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The purpose of this interpretative inquiry study was to observe, describe, and

analyze the experience of the children, as well as the adults, in an overseas military early

childhood classroom when teacher change occurs. The intent was to gain an

understanding about the effects of teacher change from the perspective of the individuals

affected by teacher change. This study was done in an overseas military childcare

program because the increased mobility of military families and teachers provides an

additional dimension for understanding the phenomenon of teacher change.

The procedures used were grounded in a feminist, Bronfenbrenner's

bioecological, and Vygotskian framework. Data were collected through participant

observation, using field notes; a schedule documenting teachers in the classroom daily;

interviews with children, teachers, parents, and administrators; The Early Childhood

Work Environment Survey; The Work Attitudes Questionnaire; The Scale of

Organizational Commitment; Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised

(ECERS-R); Teacher-Child Interaction Scale (TCIS); and Student-Teacher Relationship

Scale (STRS).

The understandings gleaned during the five-weeks of observation in the classroom

include: even though there were about thirty teachers in the classroom at various times,

the children were unclear about whom, if anyone, was their teacher; the nomenclature

used by teachers to refer to themselves and one another did not reflect value in the role of

the teacher; the teachers generally did not demonstrate high quality teacher-child

interactions that support child engagement in activities; and parents expressed frustration with the lack of connection with teacher when there was frequent teacher change. These understandings provide insight about minimizing the negative effects of teacher turnover, as well as the daily teacher changes in a classroom. There are implications for how the classroom teachers perceive and label themselves, as well as other teachers; the implementation of high quality early childhood principles and practices when there are changes in teachers; and how the child-child, teacher-child, and teacher-family relationships can be used to minimize the negative effects when there are changes in teachers.

THE IMPACT OF TEACHER CHANGE IN

AN OVERSEAS MILITARY CHILD

DEVELOPMENT CLASSROOM

by

Beverly Jean Cree

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
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Approved by

_____
Committee Chair

To my mom, Juanita Cree Moss

for her unending love and encouragement

To my dad, Bill Cree

for giving me a sense of adventure

To my husband and partner, Charlie West

for helping me believe in myself

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of

The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair_____

Deborah J. Cassidy

Committee Members_____

Linda L. Hestenes

_____

Mary Y. Morgan

_____

Judith A. Niemeyer

_____
Date of Acceptance by Committee

_____
Date of Final Oral Examination

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Study

In the quest for establishing and maintaining high quality in early childhood

education, a variety of theories and related practices have been proposed over the past

few decades. One of the consistent beliefs is that teacher turnover is detrimental to the

desired quality of care for young children. In classrooms with frequent turnover, teachers

have limited opportunities to discover and meet individual needs for the childrens'

growth and development. This dissertation is a report of a qualitative study of teacher

change. The intent is to gain a greater understanding of the scope of teacher change

beyond turnover, the impact on the children, and implications related to program quality.

The Background of the Study

Consideration of the meaning of high quality in early childhood education has

resulted in the identification of critical components that provide a positive climate for

meeting individual needs through developmentally appropriate learning experiences

(Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992; Koralek, Colker, & Dodge,

2002). The consistent implementation of these components has been somewhat elusive

(Cryer & Phillipsen, 1999; NICHD, 2005; Shpancer, 2006), partially due to the link

between a high rate of annual teacher turnover, 25% to 30%, (Center for the Child Care

Workforce, 2001; Military Family Resource Center, 2002) and the critical nature of

constructive teacher-child interactions in high quality programs (Copple & Bredekamp, 2006; Epstein, 2007). Teacher-child interaction has been linked with children's trajectories toward academic success or failure (NICHD, 2005; Pianta & Nimetz, 1997), but teacher change is a major disruption in the pattern of teacher-child relationships and interactions. Given the great demand for early childhood teachers, the importance of and challenges in doing this work, there is an ongoing professional effort to reduce the rate of teacher turnover (Bloom, 1997; Hale-Jinks, Knopf, & Kemple, 2006; Whitebook & Sakai, 2003).

Pilot Study of Teacher Change

In an effort to understand what happens in the classroom when teacher turnover occurs, a pilot study was conducted. At the beginning of a center's program year when a group of children were moved to a new classroom and a new teaching team, documentation focusing on change of classroom routines and activities was done for one month. Based on the following professionally recognized structural components, this center would be thought of as higher quality. This center has a four (out of five)-star State license and is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The annual teacher turnover rate is 8%, much lower than average. Both the director and assistant director have been in those positions for at least five years, and the assistant director had previously been a highly respected classroom teacher in the center. Being a corporate sponsored center, the budget is not limited by fees paid by parents, so teacher wages are higher than average and professional support of teachers is greater than average.

The following documentation illustrates the frequency and content of planned and unplanned changes occurring in a program considered to be high quality. The director reviewed this documentation and confirmed that these were typical changes. During the course of this pilot study, it was evident that both tangible and affective changes needed to be considered, that there were changes in who was in the classroom, but there were also internal or affective changes in relation to other changes for the staff remaining in the classroom. The subsequent documentation of tangible and affective changes in the teacher-figure illustrate the potential impact of teacher change on teacher-child interaction, the child's perception of this learning environment and experience as a person and as a learner in this environment.

In the classroom, the head teacher is Barbara, and the co-teacher is Donna. There are 12 children who are older two to three years old. Some of the children knew each other from a previous class, but the groups were shuffled, so not all children know each other. This would be relevant because the adjustment to new teachers may be more challenging if children are also adjusting to new classmates.

Planned Teacher Changes

The following are scheduled teacher changes that occur throughout the year.

- Every third Wednesday, the "Story Lady" is in the classroom reading to the whole group from 9:30-10:00. This is typically the same person, but sometimes the "Story Lady" has a substitute. This is a tangible change in teacher-figure, and may also be an affective change, depending on the teachers' reaction to this person's presence in the classroom.

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- Every Tuesday from 7:30-10:30, Bobbie, the Field Experience student from the University is in the classroom interacting with the children. This is a tangible change in teacher-figure, and may also be an affective change, depending on the teacher's reaction to this person's presence in the classroom.

- Every day from 10:00-10:30, Maria is in the classroom to give the teacher and co-teacher each a 15 minute break. This is a tangible change in teacher-figure, and may also be an affective change, depending on the teacher's reaction to this person's presence in the classroom.

- Every Tuesday and Thursday, Barbara leaves at 1:30 to take courses at the community college, Noelle is the substitute. This is a tangible change in teacher-figure, and may be an affective change related to the reaction of the teacher assistant.

- On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, Barbara's workday ends at 4:00, Jerellyn is the substitute. This is a tangible change in teacher-figure, and may be an affective change related to the reaction of the teacher assistant.

- On other days, if the teacher or co-teacher have to be out of the room unexpectedly for things like parent conferences, the director, assistant director, or an available floater would be in the room with the children. This is a tangible change in teacher-figure, and may be an affective change related to the reaction of the teacher or assistant remaining in the classroom.

- Every day on the playground, for almost an hour this class is with another group of four-year-olds and their two teachers. Two days a week, there is a high school

practicum student working with the other group. On the playground, all children and teacher figures mingle with one another. This is a tangible change in teacher-figure, and may be an affective change related to the reaction of the teacher and assistant to outdoor activities and the other adults.

During the period of this documentation, two days a week for two to three hours per day, the researcher was participating in this classroom, interacting with the children indoors and outdoors. This is a tangible change in teacher-figure, and may be an affective change related to the reaction of the teacher and assistant to the presence of the researcher.

Unplanned Teacher Changes

- Barbara and Donna have both been employed at the center for a few years, but have not been co-teachers, so they are adjusting to one another. This is affective change as they experience the joys and challenges of establishing a team teaching relationship with a new person.

- The school year began on August 20, so on this day all children experienced a tangible change of teachers. However, due to the low teacher turnover rate at this center, these children and teachers may have interacted with one another in the hallways or on the playground, so the level of familiarity is uncertain. Teacher affect may be variable as they learn who children are as individuals and how they will interact with each.

- This is a different classroom for the teachers, as well as the children. However, the program is completing a new building, which they will move into in about

three weeks, so the teachers are not completely getting settled into this interim room. This could evoke affective change as the teachers experience the challenges and joys of moving to a new facility.

- Barbara has been teaching four-year-olds and expressed her pleasure in working with that age group. Her son moved into that classroom, so she needed to change, and reluctantly accepted an assignment to work with the two- and three-year-olds. She talked about feeling that she didn't quite know what to do with this age group. During the first week of this program year, Barbara told the observer, "I don't like my job anymore, it isn't fun. I don't know what to do with children this age." This teacher was expressing affective change, a different attitude about interacting with the children. She talked about starting the week looking forward to the new group of children, but by the end of the week was feeling very challenged.

- After starting with the new group of children on August 20, Donna had her baby (five weeks early). This would be tangible change with Donna's departure, and possible affective change for Barbara as she establishes a co-teaching relationship with another new teacher.

- Kimberly was assigned to be the co-teacher substitute for six weeks until Donna returned. Kimberly worked from August 23-31, when the administrators decided that she was not effective with this age group, and she was reassigned to another classroom. Another tangible change with Kimberly's departure and possible affective change for Barbara.

- Barbara was absent August 27, 28 and 29 for jury duty. During her absence, Connie (a floater) was the substitute teacher.

- Rhonda was hired as co-teacher, started on September 3 and worked until Donna's return in mid-October. Rhonda is new to the center, as well as the classroom, so it is a tangible change in teacher-figure, and possible affective change for Barbara as she adjusts to a new co-teacher.

- Barbara was absent September 5, 6 and 7 due to her son's surgery. During her absence, Connie was the substitute teacher. Tangible change in teacher-figure, and could be affective change as the assistant teacher adjusts to a substitute.

- September 10, the group moved into the new building. This could result in affective change for the teachers as they adjust to the new space.

- September 11, Rhonda was absent and Connie was the substitute. Tangible change in teacher-figure, could be affective change as head teacher adjusts to a substitute.

- September 11, the day of the terrorist attack. There was a lot of affective change on this day. The teachers had the radio on continuously, listening to news of the day and talking with other adults at the center or making phone calls to their family members, and discussing the news of the day. The teachers interaction with the children was greatly decreased, and there were schedule changes as the teachers focused on the news, rather than following the typical routines.

During this documentation process, it was evident that teacher change resulted in major differences in teacher-child interaction, and thus, the child's experience in the

classroom. The teachers seemed to take the changes for granted, typically not informing the children of a change in adults in the classroom. Some of the interactions documented provide insight about specific concerns related to teacher change. There were great differences in the ways that adults in the role of teacher interacted with the children. While the scheduled co-teachers typically had more realistic expectations and positive interactions with the children, the adult who was in the classroom to give the teachers a break has some unrealistic expectations and negative interactions with the children.

For example, rather than supporting a child's interest in her easel painting, the break person asked what the child was painting and then made suggestions for how the child could improve the painting. Or, when a thirty-seven month-old child did not want to share playdough, and hit another child who took some of the playdough, the adult providing breaks for the teachers intervened. She put this child in time out at 10:10, and when he started squirming, the adult told him, "You will sit there until lunch (at 11:30) if you don't sit there quietly and do as you are told." This was a personally difficult time for this child whose parents were getting a divorce, and the child's mother was stranded in Europe when planes were not flying right after the terrorist attack of 9-11, and the child's grandparents, whom he did not know well, had come to take care of him until the mother's return. The break person, who is in the classroom every day may have been unaware of this child's situation, but in both of these examples, she was not individualizing to meet children's needs through developmentally appropriate practices. These planned and unplanned teacher changes reflect the essence of concern about teacher change.

The Problem Statement

The purpose of this interpretive inquiry is to observe, describe, and analyze the experience of the children, as well as the adults, in an overseas military early childhood classroom when teacher change occurs. The intent is to gain insight about the perspective of the people being studied. This study was done in an overseas military childcare program because the increased mobility of military families and teachers provides an additional dimension for understanding the phenomenon of teacher change.

This purpose subsumes the following three research objectives, which comprise eight specific research questions listed at the end of the literature review chapter. Objective 1: To examine variation in the use of classroom equipment, materials, and processes in relation to the extension or hindrance of child engagement in activities when there are changes in adults in the role of teacher.

Objective 2: To examine teacher-child interactions related to the extension or hindrance of engagement in activities when there are changes in adults in the role of teacher.

Objective 3: To describe the classroom experience from the perspective of those engaged in the early childhood program when there are changes in adults in the role of teacher.

The Professional Significance of the Study

There has been extensive research about the reasons for and incidence of teacher turnover (Hale-Jinks et al., 2006; Whitebook & Sakai, 2003). The concern with high annual teacher turnover is based on the link between teacher turnover and quality care determined by child outcomes. In centers with higher rates of teacher turnover, children have lower levels of language, cognitive, and social development (Howes & Hamilton,

1993; Howes, Hamilton, & Philipsen, 1998; Howes, Phillips, & Whitebook, 1992; Howes & Smith, 1995). This link between teacher turnover and child outcomes, however, is complex. Centers with higher teacher turnover and lower levels of child outcomes, also have higher child-to-adult ratios and less well trained teachers, and are generally characterized as poor quality programs (DeVita, Twombly, & Montilla, 2002).

This study builds on the foundation of current knowledge about teacher turnover, which is the permanent change of a classroom teacher, to understand the impact of regular daily teacher change in the classroom. Given the complexity of factors related to teacher change, the goal here is to understand how this change affects the children, so pragmatic intervention for training and supervision can be more focused and effective. The resulting insights are also expected to provide guidance for teachers moving in and out of classrooms. What is important here is the type of interaction that the individual teacher has with the children when change occurs.

Because of the link between high quality and teacher turnover in early childhood programs, it will be insightful to consider how the components of quality are related to the change of teachers in a classroom. As stated previously, a high quality program is one that provide a positive climate for meeting individual needs through developmentally appropriate learning experiences (Copple & Bredekamp, 2006; Cryer & Phillipsen, 1997). An understanding of these components of high quality is informed by research in brain development (Shonkoff & Phillips 2000), teacher-child relationships (Baker & Manfredi-Petitt, 2004; Planta, Nimetz, & Bennett, 1997), teacher-child interactions (Koralek, Colker, & Dodge, 2002), and teacher-family connections (Keyser, 2006). This

knowledge base informs the analysis of teacher change in the classroom experience for the children, as well as the teachers and parents. These areas of professional literature are discussed in the following literature review chapter.

Because the focus of this research is to understand the meaning of the classroom experience for the children, three frameworks were selected to provide a structure for guiding this analysis. All three frameworks embrace the importance of understanding the meaning of an experience from the perspective of the person being studied. These are feminist theory, bioecological theory, and Vygotskian theory, all of which are discussed in the conceptual framework section of the following chapter.

The results of this study should be of direct pragmatic usefulness for practitioners in the field of early childhood education, especially given the integration of the identified areas and literature, and this unique combination of frameworks. But, the most meaningful results are expected to be insights about the meaning of teacher change, not limited to teacher turnover, especially from the perspective of the child. Studies have not examined the impact of frequent typical changes in classroom personnel, including: short-term and long-term substitutes for planned and unplanned teacher absences, such as illness, daily breaks or release time for meetings, professional training, or parent conferences; children being moved from one classroom to another to maintain ratios; teachers transferred to another classroom, but may still have contact with the children; visitors in the classroom, such as field experience students, interns, researchers; or children moving up to the next class at the beginning of the new program year. By looking at the phenomenon of teacher change from the perspective of the child, one

realizes that the child is likely to perceive as teacher anyone who seems to have some

authority in the classroom, not defining teacher as is typically done in the early childhood

field. Therefore, from the child's perspective, the level of teacher change is much greater

than the teacher turnover rate of about 30 percent. There is a major difference between

thinking about a teacher turnover from the organizational perspective, compared to the

understanding of teacher change from the children's perspectives.

Overview of Methodology

This study was an interpretative inquiry conducted in an overseas military early

childhood classroom. The methodology for this research is grounded in the perspectives

of feminist, Bronfenbrenner, and Vygotsky. Because the intent is to capture a

contextually relevant understanding of this classroom experience from the perspective of

the people engaged in the classroom activities, the documentation includes a variety of

methods for observing and describing the classroom experience for the children, as well

as adults. This includes field notes, semi-structured interviews, formal instruments

assessing the classroom environment and teacher-child interactions, and documentation

of teachers who are actually in the classroom. This is explained in more detail in the later

chapter on methodology.

Definitions of Key Terms

For purposes of this study, the terms teacher and change have specific

definitions. *Teacher*: any adult in a position of authority or having responsibility for the

group of children in the classroom. Regardless of that person's education or experience,

functioning in the role of teacher is the characteristic under discussion. *Change*: the

pattern of variability of teachers responsible for the classroom on a daily basis, the

consistent classroom teachers, substitute teachers, floaters, teachers from other

classrooms when children are telescoped, or replacement teachers when turnover occurs.

Conclusion

This study incorporates many strands that are woven together as the fabric of the

meaning of teacher change experienced by the children in a classroom. Chapter two is a

review of the literature about the conceptual frameworks and the most relevant

components of professional literature. Chapter three presents the rational for and specific

methodology used to observe and record documentation for analysis. Chapter four reports

the results organized by themes related to the research questions. Chapter five is a

discussion of the relevance of the results, based on overarching themes gleaned from the

results of the study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of the literature for this study includes four sections: theoretical

foundations, the meaning of teacher change, working conditions and work environment,

and program components related to teacher change. These sections include discussion,

applying these foundation concepts to the particular characteristics of this study.

Theoretical Foundations

This research is grounded in three theoretical perspectives, Feminist,

Bronfenbrenner, and Vygotsky, which reflect the contextualist approach to understanding

development. The conceptual framework chosen by the researcher is determined by

personal beliefs about how human beings develop and function. Overton and Reese

provided a framework for the integration of research and theory through the systematic

analysis, understanding, and application of developmental theories (Goldhaber, 2000).

That is, there is no single framework that guides all thought about development, but

individuals are drawn to a framework consistent with more global beliefs about human

functioning in the world. Within this framework, each of three world views addresses a

basic question related to human development. Mechanism focuses on how we differ from

each other, a question of variability. Organicism focuses on why we change over time, a

question of sequential patterns of change. Contextualism focuses on what determines the

particular content of our lives, the role play by particular sociohistorical contexts in the

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definition of both structure and function (Goldhaber, 2000). Being grounded in the

sociocultural developmental perspective, this study incorporates the characteristics of

contextualism, as identified by Goldhaber (2000):

> The study of human development always reflects the sociohistorical perspective of the researcher; 2) The meaning of an event is best defined from the perspective of the individual experiencing that event; 3) Explanations and interpretations of human development are always situated in and restricted to any particular sociohistorical context; 4) Human development is an open-ended phenomenon, with no necessary theoretically implied directions, patterns, or limits; and 5) There is a moral and ethical imperative in the study of human development that is directed toward a politics of liberation. (p.62)

In addition to reflecting beliefs about human development, the conceptual

framework also reflects beliefs about the overarching purpose and meaning of research.

The philosophical and theoretical premise of this research is that the early childhood

classroom is most effectively understood by in-depth exploration of the perspective of the

participants in the classroom. Within contextualism, the purpose of a study is to discover

the meaning of the interconnected web of interactions and the role of the individual in

everyday life events (Goldhaber, 2000). Of the three contextualist theories incorporated

into the conceptual framework for this study, feminist theory provides the

epistemological foundation, the basis for understanding how knowledge is generated;

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory identifies the components of that knowledge base

for understanding human experiences; and Vygotskian theory addresses the

componentsof interaction in developmental human experiences. In the following sections,

these three perspectives are discussed, with the relevance for an education setting gleaned

from each, and the theoretical principles related to the proposed research.

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Feminist Theory

The assumptions, goals, and epistemology of feminist theory provide the foundation for the feminist methodology used in this research. Focusing on understanding everyday experiences, a basic assumption of this way of organizing knowledge is that there is oppression to be addressed, that the oppressed and the non-oppressed have different experiences, and the challenges are real for those in the oppressed group (Flax, 1979). Another assumption is that oppression of a particular group comes from a unique combination of social problems, and is understood in and of itself, not as a subset of another societal structure, like class (Flax, 1979). Part of the system is a power structure, within which the privileged have more power or access to what is desired in society, than do those in the oppressed groups.

