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Empowering Early Childhood Teachers: A Community Based Participatory Research Approach

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EMPOWERING EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS: A COMMUNITY

BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH APPROACH

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A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

Child Development

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by

Kourtney Denise Jones

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Dr. Amanda Wilcox, Committee Chair, Psychology

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ABSTRACT

Despite a significant increase in the demands for teachers' professional development, the work environments of teachers have not developed at a comparable rate. Due to research on inequity in teacher work environment, the purpose of this case study was to explore the role of empowerment in the early childhood education (ECE) workforce, using Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) as a framework. This project was done with 5 educators in a for-profit ECE center. Over the course of five weekly sessions, the educators completed questionnaires, interviews, and engaged in weekly focus groups geared towards providing the teachers with an opportunity to share their experiences and collaborate on solutions for change in their work environment. Overall, descriptive statistics of the quantitative data did not demonstrate an increase in empowerment over the course of the project. However, the six emerging themes (i.e., Frustration with Center Operations and Corporate, Empowerment, Communication, Emotional and Physical Well-Being, Teacher Unity, and Teacher Training and Education) provided important insights into the nature of teacher empowerment in the ECE setting, which informed lessons learned and future directions for research.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this project to my first teacher and favorite person, my mother, Kim Jones.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Teaching early childhood education (ECE) is a relatively young profession in the United States. With a growing demand for ECE and increased research on the role teachers play in providing quality care, there have been increased demands on teacher qualifications and education requirements. The field has evolved from requiring no formal training, to all ECE teachers required to have at least some college coursework in child development (specific requirements vary by state), and most teachers holding at least an associates or bachelor's degree in child development or a related field (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 2014).

In spite of the increased requirements for ECE teachers, overall, the teacher work environment has seen little improvement to support teachers in their positions. For the purposes of this project, teacher work environment will refer to components such as broad contextual trends in turnover and compensation, as well as more proximal components of teachers' day-to-day work experiences (e.g., stress, communication with supervisor, health, etc.). While little research on has been done on the day-to-day experiences of ECE teachers, trends in turnover and compensation provide evidence that teachers are not being well supported in their work environments (Hall-Kenyon, Bullough, MacKay, & Marshall, 2014). For example, in the United States, the average rate of turnover for ECE teachers is 13% (BLS, 2015). This

percentage is significant considering that the Cost Quality and Child Outcomes Study found that centers with turnover over 10% a year, were more likely to deliver poor quality care to young children (Helburn, 1995). In regard to compensation, in the United States, ECE teachers working with infants and toddlers are in the third percentile for national wages earned and preschool teachers are in the nineteenth percentile for national wages earned (BLS). With such low wages, ECE teachers are often stressed about their financial outlook, and a significant number of teachers rely on one or more forms of government aid to support themselves and their families (Whitebook. Phillips, & Howes, 2014). Simply, teachers are not being well supported in regard to work environment.

Considering these disparities in teacher work environment, it is imperative that something be done to support the educators providing a significant service in our country. Characterizing this problem from a Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) framework, teachers must be empowered to enact change in their work environments. As described in Rappaport (1981), effective change can be brought about when the people who are affected are paramount in enacting change. While policymakers and lobbyists play an important role in enacting change for teacher work environment, it is also important that teachers, people directly affected by these decisions, be a part of this process as well.

The purpose of this study is to collaborate with ECE teachers about the best way to bring about change in their centers of employment. It is proposed that by collaborating with teachers on a project specific to their center, the process will build teachers' experience of empowerment. As the people working in this environment on a day-to-day basis, they are in a unique position to tell an important story, and it is proposed that the use of CBPR principles will empower teachers in their quest for improving their immediate work environments, and as a result, the field of ECE as a whole.

The History of Teachers in Early Childhood Education

The Early Years of Early Childhood Education and Initial Efforts of Teacher Preparation

To help describe the need for research on the empowerment of ECE teachers, it is important to first give some background on how teachers' training and education have evolved in this country. The field of ECE (i.e., education for young children, ages 0-5), in the United States is a relatively young profession and as the understanding and recognition of the field has evolved, the qualifications for ECE teachers have evolved as well. For example, the earliest forms of ECE in this country were day nurseries in the 1800s (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). Used as an alternative to leaving children alone during long workdays, day nurseries were simply custodial in nature. Caregivers attended to children's basic needs while mothers were away, but

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there was little focus on children's developmental needs. As a result, there were not standard qualifications for performing the job.

Since that time, standards for ECE have increased, and as a result, the requirements for teachers have increased as well. With contributions of child development researchers like G. Stanley Hall and organizations like the Child Study Association, the early 1900s ushered in a shift in the operation of ECE in the United States (Barbour, 2003; Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). Borrowing from practices already established in England (e.g., the McMillan Nursery School), the United States saw a rise in nursery schools. Unlike the day nurseries of the past, nursery schools were no longer focused on simply providing custodial care; instead, nursery schools became sites for observation and applying scientific research on the development of young children.

As a still young area of research and practice, the earliest forms of training for teachers were provided on-site, at nursery schools (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). Guided by the directors of their centers, ECE teachers engaged in an apprenticeship at their center of employment.

While the development of the field for ECE teachers was well on its way, the education of young children was still very narrow in its field of influence in the United States. However, a series of national events occurred which helped to develop the influence of ECE, and as a result, the training required for ECE teachers. To begin, the first of seven White House

Conferences, focused on Children and Youth, was held in 1909 (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). Led by President Theodore Roosevelt, the summit focused on addressing the nation's role in protecting children and their families. Important organizations like the Children's Bureau and the Children's Welfare League were born out of the results of this conference. In essence, these conferences helped to prime our nation for understanding the importance of youth and their development and helped to begin the long process of adequately supporting the youth of our country.

This shift in perspective on young children was crucial in the development of several important strides in ECE teacher development to follow (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). In 1929, when the stock market crashed, the nation experienced unprecedented levels of unemployment. In regards to the field of ECE, this resulted in two main problems: 1) the inability of families to adequately meet the physical needs of their children and 2) the layoff of teachers from the public school sector. In 1933, as part of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), the federal government allotted funds to public schools for the development of Emergency Nursery Schools (ENS). The goals of the ENS were to create jobs for teachers and to help meet the physical and developmental needs of young children in poverty. Designed as a temporary relief to our country's economic crisis, the ENS were only in effect from 1933-1935. As to be expected, once funding for the program ended, these sites were shut down.

While the ENS were not permanent fixtures in our nation's history, the manner of educating teachers to work in these centers foreshadowed the country's expectations for teacher education in the years to come (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). As described above, ECE was still a young profession and there were not enough trained ECE teachers to staff the ENS across the nation. Because the nursery schools were unchartered territory for public schools, they needed support from well-established organizations on quickly training staff to work with young children. Only 6% of the teachers hired to work in the ENS had worked in ECE before. As a result, there was a call to institutions across the nation to provide short-term training for ECE teachers. Teachers were taught for typically six to eight hours per day, and the training programs lasted anywhere from two to eight weeks.

Moving forward, in the years following the financial boom of World War II, our country's financial outlook declined again. Towards addressing this disparity, a series of initiatives were created towards building the nation's economy (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). This national crisis was the foundation for another important wave of fostering the development of ECE as a profession. In 1964, planning for Head Start began as a part of several initiatives of the War On Poverty. The Johnson Administration strongly advocated for programs to rebuild the nation's poverty-stricken communities. As a part of several other initiatives, the Community Action Program (CAP) was responsible for helping poverty stricken communities get in touch with

resources and technical assistance for rebuilding their communities. The Head Start Program was one of the initiatives proposed by CAP, and was geared towards helping prepare young children of low socio-economic status (SES) to begin elementary school. Although it was initially designed as an 8-week summer intensive program, Head Start quickly evolved into a year round program offering a host of services to children and their families. Funded by the federal government, Head Start offered comprehensive services to children and families of low SES.

Growing out of Head Start's early initiatives of teacher preparation, further training modes evolved. Specifically, the Head Start Supplementary Training (HSST) and the Child Development Associate (CDA) certification were introduced (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). In 1968, the HSST was created to help Head Start teachers develop career pathways within the organization. Through this program, teachers worked with mentors towards developing long-term educational and career goals, and were also supported in attaining higher levels of education. Specifically, mentors assisted teachers in earning certification, an associate's degree, or a bachelor's degree. To support Head Start teachers in their educational goals, the program collaborated with university systems to make achieving further education more accessible (e.g., providing assistance with transportation, shaping course curriculum to fit the needs of the teaching staff, giving credit for practical experience, and dropping college entrance requirements).

Following the lead of the Head Start professionalization process, the Child Development Associate (CDA) certification was created in 1972 (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). The CDA was instrumental in clearly defining the role of ECE teachers in our country, as well as in aiding ECE teachers develop as working professionals. Combining course work, supervision, and practical experience, the CDA outlined specific competencies that quality ECE teachers must possess. The six competencies were: 1) Establish and maintain a safe and healthy learning environment for children; 2) Advance physical and intellectual competence; 3) Build positive self-concept and individual strength; 4) Promote positive functioning of children and adults in a group; 5) Bring about optimal coordination of home and center child-rearing practices and expectations; 6) Carry out supplementary responsibilities related to children's programs.

While earning a CDA certificate was not mandatory, it symbolized a teacher's readiness for delivering quality services to young children and their families (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). Moreover, the development of the CDA certificate was instrumental in professionalizing the field of teaching in ECE. It outlined the intricacies of being an effective teacher, which is a necessary step in validating the importance of a new profession. With an ever-increasing demand for ECE care services, especially services provided outside the realm of Head Start, the CDA credential was important for the development of the field.

Moving forward in our nation's history, the influence of the civil rights and women's movements were also important in professionalizing the field of ECE (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). During the 1960s and 1970s, the country's climate of empowerment led to an increase of women working outside of the home. With more women working, there was a demand for ECE services that could not be satisfied through federal programs, which were geared towards low-income families. Based on this demand for care, for profit agencies, like the popular KinderCare, were established. This rise in demand for ECE, led to increased training of ECE teachers, in order to staff new centers.

Professionalization of Early Childhood Education in the 20th and 21st Centuries

As the need for ECE services continued to increase in the twentieth century, the country's goal shifted from creating a sustainable field, towards the goal of increasing the quality of services provided (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). Consistently, large-scale studies on quality programs have found that children in higher quality centers perform better in tests of language, cognitive, and social development than children in lower quality centers (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2000).

Center quality is made up of structural features (i.e., how a program is set up) and process features (i.e., how services are carried out). Structural components of care include: staff-to-child ratio, group size, teacher education, parent fees, teacher wages, director qualifications, and center support for

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professional development (Friedman & Amadeo, 1999; NICDH, 2002; Phillipsen et al., 1997; Slot et al., 2015). Process features refer to things like: teacher child relationships, developmentally appropriate interactions, and how teachers speak with children. Overall, it has been found that strong structural features are important in ensuring positive process quality for young children (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network 2002; Vandell et al., 2010). In other words, it has been found that when teachers have higher standards of structural support (e.g., smaller ratios, higher wages, higher levels of education, smaller group sizes, etc.), they are better equipped to do their jobs well.

Supported by growing information on the role that structural features play in ensuring high quality care, the publishing of the book *Eager to Learn: Educating our Preschoolers* was one of many important documents demanding professionalization of ECE teachers (Ingleby, 2010). Because quality of care and children's developmental outcomes are strongly linked to how teachers engage with young children, *Eager to Learn* pushed for an increase in qualifications of ECE teachers. The profession at large echoed this demand, and the field has seen a steady increase in teacher education requirements since then.

The basic level of requirements for teacher education qualifications is set by state level licensing standards. Because there is no federal regulation of ECE, the stringency of regulations vary by state, but overall, licensing

standards require minimum qualifications for care of young children. For example, in California, Title 22 regulations require that all teachers have completed a minimum of 12 units of ECE (State of California Health and Human Services Agency – Department of Social Services, 2005).

In addition to state licensing standards, individual states have credential programs, which issue ECE teachers varying levels of credentials based on education and experience qualifications. For example, in California, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) outlines six Child Development permits, each with increasing qualifications necessary in order to apply (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2016). To qualify for the baseline credential, Child Development Assistant, teachers must have 6 units of ECE or completed an equivalent program in Child Development Related Occupations. The Associate Teacher, Teacher, and Master Teacher permit require increasing levels of education (i.e., 12 units of ECE, associate's degree, and bachelor's degree) to qualify. Each permit expires after five years, and there are monetary incentives for teachers that apply for a higher-level permit, before three years time. Holding a teacher permit has become increasingly more important because centers who receive state funding are required to hire teachers with permits, in order to qualify for subsidies.

Another important development in increasing teacher qualifications, is the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). QRIS is a state level systemic program, which outlines standards and methods for improving quality

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of care (QRIS, 2016). Adopted by individual states since 1998, QRIS systems outline specific levels of service, and centers are rated against those program standards. Similar to restaurants and hotels, individual centers are assigned a rating that indicates the quality of that center. In relationship to teachers, the QRIS documents specific requirements for teacher education. While specific requirements vary from state to state, the higher a teachers' level of education, the better a center rates on the QRIS. For example, in California, facilities whose teachers only have 12 units of ECE are rated at Tier 1. In contrast, centers that employ teachers with a bachelor's or master's degrees are rated as Tier 5. Putting this into context for the field as a whole, there is a growing push for teachers to be more highly educated than in the past.

In addition to QRIS, the Head Start Reauthorization Act in 2007 (Head Start, 2016) has also been paramount in increasing the education level of ECE teachers. In addition to reauthorizing funding and some other improvements, the bill delineated the goal that by 2013, all Head Start teachers would have an associate's degree and at least half of teachers would have a bachelor's degree. This goal was reached, and in 2015, 96% of teachers had at least an associate's degree and 67% had a bachelor's degree.

