment, parity, roadblocks,* and *innovations.* The constructivist themes of *communication*, *mentoring, collaboration,* and *reflection* were also reflected within the 6 major themes relating to RQ 1. The themes, concepts, and coding are outlined in Table 2.

Online components. O*nline components* for facilitating online field experiences, included dialogues about how specific modules were set up online to take the place of forms and other materials distributed to preservice teachers in live field experiences. Weekly discussions were used by all of those interviewed. Cate and Deb stated they had a formalized procedure including a corrective action plan when problems arose during field experiences to help the preservice teachers; this plan could include additional supervision, observation, or videos. Others described informal processes for these issues. Deb also described a formal process of structured email and telephone communication

between the instructor and mentor teacher to replace live communication. In addition, Deb used a process for email, telephone, and Skype communication with all preservice teachers three times per term. However, none of Deb's meetings included all three members of the triad together.

Variety in the way field experiences are offered was a finding. Six instructors outlined a progression of field experiences that were managed through the use of course pre-requisites. These instructors described the final field experience as a capstone experience that takes place during the end of the degree program. Cate uses a process where preservice teachers are evaluated prior to being allowed to take the first field experience course. A "conduct and disposition indicator" scored on a Likert Scale was part of a process that included pre-requisite course work and an interview with the field experience instructor. Ivy described the use of approximately 15 field experience hours embedded in ten courses in addition to the field experience courses. Elle stated that all field experience candidates were drug tested prior to being allowed to participate in field experience course work.

The online components relating to supervision were not identified as an integral part of any of the participants' field experiences, because those interviewed either stated or inferred that these experiences did not occur at laboratory schools with full-time paid supervisors, so there was not quality control on what happened during the field hours. However, several stated that the mentor teacher was required to be in the classroom at all times, and Hope, Cate, and Ivy stated that no volunteer preservice teachers were allowed

to be alone with children; these rules did not apply to those preservice teachers who were employed by the field site. Two instructors stated they asked the mentor teacher to observe the preservice teacher and agree to complete other mentoring, supervising, and assessment tasks, but no paperwork was collected so there is no way to tell if this occurred. Cate stated that the process of having the mentor teacher sign off on journal entries was a form of supervision, but there was no way to verify the quantity and quality of supervision. However, because they were required to never be alone with children, the preservice teachers had constant supervision.

Elle stated that even if preservice teachers were working full time in the field, they could not use their own workplace as their field site. This program did have access to scholarship funds that paid for substitutes so the working preservice teachers did not lose their jobs in order to complete field experience requirements off their worksite. Bev allows preservice teachers to use their workplace for one of the four practicums in her program, but will often work with preservice teachers allowing them to do up to half the hours required in other practicums in their worksites. The other eight programs allowed the use of work sites as field sites. Cate stated they can use their workplace, but must not be paid for the hours that are used for practicum. Theme two follows with a discussion of observation / performance assessment during online ECE preservice teacher field experiences.

Observation/performance assessment. Theme three, *observation* and *performance assessment* were considered an integrated process for all the participants,

producing an integrated report in these results and in the findings. All but Cate and Fay described having preservice teachers submit videos of them teaching in the field site with instructor assessment of the videos along with written feedback on the preservice teacher's performance. Bev, Elle, Gwen, and Ivy were able to conduct site visits of their preservice teachers in field sites each term, creating a traditional triad model (Cohen, et al., 2013) for an online course. The average number of times preservice teacher observation and performance assessments occurred by instructors (either through site visits or video tapes) was three. The interviewees described a combination of qualitative and quantitative questions for performance assessment of preservice teachers by instructors. Four instructors use the CLASS tool (Pianta, et al., 2008) as part of the assessment process of preservice teacher performance.

Mixed responses about how observation/performance assessment was accomplished included live site visits, videotapes, and the use of course assignments to assess performance of the preservice teacher. Ivy described a process where a 2 1/2-hour visit occurs three times per term, and the preservice teacher is videotaped while the instructor is there. After the video is complete, the instructor and preservice teacher sit down and review the video together. Deb described an in-depth process of giving preservice teachers specific feedback on their videos, including the use of time prompts to direct preservice teachers to feedback concerning their specific interactions in the videos. Elle stated that the first live observation/assessment visit was unannounced. Cate,

Elle, and Ivy described that part of performance assessment focused on professional behaviors and soft skills such as dress code, punctuality, engagement with children, etc.

All nine participants described that the mentor teacher was part of the preservice teacher performance assessment using rubrics provided by the instructor. The interviewees described a combination of qualitative and quantitative questions for performance assessment of preservice teachers by mentor teachers. Most performance assessments by the mentor teacher occurred twice per term, at the middle and the end of the field hours. Bev described the mentor teacher completing varied performance assessments related to specific field assignments within each field experience course. All described assessment based on a combination of the CLASS tool (Pianta et al., 2008), course outcomes, state ECE competencies or skill standards, employability skills, NAEYC standards, or ECE industry standards. Deb takes a rigorous approach to performance assessment using the CLASS tool, and stated that what occurs is "norming from a sort of program perspective and the CLASS outcomes perspective. Is this what a first-year student teacher looks like? Is this what a second-year teacher looks like? …that's an ongoing process."

Most participants did not hire clinical or field supervisors for observation or assessment, except on rare occasions when it was necessary four instructors hired an observer. Per Bev, "I wouldn't call this a clinical supervisor, as this is not an ongoing relationship the observer has with the practicum preservice teacher. It is usually a one-time visit from this observer."

Four participants stated that preservice teachers completed guided observations of children, and these assignments were considered part of the preservice teacher's performance assessment. Bev also has adopted employability skills and the evaluation of these skills by both the instructor and mentor teacher were 25% of each preservice teacher's grade. Cate stated that her grading of preservice teacher journals was the sole means of instructor evaluation of the preservice teacher's performance during field experiences. Fay described the use of artifacts "their assignments, their lesson plans, [and] their reflections" as the means of assessing preservice teacher performance. Preservice teacher self-assessment was part of the performance assessment for most of the interviewees as well. Participants reported journal writing, completing self-assessment rubrics, and the discussion forum as ways preservice teachers complete self-assessment.