In the everyday experiences of people who do not have power, there are unconscious processes that contribute to the condition of oppression. Therefore, the goal of feminist analysis would be to understand how the structure of the oppression evolved, how it changes over time, and how it is related to other forms of oppression (Flax, 1979). This understanding could then be used to expose the oppression with the intent of overcoming that oppression. By bringing the unconscious processes to a conscious level, this makes one's choices conscious, enabling one to use choices more intentionally (Flax, 1979). This kind of awareness could make a big difference in an early childhood program, where there are many ways in which oppression can occur, and many opportunities for intentional choices.

To achieve this kind of analysis, feminist epistemology reflects an approach of "women [or the oppressed] as agents of knowledge,… as humans whose lives provide a grounding for knowledge claims that are different from and in some respects preferable to knowledge claims grounded in the lives of the dominant groups" (Harding, 1991, p. 47). Given the intent to gain knowledge grounded in the lives of the research participants, the way in which this knowledge is organized is critical. Participant observation used in this study, is based on a philosophy of valuing research participants as authorities on their own lives, and the role of the researcher is one of helping the research participants tell their own stories. The researcher is an instrument of inquiry and knowledge, which is generated through dialogue, listening, and talking.

One component of this process is reflexivity, the inseparable relationship between the researcher and the researched, between the knower and the known. Within the context of the everyday experience, the dialectical relationship between the subject and object of research extends the opportunities for mutual sharing of experiences as individuals. This relationship is one of respecting the subject as the expert from which the researcher can gain insight about the phenomenon under study (Klein, 1983; Thompson, 1992), facilitating intersubjectivity. By enhancing the depth and breadth of information generated, this process elicits constructed knowledge, which is the integration of multiple perspectives of a phenomenon.

Feminist epistemology is in contrast to traditional methodology, in which there is a hierarchical separation to emphasize objectivity (distance and neutrality) between the researcher thought of as the authority or the knower, and the researched, thought of as the

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object or subject, the known (Klein, 1983). In the application of feminist theory, the

inquiry should be a process of the knower and the known seeing the experiences as they

are – holistic, complex, and in context (DuBois, 1983). The aim is to glean firsthand, or

contextualist knowledge by vigilantly attending to people, including oneself, and settings

about which understanding is desired (Thompson, 1992)

Feminist epistemology is the application of "a systematic analytic approach to

everyday experience" (Flax, 1979, p.3). Embracing the goals of feminist theory, the

inherent purpose of interpretative inquiry is the understanding of components of human

experiences through the perspective of those living the experience, that is, "interpretation

is the explicit form of understanding" (Hultgren, 1989, p. 41). In the feminist paradigm,

the purpose of interpretation (van Manen, 1984) involves:

> a systematic search for deep understanding of the ways in which persons
> subjectively experience the social world…to clarify, authenticate, uncover or
> bring to full human awareness, meaning structures as expressed by persons in
> their everyday life-world experience…from the perspective of those living
> through the experience. (p. 41)

From a feminist perspective, there are three criteria for enhancing validity through

interpretation: the active voice of the subject should be heard in the account, the

theoretical reconstruction must account for the investigator as well as the investigated,

and the reconstruction should reveal the underlying organization of actions and

practicesevident in the typical daily lives of the research participants (Acker, Barry, &

Esseveld, 1983). The goal is to generate an interpretation which is endorsed by

participants, confirmed by readers, and cognitively satisfying to the researcher (Reinharz, 1992).

Feminist epistemology advocates not merely an extension of the present, but more significantly a qualitative transformation of the present (Westcott, 1979), grounded in the knowledge that there are multiple realities (Thompson, 1992), not just one truth. This contextualist approach to understanding knowledge presumes that not only are there multiple realities based on the perspective of the participants, but those realities are dynamic, that is, modified throughout the life of the research participant.

Feminist theory incorporates five basic criteria for explaining human experience: participatory, emancipatory, intentionality, lived experience, and being for women (Suransky, 1980; Klein, 1983; Weiler, 1988; Cook & Fonow, 1990; Thompson, 1992). A *participatory* ideology implies a rapport, or a team relationship, between the person living an experience and the person striving to understand the experience. In contrast to a traditional hierarchical relationship that may be exploitative, the participatory team relationship provides the foundation for greater understanding of an issue or experience. Through the shared universe of reciprocity and meaning, learning about one's world occurs (Suransky, 1980). A participatory ideology would include collaboration, especially among women, to inform theory and practice. The subject-object distinction is key in the participatory relationship. Individuals involved in experiences are not passive objects to be acted up by the expert, but are active subjects in the generation of knowledge about which they have the greatest expertise, their lives (Thompson, 1992). Through dynamic participatory interaction, the intersubjectivity,

between the person living the experience and the person striving to understand the experience, transformation rather than maintenance is expected to occur. This transformation can be emancipatory.

The criterion of *emancipation* indicates that the process of generating knowledge about individuals will be useful for reducing oppression for those individuals and similar groups, whether or not they are aware of their oppression. It is intended that this research project be beneficial to the participants, not just for the researcher to gain knowledge about the experience. Supporting people in redefining or clarifying the reality of their experience can be emancipatory. According to Thompson (1992), because social is thought of as a social construction, as one engages in reflection of the current situation, critical questioning and radical action, emancipation can occur through conscientization (conscious acts of cognition). Reflection about a situation results in the recognition that there are multiple truths, that there is no ultimate interpretation of an experience that is valid for all time, or that will satisfy everyone. In feminist theory, the intent is "not to discover truth but to displace dominant knowledge that oppresses people" (Thompson, 1992, p. 12). Because of this, feminist theory goes beyond methodological issues to emphasize the political and moral criteria necessary for emancipation of the oppressed.

The concept of *lived experience* implies knowledge of the experience or phenomenon from the perspective of the person(s) living that experience. In this research, the purpose is to understand the lived experience of the children, teachers, parents, and administrators. The individual's perception of the experienced world is the foundation ofall our meaning structures (Suransky, 1980). Because the meaning structures are unique

to the person living the experience, the women or other oppressed person(s) are the credible sources and justification of knowledge, which is represented as multiple truths related to the phenomena being studied (Thompson, 1992). Given the feminist contention that one cannot be separated from one's historical, social, and cultural situatedness in the world, an understanding of the lived experience of individuals will be more complete when all three components of one's situatedness are addressed (Goldhaber, 2000).

Intentionality refers to a specific focus on increasing understanding about the nature of human beings, especially to understand the meaning structure of particular individuals in particular situations (Suransky, 1980). As a contextualist framework, feminist theory is guided by comprehensive social, historical, and political implications related to this understanding. With the focus on making the personal become political, the intent of this research is to discover the meaning structures in the lives of individual children, teachers, parents, and administrators, and to relate this to social organization.

The feminist criterion of generating knowledge or understanding *for women*, rather than about women or other oppressed groups, clearly implies going beyond descriptions of what occurs, and delving into the how and why of these occurrences. Knowledge for women is a fundamental feminist principle, because traditional approaches to knowledge tend to present information about women in contrast to a male standard, and women are conceptualized as different, often construed as deviant. Feminist theory acknowledges the relevance of the issues of an individual woman, that they are relevant to the issues of many women, therefore, the personal is political (Klein, 1983). The oppressed individuals or groups are those who are living in a situation of

having another's definition of reality imposed upon them, and remain passive in the face

of this imposition (Suransky, 1980). Generating knowledge for women occurs through

the process of treating the individuals under study as authorities on their own lives, and

helping them tell their stories (Thompson, 1992). A dilemma in a focus for women or

other oppressed group is that some individuals or groups do not define themselves as

oppressed, even though others may perceive the experience as oppressive; or the

individual living the experience may perceive oppression when others do not. To address

this dilemma, the knowledge generated may be the observer's interpretation of the

individual's interpretation of her lived experience. The key is to take precautions to avoid

exploitation and objectification of individuals about whom one seeks understanding

(Thompson, 1992).

In this project, the criterion of research benefiting women is extended to include

the oppressed groups of young children and their teachers. Early childhood teachers are

not typically valued by society in general or the parents of the children they teach, and

they have low pay, barely above minimum wage (Whitebook, 2002). Young children and

their teachers are oppressed because of their low status and lack of power in society. The

distinction in feminist theory is that knowledge is generated for the oppressed, that it is

intended to benefit them or similar groups in some way, rather than just being about or

describing those individuals. This criterion of feminist theory is consistent with national

standards of ethical principles in the use of human subjects in research, that the principle

of *justice* indicates that those who bear the burden of research ought to be

thebeneficiaries of the research (Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1979).

This research will include the participants in formulating questions of interest to them, and they will receive feedback that they deem most helpful.

Bronfenbrenner – Bioecological Systems

Consistent with the objective of this research, to examine teacher-child interactions through a naturalistic ethnographic approach, the ecological systems theory explicitly supports this objective. Observational studies of structural and process characteristics within childcare programs have linked features of these environments with children's cognitive, language, and social development. Studies that examine the interaction between the environment and the children's behaviors within the ecological context have been referred to as "ecobehavioral assessment," and are based on the premise that this approach provides an essential foundation to the understanding of the relation between environmental circumstances and young children's behavior and development (Brown, Odom, Li, & Zercher, 1999). Since the mid-1980's, researchers have used ecobehavioral assessment to: 1) evaluate the effectiveness of early childhood programs (Carta, Greenwood, & Robinson, 1987; Marcon, 1992); 2) study preschool experiences related to cognitive and social skills (Connolly & Doyle, 1983; Dunn & Herwig, 1992; Ramsey & Lasquade, 1996); 3) evaluate the interaction of children with disabilities in inclusive preschools (Brown & Bergen, 2002); and 4) examine the relation between teacher practices and children's experiences in play (Aureli & Coecchia, 1996); and learning (Stipek, Daniels, & Milburn, 1995; Wishard, Shivers, Howes, & Ritchie,2003). These ecobehavioral assessment studies in early childhood education reflect the ecological systems theory.

The ecological approach to understanding development was conceptualized in the early 1970s by Urie Bronfenbrenner, who reacted against the state of the study of human development, describing it as "the study of the strange behavior of children in strange situations for the briefest possible period of time" (Bronfenbrenner, 1998, p. 994). His proposed model of development was greatly influenced by an analysis of research in which he observed that the process of development could be changed or moderated by the interaction of both person and context. From this, he concluded that studies of human development should be done within the ecological context. Adapting a framework proposed by Kurt Lewin, that "*behavior* is a joint function of person and environment," Bronfenbrenner proposed that "*development* is a joint function of person and environment," Bronfenbrenner, 1988, p. 25).

Accounting for the three components of this framework and the interrelationships among them, Bronfenbrenner settled on the process-person-context model (Bronfenbrenner, 1988), later revised to include time, and referred to as the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1998). The effects of the person, process, context, and time are not merely additive, but dynamic and interactive, reflecting the contextualist belief that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The core of the bioecological model accounting for human development is *proximal processes*, which are particular forms of interactions between the individual and environment. Variability in human development is explained by the characteristics of the developing *person*, the immediate and remote environmental *contexts*, and the *time* periods in which the proximal processes occur. In

the following sections, each of these four components is addressed in relation to this study.

Person

Within the bioecological system, the focus is on the interactions among the human beings in different contexts. For this research, the persons of interest are the children, parents, teachers, and administrators, with the interactions encompassing activities, interpersonal relations, and roles. Central to individual development are three biopsychological characteristics: 1) dispositions, which are the catalyst for proximal processes; 2) the resources of ability, experience, knowledge, and skills necessary for the functioning of proximal processes; and 3) the demand from the social environment related to the support or inhibition of interactions (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). These personal characteristics moderate the environment's affect on development because they provide boundaries related to what is perceived, desired, feared, thought about, or acquired as knowledge. Consistent with feminist theory, the essential elements of the demand from the environment are those that have meaning to the person, and that what is important to understand is the environment as it is perceived or defined by the individual, rather than as it may exist in objective reality (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Applying these principles, the study focused on individual's perceptions about their involvement in daily activities and interactions within the childcare program.

Process

Central to development in bioecological theory are the proximal processes, which are the interactions between persons and the environment, including persons or objects.

The focus is on the interactions among the human beings in different contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), with the interactions encompassing activities, interpersonal relations, and roles. These processes vary substantially as a function of the person, environmental context, and the time periods (Bronfenbrenner, 1998). The trajectory and strength of the proximal processes, in conjunction with the three characteristics of the person, determine whether development is supported or inhibited (Bronfenbrenner, 1998). These processes are executed by individuals who are not passive recipients of experiences, but are considered to be dynamic entities who interact with the environment and can restructure it (Bronfenbrenner, 1998). In this study, the processes are evident in all interactions among children and adults throughout the day in the child care program. The interactions include verbal and nonverbal communication, initiations and responses in interactions, internal thoughts and attitudes as well as the expression of those, and choice of activities and level of engagement in those activities. The nature of the processes of the interactions between individuals and their environment in this study are discussed in more detail in a later section on Vygotsky's theory of development.

Context

According to Bronfenbrenner, (1986) the context of development is best understood in terms of four levels of nested ecological systems and their interrelationships. These are the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem, the immediate settings (proximal) and the larger contexts (distal) in which the immediate settings and the developing person are embedded. As the biopsychological characteristics of the person influence the processes that occur within the environmental system, the

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environment, in turn, also has an influence and can cause change. The focus here is on the reciprocal relationships among the four levels of systems rather than on the properties and processes characteristic of any one system. This reciprocity between elements within each system, and between system levels is a fundamental factor in the bioecological theory, extending the emphasis on the dynamic nature and reciprocity within and between the four theory components of person, process, context, and time.

Microsystem. Drawing on the intent of this research, the four levels of structure and interaction will be explained in terms of relevance for all people, especially the child, within the child care program. The first level, the microsystem, is the central structure and the immediate social setting in which most of the direct interactions with others occur (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986). In this case, the microsystem would be the classroom, for which the children, teachers, parents, and administrators each have one or several roles within that setting. Another microsystem would be the family in which each child lives. The interrelations among these people (processes) form the experiences that directly affect each individual's life in bi-directional influence between people and the environment. Examples of classroom interactions would be child-child and teacher-child relations in all settings and routines, and could be child-initiated or teacher-initiated.

Mesosystem. The mesosystem is represented by the interrelations among two or more settings (microsystems) in which the individual is actively involved (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986). For the child, the mesosystem would be the links among the home, the child-care center, and neighborhood friends who are also classmates, or relations within the family that affect relations with the teachers and other children in the

classroom. For the parents, the mesosystem would comprise the interrelations among the home, the child-care center, and the work setting. Examples of this would be the parent-teacher conference, or how work responsibilities affect relations with the child care setting. For teachers and administrators, the mesosystem would be the relationship between family responsibilities and work responsibilities. Another factor of the mesosystem of the overseas Military program involves a unique family structure. The relationships within families are affected by extended family members being thousands of miles away, or Military personnel who have married local citizens and have extended family members who are non-English speaking and may have very different expectations regarding family traditions. Another relevant mesosystem effect is the military policy of providing for teachers to have extended leave to return to the States for vacation or a family emergency. While this is a supportive teacher benefit, the classroom effect is discontinuity in teaching staff.

Exosystem. The exosystem includes one or more settings in which the individual is not directly involved that influence that person's experience in a more immediate setting, or microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986). In this case, the exosystem would be the Military, specifically the U. S. Army, which is responsible for the policies and procedures related to the microsystems. For the children in the classroom, the exosystem establishes guidelines for the childcare facilitiy, the equipment and materials in the classroom (structure), and the teacher requirements, training, and curriculum (process). Basically, the exosystem establishes parameters for the experience provided for the children. The exosystem is evident for the parents, teachers, and administrators in work

responsibilities, deployment which takes parents of the children or spouses of staff members away from their families for an extended time.

   Macrosystem. The macrosystem refers to the overarching patterns of culture, politics, and economy that are consistent in the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986). In the context of this research, the microsystems, or settings (home, neighborhood, classroom, work) which comprise the mesosystem are all Military-based. Within the U.S. Military, a variety of ethnic cultures are represented, and members of the Military are not required to be U.S. citizens, so the overarching patterns would be those reflecting the U.S. Military. For example, in support of families, the military budget allocations have provided for major increases in funding for childcare facilities. The macrosystem expectation that families and child care staff will support the Military responsibilities and efforts influences the behavior patterns, beliefs, and attitudes demonstrated by parents, teachers, and administrators, which in turn, affect the experience of the children within the classroom.

Time

   The concept of time is conceived at three successive levels. *Microtime* refers to stability and change within ongoing episodes of proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner, 1998). This applies to the degree of consistency perceived in expectations and procedures in daily interactions with individual teachers or other caregivers. *Mesotime* refers to the relation among similar episodes across several days or weeks. This concept is especially relevant for teacher change, as teacher-child and child-child interactions would reflect different expectations and level of engagement depending on individual teachers.

Macrotime relates to the changing expectations and events in the larger society, the sociohistorical factors influencing the interrelationships among the persons, the processes, and the contexts. Since the mid 1900's, there has been a steady increase in the proportion of military service members who have families, and in the late 1900's the inclusion of women as active duty military members (Fallon & Russo, 2003). Responding to the needs of additional children in the military community, the military has established full-day childcare programs. During this same period of time, there have been extensive contributions to the knowledge base in the education and development of young children, with numerous implications for the importance of and challenges in providing high quality childcare programs (Howes, Phillips, & Whitebook, 1992; Ceglowski & Bacigalupa, 2002).

Vygotskian Theory

Vygotsky described specific kinds of interactions that provide a perspective for understanding the proximal processes which are central to Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory; and for understanding developmental opportunities in the childcare classroom in this research. The work of Vygotsky has made a substantial contribution to understanding the role of the adult or more capable peer in the child's development and learning. He considered interaction to be a key component because he viewed learning as a social activity, rather than a matter of individual discovery in isolation. According to Vygotsky, the nature of learning and development for all children, including those with disabilities, is understood in terms of the child as an individual, the meaning of interactions between individual children and teachers from the perspective of those

participants, the tools of learning, and the cultural and historical context (Tudge &
Scrimsher, 2000; Tudge & Winterhoff, 1993). The concepts that are most relevant for this
study relate to the interactions among individuals, especially children and teachers,
within the particular context of the military childcare program. The Vygotskian concepts
addressed in this research are included in the collaborative process of teaching and
learning, which includes the co-construction of knowledge, the zone of proximal
development, scaffolding, intersubjectivity, and the sociocultural perspective. In the
subsequent sections, each of these concepts is discussed in relation to this study.

Obuchenie

Vygotsky used the Russian term, <u>obuchenie</u> to describe the core component of his
theory. The dialectical process of obuchenie occurs as the teacher and child engage in a
collaborative teaching and learning interaction (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2000). The most
productive interaction is that which is slightly ahead of current development and leads or
facilitates learning and development for all individuals involved. This is not a focus on
the acquisition of new skills or knowledge, but on the process of working toward them,
with the more competent and the less competent both engaged in teaching and learning.
In this mutual process of teaching and learning in the early childhood classroom, the
teacher and child are engaged in the process of: mutual discovery about content
knowledge; understanding the process of learning; and understanding who they each
areas individual learners as well as co-learners. It is through this process of mutual
engagement that the co-construction of knowledge occurs.

Co-construction of Knowledge

The critical role of the interaction between children and teachers is evident in the co-construction of knowledge. In order to maximize this interaction, the teacher needs to be receptive to her own opportunities for learning, and be aware of how to gauge the interaction for optimal developmental opportunities for the child. Maximizing the interaction requires sensitivity to the child's perception of the interaction, and understanding how the child is processing information. In Vygotsky's view, the child's mental or cognitive structures result from relationships between mental functions. He considered the relationship between language and thought to be especially important in this regard, and that language and thought initially develop independently of each other, but eventually merge.

Two principles govern the merging of thought and language. First, all mental functions have external or social origins. Children must use language and communicate with others before they focus inward on their own mental processes. Second, children must communicate externally and use language for a long period of time before the transition from external to internal speech takes place (Berk & Winsler, 1995). Applying these principles to gauge interaction, the teacher would support the independent development of thought and language, and the use of language with others as a foundation for internal speech, which extends the child's mental processes. From this perspective, the depth of interaction between the teacher and child has great potential for supporting the development and learning of the child.