To summarize, the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have largely focused on improving the quality of services provided in ECE. Research on early child outcomes and center quality has demonstrated the importance of quality care services in ECE, and the important role that ECE teachers play in

delivering quality care. With growing evidence for the importance of quality care for children, the profession has moved towards increasing professional requirements for ECE teachers. However, the requirements for teaching have increased, the field has not seen an increase in quality of work environment to match.

Disparity in Teacher Work Environment

Considering the role that teachers play in delivering quality services, it is an important next step in the development of the field to focus on the conditions that enable teachers to implement quality interactions with children and families. In spite of the role that teachers play in providing quality care, ECE teachers have a history of being marginalized as profession. For example, the last comprehensive report of ECE work environments was conducted in 1985, and at that time, full-time teachers earned an average hourly rate of $5.35 (Howes, Whitebook, & Phillips, 1992). This translates into a yearly salary of $9,363, during a time where the national threshold for poverty was $9,431. This means that the majority of ECE teachers were earning a wage that put them at or near the poverty level in our country at that time. Moreover, turnover rates were at an all-time high, with 41% of teachers leaving their positions within a year of beginning work. In recent years, while research and advocacy efforts have helped to address these concerns, teachers still have poor work environments. The majority of research on work environment has been done on teacher wages, financial stress, and turnover.

These broader contextual concerns for the ECE profession are described

below in order to provide context for why ECE teachers are considered a

marginalized group.

<u>Wages</u>

Wages for ECE teachers can be delineated into two categories:

childcare worker salary (i.e., teachers working with children ages 0-3) and

preschool teacher salary (i.e., teachers working with children ages 3-5). The

mean hourly wage for childcare workers is $10.44 per hour, about $22,000

annually (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). The mean hourly wage for

preschool teachers is $15.40 per hour, which translates to about $32,000

annually (BLS, 2015). The median hourly rate for childcare workers is $9.48,

about $20,000 annually. The median hourly rate for preschool teachers is

$13.52, about $28,000 annually. The median hourly rate for teachers is often

reported as a more accurate depiction of overall teacher salary because the

high salary for a minority of teachers (i.e., teachers working in

school-sponsored programs) skews the mean. To put this in perspective, the

2015 national poverty levels are described: One-person household = $11,770,

Two-person household = $15,930, Three-person household = $20, 090, and

Four-person household = $24, 250 (ObamaCare Facts, 2016).

In relationship to other wage earners in the United States, ECE

teachers are in the minority. According to the BLS, childcare workers are

ranked at the third percentile and preschool teachers at the nineteenth

percentile for wages earned by all occupations in the United States (2015).

Furthermore, there is a sharp contrast when comparing the wages of ECE

teachers versus grade school teachers, who are in the 60th percentile of all

occupations in the United States. Kindergarten teachers' mean annual salary

is $53,000 and they earn a median annual salary of $50,000. Elementary

school teachers mean annual salary is $56,000 and they earn a median

annual salary of $54,000. Based on this information, one can infer that the

younger the children served, the less money teachers earn.

As a whole, early childhood teachers earn a poor wage, but this

disparity is magnified when considering differences in salary, based on center

auspice. Center auspice describes the type of entity that operates the center

(Doherty-Derkowski, 1995). Centers can be generally organized into two

categories, non-profit or for-profit organizations. Non-profit centers include

school-sponsored programs, Head Start, and Public Pre-K, and receive

funding from an exterior source. For-profit centers include all ECE businesses

yielding a profit, like single operated for-profit centers, for-profit chains, and

employer-sponsored centers.

Overall, it has been found that non-profit centers are both higher in

quality and provide more equitable wages for teachers (Doherty-Derkowski,

1995, NSECE, 2013). Specifically, teachers working in school-sponsored

programs earn the most, with median hourly salary ranging from $11.80 to

$20.60 per hour (NSECE). While these teachers have the highest hourly

wages, teachers working for school-sponsored programs make up only 6% of all ECE teachers. In contrast, for-profit centers, which serve 59% of all children enrolled in center-based programs, have the most limitations in terms of annual salary. Median hourly salary ranges from $9.60 to $13.90, depending upon level of education. This means that the majority of ECE teachers are making between $20,000 and $28, 912 a year, placing them at or near the poverty line, depending on size of household.

Financial Stress

Considering inequity in teacher wages, researchers have investigated some of the effects of low wages on teachers' financial stress. Recent research by the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment investigated the effect of disparity in wages and turnover on teachers' levels of worry and stress (Whitebook, Phillips, & Howes, 2014). Specifically, the project team investigated the construct of economic insecurity in ECE teachers and how specific program policies influenced teachers' levels of stress about finances. The 13 item questionnaire included questions regarding: worries about providing for their families, having enough money to pay for bills, having enough money to plan for the future, having hours reduced, being sent home due to low enrollment, and being able to take time off to be with their families. It was found that overall, 57% of teachers are somewhat to strongly worried about their financial situation. While the numbers were somewhat lower for teachers with higher levels of education and for teachers who earned higher

wages, teachers on the higher paying end of the spectrum still expressed significant concern about the state of their financial situation.

Related to high levels of concern about financial outlook, ECE teachers are often required to rely on government aid in order to support themselves. The 2015 Worthy Wages study used Census Bureau data from the years 2007–2011 to garner an estimate of the utilization of public support programs by early childhood teachers, specifically teachers working with children 0-3 years old (Whitebook, Austin, & Amanta, 2015). Overall, it was found that 46% of childcare workers used at least one of the four types of government aid under investigation. The gravity of this percentage is augmented when comparing it to the national workforce estimates on government assistance. When considering the entire workforce of the United States, only 25% of workers rely on one of the forms of aid investigated. In contrast, in the field of ECE this percentage is almost doubled. Furthermore, because only four programs were included in the investigation (i.e., Federal Earned Income Tax Credit, Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), this finding provides a conservative estimate of the government aid childcare workers need to support themselves and their families.

Teacher Turnover

Teacher turnover rate is most often described as job turnover, or the percentage of teachers who have left their positions at a center within the span

of one year (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 2014). When considering rates of turnover, it is important to have a comparison from to base interpretations of trends. Overall, it has been found that centers with a turnover rate of 10% or higher tend to be of lower quality (Helburn, 1995).

Average annual job turnover in ECE has reduced from 25% in 1990 to 13% in 2012 (BLS, 2014). While this appears to be a significant reduction, three important pieces of information more fully illuminate the rate of turnover in ECE. First, research has shown that only about half of centers in the United States experience any turnover within a given year. For the centers reporting job turnover within the year, the turnover rate in 2012 was actually 25%. This rate is almost twice the rate of the national average for all ECE teachers. Second, although there has been a general decline in job turnover within the field, this decline is consistent with overall turnover trends in the United States. Due to changes in the financial climate, all non-farm related occupations have experienced reduced rates of job separation (e.g., turnover) in recent years (BLS). This suggests that the reduced rate of turnover in ECE is not necessarily due to improvements in the field, but could be related to the larger economic climate. Third, rates of turnover vary based on center auspice. Specifically, non-profit programs tend to have lower rates of teacher turnover (i.e., 14% for school sponsored programs, 10% for Head Start programs), while for-profit centers have the highest rates of turnover (i.e., 27%). As noted

above, this is especially problematic because the majority of ECE teachers work in for profit centers.

While turnover in any occupation is to be expected, high turnover rates in ECE is especially problematic due to the negative ramifications turnover has on children's development (i.e., language and social-emotional development), attachment relationship between children and teachers, work environment for teachers and directors, classroom quality, and parental satisfaction (Cassidy et al., 2011; Whitebook & Sakai, 2003).

In addition to high levels of job turnover, ECE teachers experience high levels of occupational turnover as well. The term teacher turnover also includes occupational turnover. Occupational turnover refers to the rate at which teachers leave the field of ECE altogether (Whitebook & Sakai, 2003). Whitebook and Sakai were the first to explore teacher turnover in a longitudinal study. Over the course of 4 years, ECE teachers were tracked as they moved to new centers or new occupations. It was found that only 51% of teachers continued to work in ECE after leaving their original position. The other half of teachers sought work in other industries like human services, technological services, and retail. Interviews with teachers revealed that the need to be one's own boss and to earn better wages were among the top reasons for leaving ECE. Also, on average, teachers who sought work in different occupations made more money than the teachers who stayed in ECE.

Teacher Empowerment

In reviewing these trends in ECE work environments, it is apparent that ECE teachers are generally paid low wages, experience significant financial stress, and are subject to high rates of turnover. Considering these trends in the profession as a whole, ECE teachers can be described as a marginalized group. The general definition of marginalization is, "To put or keep in a powerless or unimportant position" (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2015, Para. 1). Despite a growing demand for ECE teacher services and consistent increases in job qualifications, teachers' work environments do not reflect that.

In light of growing qualifications required to perform the job and the importance of services being rendered, it is imperative that conditions for teachers improve. This is an important goal, not only for the well-being of our teachers, but for the quality of education for our country's young children. Past legislation to improve the quality of education for young children has largely focused on improving structural features of the system (Clarke-Stewart & Allhusen, 2005). For example, amendments have been made to the level of education needed to be a teacher and requirements for paperwork and assessment tools have increased. While these are important steps for improving the quality of care for young children, these demands are top-down in their organization and do not focus on the well-being of teachers. Policy makers, business owners, and supervisors are in charge of changes that are then expected to be enacted by teachers. As described in Moore (1998), this

top-down level of reform is problematic because the people affected most by these decisions are not a part of the decision making process. In contrast, when people directly affected by a problem are given an opportunity to strategize, collaborate with others, and advocate for themselves, authentic and long-term change can be brought about (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005).

As described in Rappaport (1981; 1987), the definition of empowerment is the process or mechanism by which marginalized groups obtain control over the conditions of their group. Empowerment focuses on the innate and diverse competencies of individual groups and highlights the impetus of change as derived from within the group. In contrast to this internal source of change, historically, our country has seen a host of examples of helping agencies that direct initiatives in order to bring about change in disenfranchised groups. For example, the Progressive Era in the United States brought about a host of initiatives towards building up the nation's poor. While these initiatives were important for helping to get individuals unstuck from conditions of poverty, these programs had limits in their funding and were eventually disbanded, without providing permanent solutions to the problem at hand.

As described in Rappaport (1981) outside efforts of aiding marginalized groups are problematic in ensuring long-term and authentic change because they are one-sided and take away power from the disenfranchised groups. To describe this, Rappaport makes an important distinction between the constructs of prevention and advocacy versus empowerment. Efforts of

prevention are focused on implementing strategies to keep unwanted outcomes from occurring within a disenfranchised group. As an alternative to prevention, advocacy efforts are characterized as initiatives from outside groups to bring about change for marginalized groups. In both constructs, the goal of interventions is to fix or change the underlying structure of the groups and the strategies to do so come from experts located outside the groups. In contrast, empowerment focuses on the role individuals, within a group, play in identifying their unique strengths and capabilities. Empowerment also focuses on how they can work in collaboration with outside agencies in bringing about desired changes. Simply, the source of power in advocacy and prevention stems from the outside group, while in empowerment, the motivation for change emanates from within the group.

Utilizing empowerment as a tool for collaborating with marginalized groups, like ECE teachers, is important for three main reasons. First, the model of empowerment recognizes the unique and innate competencies of the marginalized group at hand. Disenfranchised groups are recognized as having the necessary resources to bring about change in their group, and it also acknowledges that they do not require an outside agency to solve their problems for them. Second, the problems facing marginalized groups are recognized as the result of social structures and blocked access to resources (Rappaport, 1981). From this perspective, individuals of marginalized groups are not viewed as causing the challenges that they face. Instead, a model of

empowerment recognizes that there are faults in the system, which, in some way, prevents groups from achieving access to the resources they need. Third, this model allows for marginalized groups to enact change that is specific to the diverse needs of their group. So often, changes in public policy are umbrella changes that may or not meet the specific needs of the group. Empowerment allows for authentic change because the people who live through the conditions that need to be changed drive it. In other words, the group members hold a unique level of expertise that cannot be replicated by outside individuals or agencies.

While there is no specific research on ECE teacher empowerment, ECE teachers do have a young history of advocating for an enhanced teacher work environment. For example, since the 1940s and 1950s, ECE teachers began to advocate for themselves through grassroots campaigns regarding livable wages (American Federation for Teachers, 2016). In the 1960s and 1970s, the grassroots campaigns of years past became more organized and the Center for the Childcare Workforce (CCW) was founded in 1976. The CCW's main goal was to provide a voice for ECE teachers in advocating for worthy wages and to illuminate the role that teachers play in providing quality education services. Initiatives of the group, like 'Who's Minding the Childcare Workers,' and the creation of the California Teacher Mentor Program, have helped to empower teachers to advocate for themselves. Based on these examples,

moving forward, there need to be continued efforts towards empowering

teachers and research to support these initiatives.

Community Based Participatory Research

In alignment with this perspective, the goal of Community Based

Participatory Research (CBPR) is to conduct research based in collaboration

and equitable partnership (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008). CBPR is an

orientation for guiding research that focuses on building equitable partnerships

between groups with few resources and researchers interested in learning

more about them. From this perspective, research is not done on participants

in order to simply learn more about a specific phenomenon. Instead, this

orientation focuses on building an equitable partnership, in which group

members and researchers share their respective levels of expertise, in order

to gain knowledge and bring about meaningful change.

CBPR is an integration of nine basic principles that generally inform

work done with community members. While researchers must maintain a

certain level of flexibility in implementing principles, the following nine

principles should inform collaboration with community members (Israel et al.,

1998).

1. Community as a Unit of Identity

This principle highlights that participants from this framework identify a

sense of community with the group as a whole. In other words, individuals of

marginalized groups share common experiences, values and norms, common interests, and joint commitment to change, to name a few.