Most participants indicated that *videotaping* (theme four) was used at some point in the field experience, but Cate and Fay did not use videotaping as part of their observation / performance assessment procedure. Cate stated that instructor observation is not part of either live or online field experiences at their college, but she did call the field sites once per term to check in, and the preservice teachers submit a journal outlining their progress in the field site. Cate was also contemplating the use of videotapes in the future. Bev, Elle, Gwen, Hope, and Ivy used live instructor visits for preservice teacher performance assessment. Elle and Ivy accomplished this by only accepting preservice teachers within their college district, and arranging time for

instructors to make three visits per preservice teacher, per term, and Bev occasionally used video tape or a field supervisor in an area where the preservice teacher was located when distance would not allow an instructor to complete the observations. Hope's and Ivy's programs required videotaping for preservice teachers to complete self-assessment of their work in addition to the live instructor visits. In addition to live observation/ performance assessments, Elle also does not allow preservice teachers to use their work sites as field sites, and requires that field experiences hours be completed in approved sites during approved hours on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings to make instructor visits more easily facilitated. Elle stated that if there was a conflict in completing live visits, preservice teachers were asked to send videotapes, but this was a rare situation, and never were all three observations conducted through videotape. Ivy, who facilitates instructor live observations, requires preservice teachers to complete videotapes in addition to live visits for inclusion in an education portfolio they develop throughout their degree program.

All participants that used videotaping stated that preservice teachers mostly used laptops, smart phones, or tablets for videotaping. Elle's program purchased eight iPads that preservice teachers checked out for completing videos. None stated that video-recording technology was a significant roadblock, stating that the preservice teachers were familiar with video technology. Deb described occasionally using Skype for real time observations, but no one described consistently using technology for web-based real-time observation and assessment.

Sharing videos with the instructors was accomplished using YouTube, Google Drive, and texting between cell phones, cloud platforms, or the use of paid subscription services for data sharing. Four participants expressed skepticism noted about the use of social media such as YouTube for sharing videos due to perceived privacy concerns, even if they were on a private channel. You Tube privacy concerns led to Deb's college to begin using a college-wide cloud based storage system. Ivy's college uses TaskStream, which requires preservice teachers to purchase a subscription, for video sharing as well as portfolio artifact collection. Another issue related to videotaping was that some ECE classrooms did not allow videotaping of children. In Ann's program, that meant preservice teachers had a main field site, typically their work site, and used another site on a limited basis in order to have a site to complete videotaping. Deb surmounts this issue by having each parent in the classroom sign a video permission form. Recorded videotapes were seen as a working solution to live observation and assessment by those who utilize this method, but there was consensus that video did not fully replace the old triad model of real time feedback. The next section describes theme three, *parity in live and online facilitation of field experiences*.

Parity. *Parity* of live and online field experiences concerning performance assessment was achieved in the opinion of eight interviewees. The exception to this parity was with Fay, who stated that live field experiences have weekly site visits for observation/performance assessment from the instructor; online field experiences currently have no instructor observations or performance assessment. The other eight

described that either the same number of site visits for observation / performance assessment occurred in both live and online field experiences, or that the same number of videos replaced the instructor site visits for fully online field experiences. Theme four follows with discussion of *roadblocks* and challenges identified by those interviewed.

Roadblocks. Data gathered relating to *roadblocks* in facilitating field experience online included the difficulties relating to not having personal contact with preservice teachers, difficulties with observation and performance assessment due to the fully online format, and technical difficulties. Most instructors described the following roadblocks: arranging field site approval at a distance and finding quality sites. Elle stated that is why they use an approved list of six childcares and five public schools. Each of these approved sites takes two or three preservice teachers each. Cate said, "I can call the center and I can make sure they're licensed, and I can check to see if they follow NAEYC accreditation; but I can't fly to California. I'm hoping they're getting a positive experience, but I don't honestly know."

Facilitating observation and performance assessment of preservice teachers, and supervision were also identified as challenges. Per Deb, "the mentor teacher signs off on a lot of statements about how they are going to do things. I don't know to what extent that is being done." She described the difference by comparison to a traditional triad model lab school set up specifically to mentor preservice teachers. Under this comparison, the field sites used do not offer the same level of support: mentoring preservice teachers as part of their job descriptions results in more time being spent

mentoring. The use of observation rooms and instructors typically onsite are also not present during online field experiences. Bev described that mentor teachers did not always submit performance assessments, so they had to make it worth only minimal points towards the preservice teacher's grade. She also stated it was a roadblock to not know the skill level of the mentor teachers.

The most often described challenge was related to the instructor/preservice teacher relationship within an online format. Instructors described not having the same relationship as face-to-face interaction with preservice teachers because of no face-to-face component. Many felt the discussion forum and email were attempts to form the relationship. Other issues related to online field experience course work were related to the online classroom. Ann said, "I create those mini videos and it does seem to feel like I'm more invested in them, and so I have a better understanding what their struggles are." Technical difficulties, ADA compliance in online materials, and copyright permissions were obstacles. Elle described the difficulty of accommodating preservice teachers with disabilities such as dyslexia or autism in online formats. Instruction style was described as a challenge by Gwen. "Humor can sometimes be misconstrued by an online recipient as being sarcasm, or not actually understood as pure humor. So, figuring out a way to make my online class personable is very important to me."

Two instructors described the possibility of cheating because of the online factor as a roadblock. Ivy described that the rigor of the courses within the program will sometimes "weed out" preservice teachers who would not be successful in field

experiences. Hope's program included a capstone project and interview process where any preservice teacher she believed did not complete the work would not pass this capstone. *Innovations*, theme five, is the next section of data reporting.

Innovations. *Innovations* were reported by all nine participants along with successes they achieved. Seven instructors reported successful use of videotaping as an effective innovation. Others reported innovations included training, socialization, and lab support for mentor teachers. Cate described a robust section of the online course materials related to ECE resources and job recruitments from the area as a successful innovation. Cate also described using a Facebook page for each cohort of preservice teachers as an innovation to facilitate communication and mentoring. Deb's college has a Skype tutoring process for technology help.