Applying Vygotsky's theory, Barbara Rogoff advocated an activity-based approach to understanding and facilitating development based on what the child does in a specific setting (Goldhaber, 2000). In particular, imaginative play is important to a child's development, because it allows the child to develop self-regulatory activity. Also, play helps the child to separate thought from actions and object, which is relevant to learning and development because action evolves from ideas and is not limited to objects (Berk & Winsler, 1995). Through reflective interaction with the child, the teacher can facilitate the generation of ideas and the extension of play. Play provides opportunities for children to learn new concepts, to clarify and extend previous concepts, and to become aware of links between and among concepts. The developmental outcome of immersion in play is that the child becomes more intentional in engagement in, and reflection upon activities with objects and/or people. This perspective emphasizes the significance of the process of interaction, in addition to the structure in the early childhood program, especially in imaginative play opportunities. The teacher and child roles in the co-construction of knowledge are maximized by process and structure components that support the dialectical process of obuchenie, the collaborative teaching and learning interaction between the teacher and child. Teacher-child engagement which optimizes the co-construction of knowledge occurs in relation to the zone of proximal development for individual children.

Zone of Proximal Development

The zone of proximal development (ZPD) as explained by Vygotsky is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem

solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving

under adult supervision or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.

86). Conceptualized as a measure of learning potential, rather than the demonstration of

specific skills and abilities (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2000), the ZPD would be different for

each pair of participants in the co-construction of knowledge. That is, in gauging

interactions with children, the teacher would consider the personal dynamics and the

setting of the learning opportunity, not just results of developmental assessment of the

child. This emphasis underscores the importance of social influence on cognitive

development and the role of instruction in children's development.

Using the ZPD to gauge teacher-child interactions focuses on learning and

development that is an interpersonal, dynamic social event involving a minimum of two

minds, one better informed than the other. The child does not have an independent ZPD,

rather the child shares a ZPD with a facilitator of learning and development in the co-

construction of knowledge. This occurs within the realm of the ZPD through the process

of scaffolding.

Scaffolding

Optimal teaching-learning interactions occur through the process of scaffolding,

through which practical teaching based on the ZPD begins toward the zone's upper limit,

where the child is able to reach the goal only through close collaboration (obuchenie)

with the instructor (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Bodrova & Leong, 1996). With continuing

instruction and practice through immersion in learning and developmental opportunities,

the child organizes and masters the behavioral sequences necessary to perform the target

skill. There are many emerging skills and areas of knowledge that are in the ZPD, and the teacher gauges interactions so as to offer these opportunities in a logical sequence.

Once the goal is achieved, it may become the foundation for the development of a new ZPD. The ZPD is most effectively used to gauge interactions for scaffolding opportunities when the child is motivated and involved in activities that relate to skill at a reasonably high level of difficulty, toward the zone's upper limit. The teacher must know how to exercise the target skill at any level required by the activity, and must be able to locate and stay in the zone for individual children. The more skilled teaching-learning partner adjusts the task goals to meet the child's abilities, and adjusts the quality of the assistance during the problem-solving period in direct response to the children's successes and challenges. Two elements are necessary for effective scaffolding: the child must be motivated to learn a skill, and the instructor must recognize the child's capabilities and adjust the teaching-learning situation accordingly. The internal conditions (child's readiness, prior knowledge and experience, and meaning of those to the child) related to development may be more influential than the external environment (materials, activities, and interactions), although obuchenie incorporates both internal and external components.

The progress or experience within a zone depends on the extent to which others who are more competent are ready and willing to apply principles of scaffolding to nourish the child's eagerness for new words and ideas. Vygotsky (1986), writing about the process of thinking and speech, stresses the importance of the adult's sensitivity to the child's abilities at the moment of engagement or interaction. Teacher awareness of the

child's potential contribution to the co-construction of knowledge is critical.

Determining the actual level of the zone of proximal development for the multitude of

development and learning opportunities for individual children is the most essential

factor in resolving each practical problem of scaffolding opportunities for the child. This

understanding of the child's current development is necessary for providing the most

appropriate opportunities for individual children (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2000). Vygotsky,

and later Bronfenbrenner (1989), argued for the necessity of assessing children in real-

life situations, especially play situations, in order to accurately capture an understanding

of the child's development and learning, the boundaries of the ZPD. Play provides a

shared learning and developmental opportunity, the ZPD (Tudge and Scrimsher, 2000);

especially if the play is structured to encourage cooperation, classmates can draw each

other into the upper limits of the zone of proximal development (Rogoff, 1990).

Imaginary or fantasy play require the use of an array of pragmatic skills, thus providing

more opportunities for learning and development.

In facilitating the learning process, teachers need to be able to identify and

support processes currently maturing. Thus, according to Vygotsky, assessments should

not measure what children can do independently, but rather what the child can do with

help, which actually reveals more about the child's specific knowledge and skills, as well

as the child's processes of learning and development. The more competent teacher or

learner scaffolds, or maximizes, the interaction by supporting children in becoming aware

of divergent viewpoints for perceiving an object or action. Through the process of

observation and interaction, current knowledge is extended through application and

analysis, thus facilitating the construction of higher level thinking skills (Berk & Winsler, 1995).

Scaffolding is enhanced when two conditions are evident in the situation: 1) the scaffold, or learning opportunity, must be appropriate for the child's zone of proximal development, and 2) the relationship between the child and the person providing the scaffold is one in which the child understands and internalizes the cues or codes (Berk & Winsler, 1995) which are tools of the culture. The process of scaffolding is optimized by an understanding of the concept of intersubjectivity.

Intersubjectivity

The concept of intersubjectivity is the process by which "two participants who begin a task with a different understanding arrive at a shared understanding" (Berk & Winsler, 1995). Due to the collaborative nature of obuchenie, intersubjectivity is especially important because it reflects the common foundation of communication between the participants as each adjusts to the perspective of the other in the co-construction of knowledge. The teacher and the child adapt to each other's requirements through a reciprocal, dynamic relationship. Consistent with feminist and Bronfenbrenner theories, an important component of this relationship is the perspective of each of the participants. Although a child is quite capable of engaging in an activity alone, or with another child, the interaction between the participants channels thinking about and engagement in the activity. The adult comments or questions, the scaffolding, is more effectively gauged when it incorporates an understanding of the child's perspective

related to the structure and process of the interaction, which includes the materials, people, and verbal and non-verbal communication.

The child's perception or definition of the situation is based on prior experrience and knowledge. According to Vygotsky, adult sensitivity to these components of the dynamic process of development can support child engagement in interaction events that are collaborative developmental and learning opportunities. As the interaction continues, the skill and knowledge transfers from the teacher to the child, as the teacher gradually reduces the explanations, hints, and demonstrations until the child is able to adequately perform alone. Skills and knowledge are enhanced through a process of internalization and externalization. Through interaction of obuchenie with a teacher or more competent peer, the child's understandings merge with those of the more competent other. Individuality based on the child's previous experiences inform the process and content of internalization (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2000). Thus, development based on internalization is demonstrated and extended through the process of externalization, in which the child explains her or his understandings to another person. In this research, the focus is on observing teacher-child interaction that maximizes child engagement in learning and developmental opportunities.

Intersubjectivity, or shared meaning between participants, and the meaning of the interaction for the child and for the adult are integral to maximizing child engagement. The dynamic nature of the individual in the process of learning and development is grounded in the context in which the learners are engaged (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2000) in

the co-construction of knowledge. The importance of the context is addressed by Vygotsky as the sociocultural component.

Sociocultural

Within this sociohistorical theory, interactions, communication, and the social and cultural influences are critical to understanding particular experiences and the meaning they have for an individual child (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2000). These experiences provide the foundation for patterns of interaction with others, especially in relation to the obuchenic experiences of collaborative teaching and learning. The adult or more competent peer is the vital component. It is expected that these individuals have the knowledge and skill to provide developmental opportunites, including independent play, that will be most beneficial to individual children, based on the child's zone of proximal development related to specific skills and knowledge. How and when a child progresses through a zone, and the extent to which the co-constructed knowledge and understanding become incorporated into independent thinking, is linked to the social context – how the participants have learned to interact, and their perception of the interaction. This is an integration of both nature and nurture, the characteristics of the individual child merge with characteristics of the particular culture (Tudge and Scrimsher, 2000). The result is the child's dynamic process of learning and development, in which each interaction builds on the foundation of prior interactions and is woven into the process of future interactions.

Vygotsky wrote that the child's ability to think and communicate occurs within, and is influenced by, interactions that are guided by the sociocultural context, both the

institutional and the interpersonal levels of social context. At the institutional level, cultural history provides organizations and tools useful to cognitive activity through institutions such as schools, inventions such as computers, and literacy. Institutional interaction, at the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem bioecological levels, provides children with broad behavioral and societal norms to guide their interactions. Although grounded in institutional norms, the interpersonal level has a more direct influence on the child's mental functioning, because specific information is transmitted through direct social interaction embedded in the cultural milieu. The higher mental processes such as memory, attention, and reasoning involve learning to use the inventions of society, such as communication, mathematical systems, and memory devices that are the core components for the development of skills and knowledge, and effective interpersonal relations (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2000).

According to Vygotsky, the evolution of "artificial signs" for memory, communication, and number within a culture is the catalyst that provides the foundation for development of the culture, and an understanding of the collective nature of the culture. As the culture evolves, all three of these constructs follow the same path from being more concrete and specific to being more abstract concepts (Goldhaber, 2000). Through social processes, these constructs evolve from being intramental (psychological tools used by the individual) to being intermental (interactions of individuals in the process of more integrated and complicated labor) (Goldhaber, 2000). The culturally determined artificial signs for communication, thought, and number enable the members of that culture to work together more effectively and efficiently, to be more responsive to

the needs of the individuals in that culture (Goldhaber, 2000). In the classroom under study in Germany, all of the children, families and teachers are affiliated with the U. S. Army. Because of this, they have a shared culture, commonalities in the ecological system. Teacher responsiveness is enhanced by teacher sensitivity to the ZPD for the child and herself, skill in scaffolding to extend and enrich child engagement and development, and insight about the child's perception of the experience. In this research, a focus is on the interaction among members of the culture of the early childhood program, especially teacher responsiveness to the needs of children in relation to engagement in activities, including those that support the development of the higher mental processes. Optimal developmental interaction can occur in any experience, such as reading books, excursions, pretend activities, mealtime, or outdoor play. The key is that the experiences provide opportunities for discussion, for the co-construction of knowledge.

Building on these three theoretical perspectives – feminist, Bronfenbrenner's bioecological, and Vygotskian, the next section reviews the literature, addressing the meaning of the experience for the individual, a keystone of these perspectives. In this research about teacher change, the meaning is formed over time through interactions among children, teachers, parents and administrators within the early childhood classroom context.

The Meaning of Teacher Change

The meaning of teacher change as it influences the child's experience is understood in terms of the dynamic, interactive process between people and their environment (Suransky, 1980; Bronfenbrenner, 1981/1992; Thompson, 1992; Berk & Winsler, 1995; Bodrova & Leong, 1996). Within the childcare center, this process is guided by the collective perceptions of all the people involved: the children, teachers, parents, and administrators. These collective perceptions are influenced by differences in organizational structure as well as by individual meanings that people attach to their interactions (Bloom, 1997). What is important here is the subjective interpretations, formed by specific values, beliefs, and expectations, that become parameters for how individuals define their experience (Suransky, 1980; Bloom, 1997). An understanding of this dynamic, interactive process related to teacher change is informed by the early childhood theory and research discussed in the following sections: teacher change, organizational climate, quality care, brain development, teacher-child relationships and interactions, and teacher-family connections.

Patterns of Teacher Change

Early childhood research about change of teachers for young children has been in two basic areas. One is the end of year transition as children move from one classroom or program to another. Much of this focus has been on the transition from preschool to the public school (Kagan, 1991), with a more recent concern about the alignment of standards, curricula, and assessment between these two programs (Kagan, Carroll,

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Comer, & Scott-Little 2006). The other area of research, which is the focus of this study, is related to teacher change within a classroom.

Teacher change within a classroom occurs in two basic ways – *turnover*, which is a measure of the number of teachers who leave a program during a year (Whitebook & Granger, 1989), and the more customary daily *changes* that result in a variety of people being in the role of classroom teacher. These customary daily changes have not been documented in the early childhood literature, in contrast to teacher turnover that has been researched and written about frequently. Teacher turnover is one component of teacher change, but does not tell the complete story of the cumulative effect on the variability of actual teachers responsible for the children in a classroom. In the following sections, teacher change, which includes turnover, is discussed for both civilian and military programs, to provide a greater understanding of the relevance of the information for the military program used for this study.

There are three types of turnover among staff in the childcare setting. These are: 1) job turnover in which a teacher or director leaves the childcare center; 2) position turnover in which a teacher moves to another classroom within the center or agency; and 3) occupational turnover in which a teacher leaves the child care field (Whitebook and Sakai, 2003). In civilian early childhood programs, the average annual rate of job turnover for teachers has been reported at about 25% (Charlesworth, 1997), and for childcare teachers and administrators combined, it was 30% (Whitebook & Bellm, 1999). Other sources report higher rates of an annual turnover estimated to be 30% for caregivers and 40% for directors (Center for the Child Care Workforce, 2001). About

half of the teaching staff as well as administrators who leave a center continue to work in the field of childcare, that is, position turnover (Whitebook & Sakai, 2003).

In military childcare centers, the rate of staff turnover has demonstrated drastic change over the past 20 years. Until the mid-1980's military childcare was drop-in hourly care in the least desirable facilities, with staff receiving minimal training, minimum wage, and few benefits (Military Family Resource Center, 2002). Given these conditions, around 1980 the annual turnover rate had become as high as 300 percent, especially in overseas programs (Military Family Resource Center, 2002). In 1989, the Military Child Care Act (MCCA) was enacted by Congress in response to General Accounting Office reports and congressional hearings that detailed the extremely poor condition of the child care available to military families (Military Family Resource Center, 2002). Because of its link to low-quality care, staff turnover was one of the issues that the MCCA required the armed services to address. In 1989, the average annual teacher turnover rate at military childcare centers was 48 percent. By 1993, the turnover rate was reduced to less than 24 percent (Zellman and Johansen, 1998). An official rate of turnover is not currently documented (National Clearinghouse for the Military Child Development Program, 2004), although the pattern has greatly improved from the previous 300 percent annual rate.

In addition to teacher turnover, daily teacher change within the classroom impacts young children as well because daily scheduling to provide classroom coverage can be challenging. For centers that are open from 6:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., the typical pattern in military child care programs, the full-time lead teacher or the teacher with seniority gets

the most desirable schedule, typically from 8:00 to 5:00 (Military Family Resource Center, 2002). This means that it may be the part-time teacher or floater who greets parents and children, and conveys information at drop-off or pick-up time, and is moved among classrooms to maintain staff-child ratios during absences and breaks throughout the day. In many centers, children are concentrated in fewer rooms (telescoped) in the morning before the full staff arrives and again in the late afternoon as the group size changes. Therefore, a child who is at the center nine to twelve hours a day, can interact with five or six teachers during the day (Baker & Manfredi-Petitt, 2004). When any of these regularly scheduled teachers are absent, the children are subjected to additional change over time.

Relevance of Teacher Change

Many children are affected by the change of classroom teacher. Approximately 38% of three-year-olds (Burchinal, 2000) and 50% of four- and five-year olds (Kontos & Wilcox-Herzog, 1997) are in civilian center-based settings. The U.S. armed services oversee a child care system that serves more than 200,000 children every day at over 300 worldwide locations and includes families from all four branches of the military (Zellman and Johansen, 1998). The military child care system includes child development centers, family care, and before-and after-school programs. The Army has a capacity of 111, 300 spaces in child care, but this meets only 60% of the requested need for child care, so most of the centers have a waiting list (Kozaryn, 2004).

Concerns regarding the quality of care and education received by young children reflect the crucial nature of the quality of individual teachers. These concerns, therefore,

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are exacerbated by high annual teacher turnover rates that can result in inadequate attention to the learning and development, as well as the safety of children (Bloom,1997; Center for Child Care Workforce, 1996; Cryer & Phillipsen, 1997; National Association for the Education of Young Children). Studies have indicated that centers with higher job turnover had lower levels of quality as measured by developmentally appropriate environments, activities, and teacher-child interactions (Phillips, Mekos, Scarr, McCartney, & Abbott-Shin 2000). Two major national studies were the National Child Care Staffing Study (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1990), which documented the patterns of teacher demographics and program quality linked to job turnover in various kinds of centers; and the Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers study (Helburn,1995), which addressed the links among indicators of center quality and job turnover. These studies reflect a pattern of evidence that the quality of the early childhood education setting is linked to the development of young children, with one of the dominant factors of quality being the individual teachers and their interactions with the children. Program quality and teacher-child interaction will be discussed in more depth in later sections.

Another concern about the quality of the program for young children is the link between teacher change and staff training. Teacher quality has been linked to teacher training (Berk, 1985; Cassidy, Buell, Pugh-Hoese, & Russell, 1995; Dunn, 1993; Honig & Hirallal, 1998). However, the majority of child care teachers have limited education, a 1995 report indicated that 33% of teachers and 12% of assistants had at least a bachelor's degree, not consistently in early childhood education (Center for the Child Care

Workforce, 2002). This problem is exacerbated by the lack of availability of trained teachers. In America's top 50 for-profit childcare organizations, 80% of them considered the lack of available high quality teachers as a major threat to their programs. In lower quality programs, where teachers have a greater need for training, they have fewer opportunities for professional growth (Cryer & Phillipsen, 1997). The link between high turnover and lower program quality results in an on-going demand for staff training, especially when turnover is high (Charlesworth, 1997; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2005). The education and training of childcare teachers are important indicators of quality, that a well-trained staff follows basic health and safety standards and promotes positive child development (Cassidy & Myers, 1993; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2005).

Applying the bioecological perspective, the work environment of the classroom and the center is part of the microsystem, which is affected by the exosystem, the military policies and procedures. Both of these systems influence the frequency of teacher change within the classroom, and the need for additional teacher training, both of which are linked to the quality of care and education received by the children. There is also a link between caregiver's needs and children's needs, with factors in the adult work environment being an indicator of quality in the early childhood program (Bloom, 1997). Therefore, the concern about teacher turnover is two-fold: (1) The well-being of teachers is threatened when their needs are not met in the work environment, such as less desirable characteristics for teachers, as well as staff shortages (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1989; Bloom, 1997), and (2) The well-being of the children in their care is threatened

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because the teachers do not have the structure and support to provide a high quality program (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1989). The experience of children in the early childhood classroom is linked to teacher change, which is linked to working conditions and the work environment. This will be discussed further in a later section on organizational climate.

Reasons For Teacher Change

Turnover can be voluntary or involuntary. The concern related to turnover is when the staff member chooses to leave a position in which he or she was making a positive contribution, directly with the children and families or indirectly by providing leadership. While a related concern is for staff who remain in the field of child care and education, but are not constructively engaged in their work with the children and parents (Whitebook & Sakai, 2003), this study is concerned with teacher change in the classroom, resulting in the children experiencing the effects of working with a different teacher.

Staff turnover results from a variety of factors in the work environment. The low pay, lack of benefits (Kagan, Brandon, Ripple, Maher, & Joesch, 2002), strenuous work, and difficult working conditions result in low morale, stress, and even job burnout (Curbow, Spratt, Unagretti, McDonnell, & Breckler, 2001). Even though teachers report experiencing a feeling of professional accomplishment from their interactions with children, they still feel a profound sense of personal failure because the conditions of teaching are so often frustrating, unrewarding, and intolerably difficult, with some describing the situation as an inability to fulfill their aspirations (Bloom, 1997). Due to

financial constraints, many centers strive to provide safe and reasonable care, rather than optimum growth and development. When ratios are high and include telescoping, combining children in fewer classrooms at the beginning and end of the day so fewer teachers are needed, even the most qualified caregivers are unable to have the kind of individual relationships with children and families that they know are important (Baker & Manfredi-Petitt, 2004). Often, the total group of children is managed by one caregiver throughout the day, even when several caregivers share responsibility for the group. It is these kinds of negative factors that wield the internal change in teachers, which can influence their overall effectiveness.