2. Build on Strengths and Resources within the Community

This principle highlights that it is necessary for CBPR to highlight strengths and resources the group members already have available to them, as well as support group members in building on those strengths and reaching out for additional support.

3. Facilitation of Collaboration and Equity in all Phases of Research Process

This principle describes that all members participate in the research process. This includes problem definition, data collection, interpretation of results, and application of the results. This principle acknowledges that community members are not typically given this opportunity. Therefore, there will need to be direct attempts to address inequities in understanding the research process and empowering group members in developing those skills.

4. Co-learning and Capacity Building

Building upon the above principle, the fourth principle focuses on the reciprocal nature of exchange between community members and researchers. Each group has a level of expertise that is equitably shared with the other group.

5. Balance of Research and Action

This principle highlights that research should bring forth new information that helps determine action necessary for the group. Furthermore,

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this process is cyclical. As actions are carried out, new information gained through the process is used to determine further group practices.

6. Emphasis on Local Public Health Problems

This principle describes that CBPR takes into account health concerns specific to the target group. Health is characterized from a positive model that includes a person's physical, mental, and social-well-being. Also, this principle highlights the importance of viewing health from an ecological model that considers the role of both immediate and distal contexts for the group.

7. Systems Development through a Cyclical and Iterative Process

This principle illustrates the repetitive nature of the partnership between researchers and research participants. In other words, the partnership is both developed and maintained through the continual repetition of capacity building and co-learning, problem definitions, data collection and analysis, etc.

8. Dissemination of Findings to all Partners and Involves all Partners in the Dissemination Process

This principle describes that the findings from each project are shared with all partners involved in the research process. In addition to this, this principle underlies the importance of sharing information in an understandable and respectful manner that acknowledges the unique contributions of all partners involved.

9. Long-Term Process and Commitment to Sustainability

The final principle underscores the importance of building long-term partnerships and honoring commitments to work in collaboration with groups.

While 'long-term' is not explicitly defined, partnerships should extend beyond a single project. While the nature of the partnership may change overtime, there is a commitment, on the part of both community members and researchers, to continue the collaboration until they amicably decide to part ways.

While the history of CBPR emanates from health disparity research, it has also been used as an important orientation for conducting research with teachers. For example, Langdon et al., (2014) applied CBPR principles to engage pre-service teachers in improving their teaching training program. Pre-service teachers were introduced to Photovoice (i.e., a qualitative method of collecting pictures to illustrate participants' perspectives) and created a project to highlight the strengths and weaknesses within their program. For example, one teacher took a photo of an impromptu revised lesson plan to illustrate one of the program's strengths. Through facilitated discussion, the preservice teachers then organized all of their photos into larger groups and sub-groups. For example, the revised lesson plan was placed in the 'Strengths' section, specifically in the 'Best Practice' sub-group. Within the 'Best Practice' group of images, the pictures were further organized into smaller groups, and the revised lesson plan was placed into the group of images entitled 'Writing and Adapting Lesson Plans'. Using the identified groups of images as discussion points, the results of the Photovoice program were presented to the managing staff of their program, and important findings were integrated into the program to enhance its quality.

Specific to ECE, CBPR principles have been exemplified through the RECAP program at the Children's Institute at the University of Rochester (Children's Institute, 2016; Infurna et al., 2015). The RECAP program has been in effect since 1992 and its main goal is to improve quality of care for young children through assessment and dissemination of results about contributions to quality care. The collaborative is made up of parents, teachers, administrators, researchers, government entities, foundations, and schools. Through the contributions of different funding sources throughout the years, RECAP provides training to collaborative partners about research and assessment tools. In addition to this, each group of partners is given an opportunity to assess quality care based on their specific perspective. For example, teachers, as a partnership group, report on children's ratings in the classroom, and parents contribute information regarding family satisfaction. Annual reports, consisting of the data collected from each group of partners, are later disseminated to school, government, health, and foundation policymakers. Based on annual reports, schools that were a part of this program demonstrate overall higher quality care than centers that are not a part of the collaborative (Infurna et al., 2015). This suggests that the equitable and empowering nature of the collaborative were key in creating sustainable change in program quality.

Summary and Purpose of the Study

To summarize, the teaching profession in the field of ECE has developed in need, recognition, and qualification requirements over the past 200 years. ECE teachers began as a small group of non-professionals who provided custodial care and had no requirements for training. Over the course of our nation's history, the profession has helped to develop include a group of professionals that serve over 6.8 million children in the country. In spite of the strides made to professionalize the field of ECE, little research has focused on the well-being of ECE teachers and how they can advocate for themselves. This is detrimental, not only for the teachers and their well-being, but also for the quality of care and well-being of the millions of children enrolled in ECE.

To address the marginalization of ECE teachers in the work force, the purpose of this case study was to explore the role of teacher empowerment in the ECE work environment. For the purpose of this investigation, teacher empowerment was defined as the process by which ECE teachers advocate for their needs in their work environment (i.e., turnover, compensation, teacher-identified components of work environment). The majority of past research has focused on grand-scale identifiers of work environment, so, an important component of this project was to highlight how teachers personally identify issues in their work environment. Working from a CBPR framework, this investigation focused on assisting ECE teachers, specifically teachers working in for-profit centers (59% of all ECE centers), in addressing

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self-identified problems and strengths in their work environment. To facilitate this process, weekly focus groups were held with the teachers, and the focus groups centered on the development of a project that the teachers developed and implemented in their center.

Research Questions

To explore teacher empowerment, this study focused on two major research questions: 1) How do ECE teachers, working in for-profit centers, describe issues in their work environment? 2) How does teacher empowerment play a role in addressing these issues? Due to the exploratory nature of the study and the CBPR orientation, specific hypotheses were not outlined. Instead, the goal was to allow the participants to guide the process and set objectives for the research project.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODS

Rationale for Qualitative Exploration and Design

To investigate the research questions described above, the study

employed qualitative methodology. Specifically, the design of the project was a

case study. Case studies are used to develop an in-depth understanding of

the research problem of interest, over a sustained period of time (Creswell,

2014). Qualitative exploration and the use of a case study were chosen for two

main reasons. First, due to the lack of research in ECE teacher empowerment,

a qualitative exploration of the problem was imperative in gaining a deeper

understanding of the nature of the issue. Qualitative analysis is important for

in-depth study because it allows for the use of multiple sources of data, which

was beneficial in creating a more comprehensive understanding of teacher

empowerment (Creswell, 2014). Second, using qualitative methodology was

beneficial in the process of establishing equitable partnerships with the

participants of the study and allowing for them to shape the nature of the

project (Creswell, 2014). In alignment with the CBPR approach, it is imperative

that the unique viewpoints of participants are central in the research process

(Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008). Due to the emergent nature of qualitative

methodology, participants were able to guide the nature of the project.

Role of the Researcher

In employing a case study design, the researcher was actively engaged with the participants of the study (Creswell, 2014). Because of this, there was a strong potential for bias inherent in the process (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2007). To address this, relevant background information about the researcher's potential for bias and how this was addressed in the study are included. Like the participants of the study, the researcher is a female, ECE teacher. She has seven years of ECE experience, and earns a comparable wage to the proposed participants. Due to the shared similarities between the investigator and the participants, it is apparent that the investigator will have some bias in the interpretation of the analysis. For example, there is the potential for the researcher to focus on certain themes or find support find support in conclusions that tie in with her past experiences.

To help address this bias, the investigation was not completed at the researcher's place of employment or with teachers she has a direct connection to. In addition to this, the analysis of the data was completed with two additional research assistants. The research assistants were undergraduates working on their Honor's theses, and they had been trained in Thematic Analysis as a part of one of Dr. David Chavez's research teams. Furthermore, the investigator regularly evaluated her role in the process through engaging in questions of self-reflection, as well as checking in with the participants about the representativeness of the project to their own experiences. Finally, all

materials and procedures used, were approved by the departmental Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Participants

The study included four early childhood teachers and their center director. All participants were female and ranged in age from 20 to 67 years of age. The group of educators was diverse; with three of the educators describing themselves as Hispanic, one educator describing herself as Caucasian, and one educator describing herself as Vietnamese and Black. The majority of the educators worked 42 hours per week, with only one teacher indicating part-time status at the center, and the center director indicating working about 50 hours per week. In regards to education, two of the educators described that they earned their core units of ECE, one educator described earning 15 units of ECE, and one educator indicated that she earned a dual BA degree in Human Development and Psychology. The director stated that she has her AA degree in ECE. On average teachers indicated making about 25,000 a year, with the center director making about $42,000 a year.

Measures

Program Information Survey

This survey elicited information about basic program operations (e.g., number of classrooms, number of teachers, average teacher salary, rates of

turnover, teacher benefits, teacher education, additional sources of funding)

(See Appendix A).

Director Interview

This semi-structured interview focused on the director's experiences in

supervising the program and the teachers. Both closed and open-ended

questions were asked to elicit responses and the interview was about 10

minutes long (See Appendix B).

Early Childhood Education Teacher Questionnaire

This questionnaire requested demographic information from the

participants and utilized open-ended questions to learn more about teachers'

ECE work experience (See Appendix C).

KinderCare Psychological Empowerment Scale (PES) – Modified

A modified version of the PES was used (See Appendix D). The PES

was designed to measure four areas of psychological empowerment:

Socio-political Skills, Motivation to Influence, Participatory Behavior, and

Perceived Control (Ozer & Schotland, 2011). The modified version of this

measure asks questions that are site specific and it has a test-retest reliability

coefficient of .83. The measure was administered twice – once in Session 1

and again in Session 5.

Focus Groups

Over the course of the project, five weekly, 1.5 hour focus groups were

conducted with the teachers (See Table 1). The nature of the focus groups

was to actively engage teachers in characterizing work environment issues

and to facilitate the development of the project.

Table 1. Session Schedule

Session Number	Topics
Session 1	-Personal Introductions -Teacher Demographic Questionnaire -Purpose of Project -Orientation to CBPR
Session 2	-Discussion of work environment issues -Brainstorming project ideas
Session 3	-Project Preparation
Session 4	-Project Preparation
Session 5	-Project Presentation -Discussion/Exit Survey -Debriefing

Teacher Exit Survey

In the final session, teachers were asked to fill out a survey describing

their experiences during the project. The questions included items to rate and

open-ended questions (See Appendix G).

Director Exit Interview

In the week following the final focus group, the researcher conducted

an interview with the director. The interview was semi-structured and lasted

about 15 minutes. The interview was an opportunity to receive feedback from

the director about the process, as well an opportunity for the researcher to provide any needed resources (See Appendix H).

<div align="center">Procedure</div>

<u>Recruitment of Centers</u>

For-profit centers in the Inland Empire were contacted by phone, in-person, or by letter, with a brief description of the proposed project. For centers that expressed interest, a 15-minute presentation on the nature of project was provided to the teachers and director. Following the presentation, if the participants were interested, consent forms were collected.

<u>Director Interview and Program Information Survey</u>

Before collecting focus group data, the semi-structured interview was conducted with the director at the center. The interview was recorded using two digital audio recorders (one for back up) and notes.

<u>Focus Groups</u>

The focus groups were about 1.5 hours long and held once a week at the site. The first four meetings only included the researcher and the participants. The purpose for this was to allow the participants an opportunity to establish the nature of the project, without the influence of their supervisor. The final session was an opportunity for the teachers to present their project, and their supervisor was invited to attend. For each session, water and a light dinner were provided to the participants.

Session 1. The first session began with personal introductions and an icebreaker to help establish rapport between the investigator and the participants. Following the icebreaker, the demographic questionnaire and work experience questionnaire were distributed and completed during the session. Once the questionnaires had been collected, the investigator began a PPT presentation about the background of why the project was being conducted and gave a brief overview of CBPR (See Appendix E). Ten to fifteen minutes were left at the end of the session for discussion or questions.

Session 2. The second session began with a short icebreaker. All of the icebreakers were geared towards helping to establish rapport between the researcher and the participants, and to help start dialogue for the session. An example of an icebreaker used was one called Bugs and Butterflies. For that icebreaker, the teachers shared an experience that was going well for them in the classroom (i.e., a butterfly) and an experience that was not going well (i.e., a bug). Following the activity, the investigator facilitated a discussion with the participants about the pros and cons of their work environment. In addition to audio recording, specific items were recorded on large post-it notes. The post-it notes were referenced during the next half of the session, which focused on the sort of project the teachers wanted to create in order to address concerns in the work environment. To help establish the nature of the project, each teacher was asked to identify a short-term goal and a long-term goal related to their work. These were shared with the group, and then, as a

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group, they worked to come to consensus about two to three tasks that could be realistically completed over the next month. A few minutes were left at the end of the session to address any comments or concerns.

Sessions 3 and 4. These two sessions each began with a brief icebreaker. Following the icebreaker, there was brief check in and review of what had been accomplished in the previous session. Building upon the work completed in the session before, the teachers and the researcher shared ideas and resources that could be used to address the three major areas they would like to see change in their workplace. Following the lead of the participants, the investigator prepared relevant resources to aid in this process. Session 3 ended with questions and discussion of tasks to complete the following week.

Due to teacher scheduling, there was a week break between Session 3 and Session 4. Following the icebreaker, the session continued similar to Session 3. However, during the last half an hour of Session 4, time was left over for the group to discuss the final session and presentation. Housekeeping items like who to invite, the order of events, and how the final results of the project will be disseminated were discussed.

Session 5. Due to one of the participant's leaving the center, the center was unable to host Session 5, the week following Session 4. Instead, Session 5 was held two weeks after Session 4. Because of this, there were some last minute adjustments that had to be made in order to prepare the presentation.