Five instructors reported successful facilitation with higher completion rates and better access for preservice teachers through the use of online field experiences. Three described their field experience component as directly related to improving quality in local care and education of young children. Gwen stated that, "My ultimate mission, is to improve quality of early childhood care… so [online facilitation] is allowing more people that freedom to go back to get higher ed certification and training, which of course will trickle down to quality [improvement]." Frequency of preservice teachers being hired by the place they completed their field experiences was reported by three instructors, stating this demonstrated the success of their field experience facilitation. Bev reported that she has been creating a network of placement sites and mentor teachers based on positive

outcomes with preservice teachers. The final theme, *overall opinion of live versus online facilitation* concludes the discussion of data for RQ 1.

Live versus online facilitation. The final question asked of the interviewees was their overall opinion of *live versus online facilitation* in general. They all described a preference for live facilitation. They also described the importance of offering online field experiences, in order to give access to students who work full time, or have other commitments that preclude them from participating in live facilitation of field experiences. More than one participant stated that the percentage of preservice teachers who complete their degree program has increased due to online facilitation of field experience, emphasizing the need for this mode of course delivery. See Table 3 for summarizing quotes from each participant.

Table 3

Live Versus Online Facilitation of Field Experience

Participant	Feelings about Live versus Online Field Experiences
Ann	"Online is meeting that need of [preservice teachers who] don't have the time or the ability to attend class."
Bev	"I think [live and online facilitation] are largely similar. The biggest challenge when it's from a distance is not having personal experience with the placement myself. But the process and often the ongoing interactions with the students are often pretty similar."
Cate	"When we had field experience in the lab school all together, I was their mentor teacher as well as their professor. There was a lot of benefit to that experience, but it wasn't realistic."
Deb	"My views are that both take a lot of time and …I actually now do believe that the online can be absolutely as impactful as the face-to-face."
Elle	"If we had onsite childcare centers, I would go face to face, but because of our geographic challenges, we could not ask students to do that, to spend three hours in a center when some are losing homes and jobs."
Fay	"If I had a preference I would do face to face so then I could go visit them. But I often think that there are still very valuable worthwhile experiences that happen in an online environment, for those enrolled in an online environment, if the quality of the site is controlled."
Gwen	"I think it's the reciprocal relationship part of it [that is difficult]. Again, early childhood uses a heavy modeling concept, and we have always taught in live classrooms; online, we want to instruct the way we want our students to instruct."
Hope	"I think [online course work] really works great when students are the right fit for it." (She describes having good time management and being tech savvy as the right fit).
Ivy	"Of course I would rather be doing the face to face as well. I mean, I just love the interaction… But I feel like we have developed such a good way online to have some of the interaction by going out to their [field sites]. I think that we have made it work well and I don't mind doing it online."

The table of each instructor's quote is included because reading their exact words more clearly reports the data since they involve feelings. To summarize, the data collected for Research Question 1 revealed information about each of the following themes in relation to online facilitation of ECE field experiences: *online components*, *observation / performance assessment, parity, roadblocks*, *innovations*, and *live versus online field experience.* Next, the data from Research Question 2 are presented. Themes related to constructivist learning theory comprise the reporting of Research Question 2 data.

Research Question 2: Constructivist Aspects of Online Field Experiences

For RQ 2, the responses were grouped in the following four major themes: *communication, mentoring, collaboration,* and *reflection.* These themes, concepts, and coding are outlined in Table 2. A significant finding was that each of the ECE instructors acknowledged that constructivist teaching practices were intentionally included in the facilitation of online field experiences.

Communication. The first constructivist theme is *communication*. Open, three-way oral communication, is rare in online field experiences according to those interviewed in this study. Bev, Elle, Gwen, Hope, and Ivy have much more frequent open communication because they do live observation visits. However, they stated it was not always feasible for all three members of the triad to meet after observations to debrief and give live feedback; Only Ivy stated that three-way conferences happen regularly during field experiences. Ivy has a mandatory orientation meeting at the beginning of each term where all three members of the triad are present, creating a time for three-way

communication. Deb stated that email communication included all the members of the triad, creating open, three-way communication. Communication was mostly two-way, facilitated largely via discussion forums or email.

Individual communication between the instructor and preservice teacher was typically through email or phone, and occasionally through Skype. Bev described that she intentionally modeled reflecting on practice within the discussions to help preservice teachers learn this skill and use this skill while communicating. Cate stated that although her practicums were online, she taught most of the courses live, so she was in the unique situation to have real time communication with preservice teachers frequently. She also has set up Facebook pages that she and her preservice teachers used frequently to communicate through messaging. Gwen gave each of her preservice teachers her personal cell number to be able to always reach her, and stated that they were very respectful of when it is appropriate to call her. She was "trying to create that reciprocal relationship and have a college student know I actually care."

Communication between the instructor and mentor teacher was reported as limited by each of the participants. Ann described communication between her and the mentor teacher as: "I don't have any direct contact with the director or the mentor teacher, um, unless there's an issue or if I have a question about something." Deb was the only one who reported regular email communication between her and the mentor teacher. Most of the communication to the mentor teacher regarding processes and procedures was delivered via the preservice teacher and consisted of the instructor's

written communication about the field experience. Hope used a tool called Remind.com that allows her to send text message communications to her preservice teachers. Communication between mentor teachers and preservice teachers was reported as extensive because these two members of the triad worked together in the field experience.

Considerable written messaging was used to communicate course processes, procedures, and expectations in the online course. One-way oral communication included the use of mini videos to demonstrate how to perform a technical skill or a skill related to working with young children for many of the instructors. A few instructors used Camtasia, Panopto, or Collaborate to create video-based tutorials.

Preservice teacher communication style differences were described as obstacles in the online format. Some preservice teachers were reported as being better at communicating their needs to the instructor than others. Fay described that because of this, communication was individualized for her field experiences:

> So while it's not a (regularly scheduled occurrence); it really is connecting, because we have so many students in the classroom who are at very different points in their career or profession level. So, I may spend more time with a student who's never had a job in childcare or an early childcare program before than I would spend with an experienced teacher in our program.

Hope stated that some preservice teachers communicated better online than others, so "a preservice teacher's personality could interfere" with the quality of communication.

There were some constructivist-based innovations in communication described by the participants. Deb described a communication procedure with scheduled email and phone or Skype communication throughout the field experience, including all three members of the triad in the procedure. Gwen described using Skype, Facetime, Zoom, or Go-To-Meeting (depending on which technology the preservice teachers had access) to meet with preservice teachers using webinar-style meetings. Fay also did this using Blackboard Collaborate. She scheduled these sessions "when we're working on projects and everyone's having the same issue." The use of a cohort model by Fay was a way to help preservice teachers connect and communicate with their peers. A discussion of the constructivist-based theme *mentoring* follows.