Until the early-1990's the situation of childcare workers being dissatisfied with low pay and paltry benefits seemed to be worsening because salaries had not kept pace with inflation (Phillips, Mekos, Scarr, McCartney, & Abbott-Shim, 2000; Whitebook & Bellm, 1999). The reasons for this include wage discrimination against females, the labor-intensive nature of early childhood programs, many children in childcare due to parental employment, the relatively low income of young families, and our culture not being child-centered (Cost, Quality, & Child Outcomes, 1995; Modigliani, 1986). To address these concerns, in 1991 the Center for the Child Care Work Force initiated the Worthy Wage Campaign, a movement that has continued to advocate for improved compensation for the early care and education workforce (Center for the Child Care Work Force, 2007).

Salary, along with the high demand for teachers, is directly related to the pattern of teachers entering the profession because some have minimal training that limits other

job choices, although some new staff may have previously worked in other childcare or education programs (Bloom, 1997). Salary is also linked to reasons for teachers leaving the early childhood profession (Kontos & File, 1992). Teachers with more training have more knowledge of early childhood principles and practices to contribute to the quality of the program. However, these highly trained teachers are more likely to leave their jobs if they earn lower wages, work in a climate of less stability of highly trained co-workers, and work with more teaching staff who do not have a bachelor's degree (Whitebook & Sakai, 2003).

Instability of the director is another major factor in teacher turnover, and low wages make it more likely that directors will leave their position (Bloom, 1997). Therefore, center instability resulting from turnover can elicit additional turnover, and thus the negative cycle of additional instability. But, when there is a solid and supportive director-caregiver relationship, teacher retention is higher (Carter, 2000; Catapono, 2001; Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1990). Given the negative impact of teacher change on the experience of the children in the classroom, additional insights about working conditions and work environment will contribute to an understanding of this bioecological process.

Working Conditions and Work Environment

Paula Jorde Bloom (1997) developed a procedure for understanding the "organizational climate," or the atmosphere that characterizes the work environment, providing insight for describing and evaluating the early childhood work setting. The organizational climate includes and influences the perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and

values of all individuals within a given work setting – a composite of the personalities

and the leadership that guides them (Bloom,1997). These factors, in turn, affect the

relationships among teachers, children, parents, and administrators; and how

responsibilities are performed. One's perception of organizational climate is subjective –

depending on one's role in the organization, one's value orientation, and the context of

the situation, so the perspectives of administrators and teachers will differ (Bloom,1997).

While the organizational climate is the collective perceptions of everyone in that

environment, it is understood by considering the meanings that individuals attribute to

that environment of both (Bloom,1997). These principles are applied in this study

through the documentation of perspectives of various people involved with the classroom

– children, teachers, parents, and administrators.

In an analysis of the work environment, Bloom (1997), described ten dimensions

of organizational climate: collegiality, professional growth opportunities, supervisor

support, clarity, reward system, decision-making, goal consensus, task orientation,

physical setting, and innovativeness. While all of these dimensions affect the classroom

experience, those most directly linked to teacher competence are supervisor support and

professional growth opportunities, with emphasis on an increase in professional

competence. As discussed previously, teacher quality determines the experience of the

children in the classroom. The dimension of supervisor support is critical in this process

of guiding teaching behavior and improving effectiveness with children (Carter & Curtis,

1998).

With the high rate of teacher turnover and tight schedules of supervisors and teachers, many teachers function in positions of great responsibility with minimal initial or ongoing professional support. Lack of supervisor support for training has been found to be a major cause of job turnover in the field of childcare, with the teacher's attitude toward and relationship with the supervisor being linked to the effectiveness of supervisor support related to teaching performance (Fleischer, 1985). Given the previous discussion about program quality based on developmentally appropriate environments, activities, and teacher-child interactions, with the significance of the human factor, it is remarkable that the National Child Care Staffing Study found that 40 percent of teachers had no written job description (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1989). Related to the organizational climate dimension of clarity, high quality may be expected, but not clearly communicated to teachers, thus contributing to stress and the choice to leave the teaching position.

For the dimension of decision-making, an integral part of a healthy organizational climate is an uncompromising respect for the need of people to feel that communication is clear, that the decision-making process is fair, and that they have some say in the decisions that directly affect them, resulting in staff who feel a greater commitment to the program goals (Bloom, 1997). The challenge with this process in centers with high staff turnover is that teachers would have less knowledge and experience necessary for making decisions that reflect the principles and practices of a particular program. In addition, participatory management is most effective when implemented gradually (Bloom, 1997), not feasible with high turnover.

These issues are consistent with the feminist theory principle that research be for the oppressed, in that this study provides an opportunity to enhance the work environment. By identifying ways to provide a healthier organizational climate, the teachers could feel less oppressed, which makes it feasible for them to work more effectively to meet the needs of the young children, as well as supporting the families.

Addressing Work Environment Issues

 "By failing to meet the needs of the adults who work in child care, we are threatening not only their well-being, but that of the children in their care" (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1989, pg 3). But, by addressing the personal and professional needs of all involved, teachers and administrators can work collaboratively to address some of the negative aspects and establish a more open climate, which is characterized by a sense of belonging, a shared vision, many opportunities to interact, autonomy, and upward influence (Bloom, 1997; Carter & Curtis, 1998).

The organizational climate is enhanced by soliciting feedback about what would improve working conditions for individuals, and staff meetings that are well-organized and ensure that cooperative management and a positive team spirit and shared vision is established (Bloom, 1997; Carter & Curtis, 1998; Sciarra & Dorsey, 2003). Collaborative decision-making and management requires more time for the director, to involve staff in establishing a mission statement and set goals and educational objectives for the program. To be most effective, this involves an examination of core beliefs and values, and being consistent with the center's educational philosophy (Bloom, 1997). The outcome of this process could be a higher quality program as teachers engage in

more efficient and effective use of the limited time they have, because it helps teachers set priorities about activities and measure progress with children, as well as organize their own time to be consistent with the broader mission of the program. While involving staff in developing a mission statement could reduce the rate of turnover as well as support substitutes in the classroom, increase commitment to the program, and increase the quality of the program for the children, the director may question this use of time and energy for staff whom are likely to leave the center (Bloom, 1997). In addition, the director may not have the commitment or expertise to implement this process, and will benefit from training in this area.

Since the 1980's, both the Military and civilian childcare systems have focused on addressing issues of quality, including teacher turnover (DeVita & Montilla, 2003; Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1989). While a variety of administrative and fiscal programs have supported quality in the civilian childcare system, these programs have not been as comprehensively and consistently applied as in the Military Child Care System (MCCS), because these resulted from internal policy and procedure changes. In the process of revamping the services provided for Military families, the MCCS has benefited from change in institutional administrative and financial support focused on improving childcare quality. The Military Child Care System has addressed five factors relevant to quality of care and teacher turnover. These are: 1) Training and education of child care providers; 2) Linkages between training and compensation; 3) Subsidies to assure affordable costs for parents; 4) Licensing and accreditation standards to improve quality; and 5) Inspections and oversight to establish accountability within the system

(DeVita & Montilla, 2003). These efforts have produced dramatic changes. In 1998, the White House recognized the Military Child Development System as a model for all early childhood programs, and with the goal of one-hundred percent accreditation, in 2003 ninety-five percent of the military's centers had been accredited by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs, a division of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (DeVita & Montilla, 2003), in contrast with about 10 percent of civilian centers being accredited (Zellman & Gates, 2002).

The training and education of all childcare teachers, including the substitutes and floaters, is a critical piece in providing a healthy organizational climate and facilitating quality care (Carter & Curtis, 1994; Teeters, 2001). In the process of teacher training, there are identifiable stages in teachers' attainment of competencies, these stages being linked to ranks on a career ladder (Johnson & McCracken, 1994). The carefully thought out career ladder is part of the process for supporting professional growth of all staff, to acknowledge and reward high quality teaching performance and include incentives for job enrichment and expanded responsibilities (Bloom, 1997; Johnson & McCracken, 1994). Supporting the enhancement of teacher competence includes setting a positive tone in the center and demonstrating respect for individual teachers, but also advocating for higher pay, outlined by the Worthy Wage Campaign, (CCEP, 1992), The Center for Child Care Workforce (1996), and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (1995). The military subsidized systematic pay increases have contributed to the dramatic decrease in teacher turnover in the military programs (DeVita & Montilla, 2003).

Because low wages and limited professional growth opportunities are linked to poor organizational climate and high turnover, these issues have been addressed in the early childhood field. However, despite the positive benefits of training and education, there are few incentives and many barriers for upgrading teacher skills. In civilian programs, most training tends to be voluntary, is provided by community resources, involves a 4-5 percent raise or bonus upon completion of 9 –15 credits earned toward a degree, and requires a one-year commitment to the center after completion of training. Examples of civilian training opportunities to enhance quality by linking continued education and increased compensation include: Compensation and Retention Encourage Stability (CARES) in California, Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (TEACH) developed in North Carolina and operating in 23 states, and Advancing Careers through Education and Training (ACET) in Georgia (DeVita & Montilla, 2003). In contrast, in the military system, training is mandatory, is provided within the center or modules via the internet, involves a 6 percent raise after completing initial training and another 6 percent raise when training is completed and competency is demonstrated, with no required commitment to the center (DeVita & Montilla, 2003).

In an attempt to improve the organizational climate, the focus needs to be not the administrator's assessment, but the subjective interpretations of staff, what individual people perceive as their experience is what is important (Bloom, 1997). This will differ for individuals, so administrators need to match people to jobs so they feel challenged and stimulated, but not overwhelmed (Bloom, 1997). This takes time and an awareness of the skills and interests of each teacher or substitute or floater, which the director may not

have with high rates of teacher change. This emphasizes the importance of effective

communication and a clear job description, to be clear about the priorities for teachers, as

well as the opportunities for professional development, including opportunities to

develop their own areas of interests as professionals.

The role of the director is critical as a facilitator for open communication,

support of staff in developing skills and interests related to new techniques and

instructional approaches, understanding the reasons for teacher's resistance to change,

encouraging divergent thinking and creativity to develop strategies for addressing

problems (Bloom, 1997; Carter & Curtis, 1998). Therefore, support and training of

directors is one of the issues to be addressed in minimizing the negative effects of teacher

change.

Because the human factor is the most critical factor in the quality of child care,

providing support and training to meet the needs of all teachers engaged in the classroom

are more likely to provide optimal learning environments for the children. The following

sections address components of the early childhood classroom in relation to the critical

human factor and implications for teacher change. Mentioned in previous sections, topics

addressed in more depth below are: quality care, teacher-child relationships and

interactions, and parent-teacher relationships and interactions.

Quality Care

The standards of quality care are guidelines for teacher practices, based on what is

developmentally appropriate for a given age group, but also what is appropriate for

children as individuals (Bredekamp, S. & Copple, C.,1997; Wardle, 1999; Copple &

Bredekamp, 2005; Elkind, 2005). Research supports the use of these practices for

enhancing the learning and development of young children (Dunn & Kontos, 1997;

Charlesworth, 1998; Howes, 1990; Marcon, 2002; Stipek et. al., 1995). While many

teachers state a belief in developmentally appropriate practices, their actual classroom

practices do not consistently reflect these principles; with actual practices reflecting

belief in children's abilities and the effectiveness of teacher-directed or child-centered

practices (Isenberg, 1990; McMullen, 1999; Parker & Neuharth-Pritchett, 2006; Raths,

2001). This situation is understood in terms of the bioecological model of human

behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 1981), reflecting the dynamic, interactive nature between

people and their environment, and how teachers resolve conflicting influences on their

decisions about who they are as a teacher. This is an example of the mesosystem process,

the linkages between two of the exosystems: the individual teacher's beliefs and values,

or individual meanings attached to interactions, may be in conflict with the policies,

training, and expectations of the military child development program. As teachers

experience the inconsistency between their beliefs and practices for teaching young

children, this dilemma adds to the stress experienced by the teacher, the stress in turn,

affects teacher quality (Bloom, 1997).

These recommended practices are grounded in the concept of critical periods; that

is, different environmental factors or experiences at different points during development

can have differing effects on development (Gottlieb, 1976). Therefore, these practices for

high quality programs are based on research and theory of what is known about how

young children learn and develop most effectively. Because childhood experiences not

only shape immediate development and learning, but establish the foundation for future potential (Howes & Hamilton, 1993; Shore, 1997), the content and delivery of learning and developmental opportunities is critical. Although standards of developmentally appropriate teacher practices have been identified (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Gronlund, 2006; NAEYC, 1996), and teachers may state belief in the established developmentally appropriate practices, their classroom behaviors may demonstrate developmentally inappropriate practices (Hatch & Freeman, 1988; McMullen, 1999; Parker & Neuharth-Pritchett, 2006).

Reflecting the theories, principles, and best practices of early childhood programs, the specific components of program quality have been defined in a variety of ways. But, the models of high quality incorporate both structural and process or dynamic factors, with process factors having a direct impact on children's developmental outcomes, and structure factors having an indirect impact via the process quality (NICHD, 2005; Phillips & Howes, 1987). Structural factors are child-staff ratio, group size and composition, and staff qualifications (experience and training). The process factors are represented by caregiving quality, the children's daily experiences. The structural and process factors exist in the particular context of the child care setting, one of the components of the bioecological framework. These contextual considerations of time, place, and situation, are fundamental to making meaning of quality in early childhood programs (Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence, 1999). One of the contextual factors is staff stability (Phillips & Howes, 1987). The continuity of care for children, which is a

critical component in providing a high quality program, is jeopardized by high turnover (Bloom, 1997).

While higher quality in structural factors provides the foundation for higher quality in the process factors, the relationship between structural and process factors is inconclusive. The results of one study done over five years in ten national sites revealed that the process factor of positive caregiving was higher in relation to the structural factors of lower child-adult ratios, smaller group sizes, higher levels of caregiver education, and more child-centered beliefs by caregivers (NICHD, 2005). In another study, the structural factors were not predictive of the process factors (Cryer, Tietze, Burchinal, Leal, & Palacios, 1999). This study, conducted in four countries concluded that efforts to enhance the process factors, the child's daily experience, are most effective when addressing the caregiving quality directly. Again, this emphasizes the critcal nature of the human factor in high quality child care, and the relevance of the interaction process between individuals in the bioecological framework. According to Platt (1991), an optimal program for children requires that teachers understand how to help young children best learn how to learn, rather than just thinking of themselves as teacher with the child the recipient of knowledge. She adds that the atmosphere in the classroom, the teacher-child relationship, and the teacher-child interaction are critical components of a high-quality program. The challenge here for the teacher is that the relationship and interactions differ for each individual child, and the overall atmosphere in the classroom varies over time. Teacher-child relationships and teacher-child interactions are discussed further in a following section.

Because high quality in early childhood programs depends on staff trained to provide process quality, the following definition of this dimension of quality will clarify what is expected in this area (Tietze, Cryer, Bairrao, Palacios, & Wetzel, 1996):

> Safe care, with diligent adult supervision that is appropriate for children's ages and abilities, safe toys, equipment, and furnishings; healthful care where children have opportunities for activity, rest, developing skills in cleanliness and toileting, as well as having their nutritional needs met; developmentally appropriate stimulation, where children have opportunities for play and learning in a variety of areas such as language, art, music, drama, fine and gross motor ability, numeracy and nature or science; positive interactions with adults, where children can trust, learn from, and enjoy the adults who care for and educate them; encouragement of individual emotional growth, allowing children to operate independently, securely, and competently; and promotion of positive relationships with other children, allowing children to interact with their peers with the environmental supports and adult guidance required to help interactions go smoothly. (p. 453)

The Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale - Revised (ECERS-R) was developed to broadly assess global process quality by assessing seven areas: space and furnishings, personal care routines, language-reasoning, activities, interaction, program structure, and parents and staff (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1998). This instrument is used in this study, and is described in more detail in the methodology chapter.

The following indicators of quality represent the comprehensive nature of expectations of early childhood programs, the context, and therefore the individual teachers within that context:1) The program is based on an understanding of child development, 2) The program is individualized to meet the needs of every child, 3) The physical environment is safe and orderly, and it contains varied and stimulating toys and materials, 4) Children may select activities and materials that interest them, and they

learn by being actively involved, 5) Adults show respect for children's needs and ideas

and talk with them in caring ways, 6) Parents feel respected and are encouraged to

participate in the program, and 7) Staff members have specialized training in child

development, education, and appropriate programming (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997;

Koralek, Colker, & Dodge, 2002). In addition to providing an immediate positive

developmental experience for the children, teaching practices consistent with high quality

programs extend and strengthen development of the child's brain.

Early Childhood Program Quality and Brain Development

The quality of the young child's early learning experience is crucial because of

the link between brain development and learning potential. As recently as the mid-

1980's, neuroscientists believed that by the time babies are born, the structure of their

brains had been genetically determined (Shore, 1997). Since that time there have been

dramatic advances in understanding the development of the brain. Current studies

indicate that the child's early development is determined by genetics, as well as by early

experiences in the daily environment (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Nature and nurture

both provide critical and necessary components in the development of the brain.

Over 90 percent of brain growth happens during the first three years of life. At

birth, the brain has about 100 billion neurons that form at least 50 trillion connections, or

synapses, that can grow to 1000 trillion synapses by the age of eight months, but

decreases to about 500 trillion by age ten (Jensen, 1996; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). As

the child receives stimulation through the five senses, synapses form between neurons,

and these trillions of connection make up the wiring of the brain. Stimulation is a critical

factor in the process of brain wiring because those connections that are frequently activated are retained, and others are discarded so the active connections can become stronger. Early childhood experiences, therefore, wield a specific and dramatic impact, physically determining the wiring of the multitude of intricate neural circuits of the brain.

The wiring of the brain determines the child's ability to store and draw on information in the neurons. The process of this wiring is very systematic in the formations of the number and strength of synapses among the neurons in eleven basic sections of the brain. These eleven sections are each responsible for basic functions of the body, as well as functions for learning and development, and these brain sections develop at different times (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). For example, the brain stem which controls the necessary functions of the body, such as breathing, circulation, heartbeat and reflexes, is one of four regions of the brain already completely wired at birth. The wiring for learning and developmental areas of the brain is described in terms of brain plasticity or prime times when environmental experiences can be used to enhance the anatomy of the brain, and the neurons can create synapses most easily and efficiently (Chugani, 1997; Shore, 1997; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

Following the prime times for brain wiring, there are critical developmental periods for learning opportunities. The difference is that during the prime wiring period, the synapses are being formed, and during the critical learning period, these connections are being strengthened and made more permanent. For each of the developmental areas of motor, emotional, visual, language, and cognition, there are different patterns of timing for brain wiring and learning opportunities. Basically, for these developmental area, the

brain wiring prime time is between birth and three years; and the learning opportunity critical periods are between two and five years. Therefore, the child's experiences between birth and five are critical for potential lifelong learning and development. Given this significance for the nature of the individual child's experience in an early childhood classroom, the role of the teacher is central for providing optimal developmental and learning experiences for strengthening the connections in the brain. This teacher role of providing stimulating experiences is a component of a high quality program.

During these prime times the absence of appropriate stimulation can minimize brain development by the formation of fewer synapses, and negative experiences can be detrimental to the brain (Shore, 1997). For example, when parents experience depression and are less responsive to infants, the child's brain is less active; and when children experience stress, the body produces the hormone cortisol, which has been linked to diminished brain functioning (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). An implication directly related to this research is that in the process of early brain development, there can be detrimental effects of early and sustained experiences, particularly with inappropriate, stressful, or disrupted caregiving environments (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). A high level of teacher change is a disrupted environment for the child, and if teaching practices are inappropriate, the concern is exacerbated.

The optimal brain-related experiences are based on stimulation, and are consistent with established developmentally appropriate practices in an atmosphere of supportive relationships and interactions, which are discussed in following sections. In the high-quality program that provides these optimal experiences, teachers would

embrace the understanding that a child's learning process includes: active exploration, sensory experience, repetition, meaningful context, trial and error and problem-solving, and elaboration of experience, rather than acceleration of experience (Epstein, 2007; Koralek et. al., 2002; Shiller, 1997). It is the quality, quantity, and consistency of stimulation in these areas that contributes to the synaptic connections and how they will function (Dodge & Heroman, 1999; Howes & Hamilton, 1993; Jablon & Wilkinson, 2006; Jensen, 1996). The impact of this stimulation is more effective in a relationship of love and attachment (Baker & Manfredi-Pettit, 2004), with insecure attachments limiting development of the region of the brain that manages trust and impulse control, with this region developing before the region that is responsible for higher level thinking skills (Bales & Campbell, 2002).