It appeared that the teachers had a hard time coming back into the sessions, due to the longer break. Except for this break, the final session happened as planned. The first half of the final session was focused around the presentation of the project. The participants asked that the center director be present, and also invited other teachers in the center to attend. However, only the participants and the center director were able to attend. The researcher was responsible for introductions and briefly described the background of the project and common areas of concern for early childhood educators. Following this, the participants shared with their director the solutions they came up with for addressing concerns in their work environment, and engaged in collaboration about implementation of these ideas at their center. After the presentation, the director was excused and the next half of the session began. The second half of the session focused on feedback about the process of the project, completion of the exit survey, and debriefing. The investigator concluded the session by thanking the participants for their time and commitment to the project, and providing each participant with a $20 gift card. The investigator also provided her contact information and informed the participants that she will share the completed project with them.

Observation Protocol

The investigator took observation notes as needed, and included any interpretations of what she observed in the margins of her notes.

<u>Interview/Focus Group Protocol</u>

Interviews were recorded using two audio recorders (one for back up). In case of problems with the recordings, handwritten notes were taken as well. Audio recordings were uploaded onto a password-protected computer and placed in a password-protected folder. Following each session, digital recordings were transcribed. Names of participants were changed in written transcripts and in the final results to protect confidentiality. Each interview/focus group began with an icebreaker, followed by 4 to 5 questions to help elicit responses (See Appendix F). At the end of each interview or focus group, the investigator thanked the participants for their time and answered any questions they may have.

Analysis

The quantitative measure of empowerment was scored and due to the small sample size, only descriptive statistics were used to analyze the measure. The remainder of the data collected (i.e., interviews and focus group transcriptions and surveys) was analyzed using Thematic Analysis. Thematic Analysis is a qualitative method of analyzing data that identifies representative themes from the data set (Creswell, 2014). In regard to questionnaires, the quantitative measure, the Psychological Empowerment Scale (PES) was scored at Session 1 and again at Session 5. However, the rest of the data was analyzed following the four general steps as outlined in Creswell:

1) All data sources were first organized and prepared for analysis (e.g., transcribing interviews, organizing observation notes, etc.)

2) All sources of data were read and reflected on as a whole. The investigator and research assistants then began to make general notes about emerging themes.

3) Next data was hand coded. The procedure for coding information followed the steps as outlined by Tesch (1990) and codes emerged from this specific data set.

   o The entire set of transcripts was read and notes were made in the margins.

   o Next, one document was read through and notes about underlying meaning were made.

   o After repeating this process for several documents, columns of emerging clusters of topics were made.

   o Next, topics were abbreviated as codes and these codes were used to highlight corresponding portions of the text. Also, the researchers checked to see if new codes emerged.

   o After reviewing the coded data, broad and descriptive categories were determined that demonstrated interrelationships between similar codes.

   o Next, final abbreviations for codes were decided upon and then alphabetized.

- o Following this, data was organized corresponding to each category and an initial analysis of that category was conducted. This was repeated for all categories.

- o Codes were revised as necessary.

4) Coded information was then organized into a description of the setting and the participants, a description of responses to the Psychological Empowerment Scale (PES), and five to seven general themes identified in the study. The descriptions and themes are supported by direct quotes and examples.

CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS

Details of Project

<u>Description of Center Setting</u>

This case study was conducted at a KinderCare in the Inland Empire.
The center is made up of 7 classrooms and serves children ages 6 weeks to
13 years of age. Center hours of operation are 6:00 AM to 6:30 PM. The
center is for-profit and a part of a chain of other KinderCare centers. As a
result, certain modes of operation are determined by corporate (e.g., teacher
salary, teacher education, monthly budget). Although parent fees make up a
significant portion of site revenue, the center also receives subsidies from the
following agencies: Riverside County of Education, Department of Public
School Services Gain, The United States Military, and the Child Care
Resource Center.

At the time of the study, the center employed eight full time ECE
teachers and three part-time teachers. The staff also included three
administrative staff (i.e., a director, an assistant director, and a floor manager).
The beginning of the sessions coincided with recent changes in the
administrative staff (i.e., the departure of the past assistant director, the
promotion of a new assistant director, and the creation of a third level tier of
management: floor manager). However, due to insufficient staffing, the new
assistant director and floor manager were regularly included in the classroom

ratios. The majority of educators in the setting earned their core units of ECE (i.e., 18 semester units of ECE studies). On average, the teachers at this center earned about $10.40 an hour (i.e., 21,000 annual salary), and in terms of benefits, received a medical option and a 401k.

Description of Participants

Participants included four early childhood educators, each serving diverse roles in center operations. To help maintain teacher confidentiality, all names have been changed.

Lucy: At the beginning of the sessions, Lucy was newly promoted to assistant director of the center. She has been a teacher for a year and this job was her first in ECE. Lucy is 26 years old and self-described her ethnic background as Mexican. She is single and claims no dependents. She works 42 hours per week and indicated her annual income as 27,000. However, she also indicated that she does some part-time work. She has two bachelor's degrees, one in Psychology and the other in Human Development. Her past work experiences in the field include an internship at a laboratory school and babysitting. In regards to future goals, she hopes to pursue her masters and doctorate in a related field. Lucy attended all five of the sessions.

Jessica: Jessica was recently promoted to floor manager at the site. This title means that she is responsible for assuring that breaks and transitions are regularly occurring in the seven classrooms. She is included in the count for breaks and closing classrooms, and she assists with administrative tasks.

Jessica is 20 years old and described her ethnic background as Hispanic. She is single and claims no dependents. She works 42 hours per week and indicated her annual salary as $24,500 a year. She has earned some college units (i.e., core 18 units of ECE). This is her first job in the field and has worked at this site for the past 10 months. Prior to working at this site, Jessica volunteered at a different KinderCare location. She indicated that in the future she would like to open up an in home daycare. Jessica attended all five of the sessions.

Rosie: Rosie is an assistant teacher. She is responsible for opening classrooms and assisting the main teacher in implementing curriculum and providing daily care routines in the two-year-old classroom. Rosie is 23 years old and self-described her ethnic background as Mexican. She is single and claims no dependents. She works 40 hours per week and indicated her annual salary as about $23,000 a year. She has earned 15 units of ECE but hopes to continue her education in ECE. She worked at this site for nine months, and this was her first job in the ECE profession. Her future career goals include teaching child development at a community college and opening up her own child development center. Rosie attended four of the five sessions. However, she left the center prior to completion of the project, and was unable to attend the final session.

Kassidy: Kassidy is a school age teacher. Her job description includes providing homework help and programs for school age children at the site.

Kassidy is 67 years old and did not include her ethnicity in the ECE Teacher

Questionnaire. She indicated that she is a widow and that she claims no

dependents. She described that she works part time at the center, but did not

include her annual salary. She has earned some college units (i.e., 18 core

semester units in ECE). Kassidy has worked at this site for 17 years. Prior to

working at this site, she had some experience volunteering in a classroom.

Kassidy attended three of the five sessions.

Director: The director has worked at this site for the past three years.

She works about 50 hours a week and her job includes supervising staff,

running the floor, ensuring that ratios are being followed, handling parent

questions and concerns, giving tours, assisting in the classroom, overseeing

the budget, taking inventory, and shopping for supplies. She is 45 years old

and identifies as Vietnamese and Black. She has her AA in ECE and earns

about $42,000 a year. Before she worked as a director, she worked as an

ECE teacher for about 6 years.

Description of Project and Presentation to the Director

When prompted by the facilitator about the nature of the project they

wanted to conduct, the teachers expressed a desire to brainstorm solutions to

three of the top concerns they have in their workplace. After developing a

detailed action plan, based in research, planning, and preparation, the

teachers created a presentation of their plan for their center director. A brief

description of the presentation is outlined below:

1. Center Communication

   a. Incorporate regular staff meetings again

   b. Begin a center newsletter

   c. Create a parent association

2. Fundraising for Supplies

   a. Center carwash

   b. Reaching out to institutions for donations

   c. Center yard sale

   d. Selling meals to families

3. Planning time for Teachers

   a. Reschedule teachers, to allow lead teachers time to plan during naptime.

The presentation to the director was held during the first half of Session 5. Due to an incident at the center, the fifth session was pushed back a couple of weeks and one of the teachers who originally planned to present was unable to attend the session. As a result, there was some last minute restructuring of the presentation. The researcher began the session by briefly describing the background of the project as well as common areas of concern for ECE teachers. Following this, the participants shared with their director some solutions they came up with for addressing concerns in their work environment. As to be expected, the participants appeared to be more timid in the presentation with the director than they had in the focus groups. For

example, their voices were a little more shaky than usual and they needed a

couple of reminders about topics they planned to discuss. In spite of this, they

shared their action plan, and the director seemed receptive of their ideas. As

described in the emerging themes section below, the director engaged in a

collaborative conversation with the teachers about how to implement the ideas

in their center. Following the presentation, the director expressed being

appreciative of this process because she is not always allowed the opportunity

to sit down and hear from her staff directly. After the director was excused

from the session, the facilitator went through a debriefing session with the

teachers. During debriefing, they described that they appreciated being able to

sit down with their director, but that they were uncertain if things would actually

change. They also expressed that they wish more of the teachers at the center

could have been involved in the presentation.

Findings

KinderCare Psychological Empowerment Scale (PES)

Responses to the PES were scored out of a total 40 possible points.

Overall, participants scored lower on psychological empowerment from

Session 1 to Session 5. At Session 1, participants' total scores ranged from 25

to 40, out of a possible 40 points (See Table 2). At Session 5, participants'

total scores ranged from 18 – 30, out of a possible 40 points.

Items on the PES were divided into four categories: Socio-Political

skills, Motivation to influence, Participatory behavior, and Perceived control.

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For the majority of items, in all four categories, teachers' mean scores decreased from Time 1 to Time 2 (See Table 3-6). The only area in which teachers' mean scores increased was in the category of Socio-Political Skills – Item 1: If I want to improve a problem at KinderCare, I know how to gather useful data about the issue. Teachers' mean score increased from 3 to 3.33 from Time 1 to Time 2 (See Table 3).

Table 2. Psychological Empowerment Scale Time 1 and Time 2 Total Scores by Participant

Teacher	Time 1 Total	Time 2 Total	Difference from T1 to T2
Lucy	27	19	8
Jessica	37	30	7
Rosie	25	N/A	N/A
Kassidy	40	18	22

Table 3. Psychological Empowerment Scale Socio-Political Skills Mean

Scores Time 1 and Time 2

Item	T1 Mean	T2 Mean
If I want to improve a problem at KinderCare, I know how to gather useful data about the issue.	3	3.33
I know how rules and policies are made at KinderCare.	3	2.33

Table 4. Psychological Empowerment Scale Motivation to Influence Mean

Scores Time I and Time 2

Item	T1 Mean	T2 Mean
I want to have as much say as possible in making decisions at KinderCare.	3.66	2.66
People should work to improve KinderCare even if we can't always make the changes we want.	4	3.66

Table 5. Psychological Empowerment Scale Participatory Behavior Mean

Scores Time 1 and Time 2

Item	T1	T2
I have spoken with administrators at KinderCare about issues that I want to improve at KinderCare.	3.66	3.33
I have spoken with other people about issues that I want to improve at the KinderCare.	3.66	2.66
If issues come up at that affect people at KinderCare, we do something about it.	3.66	2.33

Table 6. Psychological Empowerment Scale Perceived Control Mean Scores

Time and Time 2

Item	T1	T2
There are plenty of ways for people like me to have a say in what happens at KinderCare.	3	1.33
People have a say in what happens at KinderCare.	3	1.33
People at KinderCare get to help plan special activities and events.	3	1.33

Themes Derived from Open-Ended Surveys and Transcriptions

Table 7. Emerging Themes and Sub-Categories

Theme	Times Referenced	Sub-categories
Frustration with Center Operations and Corporate Regulations	106	Frustration with Center Operations, Frustration with Corporate, Turnover
Empowerment	80	Experiences of Disempowerment, Recommendations for Change, Actions of Empowerment
Communication	73	Center Communication, Fear of Expression, Not Feeling Heard, Feeling Heard, Collaboration
Emotional and Physical Well Being	45	N/A
Teacher Unity	42	N/A
Teacher Education and Teacher Training	27	N/A

Frustration with Center Operations and Corporate Regulations

Over the course of the project, statements describing concerns about center operations and corporate regulations were referenced 106 times. These concerns can be divided into three sub-categories: Frustration with Center Operations, Frustration with Corporate, and Turnover.

Frustration with Center Operations. This sub-category can be described as frustrations and issues that the staff voiced about the day-to-day operations at their center.

The biggest concern staff voiced was lack of supplies at their center. This concern was shared by three of the four participants in response to a survey question, and it was also a regular topic of concern in focus groups. Below are a couple of quotes describing their concerns.

1. Mine is, having my supplies to help my children do what they need to do, to provide them with what they need for in their homework and in the program I have to do for them, that has been given to KinderCare for me to do. That's really important to me because if I don't have my supplies then I can't do my program. And if I do not have the supplies to help them with their homework, then I feel like I cannot help them with their homework, and then I feel that I am not succeeding. Other than that I am fine. Is that it good enough. (Kassidy, Personal Communication, August 2016)

2. Not having the supplies because most of the time, when you're looking through your curriculum book, you have to improvise, and make it work to something you have. And most of the time, we don't have what's in the curriculum book so we can't do…I mean we try to work around it, but it would nice to be able to do what's in the book, with the materials that they ask. (Jessica, Personal Communication, August 2016)

Due to lack of supplies, teachers regularly take on the responsibility of purchasing items with their personal funds, even though they have been instructed not to.

1. Where do you guys buy stuff? There was a deal on Amazon today. I'm thinking of buying it myself because my kids have a bucket, like this (demonstrating size) and they only have this (demonstrating small amount) many crayons to fill it. (Rosie, Personal Communication, August 2016)

2. "I've probably put about $400 since I've been working here" (Jessica, Personal Communication, August 2016).