Mentoring. *Mentoring* (Theme 2) during a field experience was typically performed by one or more of the following: instructors, mentor teachers, other individuals who work in the field site or community, or peers. All the participants acknowledged that the majority of mentoring occurred between the mentor teacher and the preservice teacher. All also described an obstacle in that because of the distance, they had little or no contact with the mentor teacher and could not be certain of the quality of mentoring that was occurring. Ivy was the only instructor who described a training provided to mentor teachers, mentoring the mentor teacher!

Ann described the mentor teacher as being required to complete weekly observations lasting 30 minutes to one hour, and if the mentor teacher was the lead teacher in the classroom, there was much more mentoring. Although this weekly

observation was required, there was no paperwork to verify it actually transpired. Bev required more feedback in writing from the mentor teacher to the preservice teacher than the others, with five performance activities the preservice teacher completed in each practicum course, where mentor teachers gave feedback to the preservice teachers. She did say that some mentor teachers gave specific and valuable feedback, while for others the feedback was minimal and vague. Cate believed that the mentor teacher was the one who finds the preservice teacher's zone of proximal development and mentors him or her within that zone on a daily basis. Deb believed that mentoring was individualized as some preservice teachers needed more mentoring than others. Fay stated "that during these field assignments, the preservice teacher and mentor teacher interact a bit, to work on relationship." About 75% of Gwen's preservice teachers work full time in the ECE field, providing the opportunity for ongoing mentoring with their colleagues. The contract her mentor teachers signed also required daily feedback to the preservice teacher. Hope's requirements for mentor teachers was for them to be with the preservice teacher at all times, and even preservice teachers in a paid practicum were required to have the mentor teacher with them most of the time, so mentoring was ongoing. However, because Hope encouraged preservice teachers to use multiple field sites within each practicum course, mentoring was not consistently with the same mentor teacher. Ivy's field experience courses required the mentor teacher and preservice teacher to meet weekly for mentoring.

All participants acknowledged that mentoring between the instructor and preservice teacher occurred within the discussion forum and through assignment feedback instructors gave to the preservice teachers. The following is a summary of each participant's thoughts on instructor mentoring: Ann watched three preservice teacher 30-minute videos and gave feedback based on the CLASS (Pianta, 2008) tool. Bev stated for mentoring, "the greatest emphasis is on the journal." These weekly journal entries described their experiences and Bev gave them prompts that they could write about to direct their reflection to important topics. "I give them, lengthy feedback in their journals so that to me is my primary mode of mentoring the preservice teachers." Cate stated that, "I think that mentoring starts the day they walk into the program – so I feel like mentoring happens all the way up and through field experience; I don't feel like it only happens in field experience." Deb used regular communication and in-depth feedback to preservice teachers for mentoring. She also had preservice teachers subscribe to the CLASS (Pianta, 2008) video library and she directed preservice teachers to specific video clips within her feedback to scaffold their learning. Elle described mentoring as occurring through the live observations and performance assessments she completed for each preservice teacher. Gwen used annotated comments on all assignment submissions to mentor preservice teachers, and a large library of video clips from various sources including YouTube to scaffold individual preservice teacher's learning.

Elle used peer mentoring as preservice teachers gave each other feedback on their videos. All the participants described the discussion forum as a place for peer-to-peer

mentoring. According to Deb, “they all are talking with each other about their experiences in that discussion forum.”

Obstacles related to mentoring included Fay’s performance assessment of preservice teachers. Since she did not collect videos or complete live observations, she stated she was “relying on third party reports – to know about quality and what’s going on with the preservice teacher’s progress.” Gwen stated that the system of mentoring was sufficient for most preservice teacher, but when one needed extra mentoring, it could be difficult to detect and also difficult to arrange the extra mentoring. Ann described the unknown skill level of mentor teachers as an obstacle she faces.

Collaboration. Most instructors stated that little *collaboration* among peers was included in online facilitation of field experience due to distance constraints. However, all considered the weekly discussion forum as a form of collaboration between preservice teachers. Bev stated that someday she would like to create discussion forums where all three members of the triad communicated. Also, on rare occasions when more than one preservice teacher shared a field site with someone in the class, there was peer collaboration. Elle described peer collaboration as occurring because there was a limited number of approved sites, and at least three preservice teachers were assigned to each site each term. Fay described the use of partner assignments and Wiki log assignments as peer collaboration. She also encouraged collaboration on assignments and had a computer lab next to her office where local preservice teacher often work together. Gwen also stated that local preservice teachers used a computer lab in her department to collaborate,

and there was one group assignment in each of her courses. Gwen's preservice teachers used Office365 for cloud sharing while working on these assignments. Ann described that in the past there was a group project, but this assignment was no longer being used by the consortium. Hope had preservice teachers collaborate by giving peer feedback while working on high stakes assignments within a discussion forum.

Collaboration between instructors and mentor teachers was rare as well, unless there were live observation visits by the instructor (Bev, Elle, Fay, Gwen, and Hope). Ann stated that unless an issue arose, the only collaboration was at the beginning when paperwork was shared between the instructor and mentor teacher. Bev stated they used to have a mentor teacher appreciation night to create relationships that led to collaboration, but due to budget constraints, that was no longer occurring. Cate stated that there was one phone call per term to check in and unless there was a problem, there was no other communication or collaboration.

Ann described preservice teacher to mentor teacher collaboration as preservice teachers "meet[ing] with the mentor teacher and the director regularly. But because there's not an assignment attached to it there's no way I can validate whether they really do that or not." Cate described collaboration as constant between the mentor teacher and the preservice teacher, since they were required to be together for all the practicum hours. Fay and Gwen used the Project Approach (Katz & Chard, 2000) as the basis for all their courses, demonstrating that collaboration was occurring as the preservice teacher and mentor teacher worked together on curriculum.

Cate used technology for collaboration within her Facebook pages. Deb set up some of the assignments in her practicum courses to incorporate collaboration. She described "the sharing of ideas through the online discussion forum, and the assignments....many of them are structured in such a way that they are required to share them with each other [online]."