In a program with frequent teacher change, especially if the organizational climate does not include training opportunities and supervisor support, the teachers may not have training about the relevance of brain development and the implications for specific teaching practices. As indicated in the previous section on program quality, teacher-child relationships and interactions are a critical component in process quality, or the child's experience in the program. Because change in individual teachers affects the relationships and interactions among teachers and individual children, as well as between the teacher and the group as a whole, relationships and interactions are discussed in the following sections.

Teacher-Child Relationship

Consistent with child development research, the foundation of a high quality program that supports development and learning for young children in centers is based on establishing meaningful relationships between teachers and children (Gandini & Edwards, 2001). As discussed in the previous section on brain development, a relationship of secure attachment facilitates brain development (Bales & Campbell, 2002), and provides security for children to explore their environment (Ainsworth, 1979), consistent with developmentally appropriate practices for learning. Attachment refers to a relationship between two individuals who feel strongly about each other and behave in ways to continue the relationship, a secure attachment depending on sensitivity and responsiveness (Ainsworth, 1979).

Children learn and develop within relationships (process quality), as well as observing the relationships around them, and these critical relationships are undermined when caregivers are interchangeable (Baker & Manfredi-Petitt, 2004). In a situation of frequent change of teachers, there is limited opportunity for the development of optimal relationships between teachers and children who know each other as individuals. This occurs on two levels: 1) the relationships among adults (caregiver coworkers, caregiver-parent, and caregiver-director), and 2) the direct relationship between each teacher and child (Baker & Manfredi-Petitt, 2004). Children who have developed positive or secure relationships with their teachers share more personal information, were comfortable with dependence, but were not too dependent, and they demonstrated positive affect in

response to the teachers' interactions or in regard to their relationships with the teachers (Pianta & Steinberg, 1992).

This positive teacher-child relationship sets the tone for the child's experience in the classroom. The author of the bioecological framework, Bronfenbrenner (1991), stated that children thrive when they are surrounded by people who are crazy about them. It is not just important that children feel cared for, but that they feel cared about by a nurturing and responsive teacher (Baker & Manfredi-Petitt, 2004; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Sroufe, 1995). The caregiver has many daily opportunities to be sensitive and responsive to the children as they experience incredible and sometimes challenging physical, emotional, and cognitive development in their first few years.

Developing this relationship can be a slow process, it takes children about 8 to 12 weeks before any transition feels complete, new relationships are established, and most seem adjusted with a new teacher (Baker & Manfredi-Petitt, 2004). A strong relationship with each child is also an intentional process, maintained by the caregiver who supports overall development of the child by the time-consuming process of systematically observing and understanding individual children (Gandini & Edwards, 2001; McAfee & Leong, 2002). This gradual, systematic process can be challenging in a classroom with frequent teacher change.

When young children are subjected to frequent teacher change, this is a lot of adjustments during the early critical years of development, in conflict with standards of good practice for young children (Baker & Manfredi-Petitt, 2004). When children perceive their relationships with their teachers as positive and supportive, they are

prepared to most effectively focus on other, more developmentally appropriate kinds of learning tasks. The teacher-child relationship is the foundation upon which teacher-child interactions occur.

Teacher-Child Interactions

Interaction is described as any individual verbal or nonverbal behavior which engages a teacher and child in conversation, activity, or encounter (Erwin, Alimaras, & Price, 1999). Reflecting best practices in early childhood programs, teacher-child interaction is instrumental in enhancing development in all domains: physical, cognitive, language, social, and emotional (Bredecamp & Copple, 1997). As the teacher interacts with children to provide opportunities that extend and enrich the learning and development of young children, the goal is to engage children in meaningful experiences. Engagement includes both psychological and behavioral characteristics. Psychologically, engagement includes curiosity, interest, enjoyment, and a desire to achieve one's own goals; combined with behaviors of concentration, investment, enthusiasm, and effort (Jablon & Wilkinson, 2006).

Children learn by doing and thinking about what they are doing (Dewey, 1900/1902). Teachers promote engagement in this process of doing and thinking by providing stimulating materials and activities, introducing ideas that build on children's prior knowledge, encouraging children to try new activities, and using comments and questions to stimulate children to think about and explore their own ideas (Dodge, Colker, & Heroman, 2002; Epstein, 2007; Fried, 1995; Katz & Chard, 2000; Sigel & Saunders, 1979). Research indicates that the optimal child outcomes for all

developmental domains emerge in an educational environment in which the teacher begins with an awareness of the skills and interests the individual child brings to the program (McAfee & Leong, 2002). The teacher then integrates this information with a knowledge base about learning and developmental opportunities supportive of the individual child (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Bodrova & Leong, 1996), and knowledge about the affects of teaching approaches and the atmosphere within the classroom (Koralek, Colker, & Dodge, 2002).

Consistent with the bioecological framework, symbolic interactionism recognizes that human beings interpret or define each other's actions instead of merely reacting to each other's actions (Ritzer, 1980). According to George Herbert Mead, the concept of self, or as he says, the looking glass self, implies that the individual develops a sense of self based on the perceptions or definitions of others' impressions in social interaction (Farganis, 1996). Applying this principle, if children are treated like competent learners, they will be likely to engage in more depth in learning opportunities reflecting that they perceive themselves as competent learners (Gandini, 1993).

Although there is great variation in amount of interaction, during the average day, teachers typically have approximately 1,500 interactions with the children (Billups & Rauth, 1987). While the quantity of teacher-child interaction is important, the quality of such interactions is critical in child outcomes. How children are responded to is more important, with more impact on learning, than the actual content of programs (Platt, 1991). According to Platt, the most supportive interactions are those that involve taking cues from children in deciding what and how to facilitate learning and development, and

giving positive responses to children's achievements, both large and small, respecting

children's need for attention, and responding thoughtfully to their communications. This

process of engaging in informed interactions is an application of the Vygotskian concepts

of scaffolding and the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

The quality of these informed interactions is reflected in the atmosphere of a

preschool classroom. Koralek, Colker, & Dodge (2002) described a high quality

atmosphere and related interactions.

> Lively chatter can be heard from children talking and working together
> and from teachers reacting to children's ideas, questions, and concerns.
> Teachers are genuinely interested in what the children are doing, how they
> are feeling, and what they have to say. The teachers' expectations for each
> child are appropriate to what that child can understand and do at his or her
> stage of development. An atmosphere of cooperation and caring is evident.
> (p. 86)

In a situation of frequent teacher change, the teacher expectations and interactions

with individual children are less informed. When caregivers are interchangeable in

responsibilities for children, adult-child interactions are more random and inconsistent,

because interactions with a variety of teachers affect children in a variety of ways, which

can make the child's world feel chaotic and unpredictable (Baker & Manfredi-Petitt,

2004). Especially when the teacher is a floater or substitute, she or he is expected to work

with a variety of ages and developmental abilities, an unreasonable expectation for a

person with minimal training and compensation (Baker & Manfredi-Petitt, 2004). In

addition, this person is not in a position to make informed decisions for providing

opportunities for learning and development gauged to individual children.

The risk of harm is greatest when children or teachers are changed arbitrarily and without warning, such as when children are moved to a different classroom, or the teacher leaves the classroom, and no explanation is given. There are concerns for the child who is accustomed to a teacher who knows, loves, and values him, and then experiences the change to a teacher who does not (Baker & Manfredi-Petitt, 2004). While supervisor support could counteract some of the negative effects of teacher change related to teacher-child interaction, as indicated in the previous section on working conditions, in lower quality centers supervisor support is less evident and teacher change is greater. In addition to general benefits from positive teacher-child interactions that extend engagement, there are specific patterns of interactions linked to specific child outcomes. Although there are mixed results about developmental outcomes in early childhood program, the consistent pattern is that children have more positive outcomes in social, language, and cognitive development in higher quality programs, with process quality being the key factor (NICHD, 2005), with specific characteristics of interactions related to specific child outcomes. Attributes of teacher-child interactions affecting child outcomes include: patterns of support, level of intensity in teacher-child interactions, and context of the interaction (Pianta & Nimetz, 1997).

Social-Emotional Development

The basic social-emotional development competencies for young children are to develop a positive sense of self, form positive relationships and engage in satisfying interactions with adults and peers, and engage in prosocial behavior (Dodge, Colker, & Heroman, 2002; Epstein, 2007; Katz & McClellan, 1997). Specific skills are to develop a

positive self-identity and feelings of competence, recognize and label emotions including empathy, emotional awareness and self-regulation, social knowledge and understanding, social skills, and social dispositions, which the teacher supports through interactions based on modeling, coaching, and providing opportunities for practice (Epstein, 2007; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Confidence in self, and competence in interactions with others are critical because it is through these interactions support learning and development (Vygotsky, 1978).

In the early childhood classroom, it is the strong emotional bond of attachment between a child and teacher who is a regular part of the child's life that supports children in learning to interpret emotions and behaviors and to develop an understanding of relationships (Ainsworth,1979; Bowlby, 1969, 1989; Sroufe, 1985, 1995). The quality of teacher-child interaction is an expression of the attachment relationship, which is pervasive in the experience of the child throughout the day. The application of psychosocial theory proposed by Erikson (1950) is directly linked to the effectiveness of the teacher-child interaction. The first three stages of this theory relate to whether the child develops a sense of trust in the classroom environment, and whether the child demonstrates autonomy and initiative in program activities. Although each child brings to the program his or her unique sense of trust, autonomy, and initiative, the teacher-child interaction is crucial in determining how these characteristics are expressed within the program, and thus, the breadth and depth of child engagement in learning and development opportunities.

Self-control is another developmental goal, but when children's individual needs are not met, they can behave in challenging ways. In a situation of frequent teacher change, it may not be realistic to expect that all teachers in a classroom over time will be familiar with the individual needs of all the children. If the teacher is not considering the child's perspective in these situations, the teacher may talk with the parent about inappropriate behavior of the child, without effectively supporting the child in developing self-control by addressing the circumstances that may be causing the problem (Gartrell, 2004). In situations of frequent teacher change, problems with children tend to get passed along rather than resolved (Baker & Manfredi-Petitt, 2004). So, teacher change can result in a pattern of addressing the symptoms, rather than the problems of children, as well as not addressing the concerns at all.

When there is a teacher shortage or teachers are less familiar with a classroom, the teacher tends to be more focused on managing the classroom, rather than interacting with the children to extend their engagement in learning and development (Baker & Manfredi-Petitt, 2004). When the teacher is focused on management of the classroom, there is minimal time to support and share the joy as a child masters a new skill or enjoys repeating a skill, helping children learn how to work together on projects, or comfort a child who is having a difficult day (Baker & Manfredi-Petitt, 2004). In addition, it is these kinds of interactions that provide meaningful information for teachers to share with parents, thus strengthening the parent-teacher relationship, rather than mostly talking with parents about inappropriate behaviors of children.

The teacher style in teacher-child interactions wields the potential for teachers to establish a high quality atmosphere of relationships with children, and to provide opportunities that contribute to children functioning as learners in the classroom. By establishing a positive relationship with individual children, and gauging interactions to support psychosocial development to instill a sense of trust in a safe world, and the child's autonomy and initiative are supported, the child is prepared to engage more fully in classroom activities.

Language and Cognitive Development

In the area of language and literacy, the basic developmental competencies are related to listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Dodge, Colker, & Heroman, 2002). Competencies in cognitive development include learning and problem-solving, logical thinking, and representation and symbolic thinking (Dodge, Colker, & Heroman, 2002). In relation to these competencies, teacher-child interaction has been linked with children's trajectories toward academic success or failure (Pianta & Nimetz, 1997), with specific characteristics of interactions related to specific child outcomes, such as level of teacher talk, teacher style during reading activities, intensity level of teacher-child interactions, and context of the interaction.

Outcomes of teacher-child interaction comparing the child-centered or teacher-structured context, is impacted further by the more global teacher-child relationship, or the emotional climate established by the teacher (Stipek, Feiler, Byler, Ryan, Milburn, & Salmon, 1998). In contrast to results for older children, preschoolers were more likely to

have higher scores for basic skills in math and literacy if their teachers focused less on basic skills and more on relationship.

Wilcox-Herzog and Kontos (1998) examined the effects of four levels of teacher talk: no teacher verbalizations, directives, non-elaboratives, and elaboratives. The higher level of teacher talk, the elaboratives, were associated with greater cognitive competence in children, although the higher level talk occurred only 18% of the time. This pattern was consistent for children who were not English language proficient; the level of teacher talk remained the most influential teacher characteristic in relation to child cognitive outcomes. The authors offered a possible explanation for this pattern, especially in light of the consistency for non-English speaking children, is that teachers who understand and are committed to using higher level talk with children, communicate interest in children in a variety of ways. Interest in higher level discussion of their activities, or extended length of exchange is just one expression of interest.

The style of teacher-child interaction during reading activities results in different outcomes for children (Reese & Cox, 1999). According to the authors, the *describer* style, with the focus on describing and labeling pictures, results in an increase in the children's understanding of vocabulary and connections between spoken and printed language, especially for children with greater skills in comprehension. The *performance-oriented* style, focuses on the teacher reading the story uninterrupted and leading the discussion before and after the reading, resulted in the greatest increase in vocabulary for children who already had a strong vocabulary. Thus, the benefits of specific reading styles were related to specific literacy skills and to the preexisting skills levels of

individual children. A key aspect to child outcomes related to reading styles is that one style is not necessarily preferable, but the critical component of this interaction lies in the teacher's awareness of and adjustment to the needs, interests, and responsiveness of individual children.

In addition to the type of interaction, the intensity of the teacher-child interaction is related to child outcomes. When teachers are engaged in a level of talk that involves delivering more facts or information, children engage in a lower level of play with objects (Wilcox-Herzog & Kontos, 1998). Also, when teachers are engaged in more directive interactions with children, the children display less complex cognitive play on a six level scale, ranging from the least complex (functional play without objects) to the most complex (dramatic play). However, when teacher-child interaction reflected the greatest teacher responsiveness to the child, children demonstrated the greatest cognitive competence for both intellectual ability and amount of complex cognitive play (Kontos, Hui-Chin, & Dunn, 1994).

The context of the teacher-child interaction also affects child outcomes. Marcon (1999) compared three models of teacher-child interaction: child-initiated, academically directed, and a combination of the two. Child outcomes were observed in two ways, demonstration of specific skills in a testing situation, and use of skills in daily interactions. Teachers in the child-initiated model, who were responsive to and supportive of children's interests, and teachers in the academic model, who directed children's activities, had children with higher scores in all developmental outcomes than did teachers using a combination of the two models. The exception to this pattern related

to daily living skills, the children in classrooms with teachers using a combination of the two models were more self-sufficient in routines for mealtime, bathroom use, and clothing. The greatest increase in child outcome was in communication skills (expressive and receptive) for teachers using the child-initiated and the academically directed models, compared to the combination model.

The early childhood curriculum is basically everything that happens throughout the day. The children's ability to make meaning out of the various materials, activities, and interactions throughout the day depends on the child's prior knowledge, skills, and experiences, and the extent to which the child can draw on these factors. If the teacher-child interaction helps children make meaning out of the curriculum, this process will extend and enrich the learning opportunity for the child (Dodge & Colker, 2000). Much of children's learning and development occurs through the process of play as children are engaged in the process of exploration, discovery, and experiencing joy in their world (Elkind, 2004). It is in these play experiences that teachers have the greatest opportunities for individualizing interactions to support and scaffold each child's ongoing development (Sheridan, Foley & Radlinkski, 1995). This requires a strong knowledge base in child development and education principles and practices, as well as knowledge of the skills and interests of each child. It also requires that the teacher effectively and efficiently move from child to child during periods of child-directed activity to be a supportive learning partner for individual children. When there is frequent teacher change, especially for substitutes or floaters, it is a too much to expect them to have the professional

knowledge base, the knowledge of individual children, and an awareness of the

organization of classroom materials and routines.

Teacher-Family Connections

Incorporating the bioecological approach, this research considers teacher-family

connections in relation to the four components: (1) the person (2) a particular context, (3)

the process of interaction, and (4) the passage of time. The focus is on the teachers and

families interacting within the context of the early childhood classroom, and the impact

of the passage of time. As teacher change occurs over time, there will be a related change

in the process of interaction due to individual differences. These differences affect the

quality and impact of the teacher-family connections, which, in turn affects the teacher-

child interactions (Ware & Barfoot, 2000).

Even though there is great potential for this relationship, it does not always flow

smoothly.Working with families is one of the top six concerns identified by early

childhood teachers, with teachers often requesting help from program administrators

about how to work effectively with families (Gonzalez-Mena, 2005; Sciarra & Dorsey,

2003). Even though there are benefits of and challenges in establishing a team

relationship with parents, many teachers have little preparation in this area (Greenman,

1998b; Nieto, 2004). The challenges in parent-teacher relationships are evident regardless

of the frequency of teacher change, but they are exacerbated by increased teacher change.

This pattern is cyclical, with more frequent teacher change limiting opportunities for

interactions to develop the desired relationship (Keyser, 2006); and when the teacher-

parent relationships are not adequately supported, this deficit can contribute to burnout

and high turnover among caregivers (Baker & Manfredi-Petitt, 2004). When there is

frequent teacher change, neither parents nor teachers tend to invest in a relationship when

they know it will be short term, but when these relationships are supported and are

positive, many caregivers report being sustained by the connections they have with

families and colleagues; the relationships they form on the job are one of the benefits of

working in the early care and education field (Bloom, 1997; Baker & Manfredi-Petitt,

2004).

When teachers are open to seeing parents as assets, they discover resources that

might otherwise remain untapped, and together they can channel their energies into

activities for positive change as the child's skills and development are extended (Lee &

Seiderman, 1998; Copple & Bredekamp, 2006; Keyser, 2006; Bennett, 2007). In

addition, parental beliefs about their child shape the parent-child interactions. The

interactions between the parent and teacher can change some aspects of parental beliefs

in ways that are potentially beneficial to the family unit (Keyser, 2006; Ware & Barfoot,

2000), such as discussing the child's strengths and goals in all developmental areas.

There is minimal concern that teacher frustrations with parents negatively affects

child outcomes, with evidence that teachers are able to separate their feelings about

children from their feelings for the parents, and are able to behave in generous and

unbiased ways toward the children in their care (Kontos & Wells, 1986). The concern is

that for teachers to provide higher quality care, it is important for teachers and parents to

share information about themselves and the children, to function as an effective team

raising the child(ren) together (Anderson, 1998). While "caregivers are knowledgeable

about children in general; parents are the experts about their children in particular" (Baker & Manfredi-Petitt, 2004, p. 38). A team relationship that allows for this kind of sharing requires that mutual trust is established (Baker & Manfredi-Petitt, 2004; Freeman & Swick, 2007). As the professional, the teacher has the basic responsibility of establishing the norm of comfortable mutual sharing related to the goal of supporting the development of the child. This can be especially complex for the lead teacher who makes many classroom decisions, but may not be present when parents drop off or pick up their children.

Even though there may be challenges, this relationship is critical for enhancing child outcomes. Parent involvement with the teacher and classroom activities has a positive impact on children's cognitive development, self-esteem, motivation (Auerbach, 1989; Greenberg, 1989), and discipline (Gartrell, 2004). The team relationship between parent and teacher also provides a foundation for addressing small problems with the child before they become big problems (NAEYC, 1989). When teacher change occurs and teachers have limited opportunities to interact with parents, teachers have a limited understanding of the child's behaviors and abilities. And yet, the child's actions are how the teacher understands the child to know if something is amiss in the child's daily circumstances, or how to most effectively apply the developmentally appropriate practice of individualizing instruction and interaction for all children (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Copple & Bredekamp, 2006).