Another significant point of frustration for the teachers was the way that staffing and scheduling are conducted at their center. In the ECE Teacher Questionnaire, half of the teachers described concerns related to staffing (i.e., having to shift teachers constantly and having too many children and not enough teachers). These concerns were further echoed during focus group sessions.

In regard to requesting time off for health related concerns: **"**Like when you're super sick and you have to call off, but you're already down two teachers, sometimes you have to come in" (Rosie, Personal Communication, August 2016).

In regard to having enough teachers the teachers described:

1. This is another con, it's not as bad now that you guys are here: Not being able to call off when you're sick and not being able to get your PTO approved for vacation. Being understaffed…I think that a better way of saying it. Because I feel like kids just keep enrolling and enrolling and enrolling, but no teachers are being hired. (Rosie, Personal Communication, August 2016)

2. When asked about being required to do bus runs for the site:

    Jessica: We're not supposed to, we're supposed to hire bus drivers because I guess, we're not allowed to pull out teachers from the count, but we still do. We can pull the cook, but we don't. We pull one of the teachers out of the classrooms to do bus runs. (Personal Communication, August 2016)

    Rosie: "And when it's time for the kids to go back to school, she's hardly ever in her classroom because she's pulled out to do bus runs" (Personal Communication, August 2016).

    Lucy: "It messes up with their curriculum and it falls on the other teacher that working with her… But I am working on it!" (Personal Communication, August 2016).

The teachers also expressed frustration about the amount of time their director spends on the floor of the center.

1. Rosie: I think our director needs to be here more, in the center, and I know it's hard because she has stuff she has to do in her office, but I feel like Lucy and Jessica are here all day everyday and they know what's going on. She's management - she's an assistant director – our director should know what's going on in her center. (Personal Communication, August 2016).

2. I just feel that the director is never here and if she is here then she's in her office and that she doesn't talk to us, and she doesn't know what's going on. Well, she needs to know, sooner or later, and she needs to find out how we feel. (Jessica, Personal Communication, August 2016)

The teachers also described frustration over working hours that they do not get paid for:

1. Facilitator: For your planning time, how do you usually fit in? Since it's not included in your schedule.

   Jessica: Oh, for the teachers?

   Kassidy: On your lunch.

   Jessica: On your lunch, or right when you have the children sit down, Okay, so we're doing this, You have to make it up in your head. It's not like.... Or like during nap time...Or like right when you get all of the kids sat down and another teacher always tells me if I am free to make copies, because she has an activity

planned, but she didn't have time to make copies. And it's like

our lunch is mostly working and not getting paid for it.

2.	"I worked 12 hours today!" (Lucy, Personal Communication,

August 2016).

Another major frustration with center operations surrounded the

building's regular need for repairs:

Jessica: I am telling you most of our money goes to repairing stuff,

carpet cleaning because they don't want to be buying new carpets,

which I understand because carpet is like $800. I mean add up how

many times you've had to clean the carpets, or had to fix something?

Lucy: Speaking of that - I need to go clean up a leak over there.

Frustration with Corporate. In addition to frustration with center

operations, teachers expressed frustration with KinderCare regulations and

how far removed corporate is from the actual day-to-day operations of the

center.

1.	I feel when corporate comes to speak with the people up front,

they should also come and speak with us. Because we're the

root of the tree, even though the people in the front office are

also the root of the tree – in their business – but we're the ones

in the classroom – they're not in the classroom like we are.

(Kassidy, Personal Communication, August 2016)

2.	Kassidy: And we cannot even go to school now.

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Lucy: There is a sign in the break room that says we will not be working with school schedules any more. That's for all KinderCares.

Teachers often made reference to the company's primary focus being on making money:

1.   Jessica: I think this company is just more for profit.

Rosie: They don't care about the teachers.

Kassidy: They don't care about the teachers; I don't even know if they care about the kids. They're all for money.

2.   It's our corporation. The top, the CEO doesn't see any of this. So they don't see the problem. All they see is just dollar signs. It is a business, pretty much. It's like okay, this is how much we're giving them, this all that can you have. You exceeded it? Too bad. It's just that when you're so removed from the actual work environment, all you see is just money. (Lucy, Personal Communication, August 2016)

Teachers also expressed frustration with compensation:

If we were treated differently, if we got paid what we should get paid for all that we do…then I don't think that any of us would think about leaving or finding another job. Like I've considered going to apply at In-N-Out because they pay $13 an hour to make hamburgers. I am a teacher and…. (Rosie, Personal Communication, August 2016)

Turnover. Turnover can be defined as statements in which the teachers expressed leaving their current positions, or descriptions of other teachers leaving their positions at KinderCare.

1. Jessica: If she doesn't listen and it doesn't start to change, it's going to affect her because teachers are starting to leave, left and right.

   Kassidy: And then the district is going to know and the managers are going to be asking, Why are your teachers leaving around the same time? Why do they keep leaving? Because I've never seen a KinderCare go through so many teachers. I mean, yeah a lot of teachers, but they at least stay for two years and then leave. But they're all leaving at the same time.

2. I am just here for my year's experience and then I am out. Sorry guys. Cause I thought it would be different, when I started this job I thought that I am going to be here for a couple of years, and then a couple of months went by and I said – Oh no, I am here for one year and then that's it. If we were treated differently….

   (Rosie, Personal Communication, August 2016)

Empowerment

A second emerging theme was Empowerment. Empowerment can be described as a process or mechanism by which marginalized groups obtain control over the conditions of their group (Rappaport, 1981). Over the course

of the project, 80 statements related to empowerment were made. This theme can be divided into three sub-categories: Experiences of Disempowerment, Recommendations for Change, and Actions of Empowerment.

Experiences of Disempowerment. This sub-category can be described as instances where teachers described feeling undervalued and powerless in their positions.

For example, teachers described feeling like their hard work was unappreciated.

1. Kassidy: Can I say something? To not be notified as a babysitter. Because we don't go to school to be babysitters; we go to school to get the knowledge. And I mean we have the knowledge, but some of these parents make us out like…Let me put you down. You're just here and then they're gone. Because when children hear it from the parent, the child turns around and says - Well, you're like a babysitter anyway. What the parents say, little ears hear and little ears repeat. No, I didn't go to school to be a babysitter. I went to school to learn.
    Teacher 2: I think they should give us more credit on that.

2. "At times yes, it would just anger me that we do so much and our company doesn't acknowledge our efforts" (Jessica, Personal Communication, September 2016).

Teachers also described feeling helpless to make changes in their environment:

Jessica: Just because she's the assistant and I am the floor manager, we don't have a say so. We can only do so much and it sucks because we're here most of the time, we deal with everything most of the time and we don't have any say so. It like sucks because...I don't know. It just gets me frustrated. Anyways, go on.

Lucy: Yeah, but they don't realize that we don't have that much power.

Jessica: And I let them know, I tell them you know what I am sorry but, whatever our director says... I mean I can try all I can and I can talk, but it all ultimately comes up to her.

Recommendations for Change: This sub-category can be defined as teachers' recommendations for solutions to work place concerns, specifically recommendations without taking action.

1. What about getting parents once a month to have a meeting - like at public schools they have a PTA, we could have parent meetings to let them know what's happening and what's going on. (Kassidy, Personal Communication, August 2016)

2. Kassidy: The library - they donate books.
   Rosie: Yeah, like calling the library - because my class they need books.

Jessica: I know that Office Depot and Staples - if they get packages that are damaged they throw them away. I mean we could ask for them - they're not all damaged.

Rosie: We could find like churches or tell our parents.

Acts of Empowerment. This sub-category describes teachers' acts of making change in their center.

1. Jessica: Well, you did it. You called corporate.

   Rosie: Well, I had to, I wasn't going to let that go. Those were my hours that I waited two months for to get paid.

2. Jessica: At this point, I think she needs to know and I am not afraid to present it that way, I don't know about you guys.

   Rosie: Oh no, I don't care.

   Lucy: I always tell our director what's going on.

   Jessica: I think she needs to know what's going on in her center and how we're feeling. Because if we're not open with her, she's never going to get, or she's never going to understand what's going on.

Communication

A third emerging theme was Communication. Over the course of the project statements made about communication between teachers, administration, and parents were used 73 times. Communication can be

further divided into five sub-categories: Center Communication, Fear of Expression, Not Feeling Heard, Feeling Heard, and Collaboration.

Center Communication. In terms of center operations, both the teachers and the director expressed the importance of center communication.

The teachers described a need for more center communication. When filling out the ECE Teacher Questionnaire, two of the four teachers indicated that center communication was a top priority for them towards improving the center. When asked about things that they would like to see improved at their center the teachers described:

1. Communication is the biggest thing of an open class like this. Communication so that way everyone is at the same level and everyone is working together. If you don't have that communication, you're going to have a major problem. You'll always have "she said, she said, she said," and then you'll get nowhere. (Kassidy, Personal Communication, August 2016)

2. Yeah, that's a big thing. Not only with staff – like between teachers – and our management, which I think is getting better now – now that you guys took over (gesturing to other teachers) but also with parents, like, you need to learn how to communicate with the parents or with the teachers that are relieving you. (Rosie, Personal Communication, August 2016)

In addition to staff communication, the teachers also expressed a desire for there to be better communication between the center and families.

1.   A lot of the parents that we have in this setting just pick them up and drop them off. A lot of them we have talked to and we've like expressed our concerns and they just don't care. Pretty much, I don't have the time to deal with it. Or they say I thought bringing them here, you guys would fix them. So they put the responsibility on us to fix them, but there's only so much we can to do fix them. (Jessica, Personal Communication, August 2016)

2.   This is in between a pro and a con – a pro would be a parent that actually understands their child's development, that actually understands that things happen. And obviously, the con would be that some of the parents don't understand, or they don't have the time to sit down and discuss about their children. (Lucy, Personal Communication, August 2016)

The director described the important role that staff feedback played in her role as a director:

I think the best thing is communication – and I know they tell me that too is that they want the communication. So, if I am explaining to them why I can't meet their needs, they have a clear understanding, and they understand it, instead of just no communication at all and they don't

know what's going on. So you know, just communicating with them.
(Director, Personal Communication, September 2016)

She went on to describe that having an opportunity to hear staff feedback was one of the major benefits of this program for her: "Just you know, hearing the ideas from the staff about things we can help do to benefit the program. Staff feedback is important" (Director, Personal Communication, September 2016).

While both the teachers and director expressed a need for strong communication, the teachers also described major barriers towards achieving strong communication. These barriers can be designated as fear of expression and not feeling heard.

Fear of Expression. This category can be defined as teachers' expressed uneasiness about information discussed in the sessions being shared with their director.

1. "Are you sharing any of this with our boss? I can hear it now, us being called into the office" (Kassidy, Personal Communication, August 2016).

2. Kassidy: "Just present it to her. Say this is what I put down, this is what they had to say."
   In unison other teachers: "No! No" (Rosie, Jessica, & Lucy, Personal Communication, August 2016).

Lucy: "Because you know we'll be in her office right away…"

(Personal Communication, August 2016).

Not Feeling Heard: This barrier to communication can be defined as

occasions when teachers tried to relay information to their director, but they

did not feel successful in conveying their concerns.

1. In regards to a recent staff meeting:

    Rosie: "I feel like the last one we did try to communicate more,

    like this is how we feel and.." (Personal Communication, August

    2016).

    Jessica: "They just shot us down." (Personal Communication,

    August 2016).

    Rosie: "And they're like, "No, this is what you guys are going to

    do." And that's it" (Personal Communication, August 2016).

2. "Because, we've, well I've been shut down before. Like, 'No.'

    Straight to it, like doesn't even give you a chance to explain"

    (Jessica, Personal Communication, August 2016).

While the teachers expressed barriers to communication with their

director, they also described constructive components of strengthening center

communication. These statements can be described as *feeling heard* and

collaboration.

Feeling Heard. This constructive component of communication can be

described as instances where teachers described feeling that their

experiences were validated, as well as the desire for their experiences to be heard.

1. Lucy: "I attest to that and I'm trying…I'm trying. I like to know what you guys think because I want to help you guys as much as I can" (Personal Communication, August 2016).

   Rosie: That's why I like that they stepped up because they've been through some of the issues that we've had and they know what it's like. And they're actually trying to work with us."

   Teacher 3: "They've had hands on experience. They're just not here and trying to figure out what we're talking about. (Personal Communication, August 2016)

2. "Because if you have happy teachers, than you're going to have a good class going on. But how do you make the teachers happy? By listening to them when they talk to you" (Kassidy, Personal Communication, August 2016).

Collaboration. Collaboration can be described as statements or exchanges illustrating a desire to share resources in order to make a change.

When asked about the benefits of this program, the director responded: "I am going to have to rate it a 5 because they had some good ideas that I would love to implement. Sometimes you don't hear the feedback until something like this because we don't have the time" (Director, Personal Communication, September 2016).

In response to a question about the feasibility of making the changes proposed by the staff, the director responded: "I would love to say that we set realistic goals, actually with their help, I think we can do it. It's definitely possible, they're realistic goals" (Director, Personal Communication, August 2016).

When asked about wanting to continue collaboration between the center and the researcher, the director responded: "Definitely! That would be great. And even just the way that you helped with emailing her the newsletter - that was really great too. The little things are the big things!" (Director, Personal Communication, August 2016).

In regard to exchanges between the director and the teachers, Session 5 allowed for four main conversations about working together to make changes at the center. The conversation below highlights one of these discussions between the teachers and the director.