Reflection. *Reflection* was seen as a key component of constructivist learning embedded in field experience by those interviewed. Various ways reflection was used for preservice teachers included reflective journaling, reflecting on performance assessments, reflecting after watching their videotapes, and reflection after self-assessment. Ann described a constructivist loop of instruction built into all her course work: read, implement, reflect, and receive feedback. She stated that the scaffolding occurred with her feedback to the preservice teachers. Bev described having preservice teachers "being reflective in their practice" as important. Most instructors stated that preservice teachers complete skill's journals for reflection. Ivy described the importance of journaling and reflection as "reflecting on attitudes and behaviors, whether it's towards a child, or whether it's a particular assignment or lesson plan… they have to do a lot of self-reflection." There was a daily journal about each day's interactions with children, and a weekly journal to reflect on what was being learned. A final section follows with the *other constructivist aspects* reported by the participants.

Other constructivist aspects. Other findings reported by the interviewees regarding embedding constructivist teaching practices into the online field experience

courses are included in this section. The idea of intentionally embedding constructivist teaching practices was shared by the participants. Bev's assignment design was reported as constructivist. She stated that "all these activities they do within that course [are] intentionally constructive." Cate also described her main teaching philosophy as constructivist. "So it's just doing that constructivism spiral where everything builds on everything else and kind of tags back to other information. I'm a very constructivist teacher, so I think I just use it naturally." Deb stated "I think they are given a lot of opportunity to transform those experiences and that, those hands-on experiences and those conversations, transform that into further learning." Fay described overlapping content and a mindful scope and sequence to the progression of course work. Allowing for revisions on graded work was her way to scaffold learning on an individualized basis. She and Hope were the only instructors who used the cohort model, where preservice teachers go through their degree program as a unified group. Both described the cohort model as an aspect of constructivism.

Ann, Bev, Cate, Deb described an intentional progression through course work to scaffold the learner from novice to skilled. Pre-requisite course work guided the preservice teachers through the progression. Fay incorporated the teaching of knowledge, skills, and dispositions throughout her course work, including field experiences.

Individualizing for preservice teachers was a constructivist aspect described by the participants as well. Gwen stated that some mentor teachers were reluctant to let the preservice teachers take the lead, and "99 % of the time it's just the mentor teacher not

trusting the college student enough to do it. And so, once the relationship begins it seems to open that door every time." Therefore, she worked on building relationships between the mentor teachers and preservice teachers. She also stated that, "I need to instruct and deal with my college student as I want them to deal with three year olds."

Ivy stated that "part of constructivism [is] that they are learning and continuing learning on their own and so that's one of the big things that we continue to put in all of our courses… continuing with their own personal learning and reflection and, understanding what it means to be that constructivist kind of learner throughout the rest of their lives." Ivy intentionally scaffolded preservice teachers in feedback and used reflection and self-assessment as well. Her preservice teachers set learning goals for each field experience, and were accountable for meeting those goals.

The four themes for RQ 2 consist of *communication, collaboration, mentoring,* and *reflection.* A section about other constructivist aspects concludes the reporting of RQ 2 data. All these themes relate to the conceptual framework of social constructivism. The following section summarizes the data from RQ1 and RQ 2.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I discussed how the two research questions were addressed during the study. I presented the results analyzed from the interview data. This included the setting, demographics of participants, data collection procedures, data analysis processes, evidence of trustworthiness, and results of data analysis. RQ 1 results revealed many ways to facilitate online field experiences, including processes and procedures,

observation and performance assessment of the preservice teacher, and the challenges and successes reported by those interviewed. Because the literature review did not reveal research specific to fully online field experience facilitation, these findings are significant to the field of ECE preservice teacher education. The major themes identified in the results of RQ 2 aligned with the conceptual framework of constructivism for the study outlined in Chapter 2. Across both research questions, the final themes I identified were *communication, mentoring, collaboration, parity, roadblocks, innovations, assessment,* and *reflection*. In the final chapter that follows, I present interpretation of the results, how the results support the literature described in Chapter 2, how the results support the conceptual framework, limitations, potential implications for social change, recommendations, implications, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative interview study was to understand the processes, procedures, and experiences of instructors who facilitate preservice teachers in online field experience. Using constructivism as the theoretical lens (Dewey, 1932; Piaget, 1953; Vygotsky, 1978), I analyzed interviews with instructors who shared how they facilitated field experiences in an online setting. Key findings included ways to facilitate field experience online, challenges and successes of facilitation experiences, and how constructivism was embedded in the experience. Chapter 5 includes the interpretation of findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and conclusions.

Summary of Key Findings

Key Finding 1: Processes and procedures for facilitating online field experiences were intentionally designed by the instructors interviewed, and parity between online and live facilitation was an important aspect of these processes and procedures.

Key Finding 2: Challenges in facilitation of online field experience were identified, but participants were actively addressing these challenges.

Key Finding 3: Constructivism was acknowledged by all nine instructors as the basis of their instructional design, and was intentionally embedded into online field experience course work.

Key Finding 4: All participants stated that there were benefits to live field experiences, but online field experience was necessary for meeting the needs of current preservice teacher populations.

Interpretation of the Findings

I generated conclusions through journaling, writing, and creating tables about the identified themes, based solely on the data. Findings of this study extended knowledge in the ECE field to fill a gap in the peer-reviewed literature regarding ways in which fully online field experiences were being facilitated. I analyzed the data using the conceptual lens of constructivism (Dewey, 1932; Piaget, 1953; Vygotsky, 1978).

In relation to Key Finding 1, the nine instructors shared explicit processes and procedures that can be useful to others who facilitate field experiences online. It was clear from analysis of interview data that each instructor had carefully thought about the needs of her preservice teachers and set up processes and procedures to try to meet those needs online. Although the data analysis revealed that some participants had various procedures in common such as the use of discussion forums, the participants also reported unique procedures such as lists of approved field sites and the use of live observations by the instructor as well as videotaped submissions from the preservice teacher. Dewey's (1932) experiential learning theory is a foundation of field experience based on the apprenticeship model, and the processes and procedures reported by the participants as important parts of facilitating these learning experiences aligned with the more knowledgeable other mentoring the preservice teacher. Whitebook et al. (2012) supported this finding about online processes and procedures resulting from facing challenges and from the lessons learned regarding field experience in a traditional setting. Whitebook et al.'s (2012) conclusions concerning field experience revealed variety

among programs, concurring with Key Finding 1. Oleson and Hora (2012) discussed the need to intentionally teach preservice teachers how to teach, and Key Finding 1 was supported by their findings. Parity between live facilitation and online facilitation was a strong theme with all but one participant describing parity in site requirements, assignments, number and design of preservice teacher performance assessments, and other aspects of field experience facilitation.