As teachers think about their goals for the relationship with the family, and specific strategies to achieve those goals, this process will be guided by the personal

meanings from the teacher's perspective. These meanings are the assumptions made about the child and family, the appropriate relationship with them, expectations in the classroom context, and beliefs about one's role as a teacher (Isenberg, 1990; McMullen & Alat, 2002; Raths, 2001). The manner in which the teacher conveys these meanings, will in turn, impact that relationship (Keyser, 2006). For the military families, there are a variety of stresses, with long workdays, sometimes both parents are active duty and have challenging responsibilities, or a parent may be deployed for an extended time on a dangerous assignment, and living away from extended family support systems. Because families exist in the context of their relationships with other people and institutions, the teacher-family relationships can empower families in daily life and in times of need or stress, or can be a source of additional stress (Allen & Staley, 2007; Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

For the most effective parent-teacher connection, three components have been identified: establish the relationship, build the partnership, and resolve problems (Keyser, 2006; NAEYC, 1989). The ecological framework considers the various levels or systems of influence on the individual and the wider population (Bronfenbrenner, 1988; Klein & White, 1996), such as the mutual influence between the teacher and the family. The bioecological framework provides insight into the dynamic interactive effects of the family unit and the early childhood teacher. Because this relationship is dynamic, building over time, teacher change results in an interruption in the benefits of this relationship.

Consistent with the system approach of the bioecological framework, teachers who view a child's home life as separate from the center do not help children maintain ties to family or to the way things are done at home. A teacher embracing the bioecological framework begins with the knowledge that families consist of individuals who may be very diverse in beliefs, values, goals, and desires; and yet together they are defining what the concept of family means to each of them and how they function as a family (Bronfenbrenner, 1992; Freeman & Swick, 2007), and teachers use this understanding to establish an effective partnership with each member of the family (Copple, 2003). Even though all of the families in this research are military families, there will be much individual diversity to be understood and incorporated into interactions in the classroom context.

As teachers and administrators appreciate the role they play as part of the ecological system, this information can be woven into perceptions of themselves as teachers. The key here is to build the relationship with the family, not just to be the teacher of the child. The administrative implications are that teachers need training and support in working with families, in order to enhance the process quality in the classroom.

Summary

Assumptions of the bioecological perspective are germane to the process of teacher change within a classroom. Related to the development of beliefs, values, and meanings is the proposition that the individual grows and adapts through interchanges with her or his immediate ecosystem of the family, and the more distant environments

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such as the school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Glossop, 1988; Hawley 1986). The microsystems that are involved in this study are the family and the child development program, with the mesosystem consisting of the linkages between these microsystems. The exosystem is represented by characteristics of the local community surrounding the child development program (on-base) and family (on-base or off-base). In this case, it is the overseas military community, which depending on individual families, may involve living in a local town, and include family members from the local country. The macrosystem components include the policies and practices that affect the services and restrictions for the families and the child development program.

This process of adaptation requires change in the specialization of functions of individuals and the family or the classroom as a whole, with ecosystem change occurring as new information is converted to new functions (specialization) or increased specialization of old functions (Klein & White, 1996). This new information is a result of the bioecological process, emanating from all four levels of the ecosystem (micro, meso, exo, and macro). This information is impacted by, and in turn, impacts the four bioecological components of person, context, interaction, and time.

The significance of teacher change in the early childhood classroom is informed by the application of the bioecological framework, and the relevance of this framework is acknowledged by the field of early childhood education. One of the core values in the Code of Ethical Conduct developed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC 1989/1992/1997/2005), that identifies the responsibilities of teachers is: Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of

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family, culture, community, and society. This research endeavors to understand the significance of teacher change from the perspective of the child. Research and theory applied to this research are patterns of teacher change, organizational climate, brain development, quality care, developmentally appropriate practices focusing on teacher-child relationships and interactions, and teacher-family relationships. The professional literature in all of these areas indicates a concern for optimal learning and development of the child when there is a high level of teacher change.

The following chapter on methodology explains the study intended to gain a more complete understanding of the experience in the early childhood classroom when there is change of adults in the classroom. The following three research objectives comprising eight questions will be addressed.

Research Questions

Objective 1. To examine variation in the use of classroom materials, equipment, and processes in relationship to the extension or hindrance of child engagement in activities when there are changes in teachers.

A. When there are changes in teachers, how are the use of classroom materials and equipment related to the extension or hindrance of engagement in activities for the children?

B. When there are changes in teachers, how are the classroom processes related to the extension or hindrance of engagement in activities for the children?

Objective 2. To examine teacher-child interactions related to the extension or hindrance of engagement in activities, for the children, when there are changes in teachers.

A. When there are changes in teachers, what are the characteristics of teacher initiations in teacher-child interactions that extend or suppress the extension or hindrance of child engagement in activities?

B. When there are changes in teachers, what are the characteristics of teacher verbal or non-verbal responses in teacher-child interactions that extend or suppress the extension or hindrance of child engagement in activities?

Objective 3. To describe the classroom experience from the perspective of those engaged in the early childhood program when there are changes in teachers.

A. When there are changes in teachers, how do the teachers perceive the classroom experience for themselves and the children?

B. When there are changes in teachers, how do the children perceive the classroom experience?

C. When there are changes in teachers, how do the parents perceive the classroom experience for themselves, their children, and the teachers?

D. When there are changes in teachers, how do the administrators perceive the classroom experience for themselves, the teachers, the children, and the parents?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Methodological Foundation

The methodological foundation is informed by the theoretical foundation. That is, how research is implemented and the broad principles about how to conduct research and apply theory (Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991) are grounded in the feminist, Bronfenbrenner's bioecological, and Vygotskian frameworks. The methodology for this study, reflects the principles of these theoretical perspectives, as discussed in the literature review and highlighted below.

The five feminist criteria incorporated in the research procedures are: participatory relationship, emancipatory procedures, the lived experience, intentionality to understand the meaning structure, and the benefit for the oppressed. Consistent with their contextualist orientation, Vygotsky emphasized the importance of learning about phenomena through real-life situations (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2000), and Bronfenbrenner (1995) wrote about ecological validity as a critical component in understanding the life experience. The procedures for this research are grounded in real-life situations that optimize ecological validity. The methodology is critical, because it not only guides, but also limits the emerging theory and the potential for qualitative transformation in the understanding of phenomena (Klein, 1983). The procedures described in the following sections were planned to capture an understanding of the lived experience in the early

childhood classroom from the perspective of the children, teachers, parents, and administrators directly involved in that classroom. Applying these criteria, this chapter explicates the methodological procedures through which the research questions were addressed.

<div align="center">Research Design</div>

<div align="center">*The General Perspective*</div>

This is a qualitative, interpretative inquiry study; the results are presented as themes that emerged from information generated through analysis of the documentation. Through this process, knowledge about the effects of teacher change was constructed through the integration of multiple perspectives of this phenomenon.

Drawing on the criteria of feminist methodology that the research be emancipatory by reducing oppression, the researcher functioned as a catalyst for enhancing the experience of the research participants. As a catalyst, the researcher was vigilant in observations to determine what occurred in relation to teacher change, and then adjusted the methods to capture a more complete understanding of that phenomenon. For example, the children did not seem to have a clear understanding about whom the teachers were, because there were so many teachers and other adults in the classroom. It was insightful to include information about how the children perceived the roles of different teachers and other adults when there were changes in the classroom. This information, in turn, informed the process for explaining teacher change to the children. The methodological adjustments were not made in isolation by the researcher, but were grounded in the theoretical perspectives, and were done in collaboration with research

participants and Dr. Cassidy, the research colleague for this project. An example of adjustments made in collaboration with the research participants occurred in a meeting with the teachers during the first week of the research period. The project was explained to the teachers, and they were asked how this project could be beneficial to them and their classroom, or what they thought was important to understand about teacher change in the classroom. All three of the teachers discussed concerns related to discipline and guidance when there are changes in teachers, and that it would be helpful to have strategies for dealing with that. So, attention was given to documentation related to discipline and guidance, especially related to teacher change.

Some of the ways this research was emancipatory was in giving the research participants a voice, or opportunity to express their thoughts or concerns about the effects of teacher change. Their appreciation of this opportunity was evident in the number of parents who participated in the interviews. Of the 25 parents, 17 were interviewed, and another 4 had wanted to participate, but could not work it into their schedules. Not only did the interviews give the parents a voice, it also supported them in understanding their rights as parents, and the rights of their children. For example, a parent was concerned that her child was not allowed to have her backpack at naptime to get the blanket she brought from home. Through the interview, the parent was encouraged to talk with the lead teacher about things like this, and this situation was resolved.

In addition, the teachers had frustrations about child assessments and discipline, and had questions about what activities and materials were appropriate to use with the children. Responding to a request by the teachers, at the end of the research period, the

researcher participated in a staff meeting with the full-time classroom teachers. During this meeting, the teachers and the researcher engaged in a dialogue related to basic information about child assessments, discipline, and the use of the *Creative Curriculum* materials provided by the center. The intent was to support the teachers in recognizing and using their strengths as teachers, addressing some of their frustrations related to being a new teaching team making decisions about the program and teacher-child interactions.

The procedures for the collection and analysis of data reflected the perspective that a responsibility of the researcher was to continually analyze the process of data collection, to determine what adjustments would facilitate collection of the most relevant information for the intended understanding. Specific adjustments are discussed in relation to the individual procedures below.

The Research Context

This naturalistic interpretative inquiry was conducted in a natural setting without any intentional control or manipulation of the setting by the researcher. A unique aspect of this setting was that it was a Child Development Center on a large NATO base in Europe. The research was conducted in April and May of 2002, just after the March 2002 U. S. invasion of Iraq, and the war in Afghanistan was continuing from the previous October. So, the security on the base was heightened, and at least the adult research participants were aware of the implications for deployment to very dangerous areas.

This study was conducted in one preschool classroom in a large center, designed and built specifically as a child development center. The center had nine classrooms, with the infant-toddler classrooms in one wing, and the other wing had the preschool

classrooms, as well as a classroom for the before and after school program. The infant-toddler wing and the preschool wing each had one classroom for drop-in care, and three classrooms for full-day (5:45 am to 6:00 pm). The center facility included an extensive resource room for teachers and a kitchen to prepare all meals on site. This was a very large base, with many families with young children, and the center had a waiting list.

In conjunction with the center administrators, the classroom was chosen based on high frequency of teacher change. In the month prior to beginning the research, two of the three full-time teachers had left the classroom; one had returned to the States on extended emergency leave, and the other had requested a transfer to another room. It had been the intent to select a classroom with at least one child with a disability, in order to understand how teacher change was related to individualizing for a child with a disability. However, due to the nature of this particular training base, there were no provisions for families with children with disabilities. So, if a child was diagnosed with a disability, the family was transferred to another base. There was a Child Find program on the base for basic developmental screening, but because the active-duty military personnel needed the training at this base, parents typically were not anxious to have their children assessed.

The Research Participants

The intent in this research was to describe this classroom from the perspective of those individuals who regularly participate in classroom activities. The participants for this study represent organization and social dimensions, as described by Macon (1996), who explained the importance of including representatives of all levels of individuals

involved to provide a comprehensive description. The levels of individuals represented in this research are the children, teachers, parents, and administrators.

Children and Families

There were 24 three- to five-year-old children and the parents of those children. There was one additional child in the classroom whose parent declined permission for participation. Within the families, there was a variety of single- or dual-parent households, and a variety of single- or dual-parent active-duty military. The children and their parents had been involved in this classroom varying amounts of time, depending on when their families had been assigned to this base. In addition, because the center had a waiting list, some of the children started at family day care homes or local community childcare centers before enrolling at this child development center. So, some of the children had been in this classroom for more than a year, and some had enrolled in the previous month. In appreciation of their participation in this study, the children were given a book, and the parents who completed the interview were given a $10.00 stipend.

Teachers

There were 3 full-time teachers and 19 part-time or substitute teachers. All 22 of these teachers were invited to participate in all components of the research. The 3 full-time teachers completed all parts of the research, 2 of the part-time or substitute teachers were engaged in some of the research (explained below), and the other 17 agreed to be observed in the natural course of the program, but chose not to participate fully.

Teacher experience and education. Of the three full-time teachers, one had been in the center just over two years, had been in this classroom for about eight months, and

had completed several of the training modules. Her only early childhood experience was in this center. Another full-time teacher had been in this center for over a year, had previously worked in a military child development center at another base, and had earned an Associate Degree in early childhood. She had been in this classroom for almost two months, had previously briefly been in a mentor position in this center, and before that was in this same classroom. The third full-time teacher had started in this classroom about a month before the research started, which was when her family moved to this base. Before that, they were stationed in the States, where she worked in a civilian Kindercare center, and earned an Associate Degree in early childhood. Of the 19 part-time or substitute teachers, there was much variability; some started work at this center during the research, and some had worked at the center as long as two years. Some of them had completed a few of the training modules, and others had only completed part of the basic orientation information. In appreciation of their completion of the research documentation, each of the three full-time teachers received a $25.00 stipend.

Administrators

There were three administrators; a director, assistant director, and trainer. Two of the administrators, the director and trainer each had eight years experience with military child development programs, and less than a year of experience in civilian centers. Both of them had a Master's Degree in early childhood education, that had been earned during their affiliation with the military. The director had experience in many positions, starting as a parent volunteer, working as a teacher in an infant-toddler drop-in classroom, then as a full-time teacher, and assistant director. The assistant director had a Bachelor's Degree

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in early childhood education, and was very new to the military, having been in this center about two months.

<div align="center">*Research Focus*</div>

The naturalistic research was an interpretive inquiry, which aimed to understand the classroom lived experience from the participants' perspectives, based on direct, systematic observation (Babbie, 2001; Vogt, 1999). The intent of this study was to capture a contextually relevant representation of the factors that contributed to teacher-child interactions and the level of child engagement in developmental and learning opportunities when there was teacher change. The unit of analysis was the individual child. The following constructs are defined to clarify the research focus and serve as a basis for the research objectives and questions in the subsequent section.

Key Constructs

The key constructs in this research were: classroom processes, teacher-child interaction, child engagement, classroom experience, and changes in teachers. These constructs are defined below.

Classroom processes involved the use of the classroom materials and equipment by the teachers and children. This included the teacher affect in the delivery of curricular materials and activities; the comments and questions used by teachers as they engaged children with materials, ideas, or other children; and the tone of the atmosphere as perceived by the adults and children in the classroom.

Teacher-child interaction, one component of classroom processes, was any individual verbal or nonverbal behavior which engaged a teacher and child in conversation, activity, or encounter.

C*hild engagement* was demonstrated by positive or constructive behaviors that varied on a continuum from extended or immersed to superficial or inhibited involvement by the children as they interacted with or attended to the environment with adults, other children, or materials. The level of child engagement was reflected in the instances, patterns, and intensity of involvement. Engagement was demonstrated by curiosity, interest, enjoyment, and a desire to achieve one's own goals; combined with behaviors of concentration, investment, enthusiasm, and effort (Jablon & Wilkinson, 2006).

C*lassroom experience* referred to the experience of being a participant in the early childhood classroom from the perspective of the person(s) living that experience, in this research those were the children, teachers, parents, and administrators.

Change in teachers referred to changes in classroom personal, that is, any adult in the role of teacher in the classroom. The external changes included: teacher turnover; short-term and long-term substitutes for planned and unplanned teacher absences, such as illness, daily breaks or release time for meetings, training sessions, or parent conferences; children being moved from one classroom to another to maintain ratios; teacher transferred to another classroom, but still had contact with the children; visitors in the classroom, such as researchers. The internal change in teachers included modification in attitude or behavior of teachers due to the joys, frustrations, and challenges related to the

classroom, administrative support or lack thereof, relationships among teachers or between teachers and children or parents, or personal issues outside the center.

<div align="center">Data Collection Methods</div>

Multiple methods of data collection were used to gather information from various perspectives. The methods were chosen to provide comprehensive information for understanding the impact of teacher change in relationship to teacher-child interaction in the early childhood classroom. Although most of the data collection was focused on teachers and children, the documentation included the perspective of center administrators and parents, as well as the classroom facility. Using the participant observation approach, data collection instruments included: Schedule Documenting Teacher Change, the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R), the Teacher-Child Interaction Scale (TCIS), Semi-Structured Interviews for Adults (Teacher, Parent, Administrator), Semi-Structured Interviews for Children, Structured Interview For Children, Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS), The Early Childhood Work Environment Survey, The Work Attitude Questionnaire, The Scale of Organizational Commitment, and field notes. The following section explains the research format and each of the measures used in data collection.

<div align="center">*Participant Observation*</div>

As a participant observer, the role of the researcher was to be an instrument of inquiry and knowledge, which occurred through dialogue, listening, and talking. Applying the process of reflexivity, the researcher was immersed in the classroom

activities, and worked as a team with the research participants to help tell the stories about their lived experience in this classroom.

This process elicited constructed knowledge, which was the integration of multiple perspectives of the phenomenon of teacher change. An understanding of what was happening in the classroom, especially within the system of the military community, was studied from the perspective of the participants to reveal their lived experience. Part of the intent was to gain insight into what motivated the participants to do what the researcher had observed them doing, and what those acts meant to them at the time (Hatch, 1998). Within five levels[1] of participant observation: complete, active, moderate, passive, or nonparticipation, the researcher participated as a member of the culture, while keeping written records or field notes (Hatch, 1998). In the process of gleaning in-depth constructed knowledge for the classroom in this study, the participant observer functioned at all five levels of engagement, depending on the particular procedures and type of information being collected.

From the perspective of the teachers, the researcher functioned as a volunteer working with the children in the classroom. From the children's perspective, the researcher was perceived as a playpartner or teacher engaged in interactions with the children. The teachers were asked to introduce the researcher as a visitor who would be spending several days with them, would be participating in all activities, and would be asking the children some questions about what they did in their classroom.

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[1] Complete is total immersion in activities and interactions, with no evidence of research procedures, Active is immersion in activities and interactions, with minimal evidence of research procedures. Moderate is immersion in activities and interactions with comparable evidence of research procedures. Passive is in research procedures without interacting with research participants.

Field Notes

Field notes were recorded for 12 hours of classroom activities, with additional notes taken as insightful events occurred, like teacher-child interactions or comments by parents, teachers, children, or administrators. An example of additional insightful events was parent comments outside the classroom. This documentation was planned to include effects of teacher change related to all components of the program, including indoor and outdoor activities; teacher-planned group activities and free play; routines like meals or naps, and special events like the military day activities.

Schedule Documenting Teacher Change

A chart was used to document specific teacher change, each week for the five-week period. This chart recorded who was in the classroom at what time throughout the day, including breaks, leaving the room for staff meetings, absences from the center, basically accounting for the movement of all teachers in and out of the classroom. Because of the frequency of teacher change, and the complexity of scheduling, this chart was completed in collaboration with the assistant director, who was responsible for the scheduling.

Teacher Perception of the Work Environment

Three self-report instruments were used to measure teacher attitudes and beliefs about her or his work situation. All teachers who were in this classroom during the research period were invited to complete these forms. The 3 full-time teachers completed the forms, and 2 of the 19 part-time teachers agreed to do this, but did not follow through to complete the forms. The three instruments are described below.

The *Early Childhood Work Environment Survey* (Jorde-Bloom, 1996) had 20

statements to be rated from never to always on a six-point Likert scale, and three

questions soliciting teacher opinion in her or his own words. This instrument provided

information about overall collegiality, cooperation, and autonomy from the perspective of

the teacher. The *Work Attitude Questionnaire* (Jorde-Bloom, Sheerer, & Britz, 1991) had

50 items rated from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a five-point Likert scale.

Information is provided about how teachers feel regarding various components of their

work: co-workers, supervisor, work, working conditions, and pay and promotion

opportunities. The *Scale of Organizational Commitment* (Jorde-Bloom et.al.,1991) had

15 items rated from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a seven-point Likert scale.

This scale provided information about the teacher's level of commitment to the childcare

program, and possible sources of that commitment.

<center>*Semi-Structured Interview for Adults*</center>

Semi-structured interviews (Appendix A) were conducted at the child-care center

with teachers, administrators, and parents; with each group of adults having a separate set

of questions guiding the interview. The interviews were planned to take about an hour.

The overarching goal of the interviews was to understand the individuals' perspective of

her or his experience, as well as their perceptions of the children's experience of

participating in the classroom. The interview questions were developed and refined

through a pilot study, with the focus on teacher change in relation to the interviewee's

experience and teacher-child interaction. In addition, interviewees were encouraged to

discuss other thoughts related to the children's experience, especially related to teacher

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change. For the semi-structured interviews, the questions are intended as guidelines; the goal is to discover how individuals feel and think, the meaning for them.