Kassidy: I have teacher supplies and we were thinking about how we can get the teachers supplies when we're on a budget. And when the teachers can't get supplies they get upset and they pay out of pocket, even though they're not supposed to. Their programs do not get done because they don't have supplies...so is there a way that we can figure it out? We thought maybe fundraisers. So we thought like a carwash, like at Shakey's. So I went to Shakey's and I asked them - Is there a way that we could come to your center and have a carwash and raise some money for our school. And he goes - well

I need to know your time and your date because we book up fast. And I said, I cannot tell you anything now because we're just looking into it, but can we? And he said - Yes, by all means. So until I find out if we can or can't....

Director: A carwash you said?

Kassidy: Yes, we'll be out there, "Car wash, Car wash!" "Kindercare!" but then with the title KinderCare, I didn't know if corporate would allow that. I don't know how you would label that?

Director: Hmm we can have like fundraisers here though.

Lucy: Like a carwash? With the City?

Director: Yeah!

Lucy: On us all the time about water?

Director: Cause it's not like we'll be doing it every week.

Kassidy: Or a yard sale! Like we have someone sell their stuff and then what they don't sell, don't dump it in the trash, just leave it here and we can sell it here.

Director: You know what else we used to do? We used to have dinner night like on Fridays. Having ready-made plates of like spaghetti and bread and salad so that parents don't have to cook on Friday and then we'd sell it.

Kassidy: And then we'd have hotdog day, but then that's the money we raised for our auditorium. So, how would that affect that?

Director: Well, we have 12 months so there might be time for more than one fundraiser.

<u>Emotional and Physical Well Being</u>

A fourth emerging theme was teachers' emotional and physical well-being. In regard to emotional well-being, teachers described both negative and positive contributions 45 times throughout the project. The most common negative contribution was the day-to-day stress of working in this environment. For example, one teacher stated, "It's not easy. I think we've all had our share of breakdowns…I know I have. It's hard…and this is my first job in this profession and it was an eye opener… I was like, "Okay." It was overwhelming**"** (Rosie, Personal Communication, August 2016). Two other teachers went onto to describe:

Rosie: Mentally draining! It's just constant. By Friday, I am like, Alright, I need space to myself so I can like relax.

Lucy**:** (Interjecting) Time to recharge for the rest of the week.

In contrast to the negative contributions to their emotional well-being, teachers largely attributed the most positive and rewarding aspect of their job to working with young children. One teacher simply described it as, "I'll give you a pro: working with kids. Watching them learn, watching them grow, when they have their "aha" moments" (Kassidy, Personal Communication, August 2016).

Her fellow teachers regularly made similar statements throughout the course of the focus groups.

In regard to physical health, teachers regularly brought up the costs of working with young children for their health. The teachers mainly described that working at their center contributes to regular bouts of sickness:

Lucy: Cons: You get sick a lot, which is to be expected.

Rosie: Yeah, my doctor told me, You're going to get sick a lot in your first year working there.

Kassidy: You work in an incubator.

In addition to getting sick often, teachers also described that working at the center created barriers to them attending doctor's appointments.

1. Kassidy: Well mine is, check this out, I don't have to come into 11:45, so there's no reason I cannot do what I gotta do now. So I don't have a problem with that. Before I did, when I had to be there at 9. I couldn't get anything accomplished.

   Jessica: Well try being here from 9 -7. My office doctor's office doesn't open until 8:30.

2. Like for me, what finally got me to like...it's just that my health keeps getting worse and worse, and I just can't keep putting it off. It's just like, "Well, I need to go." I need to make it so that I can either come in earlier or leave earlier.... (Rosie, Personal Communication, August 2016)

<u>Teacher Unity</u>

Another strong emerging theme was the need for teacher unity in order to bring about change in their environment. Statements regarding teacher unity were made 42 times throughout the project. Teacher unity can be described as teachers being in accordance on major issues in the work place and the profession.

When bringing up changes they would like to see in the workplace, teachers often described needing the help of other teachers in order to make changes. For example, one teacher responded to an idea for a change in schedule with, "We have to make sure that we have teachers on board!" (Rosie, Personal Communication, August 2016).

Building upon this, the teachers described that without the support of their fellow teachers, they felt limited in their ability to make change.

Lucy: I think it's a good approach, but do I think it's realistic. I don't think it's realistic in the sense that maybe us teachers we share our moments where we have our ups and downs and yeah we create bonds like that, but not everyone does it…but there are some teachers who don't want to be a part of it.

Jessica: Yeah, like they're not team players.

Towards explaining this lack of participation, the teachers engaged in a conversation describing what they feel should happen, and why they do not observe this happening in their work environment:

Jessica: I tell her stuff all the time about what's going on, but she doesn't believe it because none of the teachers come up and say anything about it. But then again, it's like she doesn't care because she hears it from me all the time, she hears it from Miss Lucy all the time, she hears it from Miss Rosie some of the time, but not all the time. She has to hear it from different teachers, in order to get the right reaction.

Rosie: Honestly, I think that we should let all of the teachers know and when we present, they should all be there. Because I know everyone has an issue.

Jessica: But they're not like us, they don't want to stand up for themselves.

Lucy: But if we don't then nothing is ever going to change.

Rosie: I don't know. These teachers are selfish.

Jessica: A lot of teachers are selfish.

Lucy: Like it's just like after being here all day, you're drained yourself...

Rosie: But at the same time, these are things that are important...

Lucy: I think honestly, teachers here don't know care any more. They've gotten to the point where they've...

Jessica: They've stopped caring.

Lucy: So they don't...they just come to work, do their shift.

<u>Teacher Education and Teacher Training</u>

The sixth emerging theme was related to teacher education and teacher training. This included 27 statements regarding teachers' utilization of developmental knowledge, pre-service teacher preparation, and training for new staff. Throughout the course of the sessions, the teachers brought up scenarios in which their developmental knowledge was paramount in their ability to carry out work duties. An example of this would be:

"Another pro would be I guess, trying to think of new ways of how to teach children. Because not the same methods are going to work with every child… So you're like, it kinda puts your school training kinda into work. Those moments when you're like, "That's why I went to school." (Lucy, Personal Communication, August 2016).

While the teachers described the importance of their educational background in doing their job, they also described a need for better preparation of pre-service teachers:

1. Jessica: But college is like different. In college they teach us about like the perfect children…but then you come here and… Lucy: It's like they didn't prepare you for this.

2. Jessica: Yeah, true, it's just they expect it to be like, "You just got out of college, so you need to have a lot of experience." I mean, I guess college should have more internships that they have to require. I don't know cause…

Lucy: Or volunteering in the classroom.

Rosie: Yeah, like it has to be certain hours.

Jessica: Yeah, like actually being in the classroom, not just doing observations for two hours.

In addition to this, teachers also described a need for their center to include more comprehensive on the job training for new staff.

Jessica: Okay some cons. So most of our teachers working here, don't have the proper training to be working here. So, I would put getting training before you start working here.

Rosie: Yeah, like I don't think I got any training before I started working here.

Jessica: I was just thrown in there!

Lucy: Yup, two days and it's only videos of safety.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this project was to explore the role of teacher empowerment in the early childhood education (ECE) work environment, using a Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach. Through the utilization of weekly focus groups, ECE teachers met on a weekly basis to discuss issues in their work environment and propose solutions to identified problems. This project was developed in light of the research on the inequity found within the ECE work environment and the lack of research on ECE teacher empowerment (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 2014). Overall, it was found that teachers' measurement of psychological empowerment declined over the course of the sessions. Despite a decline in empowerment, six themes emerged from the sessions (i.e., Frustration with Center Operations and Corporate, Empowerment, Communication, Emotional and Physical Well-Being, Teacher Unity, and Teacher Education and Training) that provided a more comprehensive understanding of ECE teacher work environment and the nature of ECE teacher empowerment.

Empowerment

While there was no specific hypothesis outlining that this project would improve teacher empowerment, due to the equitable and empowering nature of the CBPR approach, one might infer that this project would build

empowerment over the course of the sessions. This was not the case; overall, teachers' experience of empowerment declined from Session 1 to Session 5. Of the four areas of psychological empowerment measured (i.e., Socio-political skills, Motivation to influence, Participatory behavior, and Perceived control), Socio-political skills was the only area in which teachers demonstrated a marginal increase in empowerment (See Table 2). Socio-political skills describe a person's sense of efficacy and knowledge in regard to taking social or political action (Ozer & Schotland, 2011). In regard to this project, the teachers felt more empowered in seeking out information to bring about change at their center at the end of the sessions. This is consistent with the process of the project, as the teachers had to spend time creating solutions and looking for resources.

Towards explaining the decrease in empowerment in the other areas, pertinent information from the qualitative portion of the project can be applied. In regard to Frustrations with Day-to-Day Operations, the teachers regularly described feeling that KinderCare is a corrupt corporation. One teacher even suggested that she hopes the company eventually closes down. In other words, based on their experiences of corporate, the teachers demonstrated low investment in the well being of the company. As a result, it is possible that engaging in regular conversations about faults in the company had an effect on teachers' motivation to influence change in the company, their desire to

participate in making change, and the level of control they felt in making empowering decisions.

In regard to Emotional and Physical Health, while the teachers described valuing their work with young children, the teachers also described their job as both emotionally and physically draining. For example, the teachers described breakdowns and feeling depleted by the end of the week. The teachers also described getting sick often and not always being able to take off work, due to low substitute availability. Because of this, it is possible that teachers had little energy left in order to motivate themselves towards the daunting task of making change in their workplace.

In considering Teacher Unity, it was apparent that the participants felt little support from their fellow teachers in making changes at the center. The participants described their fellow teachers as selfish. They regularly made reference to conflicts and dissension between staff members. They also highlighted that in order to make certain projects happen, they would need support from all of the teachers and appeared doubtful that could happen. Because of this, it is possible that the participants' level of empowerment declined as they realized the work involved in creating change, and the support they would need to make change happen. This is supported by past research on teacher empowerment in K-12 settings. Specifically, trusting ones colleagues is an important predictor of teacher empowerment (Yin, Chi-Kin Lee, Jin, & Zhang, 2013). Applying this to ECE settings, it could be argued that

trusting ones' colleagues is even more imperative because they are required to work more closely together than teachers in a K-12 school.

Drawing from the themes Communication and Empowerment, another possible explanation for the decline in empowerment, can be derived from the teachers' experience with collaboration with the director. For example, one teacher described reaching out to her director for approval to move forward in developing a fundraiser for the center. She later described giving up on trying to speak to the director about the concern because the director never got back to her. Based on the teachers' descriptions, this type of response was not an isolated incident. Considering this, it is possible that in their efforts to make changes, the teachers felt shut down by their director. Being shut down by their director could contribute to a decrease in their motivation, participatory behavior, and perceived control. This explanation is supported by past research on employee empowerment. As described in Appelbaum, Karasek, Lapointe, & Quelch (2014, 2015), employees' experience of empowerment is largely influenced by the leadership style at their place of employment. When the company's leadership squelches employees efforts make decisions and problem solve independently, they are less likely to feel empowered in their work environment.

A final explanation for the decline in empowerment could be related to the limited amount of time of this project. While the process of CBPR work has been found to be empowering, a key component of the work is long-term

partnerships empowerment (Israel et al., 1998). Considering this, it is possible

that the teachers need more time in order to build empowerment. Because

teachers described issues that were deeply rooted in their past experiences, it

is probable that a few focus groups and one formal meeting with their director

was not enough to fully empower them. Also, as to be expected with any major

change, the process is not always linear. There are times of stagnation; times

where people move backward, but that does not necessarily mean that

progress is not being made. It could be argued, that this project was an

important step in allowing these teachers to examine their experiences and

begin the empowerment process. However, this is a major process that will

require continued efforts.

Due to the decline in empowerment found, it was important that the

researcher provide support to the teachers beyond the final session of the

project. In accordance with CBPR principles, the project should sustain

partnerships between the participants and the researcher. To address this, the

researcher planned a follow-up meeting with the director to discuss ways

campus could provide on-going support to the center. In addition to this, the

researcher agreed to come back to help the teachers set up one of their

classrooms.

<center>Lessons Learned and Implications for Practice</center>

Moving beyond explanations for a decline in empowerment, this project

also brought to light important issues concerning ECE teachers' experiences.

First, the emerging themes were beneficial in highlighting the important role of day-to-day components in teacher work environment. Although the literature review, as well as the first session of the focus groups, centered around describing broader contextual trends in teacher work environment (i.e., wages, turnover, and financial stress), the emerging themes demonstrated that these issues were not the most immediate concerns for the teachers. Yes, the teachers made reference to these issues, but the major problems identified and solutions for change focused on more immediate concerns, like center communication, scheduling, and lack of resources in the center.

Considering this from an ecological perspective, it makes sense that the teachers would be highly concerned with the day-to-day components of work environment. From Bronfrenbrenner's model, development occurs from more proximal systems outward (1979). Specifically, issues like scheduling and lack of supplies are a part of the teachers' immediate environment, or their microsystem. In contrast, trends in compensation and turnover can be considered components of teachers' macrosystem. While trends in compensation and turnover affect the teachers, these issues are further removed from their immediate environment. As a result, one could suggest that before empowerment in issues related to compensation and turnover can be addressed, teachers may first have to find their voice in day-to-day components of their work environment.

As the researcher, the teachers' focus on the proximal components of work environment was slightly unexpected. Coming into this project, I investigated the more distal features of work environment. This could be a result of where I am at in my education as a teacher, in comparison to the teachers in this study. As a master's student, I have worked in ECE for over six years, and am focusing my research efforts on ways to advocate and improve the profession. In contrast, the teachers in this study (except for one), were within their first couple years of teaching. Because of this, it makes sense that their focus would be on the day-to-day components of their work environment.