Key Finding 2 (challenges in facilitating field experiences online) revealed the need for more evidence-based solutions. The literature review included some useful technological innovations such as the use of Bug in Ear (BIE) for virtual coaching and feedback (Rock et al., 2012), where preservice teachers receive real-time instructor feedback from a distance using telecommunication technology such as Skype and an ear bud so the instructor can speak to the teacher while the teacher is interacting in the classroom. Alger and Kopcha (2014) described the use of discussion in having preservice teachers observe their classmates' videos and give feedback, resulting in reflection and self-reflection among the preservice teachers. Finally, the use of simulation technology was reported as an increasing trend in field experience (Badiee & Kaufman, 2014; Carrington et al., 2012; Kaufman & Ireland, 2016; Muir et al., 2013). None of the participants reported the use of these technologies in their current practices.

In relation to Key Finding 3, data analysis confirmed that constructivism was an important concept in the field of early childhood education because all participants agreed that constructivism (Dewey, 1932; Piaget, 1953; Vygotsky, 1978) was embedded

in how they taught field experience courses. For example, the cohort model that Fay used could enhance the relationships among preservice teachers, and she reported this as a constructivist approach. These responses support the findings of Katz (1977) and Jones (2007) who explained that ECE instructors must model how they want preservice teachers to teach by applying the same constructivist methods to how they teach preservice teachers. Oleson and Hora (2014) also described the importance of helping preservice teachers learn constructivist ways to teach.

Participants reported the use of constructivism in communication practices, mentoring, collaboration, and reflection embedded in field experience facilitation. Communication between the instructor and preservice teacher occurred mostly through email, online discussion forums for those preservice teachers who did not physically interact with the instructor. The instructors who reported completing live observation and performance assessment also added the communication that occurred immediately following the observations. All participants described the importance of communication between the mentor and preservice teacher because the mentor was identified as the most significant guide to the preservice teacher during the field experience. Some of the communication techniques included structured three-way communication (Deb), required meetings between mentor and preservice teacher (Ivy), during orientation (Ivy) and ongoing because the mentor teacher was required to supervise the preservice teacher at all times (Cate).

Collaboration and mentoring occurred mainly between the mentor teacher and the preservice teacher in online facilitation of field experiences because, unlike the instructor who is at a distance, these two members of the triad work in the classroom together during the field experience. Lack of live seat time was identified as the main reason collaboration and peer mentoring were not as common between peer preservice teachers. Physical distance was described as the reason the instructor and preservice teacher's collaboration and mentoring were less than what the participants desired in an instructor/preservice teacher relationship. Face-to-face contact was an important component in the mentoring process according to those interviewed.

Reflection, described by Dewey (1932) as significant in constructivist and apprenticeship learning practices, was identified as a practice used by all nine participants. Per Riojas-Cortez et al. (2013) reflection on practice is important to bridge theory to practice, and participants' responses supported this. Some examples of reflection included teachers journaling about what happened during the field experiences, reflecting on performance assessments, and watching and assessing their videotapes.

Key Finding 4 revealed that field experience facilitation was important to preservice teacher success, which was supported by numerous researchers (Cohen et al., 2013; Dillon et al., 2014; LaParo, 2012; Whitebook et al., 2009a, 2009b; Whitebook et al., 2012; Whitford & Villaume, 2014). Constructivist theory emphasizes the importance of learning by doing (Dewey, 1932; Piaget, 1953; Vygotsky, 1978). Dewey (1932) also wrote about cognitive apprenticeship as part of learning skills. Overall, participants were

positive about online facilitation of field experience, but thought that live facilitation had some benefits. Those benefits were directly related to constructivism and the benefits of a relationship within a community of learners and instructors. Six of the nine participants incorporated live interactions with preservice teachers during online facilitation.

Limitations of the Study

Originally, I intended to choose participants who were in programs accredited by ECADA. However, I was not able to obtain a sufficient sample with this criterion due to a low response rate to my invitation, so I changed the requirement from currently accredited to currently accredited, in the process of becoming accredited, or embracing the ECADA standards (NAEYC, 2011) as part of their degree outcomes. Although lack of accreditation may be seen as a limitation, participants who were not in accredited programs stated they conformed to the standards required for ECADA accreditation (NAEYC, 2011), mitigating this limitation to a degree.

I scrutinized my researcher bias throughout the process, but it still may be a limiting factor. I have taught online field experience course work at the community college level since 2007, so my knowledge about the dissertation topic was a matter to be dealt with. I was careful to state research questions in a way that did not include any evaluation of facilitation processes and procedures or reveal any of my personal views on the topic. I used the research journal to keep any evaluative thoughts I had in check. Furthermore, to avoid skipping steps in the preservice teaching process for those who might not be familiar, I used journaling and dialogue with my committee to craft the

interview questions to avoid confusion or ambiguity. I also had a colleague from another field read my dissertation to point out areas where I needed to add information for clarity.

Another limitation was sample size and online experience. Although nine instructors were interviewed, only Ann and Fay did not have any face-to-face contact with the preservice teachers. Five instructors completed live observations, Cate required a live orientation, and both Cate and Deb saw many of their preservice teachers in live classes taught concurrently with field experiences. Having a participant pool where none of the instructors had any face-to-face contact with the preservice teachers may have delivered more insight into facilitation at a distance when face-to-face contact was not possible. However, the fact that most participants devised ways for face-to-face contact with preservice teachers shows the importance of personal contact, even in online field experiences.

Recommendations

Given the gap in the literature regarding understanding of online field experience facilitation, the established importance of field experience in preservice teacher education, and the increased number of preservice teachers taking online courses, further research on online field experience facilitation is warranted. This study focused on the perspective of the field experience instructor, the person who typically serves as the clinical or field supervisor in the field experience triad. Future research should include the perspectives of the other two members of the triad: the preservice teacher and the mentor teacher. Questions could be addressed about how facilitation affects the mentor

teachers and preservice teachers, and findings could help instructors understand the strengths and weaknesses in their approach to facilitating field experience online.