The intention was for the interviews to be done in two stages. The initial interview was scheduled at the convenience of the adult and was conducted in a private office at the center. At the end of the interview, the participants were told that they were invited to do a follow-up interview in about a week, for clarification or extension of responses. The participants expressed appreciation for the additional opportunity, but felt they had said what needed to be said, and the scheduling for an additional conference was challenging. Some of them did share brief additional thoughts in passing at the center. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Semi-Structured Interview for Children

The interview procedure for the children was somewhat different than that for adults because young children are not accustomed to being interviewed, which typically involves an unfamiliar person in an unfamiliar setting using unfamiliar procedures (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). The interview approach for this research was designed to provide the most meaningful information from the children, to document their experiences related to teacher change, and their perceptions of those experiences. The approach used was informed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) position statement on the assessment of young children (Bredekamp and Rosegrant, 1995). The following three of those assessment guidelines were especially relevant to this research.

1. Assessment relies primarily on procedures that reflect the ongoing life of the classroom and typical activities of the children. Assessment avoids approaches that place children in artificial situations, impede the usual learning and developmental experiences in the classroom, or divert children from their natural learning processes.
2. Assessment relies on demonstrated performance during real, not contrived, activities.
3. Assessment supports children's development and learning; it does not threaten children's psychological safety or feelings of self-esteem. (p. 17)

Typical daily interactions were used for doing the semi-structured interviews. As the children were engaged in the indoor and outdoor activities, and routines throughout the day, the researcher would informally ask the interview questions (Appendix A). These strategies included joining children's activities, and asking questions about what they like to do at school or what they might tell a new child about what it is like to be in this classroom. The intention was to talk with each child in the classroom each day the researcher was present. This was documented by a checklist with each child's name and categories to indicate the context of the interaction, such as indoor learning center time or outdoor free playtime. This intentional daily interaction was done to establish a relationship with each child, as well as to get some information about each child's perception of the classroom experience. The children's responses tended to be very brief. This may have been a reflection of the limited teaching-learning interactions or discussions between teachers and children in this classroom, that they are not accustomed to having conversations about what they are doing.

Structured Interview For Children

An interview was designed to learn about children's preferences for individual teachers in various activities (Appendix A). This involved a random pattern arrangement

of four by six inch photographs of eight adults who had the most frequent interactions with the children. The children were asked to point to the picture of the person they would most want to interact with in various situations, such as who they liked to read books with, who they liked to do things with outside, or who they wanted to be with if they were sad or sick. Of the five weeks the researcher spent in the classroom, these interviews were conducted during the fourth and fifth weeks when the children were more familiar with the researcher. Child responses were recorded on individual forms.

Due to the general chaos and noise level in the classroom, these interviews were done on the playground, at a picnic table along the side of the playground. The first day these interviews were started, a full-time teacher who had been in the classroom just a few weeks, repeatedly came to the research activity table, and pointed to her picture, saying, "Say this is my favorite teacher." The researcher talked with this teacher about the interview not being about identifying a favorite or best teacher, but to understand children's preferences for different teachers in relation to different activities. The teacher continued this same intervention in a casual, somewhat playful manner. This teacher's behavior seemed to reflect some level of discomfort with the activity, in addition to affecting the validity of the child's responses. There were other indications that this procedure was not getting the desired information from the children, because the questions were about which teacher the child preferred reading with or playing with on the playground. However, due to minimal teacher-child interactions for reading or playground activities, those questions were not meaningful to the children. This interview procedure was partially completed for seven of the children. The procedure was adjusted

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to be less stressful to the teachers and more meaningful to the children. Some of the questions from this interview were used where relevant in casual interactions with the children. For example, while interacting with an individual child on the playground, the researcher asked which other teachers the child liked to do things with on the playground, and what did the child like doing with that teacher. This approach provided a few responses, but again, the children in this classroom do not seem to be accustomed to thinking about or talking about their activities.

Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R)

The ECERS-R (Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 1998) was administered twice, by two different observers, during the five-week research period. This environmental assessment was administered twice to determine differences related to the fluidity of adults in the classroom, once at the beginning of observations and again when maximum teacher change is projected. Because this instrument measures global process quality, it is sensitive to differences in caregiver quality.

This instrument was designed to assess global quality of programs for children from two-and-a-half through five years. The scale consists of 43 items divided into seven categories: Space and Furnishings, Personal Care Routines, Language-Reasoning, Activities, Interaction, Program Structure, and Parents and Staff. Each item is rated on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (inadequate) to 7 (excellent). The rating of excellent requires greater staff involvement in providing more engaging learning opportunities for the children. An example of indicators of quality in this scale is that Language-Reasoning is divided into four subsections: books and pictures, encouraging

children to communicate, using language to develop reasoning skills, and informal use of language.

Psychometric Properties. This revised version of the ECERS was developed in close collaboration with realistic field-based sites. The definition of quality in the ECERS-R is consistent with the Criteria for Quality Early Childhood Programs statement by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs (NAEYC, 1984) and with Child Development Associate (CDA, 1998) national requirements for early childhood programs. According to the authors, because the original version has a long history of research demonstrating that quality as measured by the ECERS has good predictive validity for global quality, the revised version would be expected to maintain that form of validity (Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 1998). Single items on the ECERS-R frequently reflect more than one conceptually distinct area. For example, in the Activities section, the rating for Art involves variety and use of materials, availability for children, teacher involvement in art activities, and extension of art in other program experiences.

The psychometrics for the ECERS-R were based on the piloting of the instrument, as reported by the authors (Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 1998). The ECERS-R has satisfactory, though not strong, inter-rater reliability at the indicator and item level, and at the level of the total score, with the required interrater reliability being 85%. The percentage of agreement across the full 470 indicators in the scale is 86.1%, with no item having an indicator agreement level below 70%. At the item level, the proportion of agreement was 48% for exact agreement and 71% for agreement within one point. The Kappa, which takes into account the distance between scores given by two independent

raters was used to measure reliability on the ECERS-R. Only item #17, "using language to develop reasoning skills," has a Kappa below .50, the level considered acceptable. For the entire scale, the correlations between the two observers were .921 on the Pearson product moment correlation and .865 on the Spearman rank order. The interclass correlation was .915. These figures are all within the generally accepted range with the total levels of agreement being quite high. The overall figures are comparable with the levels of agreement in the original ECERS. Subscale internal consistencies range from .71 to .88 with a total scale internal consistency of .92. The levels of internal consistency for the seven subscales indicate that the subscales and the total scale can be considered to form reasonable levels of internal agreement providing support for them as separate constructs.

Observers using the ECERS-R for this research completed a structured training process and had interrater reliability of .88. The rating was determined by a consensus calculation involving comparison of scores on the seven-point scale for each of the 43 items. Scores of not more than one point difference were considered consistent. When raters had more than one point difference, raters discussed the rationale for their independent scoring and had the opportunity to change their ratings, which became the consensus rating. After consensus, if raters were not more than one point apart, the rating on that item was considered to be consistent.

Teacher-Child Interaction Scale (TCIS)

The TCIS (Farren & Collins, 1996) was administered for 30-minute observations on the three full-time teachers and two of the part-time teachers. The other teachers declined participation in this part of the research.

This instrument was designed for use with children from 18 months to six years, to assess the adult's interactions with children during free play or learning center time. The scale is divided into 11 different behaviors: physical involvement, verbal involvement, responsiveness, play interaction, teaching behavior, control of activities, directives or demands, relationship among activities, positive statements or regard, negative statements or regard, and goal setting. Within each of these 11 subscales, three components of interaction are measured: amount, quality, and appropriateness. Amount refers to the degree of involvement or how much the teacher demonstrates the behavior. Quality is an affective dimension of interactions, describing the degree of warmth and acceptance the teacher demonstrates in relation to each behavior. Appropriateness is based on the cognitive dimension of interactions, how closely the teacher gauges interactions to the children's development, interest levels and motoric capabilities related to each behavior. Focusing on learning center time, as an example for the behavior, Control Over Children's Activities; amount relates to the degree of freedom of children and structure of activities, quality refers to the intensity or flexibility of teacher structure of child activities, and appropriateness relates to the consistency of teacher control of activities with children's developmental levels.

Psychometric Properties. The psychometrics for this instrument have not been reported, and there are no research publications using this instrument. Observers using the TCIS for this research completed a structured training process and established interrater reliability of at least .85, with scores considered to be consistent if they are not more than one point apart on the five point scale.

Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS)

Each of the teachers was asked to complete this instrument. The teacher rated the extent to which a particular item applied to his or her relationship with a particular student. The three full-time teachers completed this instrument on each of the 24 children for whom parental permission had been given. Two of the part-time teachers had agreed to complete these forms, but did not follow through on doing this.

The STRS (Pianta, 2001) was developed in 1991, then revised and published in 2001 for use with children from preschool through age eight. This is a 28-item self-report instrument that uses a 5-point Likert-type rating scale to assess a teacher's perception of his or her relationship with a student, a student's interactive behavior with the teacher, and a teacher's beliefs about the student's feelings toward the teacher. The STRS scoring is based on factors that represent three dimensions of student-teacher relationships: Conflict, Closeness, and Dependency. These three subscales represent the factors that were extracted using a principal components analysis. Examples of attitudes or behaviors reflecting these three dimensions are explained by Pianta (2001):

> Conflict measures the degree to which a teacher perceives his or her relationship with a particular student as negative and conflictual. High Conflict scores indicate that the teacher struggles with the student, perceives the student as angry or

unpredictable, and consequently the teacher feels emotionally drained and believes he or she is ineffective.

Closeness measures the degree to which a teacher experiences affection, warmth, and open communication with a particular student. High Closeness scores indicate that the relationship is characterized by warmth, and the teacher believes he or she is effective because the student uses the teacher as a source of support. High Closeness scores also reflect a greater sense of knowing on behalf of the teacher that the student is well and the student can effectively use the teacher as a resource.

Dependency measures the degree to which a teacher perceives a particular student as overly dependent on him/her. High Dependency scores suggest that the student reacts strongly to separation from the teacher, requests help when not needed, and consequently the teacher is concerned about the student's over-reliance. (p.11)

Psychometric Properties. The author reports that the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) is currently the only standardized, validated, and reliable instrument available for assessing a teacher's perception of his or her relationship with specific students in preschool through third grade. The STRS manual provides extensive information about validity, reliability, and scores normed for children by gender and ethnicity (African-American, Hispanic-American, and Caucasian) (Pianta, 2001). The test-retest reliability correlations were significant at $p < .05$ at the following values: Closeness, .88; Conflict, .92; Dependency, .76; Total, .89. Using the Cronbach's alpha, internal consistency reliability values were as follows: Closeness, .86; Conflict, .92; Dependency, .64; Total, .89. The amount of total variance accounted for by each subscale is: Conflict, 29.8%; Closeness, 12.9%; Dependency, 6.2%.

Before publication in 2001, the STRS was used in research which documented concurrent and predictive validity. For kindergarten children, the quality of the student-teacher relationship was determined by the STRS; and developmental screening was conducted based on two subtests of the Stanford-Binet-IV, the fine motor skills subtest

from the McCarthy scales, and the Fluharty Preschool language screening scale (Pianta, R., Steinberg, M. & Rollins, K., 1995). Students predicted to fail, but who succeeded had significantly lower Conflict scores and higher Closeness and Total scores on the STRS. The students predicted to have positive outcomes, but were retained or referred had significantly higher Conflict and lower Total scores on the kindergarten STRS.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

Given the contextualist methodological goal of understanding teacher change, the results will be gleaned from any of the data collection sources that provide insight related to particular research questions. The following table indicates the instruments or procedures most likely to be reviewed for each research question (see p 84).

Table 1

Instruments Used for Analysis of Each Research Question

	SCH	WES	STR	ECE	TCI	WAQ	SOC	SS - A	SS -C	SIC	FI
Objective 1 Question A	*			*	*			*	*	*	*
Objective 1 Question B	*		*	*	*			*	*	*	*
Objective 2 Question A	*		*	*	*						*
Objective 2 Question B	*		*	*	*						*
Objective 3 Question A	*	*	*		*	*	*	*			*
Objective 3 Question B	*		*		*			*	*	*	*
Objective 3 Question C	*							*			*
Objective 3 Question D	*							*			*

SCH = Schedule Documenting Teacher Change

WES = The Early Childhood Work Environment Survey

STR = Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS)

ECE = Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R)

TCI = Teacher-Child Interaction Scale (TCIS)

WAQ = The Work Attitude Questionnaire

SOC = The Scale of Organizational Commitment

SSA = Semi-Structured Interview for Adults (Teacher, Parent, Administrator)

SSC = Semi-Structured Interview for Children

SIC = Structured Interview For Children

FI = Field Notes

Data Collection Procedures

Being grounded in the feminist and Bronfenbrenner's bioecological frameworks, the data collection procedures valued the perspective of and relationship with each of the research participants, as well as valuing the shared understanding of the meaning of the lived experience. The importance of this team relationship as a foundation for the research process is discussed below before addressing the specific procedures.

Relationship Between the Researcher and the Researched

Through the application of reflexivity, the team relationship with research participants, the process of data collection was enhanced. By establishing this rapport with research participants, there was more sharing of information about perspectives,

which was essential for effectively achieving intersubjectivity, the shared meaning of the experience. These concepts were discussed in more detail in the prior literature review.

Reflexivity was established as the researcher developed relationships with each of the research participants; the children, teachers, parents, and administrators. Those relationships were intended to demonstrate respect for each participant as the expert from which the researcher could gain insight about the effects of teacher change in the classroom. This relationship was initiated as the researcher introduced herself to each participant, and explained her role in the classroom. In addition, the researcher was immersed in classroom activities, and encouraged the teachers and administrators to feel free to ask for help as needed with classroom activities. Periodically, the researcher checked in with the teachers and administrators, to assure that the research process was not disruptive, and to give these participants an opportunity to ask questions or make suggestions about the research procedures. To be sensitive to the individual perspective, semi-structured interviews were used to provide participants more flexibility to share what information they thought was important in relation to the research questions. The approach to data collection also provided opportunities for conversations, an open communication that contributed to intersubjectivity. In addition to documenting information the participants thought was important, the researcher also focused on recording information that would contribute to an understanding of who the individual participants were in relation to the components of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model. An example of this was parents describing the relations between military policies, their family unit or parenting responsibilities, and teacher change in the classroom.

Applying the principles of feminist methodology, the research procedures incorporated the basic concepts of reflexivity, the team relationship; and intersubjectivity, the shared understanding. The following sections explain the procedures used to gain an understanding of the lived experience in this classroom.

Data Collection Protocol

Over the five-week period of data collection, as participant observer, the researcher spent 83 hours in the classroom, assisting the teachers, interacting with the children and parents, and documenting the experience of being part of this classroom. In addition to the time in the classroom, a minimum of 24 hours was spent doing interviews, 24 of them at approximately one hour each.

Time Line for Data Collection

The data were collected over five-weeks, a condensed period due to the remote location of the research site. The time line for data collection (Table 2) reflects the intent to have the first week to work on establishing the constructive relationship of reflexivity, and focus on the written documentation after that.

As noted in the following table the ECERS-R documenting the environment was completed the first week and again the third week. The teacher schedule and field notes were completed throughout the research period. The questionnaires were distributed the second week of research to provide time for their completion. Interviews were conducted throughout the second to fifth weeks, allowing some time to establish rapport with participants, as well as a few weeks for scheduling interviews at the convenience of participants.

Table 2

Time Line for Collection of Documentation

	SCH	WES	STR	ECE	TCI	WAQ	SOC	SS-A	SS-C	SIC	FI
First week				*							
First to fifth week	*										*
Second to fifth week		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	

Data Analysis

For feminist methodology, a basic purpose of analysis is the accurate description of the lived experience of the research participant. This understanding was facilitated by including an analysis of how and why the experience is represented as it is, to consider why the participant expresses the perspective in a particular way. For example, some expressions reflect frustration or hurt, while others reflect a feeling that concerns are futile or that their opinion doesn't really count.

The data most relevant for each research question (Table 1) were analyzed for the identification of themes representing the lived experience of participants in the early childhood program, especially in relation to teacher change. Other analytic strategies included the generation of multiple alternative explanations for the experiences of participants, analysis of outliers or out-of-pattern responses, and considering the meaning of responses in relation to the theoretical foundations.

Grounded in feminist methodology, thematic analysis was an effective technique, as the story of the lived experience of the participants emerged through a gradual process

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of discovery. In application of the process described by Tesch (1987), the discovery through analysis was a systematic process that occurred through immersion in the research data. From a feminist perspective, all responses are valued, so the unusual responses or outliers, as well as responses thought to misrepresent the experience would be an important component of analysis. This was achieved by a dialectic process of reading and reviewing the data, generating ideas about the themes, reviewing the data again, adjusting the themes, and repeating this cycle until the identified themes and the descriptions represented the lived experience of the research participants. Themes emerged from analysis of the meaning units, the individual statements and actions of the participants. Although themes, or meaning of the data, were drawn from words of the participants and the other sources of documentation, the themes were articulated by the researcher.

This articulation was done through two strategies as described by van Manen (1984). The highlighting approach was used to identify specific statements that reflected the lived experience of the participants. The line-by-line approach involved considering each meaning unit to determine what it meant in relation to the research question. The highlighting approach and the line-by-line approach were applied to each protocol (interview or observation) individually, and used for contrasting and comparing protocols, to integrate the information into meaningful themes.

Reflecting the feminist research approach, the themes reflected the focus of the individual research question, but the names of the themes were not drawn from the research questions. The theme names emerged through understanding the essence of the

patterns that represented the lived experience of the participants. When meaningful for expressing the essence of a theme, the participant's words were incorporated into the theme names. After identifying themes that emerged from the data for each research question, those themes were analyzed to glean overall themes of the lived experience related to teacher change. For both of these levels of generating themes, interpretation was done to gain insight into the meaning of the lived experience for the research participants.

Interpretation

The process of interpretation was an extension of understanding the meaning of the themes, considering the perspective of the research participants. Applying the principles of feminist methodology, the interpretation was based on three criteria: the active voice of the subject should be heard, the theoretical reconstruction accounts for the investigator as well as the investigated, and the reconstruction reveals the underlying organization of actions and practices evident in the typical daily lives of the research participants (Acker, Barry, & Esseveld, 1983). Interpretation in this research was comprehensive and incorporated all of these criteria.

Collaboration in analysis and interpretation contribute to the credibility of conclusions. The process of generating alternative interpretations involve collaboration done in two phases, first during the data collection and then during analysis of the data. Interpretation during the data collection phase was embedded in discussions or interviews with teachers and parents about the goals of data collection in relation to their understanding of the meaning of what was happening in the classroom. This information

was applied to adjustments in the data collection process, as well as contributing to the interpretation of the final data analysis. After all data was collected and analyzed, interpretative collaboration included the research director, Dr. Cassidy, who was on-site during the data collection process.

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

This chapter has explained the qualitative methods and related procedures used in this study grounded in contextualist and feminist methodology. This approach was used to analyze and interpret the documentation about the impact of teacher change on teacher-child interaction in one early childhood classroom in an overseas military facility. The next chapter presents the results obtained.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The organization for the chapters on results (chapter four) and discussion

(chapter five) reflects the feminist and bioecological theoretical frameworks, which

emphasize the importance of the meaning of the lived experience for the individuals, and

how that experience is defined within a particular context at a particular time. Grounded

in these frameworks, the understandings about this lived experience in the early

childhood classroom are gleaned through the premise that the whole is greater than the

sum of its parts. Chapter four presents the individual parts of the experience, based on the

eight research questions, with themes generated from the original documentation. Each

section, focusing on one research question begins with preunderstandings, what is known

about the people or context before the documentation is collected. Chapter five

incorporates these parts into a whole, to gain insight about the combined meaning of

experiences in the classroom when there are changes in teachers. The themes generated in

this chapter are drawn from the themes in chapter four. Because the patterns of teacher

change were complex, this information is presented separately in the following section,

and then referenced later.

Patterns of Teacher Change

Because the patterns of teacher change are related to the results of all eight of

the research questions, those results are reported at the beginning of this section, with

reference to this information in the context of the individual questions. This information was collected for five weeks in a classroom of 25 children, three full-time teachers, and a variety of part-time teachers. It is noted that the patterns of teacher change are complex due to the high level of changes. This complexity represents the lived experience of the children, the teachers, the parents, and the administrators as they individually defined the meaning of this complexity in the classroom. Because the children often referred to parents, administrators, and researchers as 'teacher', the presence of these people is also included in this information about teacher change. The basic schedule and variety of teacher change is described below, and illustrated in the following diagram.