Second, teachers described a need for there to be a change in how teachers are prepared to work in this profession. Specifically, the teachers described feeling that their education did not actually prepare them for the realities of working in this field. As one teacher described, classes gave examples of "perfect settings" that are not the reality for most teachers. For example, teachers often work through their lunch breaks, they are paid poorly, they are in classrooms with high ratios, and they are limited in the supplies they have access to. As these teachers described, they were drawn to this field because of their love for children and a desire to positively impact their development. However, they did not know what the reality of their job would entail. The participants also described a need for more hands on experience during their pre-service training. In order to prepare them for the day-to-day

realities of their jobs, the teachers suggested that ECE coursework should include internships in the classroom.

Third, teachers also described a need for better staff training. In regard to new staff, the teachers expressed a need for a formal program that is responsive to direct work experience in the classroom. The participants described primarily watching videos on safety for their training, and described that this was not very helpful when they actually started working in the classroom. In addition to this, the teachers also described that they do not receive and are not required to seek out regular staff development training. One teacher described that this problematic because this does not allow for the teachers to stay up to date with the new research in the field.

Fourth, the project also highlighted the realities of turnover in the profession. At the time of the Program Information Survey interview, five teachers had left the site within the past nine months. This number is especially salient when comparing it to the fact that only about 12 staff members are regularly employed at the center. In other words, almost half of their center staff had left within a nine-month period. In addition to this, the teachers also described that three other teachers were preparing to leave center.

When asked about the high rates of turnover, the participants had several explanations. One, teachers were leaving their jobs for higher paying jobs in other industries (e.g., Amazon, Target, photography studio). This is

consistent with past research; not only do ECE teachers leave their jobs at a high rate, they tend to leave the profession for better pay (Whitebook, Howes, and Philips, 2014). Two, the teachers also described that there is a disconnect between the amount of work they are required to do and how much they get paid. For example, one teacher stated, "With me having my B.A., I was only getting paid $11.25 an hour…For everything that we do, it's no way." Third, teachers also described that for a lot of teachers, teaching in ECE is only done for experience or as a way to prepare for a better job. For example, one teacher described that she was only working this job for her year of experience. She initially planned to work in the field longer, but after a couple of months on the job, she decided that she could not sustain working at this site.

A fifth important lesson learned was the role of teacher unity in teacher empowerment. Throughout the sessions and questionnaires, the participants often highlighted the lack of support they had from their fellow teachers. This was in relationship to things like staff not wanting to pitch in to help with day-to-day tasks and school events, as well as staff not wanting to fight for changes in their center. The participants described their fellow teachers as selfish and not team players. They also described that staff members were not willing to stand up for change in their center. As explained above, it is possible that this plays a strong role in the lack of empowerment teachers' experience.

Without the support of the full group, the already daunting task of standing for change seems even more difficult.

Finally, this project also highlighted important information regarding how directors and teachers relate to each other. Through both the focus groups and director interviews, it became clear that there was a disconnect in communication between management and staff. The director highlighted important needs for her to complete her job well and the staff described what they needed to complete their jobs well. While both parties could clearly describe their needs to the facilitator, these needs often times were not well communicated between each other. For example, in regard to the budget, the director is given strict guidelines by corporate that she must follow closely. This is an important aspect of her job that she must adhere to in order to keep the center afloat. However, because of limits in the budget, teachers are unable to have the supplies they need in order to run their programs for the children. Both are valid needs, but due to corporate restrictions, the need of the teachers is not being met and they struggle in communicating this to their director. In this case, having an opportunity to formally share their frustrations with their director and brainstorm alternative solutions was beneficial in helping both parties meet their needs.

Limitations

It is important to note that this project was limited in its scope in many ways. First, due to the qualitative nature of this study, the project focused on

only a small group of teachers. While efforts were made to choose a group with similarities to the majority of ECE teachers, these responses cannot be generalized to the whole ECE teaching population. Second, during the course of the project, one of the participants left the center. Because of this, she was unable to participate in the final presentation, and was also unable to complete the Psychological Empowerment Scale and the Teacher Exit Survey. Third, because this project was done as a master's project, it was limited in terms of time. While it was conducted for over a month, in alignment with CBPR principles, a longer partnership with the teachers would have been more beneficial (Israel et al., 1998). Fourth, the sessions were planned to happen on a weekly basis, but due to teacher absences and one of the teachers leaving the center, there were two breaks (i.e., a one week break between Session 3 and 4 and a two week break between Session 4 and 5). The teachers noted that having those breaks made it more difficult to pick back up where we had left off in the previous session. A final limitation was that two of the teachers in the project were considered management (i.e., second tier and third tier). It was decided to still include these participants for two main reasons. One, the researcher was not aware of these recent promotions until the first night of the sessions. Second, due to staff turnover at the site, both participants still worked regular hours in the classroom.

Future Directions

Considering the emerging themes of this project, there are several different directions for future research on teacher empowerment. First, it would be important for future projects to focus on similarities and differences in how ECE teachers describe strengths and weaknesses in the day-to-day components of their work environment (e.g., different types of for-profit centers, non-profit centers, school sponsored centers, etc.), based on center auspice. This would be important because research has found that there are significant differences in the broader contextual trends in work environment by auspice (i.e., turnover and wages). Due to this information, it would be an important step in future research to explore differences in the more proximal components of work environment as well. Related to this, it might also be important to explore the progression of teacher empowerment within immediate work environment and how that translates into efforts towards empowerment in the broader components of work environment.

Second, the role of teacher unity in building empowerment should be further explored. As the teachers described, they felt limited in the support of their fellow teachers in making a difference in their center. Future research might look at differences between empowered teachers versus disempowered teachers, and personal barriers towards empowerment. Another idea might be a project done by teachers, specifically focused on reaching out and gaining support from other ECE teachers.

Third, future research should also explore how center directors and teachers relate to each other, and how that relationship influences teachers' experiences of empowerment in their work environment. As described throughout the sessions, teachers struggled in how they related to their director and this was a significant factor in how they experienced empowerment in their work environment. Looking into this might provide more information about structural changes that need to occur to facilitate empowerment for ECE teachers.

A final suggestion for future research was expressed by one of the participants. She suggested that these projects should be done at multiple KinderCare sites, and that the results should be combined and presented to corporate. One of the teachers' concerns was that the people making policy are not in touch with what it is like in the classroom. On a larger scale, this is true for all ECE staff. Policy and regulations are typically made by people that are far removed from the realities of the position. Future research should look at ways of sharing these perspectives with the people responsible for making these decisions.

Conclusion

To summarize, the purpose of this project was to explore the role of ECE teacher empowerment in the workplace. Following the goals of CBPR, this project provided teachers with an opportunity to self-identify strengths and weaknesses in their work environment, as well as an opportunity to propose

solutions at their center. Through this in-depth and collaborative process, teachers identified issues consistent with past research (i.e., poor wages, high turnover), as well as issues that have not been thoroughly explored in the ECE literature (i.e., teacher health and well-being, frustrations with day-do-day operations and corporate, center communication, and teacher unity). While the results of this study were specific to these teachers and their center, the results are important because they add to the literature on ECE teacher empowerment and highlight areas for further study. Furthermore, this project adds to the literature on the benefits of utilizing a CBPR framework towards empowering marginalized groups of people. In conclusion, because ECE teachers provide a meaningful service to this country, it is imperative that there are continued efforts towards empowering teachers to advocate for what they need in order to sustain their hard work and service.

APPENDIX A

PROGRAM INFORMATION SURVEY

Program Information Survey

1. Ages of Children Served:

2. Number of Classrooms:

3. Program Hours:

4. Number of Teachers:
   a. Full Time:
   b. Part Time:

5. Education Level of Teachers:
   a. Full Time:
   b. Part Time:

6. Average Teacher Salary:

7. Teacher Benefits Packages:

8. Rate of Teacher Turnover in the Past Year:

9. List of Program Subsidies and Type:

Developed by Kourtney Denise Jones

APPENDIX B

DIRECTOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Director Interview Questions

Introduction Script: Thank you for agreeing to sit down and meet with me. I appreciate the time you've taken out of your busy schedule to help me with my project. I just have a few questions for you to help me get a clearer picture of your job as a director at this site. Are you comfortable with me audio recording this interview? If not, I will take hand-written notes.

1. How long have you been working as a director?

2. What does a typical day at work look like for you?

3. What is the most rewarding part of your job/What is the most challenging part of your job?

4. What are some of the challenges you find in supporting the teachers at your site?

5. How do you balance meeting program needs with meeting the needs of teachers?

Conclusion Script: Thank you for your time. I plan to use this information to help collaborate with you and your teachers on addressing concerns in the work environment.

Do you have time to help me complete the program survey, or would you prefer I scheduled an appointment with the administrative assistant?

Developed by Kourtney Denise Jones

APPENDIX C

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

ECE Teacher Questionnaire

Instructions: Please write your initials on the survey and answer the following questions to the best of your ability. If you have any questions, please ask.

1) Age:

2) Sex:

3) Ethnicity:

4) Marital Status:

5) Family Size:

6) Annual Income:

7) Education Level:
   High School_____
   Some College_____
   Associate's Degree _____
   Bachelor's Degree _____
   Master's Degree_____
   - Number of ECE Units Taken
   - Names of Classes

8) Position Title:

9) How many hours per week do you typically work?

10) How long have you been working at this site?

11) Do you have past experiences working in an early childhood setting?

Please list and describe below:

12) What are some of the things you enjoy about your job?

13) What are some of the things you would like to see changed?

14) What are some of your future professional goals?

Developed by Kourtney Denise Jones

APPENDIX D

KINDERCARE PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT

SCALE: MODIFIED (PES)

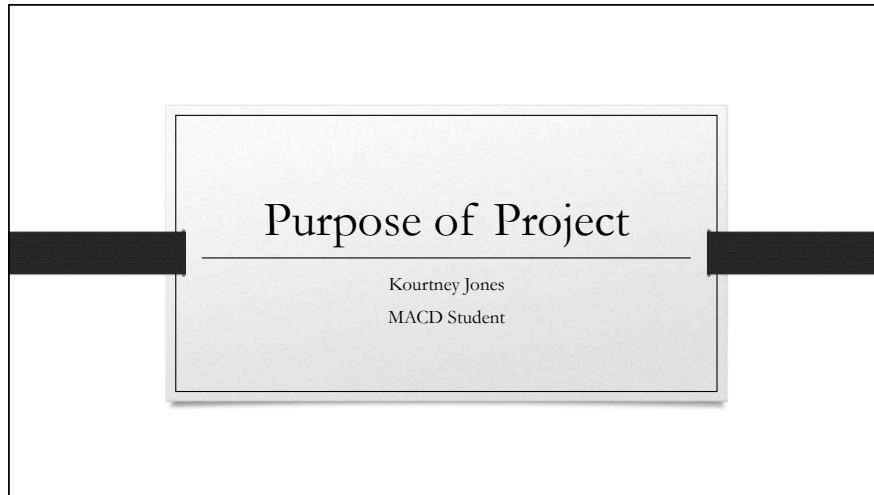# KinderCare Psychological Empowerment Scale (PES)

Instructions:

Please rate each statement according to how you feel regarding each. Rate each item from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

0 = Neither Agree nor Disagree   3 = Agree

1 = Strongly Disagree   4 = Strongly Agree

2 = Disagree

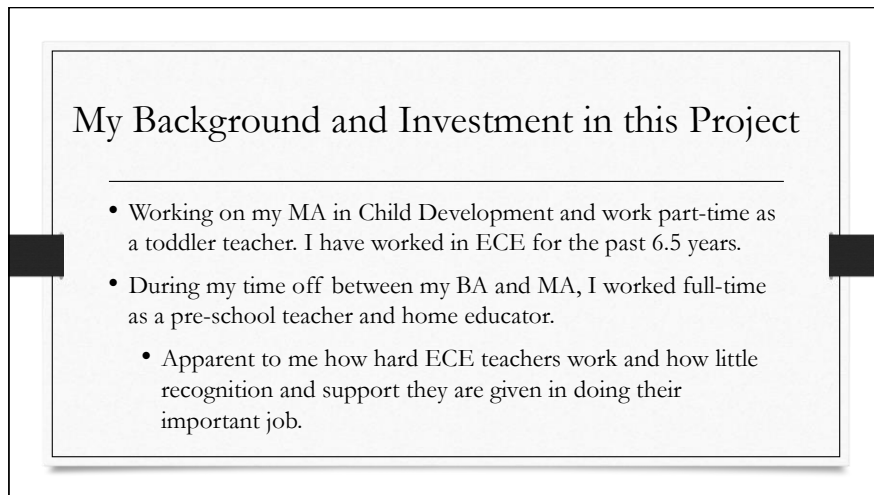|						
1	If I want to improve a problem at KinderCare, I know how to gather useful data about the issue.	0	1	2	3	4
2	I know how rules and policies are made at KinderCare.	0	1	2	3	4
3	I want to have as much say as possible in making decisions at KinderCare.	0	1	2	3	4
4	People should work to improve KinderCare even if we can't always make the changes we want.	0	1	2	3	4
5	I have spoken with administrators at KinderCare about issues that I want to improve at the center.	0	1	2	3	4
6	I have spoken with other people about issues that I want to improve at KinderCare.	0	1	2	3	4
7	If issues come up that affect people at KinderCare, we do something about it.	0	1	2	3	4
8	There are plenty of ways for people like me to have a say in what KinderCare does.	0	1	2	3	4
9	People have a say in what happens at KinderCare.	0	1	2	3	4
10	People at KinderCare get to help plan special activities and events.	0	1	2	3	4

Adapted from Ozer, E.J., & Schotland, M. (2011). Psychological empowerment among urban youth: Measure development and relationship to psychosocial functioning. *Health Education Behavior, 38,* doi: 10.1177/1090198110373734

APPENDIX E

SESSION 1 POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

Purpose of Project

Kourtney Jones

MACD Student

My Background and Investment in this Project

- Working on my MA in Child Development and work part-time as a toddler teacher. I have worked in ECE for the past 6.5 years.