Researchers could also examine the facilitation of other aspects of ECE preservice education, not just field experience. A study of the quality of educational practice in classes taught by teachers who did their field experience online would be insightful. This current study focused on the facilitation of field experiences but did not address the quality of the field experience or how online field experiences relate to teacher success after graduation. A longitudinal study comparing the teaching outcomes of live and online field experience facilitation would be insightful.

Because this was an interview study, another recommendation would be to complete research implementing the processes and procedures identified in this study in fully online field experiences. Studies of innovative processes and procedures would contribute to the body of evidence supporting online field experience facilitation. Implementation and pilot research would further address the gap in the literature regarding online field experience facilitation.

Another recommendation is for researchers and instructors to find and pilot innovative ways for real-time observations and assessments during online field experiences, such as those described by Rock et al. (2012). Although there was anecdotal evidence from those interviewed that videotaping is an excellent way for preservice teachers to assess their own performance, there seemed a clear need for either face-to-face or technology-based real-time observation and assessment.

Implications

Helburn's (1995) call to arms about the quality of childcare and education in the United States has been integral to the call for action regarding many quality initiatives in the field of early childhood to this day. It was at the forefront in my career choice as preservice teacher faculty, as I believe that preparing future teachers that are competent is imperative. It was the reason I chose this research topic, online field experiences, because field experiences are where knowledge becomes practice, so it is crucial that these experiences contribute to creating competent teachers who can help our young children succeed. "The nation must commit to improving the quality of child care services and to ensuring that all children and their families have access to good programs. That is, GOOD-QUALITY child care must become a merit good in the United States" (Helburn, 1995, p. 568). Positive social change can be a result of sharing best practices regarding facilitating preservice ECE online field experiences, helping childcare become a merit good. I realize that it is a stretch to go from processes and procedures to quality of practice, but it is a first step, as instructors reflected on and shared their current practices for this research study. Future examination and reflection on facilitating online field experiences should lead to discussions and research about the quality of preservice teachers that are a product of online facilitation.

The essence of this study was how to help ECE preservice teachers get the most out of online or virtual field experiences. Recommendations for practice include:

- Making online ECE field experiences quality experiences where preservice teachers can apply the knowledge from their course work into valuable practice through instructor efforts to supervise, communicate, mentor, and evaluate these preservice teachers during field experiences. Further research into these practices could create evidence-driven ways to facilitate online field experiences.
- Peer collaboration, especially in online field experiences, must be developed to help preservice teachers learn collaboration skills they will need when they work in the field of ECE.
- Instructors of online field experiences must continue to find ways to develop constructivist learning relationships with preservice teachers at a distance. These include developing ways for face-to-face contact or the use of technology for real-time interaction with preservice teachers.

Conclusion

Cohen (2013) and LaParo (2012) reminded those who prepare preservice teachers for the field about the importance of field experience. Theory becoming practice is the key to preparation of teachers of young children, because theory and knowledge about the field of early childhood is important, but being able to apply those theories and the knowledge under real conditions is central to successful teaching. Oleson and Hora (2014) found that unless preservice teachers are specifically taught how to teach, they will rely on their own past experiences as students and “teach the way they were taught”

(p. 3), which is not always based on current best practices for teaching. Key Finding 1, processes and procedures intentionally designed by the instructors in online field experiences, do affect preservice teachers' ability to turning theory into real classroom practice. Although Key Finding 2 identified some challenges in online facilitation, this research may open conversations among instructors of these experiences to share ways to mitigate the challenges. Key Finding 3 underscored the importance and relevance of a constructivist-base in facilitating field experience, especially the intentional embedding of constructivist practice as a means to model this theory to preservice teachers and teach them how to teach. As with most new practices, the field of early childhood is still within the learning curve of adapting live field experience facilitation to a fully online format.

Even though Key Finding 4 illustrated participant preference to live field experiences, online field experiences were identified as necessary and I believe this research can have an impact for instructors as they move from the learning curve stage. The literature related to using simulation software as a supplement to the field experience in online facilitation (Badiee & Kaufman, 2014; Carrington, Kervin, & Ferry, 2012; Kaufman & Ireland, 2016; Kopcha & Alger, 2014; Muir et al., 2013) may be one starting point because the use of simulations could bridge some of challenges identified by the participants. Virtual mentoring (Reese, 2015) and virtual coaching (Rock et al., 2012) may also provide ideas that could lead to further research that may address the challenges, and perhaps the Community of Inquiry model (Garrison et al., 1999) described in Thompson et al.'s 2013 study could be used for further research related to

challenges in facilitating online field experiences. It is my hope that this study will spur the ECE higher education community to further research, creating evidence-based practices that work and enhance the quality of preservice teacher's field experiences.

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Appendix A: Data Collection Tool

Meier Dissertation Interview Session One

Online Facilitation of ECE Field Experiences

Introduction: Create rapport with the participant by explaining about the study and introducing myself. Outline the informed consent with bulleted points. Ask the participant if he or she has questions about the study or the interview process. Ask if they are ready to begin.

Introduce the topic with background information about the purpose of the study: to understand the processes, procedures, and experiences of instructors who facilitate preservice teachers in online field experience. Explain that they were recruited because they are part of NAEYC ECADA accreditation, and therefore embrace ECADA Criterion Five (Appendix B).

Interview Question 1: I would like to start by asking questions about your degree program. What ECE degrees do you offer? **(**Some demographic data will be gathered at this point.)

Probe Question 1a: What is the:

(a) region of the US where the college is located

(b) size of community population / college student population

(c) number of ECE preservice teachers currently enrolled in the program

Probe Question 1b: How many hours of field experience are required for your preservice ECE teachers during their degree programs?

Probe Question 1c: What are the qualifications for field sites and mentor teachers?

Probe Question 1d: What unique processes and procedures have resulted from fully online field experiences?

Probe Question 1e: What course competencies or outcomes do you consider most essential for field experiences in ECE? How do you fulfill these outcomes in virtual field experiences?

Interview Question 2: What are your program's processes and procedures for fully online field experience facilitation of preservice teachers?

Probe Question 2a: To what degree do the following facilitate during field experiences in online formats?

--The instructor of the course, who acts as the clinical or field supervisor of the preservice teacher

- A clinical or field supervisor other than the instructor

--The mentor teacher (the ECE classroom teacher where the preservice teacher is

placed for the experience)
--Other (please specify)

Probe Question 2b: How is this different from a face-to-face course field experience?

Probe Question 2c: What, if any, limitations do you see with the online processes and procedures of facilitating preservice teachers?

Probe Question 2d: What obstacles have you faced concerning ECE field experiences from a distance?

Probe Question 2e: How have you overcome these identified obstacles?

Probe Question 2f: What type of assignments do preservice teachers complete in the field sites?

Interview Question 3: How is observation of the preservice teacher facilitated from a distance?

Probe Question 3a: To what degree do the following observe during field experiences in online formats?
--The instructor of the course, who acts as the clinical or field supervisor of the preservice teacher
- A clinical or field supervisor other than the instructor
--The mentor teacher (the ECE classroom teacher where the preservice teacher is placed for the experience)
--Other (please specify)

Probe Question 3b: Does your program use any technology to facilitate observation? Please describe:

Probe Question 3c: How does observation in fully online experiences differ from live field experiences?

Interview Question 4: Who assesses the preservice teacher's performance during the experience?

Probe Question 4a: To what degree do the following assess the performance of preservice teachers during field experiences in online formats?
--The instructor of the course, who acts as the clinical or field supervisor of the preservice teacher
--A clinical or field supervisor other than the instructor
--The mentor teacher (the ECE classroom teacher where the preservice teacher is placed for the experience)
--Other (please specify)

Probe Question 4b: What is the frequency of performance assessment of the preservice teacher?

Probe Question 4c: Does your program use any technology to facilitate assessment? Please describe:

Probe Question 4d: How does assessment in fully online experiences differ from live field experiences?

Probe Question 4e: Would you like to share any roadblocks you have encountered in relation to online field experience assessment?

Interview Question 5: Tell me about any successes have you have achieved.

Probe Question 5a: Describe any successful innovations in relation to facilitating online field experiences.

Probe Questions 5b: Is there anything else you would like to tell me about processes and procedures in fully online field experiences?

Concluding Remarks: During our next interview, we will focus on constructivist teaching practices that your program may incorporate into fully online field experiences. I look forward to that conversation. Thank you for your time today. Please let me know if you have any questions about this research.

Meier Dissertation Interview Session Two

Introduction: Begin with a recap of the previous interview. Review informed consent, and ask if there are any questions before beginning.

I would like to focus our interview today on the constructivist theory aspects that may be found within your facilitation of field experiences. These may include communication, mentoring, and collaboration. Then, we will discuss your ideas about constructivism in online field experiences, and end with your overall thoughts about the study topic.

Interview Question 6: How does your program communicate with the key players in the field experience?

Probe Question 6a: Is this communication oral, written, or both?

Probe Question 6b: Is there open, three-way communication between each of the key players in the online field experience? If yes, how is this facilitated?

Probe Question 6c: How is technology used to facilitate communication during online field experiences?

Interview Question 7: How is mentoring the preservice teacher incorporated into a fully-online field experience?

Probe Question 7a: To what degree do the following mentor the preservice teacher during field experiences in online formats?
--The instructor of the course, who acts as the clinical or field supervisor of the preservice teacher
--A clinical or field supervisor other than the instructor
--The mentor teacher (the ECE classroom teacher where the preservice teacher is placed for the experience)
--Other (please specify)

Probe Question 7b: How is this different from preservice teacher mentoring in live field experiences?

Probe Question 7c: What obstacles have you faced in providing adequate mentoring to preservice teachers?

Probe Question 7d: How have you overcome these obstacles?

Interview Question 8: How is collaboration incorporated into a fully online field experience?

Probe Question 8a: Are the preservice teachers taking the course given the opportunity to collaborate with each other? How is this facilitated?

Probe Question 8b: How is this different from preservice teacher collaboration in live field experiences?

Probe Question 8c: What is the extent of collaboration between the other key players in fully online field experiences (supervisor, mentor teacher, preservice teacher)? How is this collaboration facilitated?

Probe Question 8d: How is technology used to incorporate collaboration into fully online field experiences?

Interview Question 9: What other aspects of constructivism can you describe as being part of your online field experience course work?

Interview Question 10: As your preservice teachers engage in fully online field experiences, what do you believe are the areas in which they are having the most difficulty, or that are the most challenging for them?

Probe Question 10a: What difficulties do you believe are specifically related to virtual facilitation of field experiences?

Probe Question 10b: How has your program dealt (or is dealing) with these difficulties?

Probe Question 10c: What are your views on facilitating field experiences online in comparison to face-to-face experiences?

Concluding Remarks: Would you like to share anything else pertinent to this research topic? If you think of something later that you would like to add to these data, please let me know. Thanks for the opportunity to learn from you during our discussions.

Appendix B: NAEYC ECADA Standards Field Experience Principles

ECADA CRITERION 5: QUALITY OF FIELD EXPERIENCES (NAEYC, 2011, p. 31.)

The program's field experiences support candidates' learning in relation to the NAEYC standards.

Rationale: Candidates will understand and apply the competencies reflected in the NAEYC standards when they are able to observe, implement, and receive constructive feedback in real-life settings.

Indicators of strength:

Field experiences are consistent with outcomes emphasized in NAEYC's standards, are well planned and sequenced, and allow candidates to integrate theory, research, and practice.

When the settings used for field experiences do not reflect standards of quality, candidates are provided with other models and/or experiences to ensure that they are learning to work with young children and families in ways consistent with the NAEYC standards.

Instructors and other supervisors help candidates to make meaning of their experiences in ECE settings and to evaluate those experiences against standards of quality.

Adults who mentor and supervise candidates provide positive models of ECE practice consistent with NAEYC's standards.

Field experiences expose candidates to a variety of cultural, linguistic, and ethnic settings for ECE care and education.

Field experiences provide opportunities for candidates to observe and practice in at least two of the three ECE groups (birth-age 3, 3-5, 5-8) and in at least two of the three main types of early education settings (early school grades, child care centers and homes, Head Start programs).