- During my time off between my BA and MA, I worked full-time as a pre-school teacher and home educator.

  - Apparent to me how hard ECE teachers work and how little recognition and support they are given in doing their important job.
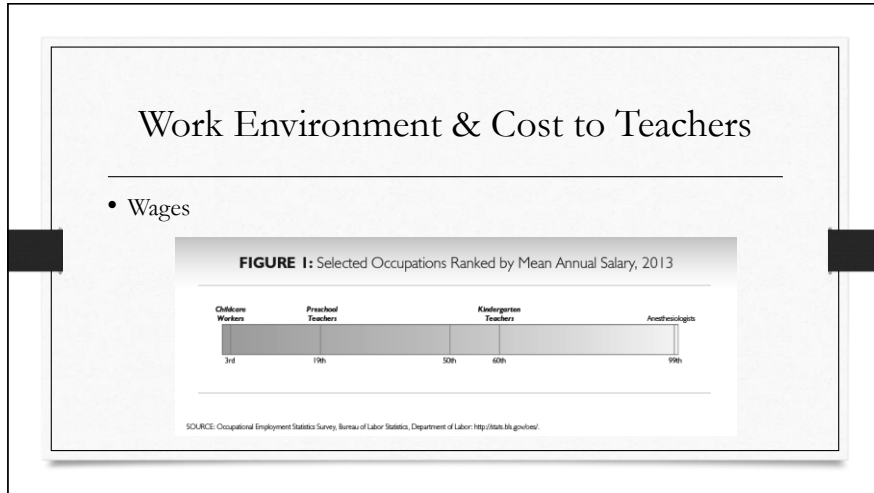
ECE Teaching Profession Over the Years

- The field of teaching in ECE has a rich history.
- Increase in demand + Increase in child development research
  - Teacher plays a key role in successful child outcomes.
- Qualifications for teaching have increased.

Efforts for Improving Work Environment

- ECE educators have a long history of working to improve wages and work environment for ECE teachers.
  - EX: Center for the Childcare Workforce, Center for the Study of Childcare Employment, Worthy Wages Campaign
- In spite of efforts, significant changes have not occurred.

Work Environment & Cost to Teachers

• Wages

FIGURE 1: Selected Occupations Ranked by Mean Annual Salary, 2013

Childcare Workers	Preschool Teachers		Kindergarten Teachers	Anesthesiologists
3rd	19th	50th	60th	99th

SOURCE: Occupational Employment Statistics Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor: http://stats.bls.gov/oes/.

Work Environment & Cost to Teachers

• Financial Stress
  • 46% of teachers report significant financial stress.
  • 25% of teachers require government aid.
• Teacher Turnover
  • 13% Annual Turnover
  • Teachers left jobs at current center ✎ Often left the profession.

Discussion

- How does this information fit with your experiences as an ECE Teacher?

Introduction to CBPR

Community-Based Participatory Research

- A research perspective that focuses on collaboration with participants.
- The goal of this orientation is to create equal partnership between the participants and the researchers.
  - Research participants and researchers have unique experiences and expertise.
- You guys have a unique story!
  - I want to learn from you and share whatever resources I can.

Nine CBPR Principles

1. Community as a unit of identity
2. Build on strengths and resources within the community
3. Facilitation of collaboration and equity in all phases of research process
4. Systems development through a cyclical and iterative process

Nine CBPR Principles Cont.

5. Dissemination of findings to all partners and involves all partners in the dissemination process

6. Long-term process and commitment to sustainability

7. Co-learning and capacity building

8. Balance of research and action

9. Emphasis on local public health problems

Discussion

- Describe your initial reactions to this orientation of research.

Session Wrap-up

- Questions?
- Thank you for your time! I look forward to working with you all.
- Next week: We will begin a discussion about your personal experiences and begin to brainstorm about your goals for this project.
  - Take time this week to think about ideas!

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Developed by Kourtney Denise Jones

APPENDIX F

SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP PROMPTS

Sample Focus Group Prompts

This list includes a sample of interview prompts that will be asked at different points in the focus group sessions. This list is not exhaustive and will vary based on the specific needs of the participants involved.

1.) How was your day at work today?
   a. Did anything happen that prompted you to think about the project?

2.) Share with me your short and long-term goals for this project?

3.) What can I do to support you in this project?
   a. Am I doing my part in collaborating with you?

4.) Tell me about your progress towards your personal weekly goal for this project?

5.) What kind of outside support do you need in order to continue the empowerment process?
   a. What are some realistic ways of getting that support?
   b. Tell me about your progress towards obtaining this support.

6.) Using three main points, how would you summarize the work done during this time?

7.) How and with whom would you like to share the results of this study?

Developed by Kourtney Denise Jones

APPENDIX G

TEACHER EXIT SURVEY

Teacher Exit Survey

Instructions: Please write your initials on the survey. Please answer these questions about your experience during this project. If you have any questions, please ask.

1. What was the most beneficial portion of this experience for you?

2. What was the least helpful part of this experience?

3. Did engaging in this experience create any negative emotions for you? Is so, please describe those emotions and what caused them.

4. Are there any things you would like to address that have not already been discussed?

Developed by Kourtney Denise Jones

APPENDIX H

DIRECTOR EXIT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Director Exit Interview Questions

Introduction Script: Thank you for agreeing to sit down and speak with me. I appreciate all the time you've taken out of your busy schedule to help me with my project. To wrap up, I wanted to touch base with you on the effectiveness of this program and how I can be of support to you in the future. Is it okay, if I audio record the session? If not, I can take handwritten notes.

1. On a scale of one to five, how would you rate the benefit of this experience for you?
   a. How would you rate the benefit of this experience for your staff?
   b. How would you rate the benefit of this experience for your center?

2. What was beneficial to you, your staff, and your center?
   a. What was not helpful?

3. What was it like for you to experience your staff member's presentation?

4. Considering the constraints on you as a director, how comfortable do you feel that you will be able to support the staff in continuing to meet the short and long-term goals they outlined in their project?

5. Were there any negative emotions derived from this process? (e.g., towards staff members). If so, please describe those emotions and what led to them.

6. Part of the orientation I am working from is continuing collaboration, even after a specific project has ended. Is there anyway that I can help support you or help connect you to other resources?

Conclusion Script: Thank you again for your time. I appreciate all of the support that you have provided in this long process. I will be contacting you in the future, when the final report is complete, so that you will have a chance to review it. In the mean time, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact either my advisor or me by email.

Developed by Kourtney Denise Jones

APPENDIX I

INFORMED CONSENTS

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
Department of Psychology

Teacher Informed Consent

Purpose: Hello, my name is Kourtney Jones and I am a master of Child Development student at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). I am completing my master's project and am working under the supervision of Dr. Amanda Wilcox. The purpose of this study is to explore the role of teacher empowerment in the ECE workplace. The Psychology Department's subcommittee of the Institutional Review Board of CSUSB has approved this study and their stamp of approval appears at the bottom of this consent form. An Institutional Review Board is the group that makes sure that any studies done from the college protect the rights of the people who volunteer to be in the study.

Description: In this study, you and your fellow teachers will be introduced to a research perspective called Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR). CBPR focuses on how researchers and research participants can collaborate and share their experiences in order to produce meaningful research. In this project, there will be five sessions or focus groups. During these focus groups, you will learn more about CBPR, share your experiences in the workplace, and develop a project that you feel is representative of change you would like to see in your workplace. The project you develop will then be shared with your director during a facilitated group discussion. During the first session, you will fill out a questionnaire with basic questions about your background and your experience in the early childhood education (ECE) field. The remainder of the focus groups will focus on active discussions about your experiences and short and long-term goals that you would like to bring about.

Participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering, and you are free to stop participating at any time.

Duration: Each focus group session will last about 1.5 hours. During the first and last sessions, you will be asked to fill out a pen and paper questionnaire and it should take no longer than 20 - 25 minutes. There will be five weekly sessions so the entire program will last for five weeks.

Confidentiality: All focus group sessions will be audio-recorded using two digital recorders. To protect your confidentiality, audio recordings will be uploaded onto a password-protected computer and then deleted from the recorders. The audio recordings will then be used to create transcripts of the sessions. To maintain your confidentiality, your name will be changed for the purpose the written transcript and the final report. Finally, all of your information will be kept safe on a password-protected computer (electronic information) or stored in a locked lab facility (paper information). Information will be saved for 5 years after publication of project. After this time, all information will be destroyed.

Audio: I understand that this research will be audio-recorded _____ (Initials)

Risks: In completing this project, there are a couple of risks that must be addressed. First, the topics under discussion may bring about strong negative feelings like

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frustration and dissatisfaction about the workplace. However, this is not the goal of the project. The goal is to provide you with resources towards managing your concerns in a productive way. Another potential risk is that you may feel uncomfortable about expressing yourself, in fear of jeopardizing your position at work. To ease this concern, all sessions will be kept confidential and your direct supervisor will only learn the results that you, as a group, decide that you want him or her to know.

Benefits: While there are potential risks, there are also potential benefits. Working together with your fellow teachers to create meaningful change in the workplace, may benefit you both personally and professionally. For example, this study may help you feel less stress about work, feel more empowered as a teacher, and create a stronger sense of connection with your fellow employees. These results are not guaranteed, but there is the potential for these benefits.

Contact: For any questions about the research project and your rights as a participant, please contact me or my advisor through email. My email address is jonek306@coyote.csusb.edu. My advisor, Dr. Wilcox, can be emailed at awilcox@csusb.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please feel free to contact the Department of Psychology Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee of the California State University, San Bernardino at psych.irb@csusb.edu

While the project is not intended to create discomfort or distress, if you are in need of services to discuss discomfort generated by the project, please contact the Family Service Association - http://fsaca.org - (951) 369-8036 for low-cost services in the Moreno Valley and Riverside areas. If you are in need of services in a different area, please contact me for a more comprehensive list.

Results: When the study is completed, I can provide you a copy of the final report. The results of this study will also be published as my master's project in CSUSB's ScholarWorks database and a bound copy will be added to the Pfau Library's thesis section. Further sharing of the results will be discussed with the group as a whole.

Confirmation Statement: By signing my name below, I am acknowledging that I have been informed about the requirements of this study, that I understand the purpose of this study, and that I am willing to participate.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

California State University			
Psychology Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee			
Approved	7/25/16	Void After	7/25/17
IBB # H16SU-01		Chair	

Director Informed Consent Form

Purpose: Hello, my name is Kourtney Jones and I am a master of Child Development student at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). I am completing my master's project and am working under the supervision of Dr. Amanda Wilcox. The purpose of this study is to explore the role of teacher empowerment in the ECE workplace. The Psychology Department's subcommittee of the Institutional Review Board of CSUSB has approved this study and their stamp of approval appears at the bottom of this consent form. An Institutional Review Board is the group that makes sure that any studies done from the college protect the rights of the people who volunteer to be in the study.

Description: In this study, the teachers working in your center will be introduced to a research perspective called Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR). CBPR focuses on how researchers and research participants can collaborate and share their experiences in order to produce meaningful research. In this project, there will be five sessions or focus groups. During these focus groups, the teachers will learn more about CBPR, share their experiences in the workplace, and develop a project that is representative of change they would like to see in your workplace. The project they develop will then be shared with you during a facilitated group discussion. As the director, your role will be to share your experiences through two interviews. The first interview is to learn about your role and the tasks you must balance in your job. The second interview will be to get your feedback on the project as a whole and to connect you with needed resources and support. In addition to this, you will also be asked some basic questions about program operations.

Participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering, and you are free to stop participating at any time.

Duration: Both interviews will last about 20 – 30 minutes and will be audio-recorded. The first interview will happen at the beginning of the five weeks and the second interview will occur at the end of the five weeks.

Confidentiality: Both interviews will be audio-recorded using two digital recorders (one as a back up). To protect your confidentiality, audio recordings will be uploaded onto a password-protected computer and then deleted from the recorders. The audio recordings will then be used to create transcripts of the sessions. To maintain your confidentiality, your name will be changed for the purpose of the written transcript and the final report. Finally, all of your identifiable information will be kept safe on a password-protected computer (electronic information).

Audio: I understand that these interviews will be audio-recorded _____ (Initials)

Risks: In completing this project, there are a couple of risks that must be addressed. First, the topics under discussion may bring about strong negative feelings in your teachers (e.g., frustration and dissatisfaction about the workplace), which could lead to disruptions in the workplace. However, this is not the goal of the project. The goal is to provide your staff members with resources towards managing their concerns in a

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productive way that benefits both them and the center as a whole. Another potential risk is that staff may feel their positions are in jeopardy based on responses that they share during group. To ease this concern, I have assured the teachers that all sessions will be kept confidential and in no way used to affect their job security.
Benefits: While there are potential risks, there are also potential benefits. Working together from a CBPR approach may provide positive outcomes for you, your staff members, and the center as a whole. For example, this study may help you feel less stress about work, empower the teachers working in your center, and create positive outcomes in the classroom. While these results are not guaranteed, there is the potential for these benefits.

Contact: For any questions about the research project and your rights as a participant, please contact me or my advisor through email. My email address is jonek306@coyote.csusb.edu. My advisor, Dr. Wilcox, can be emailed at awilcox@csusb.edu.
Results: When the study is completed, I can provide you a copy of the final report. The results of this study will also be published as my master's project in CSUSB's ScholarWorks database and a bound copy will be added to the Pfau Library's thesis section. Further sharing of the results will be discussed with the group as a whole.
Confirmation Statement: By signing my name below, I am acknowledging that I have been informed about the requirements of this study, that I understand the purpose of this study, and that I am willing to participate.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

California State University Psychology Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee			
Approved	7/25/16	Void After	7/25/17
IBB # H16SU-01		Chair	*MRL*

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