- To accommodate the military families, the schedule in the Child Development Center (CDC) was 5:30 am to 6:00 pm.
- From 5:30 to 7:00, the preschool and the elementary before-school program children were consolidated (telescoped) into an alternate classroom.
- One of the teachers in this early classroom moved with the children to the research classroom at 7:00, and stayed until 2:00.
- The lead teacher arrived at 7:00 and stayed until 4:00.
- A third full-time teacher arrived at 8:30 and stayed until 5:30.
- Substitutes and part-time teachers were scheduled as needed to maintain a 1:8 teacher-child ratio, with these shifts being from one to eight hours.
- There were various combinations of the three full-time teachers, and nineteen part-time teachers scheduled in the research classroom. These part-time

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teachers had various levels of training, experience, and familiarity with the children, the parents, and the classroom routines and expectations.

- Daily, there were various cooks delivering food, custodial staff cleaning floors after meals, and sometimes maintenance crews working on equipment.

- On the playground, which they used for one to two hours daily, the children in this classroom shared the large playground with two other classes and at least two teachers in each of those classes.

- Some of the parents arriving to pick up their children would spend a few minutes in the classroom or on the playground talking with their child as well as other children about activities.

- The CDC trainer was in the classroom a few times to observe or work with the teachers. In addition, there were three researchers in the classroom occasionally, functioning as participant observers interacting with the children.

- Teacher change was greater later in the day, especially between 4:00 and 6:00, when two of the full-time teachers had departed for the day and parents were arriving to pick up their children.

- Between 4:00 and 6:00, the children sometimes were telescoped with children and teachers from other classrooms.

- Therefore, there were about thirty different teachers in a position of responsibility for the children in this classroom.

Figure 1

Changes in Teachers in One Classroom During a Five Week Observation

Daily Schedule of Teachers

Interdependent Connections Among
the Inidviduals in the Classroom

5:30

5:30

7:00

8:3

Full time teacher

Full-time lead teacher

Full time teacher

Substitute and part-time teachers as needed for 1:8 teacher- child

2:00

4:00

5:30

6:00

three full-
time
teachers

nineteen
substitute and
part-time
teachers

two teachers
in telescoping
classrooms

parents
spending
time in the
classroom

25 children
in
classroom

four teachers
from combined
classrooms on
playground

CDC
trainers and
administrators

three
research
participant
observers

two chefs,
custodial and
maintenance
crews

Objective 1 – A: Materials and Equipment

Objective 1: To examine variation in the use of classroom materials, equipment, and processes in relationship to the extension or hindrance of child engagement in activities when there are changes in teachers.

Question A: When there are changes in teachers, how are the use of classroom materials and equipment related to the extension or hindrance of engagement in activities for the children?

Preunderstandings

1. As a result of the Military Child Care Act (MCAA) of 1989, a lot of financial resources were infused into the child development centers to provide facilities, equipment, and materials consistent with established criteria for high quality programs.

2. This center has an extensive resource room with a variety of materials for teacher curriculum planning, as well as books and learning materials for children. As mandated in the Military Child Care Act, a Training and Curriculum Specialist for this center provides training and curriculum development, and works with caregivers to formulate an annual training plan.

3. This center was designed and built specifically as a child development center, with an innovative design of classroom pods.

Generation Of Themes

For this objective, the documentation sources reviewed for analysis and interpretation were: the schedule documenting teacher change (SCH), the Early

Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ECE), the Teacher-Child Interaction

Scale (TCI), the semi-structured interview for adults (SSA–T for teacher, SSA–A for

administrator, SSA–M for mother, SSA- F for father), the semi-structured interview for

children (SSC), the structured interview for children (SIC), and field notes (FI). In

addition, dates of observation or identification number of individuals are included.

The themes generated for this question are about the materials and equipment, and

how the classroom space is used to implement the early childhood program, in relation to

changes in teachers. This included what is available; how these tangible components of

the classroom are organized and used through program components like schedule,

routines and curriculum; the challenges, like child behavior related to inconsistency; and

the related military policies and procedures. For this program component, the following

five themes emerged: Knowing how to organize the classroom space, Understanding how

to use the materials and equipment, Wanting to make decisions about the program,

Maintaining consistency in implementing the program, and Implementing military

policies and procedures.

The themes generated for this question are about the materials and equipment, and

how they are used in the classroom space to implement the early childhood program.

This included what is available; how these tangible components of the classroom are

organized and used through program components like schedule, routines and curriculum;

and the related military policies and procedures. For this program component, the

following five themes emerged: Knowing how to organize the classroom space,

Understanding how to use the materials and equipment, Maintaining consistency in

implementing the program, Wanting to make decisions about the program, and Implementing military policies and procedures.

Knowing How To Organize The Classroom Space

There was clear evidence of the fiscal support for this center, which was designed specifically as a child development center. The research classroom is one of three preschool classrooms in a pod, each having doors that open directly onto a shared playground with climbing equipment, swings, sand area, and wheel toys with concrete paths around the playground. In two places in the center, there are enclosed atriums used for gardening projects. The large preschool classrooms have bathrooms and the teacher work and storage space in the center of the room, with learning centers around the outside of the room. The learning centers, indicated by the arrangement of equipment and materials are blocks, woodworking, dramatic play, art, library, large group area, and manipulatives. There is also an area with three tables for meals – these tables are sometimes used for art projects or manipulatives (ECE, 4-04 & 5-02).

On the various shelves, there were not many materials directly accessible to the children. For the first observation of the learning environment, there were 18 books (ECE, 4-04) and for the second observation, there were 24 books (ECE, 5-02) throughout the room. In the art area, the materials accessible to the children were construction paper, markers, crayons, bag of commercial crinkle paper, and paste (no glue). There are high cabinets above this area where more art materials are stored. When the teacher (#3) was asked about the art materials, what is available to the children, and how other materials are used, she explained, "These children destroy everything, so most of our art materials

are stored and then used by teachers for group projects. In all of the learning centers, the good materials are stored in cabinets, and then teachers get them out to use with the children" (FI 4-15).

While this system may work for the 3 full-time teachers who know what additional materials are stored in various cabinets, and how those materials may be used with the children; for the additional 19 part-time teachers, there is no evidence of guidance about how the additional materials are organized and how they are to be used in the process of engaging the children in activities.

Understanding How To Use The Materials and Equipment

In the organization and delivery of the program, the daily schedule provides a basic guideline for the routines. The posted schedule had the basic routines of meal, nap, outdoor play, group time, and free play. Other than scheduled meals when the food is delivered to the room, and naptime, the schedule is not followed. Most of the day is spent in free play, which is rather chaotic and involves minimal teacher-child interaction. Group time is spontaneous, inviting those who are interested to join in activities – like reading a book or doing movement activities to tapes (ECE, 4-04 & 5-02; FI, 4-16).

Because most of the day is spent in chaotic free play and there is no schedule, none of the teachers, but especially the new teachers, have an understanding about how the materials and equipment are part of an early childhood program. The schedule and curriculum are typically the foundation for the use of the classroom space, but this was not the case in this classroom. A teacher who was new to this center, and had been in this classroom about a month when the research started, shared her thoughts about program

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organization and challenges related to knowing how to use the classroom space in the

absence of a schedule and curriculum or activities when there is teacher change.

> I think that it would be a lot more positive for everybody involved if you're going into a room that is a little bit more structured, that is ready for the change, than if they're not prepared…. When I first went into the [research] room, we had two [full-time] caregivers on emergency leave, and I'm new in there and there was no daily schedule. There was nothing and the kids were just off the wall. I'm having to ask the kids what's going on. I'm supposed to be here for the kids. It was just in an uproar. It would have been a lot better… if they were structured enough to have a schedule and different ways that they [children] know what's coming next …what to expect…. Of course, every day is not gonna go as planned, but to have a general outline,… And Plan A and B; stuff to fall back on. But there was really nothing and it was like a shock. It would make a difference, if it was made easier for the teacher coming in,.. and that would help the children. (SSA-T #1, p. 12)

Another reason that new teachers may be less informed than they need to be about

the organization and delivery of the program in a particular classroom is that some full-

time teachers do not feel comfortable providing guidance to others. "I usually don't tell

people how [to do things], 'cause I feel like I'm giving orders. So that's why I end up not

saying as much as I should" (SSA-T #2, p. 6).

When there is teacher change in the classroom, children do a variety of things

indicating that they are trying to figure out the new program, the new system. A new

teacher expressed her concerns about unclear program expectations of herself or the

children, and her desire for more guidance.

> I was asking them questions, then that means I don't know. You know, like I ask you where did your mat go. You don't know? Oh, I go over here. No, I sleep over here. No, I changed my mind. They know if it's somebody new, and they know what to say and what to do, or how to try to get their way, I guess. That's the way it was when I first went into that room. They were like, "oh, you don't know." And then, a lot of them said, "well, this is our class and this is the way w

do it." I'm like, "I don't think that's right." I think it would be a lot better if it were a more consistent staffing, and…they knew exactly who's gonna be there and what to look forward to on a more consistent basis (SSA-T #1, p. 2).

When any teacher, but especially new teachers, do not have clear information about how to use the materials and equipment, and what to expect of the children, this is a difficult situation for the teacher, as well as being confusing for the children. Child engagement in activities is enhanced when teachers used the classroom space effectively.

Maintaining Consistency In Implementing The Program

Perhaps the most striking observation about this classroom related to the organization and delivery of the program, the curriculum and schedule, is that there was very little evidence of a planned program. There were no activities or classroom displays reflecting a curriculum based on a unit theme or the project approach. The classroom displays are commercial – nursery rhymes, colors, birthday chart (name spaces are blank); there is no child work displayed, or any indication of who the children and teachers are in this classroom (ECE, 2-02 & 4-04). This absence of a planned program could make it even more challenging when there are changes in teachers, who are less familiar with the interests and abilities of individual children.

This theme of the importance of, but lack of, consistency was clearly expressed among all teachers interviewed, with part of their concern based on discipline and guidance issues. This was an interesting observation because these were the teachers who had the responsibility and opportunity to establish and maintain consistency in the program. "They [children]… get used to one caregiver and one routine and stuff, and then it changes. You have all new ideas coming in, which is good, but not so frequently"

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SSA-T #2, p. 2). The concern here seems to be that because the teachers who have been

in the classroom, are not consistently implementing any curriculum activities or schedule

in relation to how the materials and equipment are used, when new teachers come into the

classroom, they do not have clear expectation about what is to be done. The children

seem to pick up on the idea that there is not plan, the teachers do not know what to do,

and children do not have guidance. The link between program consistency and child

behavior, or child engagement in activities, was discussed by several teachers.

> If the classroom is being ran on a consistent basis, and those children know what comes next and they are ready, then it's not gonna make as big of a change because everybody's on the same page and it's the way it goes. But if it's already in an uproar, and then another teacher comes in, each teacher that comes in kind of creates more of an uproar. And so then you don't ever have the balance and the structure, and then it just gets all out of whack (SSA-T #1, p. 8).

The teachers acknowledge the challenges in finding a balance between valuing

new ideas of new teachers while maintaining basic classroom organization. This

organization is important because it provides a predictable environment for the children,

as well as the adults, and because it affects the teacher-child relationship.

> The main thing in the classroom to make things work really good is to have a steady environment--a routine type of thing. They [children] know that at certain times of the day, it's always time to do certain things. They know with teachers, this teacher will do these activities with me, this will do this one…. That's how everybody bonds. So if you have an environment in the classroom where teachers have something steady, who will have a lot of the same things every day, but not the same projects. You keep them busy, not bored by the same things over and over. You can keep a safe, steady environment on a regular, routine basis that will make you have a relaxed, well-run classroom (SSA-T #13, p. 7).

The afternoon shift change, which includes a wide variety of part-time teachers, seems to be especially challenging as far as maintaining program consistency in what activities are available and how teachers engage children in those activities.

It's hard, mostly with the shift changes. You're not there in the afternoon to see if things happen. You know, there's like one routine and then the parents complain well, this is a new routine. That's done in the afternoon and it's not consistent. And with most of the people being out, new people have to learn what's going on. There's no consistency, like I'm planning on doing journals for the kids, so that we write their name at the top and then they write something that's going on in their lives or something. It's a little journal for them to practice writing and stuff. But I'm leaving maybe in about two weeks, to go over to another room, so I don't know if that can be followed through….So a lot of ideas that are born, might not be kept up when the teacher leaves (SSA-T #2, p. 2).

There is no evidence of a written plan for curriculum or activities, so new or part-time teachers do not have guidance about what to do with the children. A full-time teacher who had only been in this classroom for a few weeks discussed her desire for a more organized program, and how the absence of organization contributed to her stress as a teacher in this classroom.

Consistency…would make it smoother, even for the other teachers, 'cause then there's less possibility of that teacher kind of getting into burn-out or feeling stressed right off. That's another thing, to have a negative first impression type of thing. [Going into this classroom] "…my first impression was, "oh, gosh, I don't want to be here, I can't deal with this." It's smoother if they already have a way of doing things and you ease into it and you learn with them. Not to have to go into somewhere and be like, "oh, what's going on?" I try to make up something new and then get shot down for it for trying to help. I think it makes a big difference if they already have a structure and a way of doing things and you come into and you maybe help along. Or, you know, just smoothly go into it, and that's just the teacher's transition into a room, to where you feel more comfortable. You don't come in feeling like you're gonna step on people's toes, not knowing what to do, not knowing which way to go, and someone else expecting you to know. I think it makes a big difference (SSA-T #1, p. 9).

The issue of consistency in classroom organization for how materials and equipment were used, and how the schedule and curriculum were planned and implemented, were very important for the new teachers, as well as teachers who had been in the room longer. The concern was that lack of consistency contributed to teacher stress, as well as the children being out of control because they did not have a predictable program.

Wanting To Make Decisions About The Program

While there was concern expressed about new teachers wanting more consistency in program structure, there was also concern about wanting more flexibility or at least opportunity to discuss a different curriculum approach. Teacher change can create challenges for how the new teaching team makes program decisions, affecting the children's learning and development due to differences in the type of activities that are planned and how they are made available to the children.

> The effect for the children is, "a lot. For instance, I come in from a different place. Developmentally we've got three- to five-year-olds in there, and…for this to be a preschool program, I'm not finding much preschool stuff. With the lead teacher… I'm trying to get it more activities and kind of butting heads because she does things in a certain way, and she thinks that it's not age appropriate… The kids just get all out of whack. So I'm trying to tone it down to get them ready [for transition to lunch], and she told me, "Well, they'll learn that in kindergarten and it's not age appropriate." I'm like, "How is it not?"…we're here to help them developmentally and we kind of had a little bit of a spat there…over what's appropriate and what's not appropriate. So here it is, a teacher who's been there a while, and has it in her mind that they're not ready for this, it's not their age appropriate. And then me coming in from another program with different things saying it is appropriate. We need to enhance and we need to make it interesting for them. And she's telling me, "No, that's not the way we do it in this room" (SSA-T #1, p. 3).

In addition to differences in curricular activities based on philosophical differences of teachers, the curriculum and specific activities also vary depending on the training and experience of individual teachers. Between about 3:00 and 6:00, the full-time teacher have left for the day or are doing things at the teacher work station, so a variety of part-time and flex teachers are scheduled in the classroom. At the end of the day, between 5:00 and 6:00, the children are combined (telescoped) in one classroom, or on the playground when the weather permits (SCH).

> That's always really rough because you have a lot of children in the same room…in the afternoons when you combine and you'll have thirty, thirty-five kids. Well, most of the children are gone by five-thirty. So when (teacher #1) stays there till five-thirty, they have…important, interesting, stimulating activities, even winding down for them. But teachers, who have been placed in the afternoons with the children aren't really trained to provide that for the kids. And so apparently they're getting a lot of just free play and it's becoming very chaotic because the teachers are themselves tired and not really doing their part for the kids. And that to me is very, very distressing. I feel very upset about that when I leave. I think oh, my gosh, what's gonna happen today. And I'm concerned for my kids (SSA-T #3, p. 2).

Even though some teachers expressed a desire to have more opportunities to make decisions about planning and implementing the program, the variation in training and experience of teachers, and the differences in philosophy and beliefs about appropriate practices, increased decision-making about the program was not a straight-forward process. It would be very helpful for the teaching team to have support in learning how to work together to make these decisions.

Implementing Military Policies and Procedures

The Children and Youth Services section of the Army has provided manuals

with specific policies and procedures for organizing and implementing a child

development program. These are the Child and Youth Services Regulation Manual

available in the Center Resource Room, and the SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures)

available in each classroom. In addition, a training manual is provided for all new staff.

The Training Manual states the following guiding principle related to classroom

management:

> Environment, Routines, Schedules, Consistency, Clear Expectations: If you
> arrange an environment that is independently accessible to children, respects
> children's feelings and patterns, most of your guidance and discipline issues will
> be avoided. (p. 6)

Therefore, the concerns discussed above about a consistent, predictable program

are addressed in the military guidelines, but the frequency of teacher change resulted in a

challenge for providing the level of training needed to maintain the level of consistency

expected and desired for a high quality program. In relation to training related to changes

in teachers, an administrator stated that an advantage in the military system is "the luxury

of having an extra person on staff who can just do training" (SSA-A #1, p. 6).

> In order to have a quality program, you need to have somebody there working
> with the staff and doing the training with them and dedicated just to that…I've
> seen, great things happen and a lot of growth. It's the hardest part of the job,
> dealing with the constant feeling of oh, good, I got them where they need to be. I
> finally feel like all the time and energy is finally resulting in some positive
> changes…and then I'm right back to the beginning, trying to set up a new person
> and get them to where they need to be (SSA-A #1, p. 2).

A major part of the training process is the teacher orientation, which is intended

as a week-long, forty-hour training before teachers put in very much time in the

classroom with children. A wide range of topics are covered in this training.

> The orientation training happens every six weeks,…a week of during the day
> classes that we try to get our teachers out for, and unfortunately we don't always
> get them out. Training includes what we call our annual requirements -- child
> abuse identification and prevention training, challenging behaviors, medications
> and communicable diseases, fire suppression and safety, growth and development,
> CPR and first aid, and the parent partnerships course (SSA-A #3, p. 5).

Even though the specific training is planned, because newly hired teachers may be

needed immediately in the classroom, they do not all receive the complete orientation

information. In addition to the initial forty-hour training, an ongoing part of training for

all permanent teachers is a requirement to complete fifteen early childhood modules

provided the Army system. The trainer explained some of the disadvantages and

advantages of these module, as well as the expectations of the teachers.

> [The modules provide]…a good general base of knowledge. It definitely has them
> looking at aspects and things that they probably had never considered before. In
> and of itself I wouldn't say it's sufficient.You definitely need to supplement it
> with more journal articles and videos and new information that comes up, because
> of the fact that they were written fifteen years ago. A lot of the information is
> outdated…. Not everybody just learns from reading. It's self-directed training
> where they have to read through the module. And working with them to make that
> link between well, this is how we implement it and this is how you see it in
> action. And, spending the time doing the role modeling and having them discuss it
> with you and what their understanding of it is more helpful then. And it's way
> more time and energy than I can dedicate to it" (SSA-A #1, p. 7).

> The biggest part of the training position is just trying to, you know, get caregivers
> straight off the street, with no background and no experience, very little
> education, and basically raise them in the way that the Army, would like them to
> do things with the children…. That's my job, is to give them feedback on their

modules, to come in and test them on their modules, and then observe them on their modules. Just kind of stay there as a mentor for them; as somebody there to kind of, you know, make sure they're understanding the material and are able to, perform it and with the children in the classroom (SSA-A #1, p. 2).

The Army has set up a training time line for everyone,… within six months you will have completed so many modules and so much training, and if not, then that's grounds for removal. A lot of times I do have to put a lot of pressure on them to maintain that time line… our expectations of them to do so much training on their own time, outside of the classroom, is just more than they're willing to give (SSA-A #1, p. 7).

In a meeting with an administrator, the researcher shared some observations of one part-time teacher who seemed to often be frustrated with the children, and was sometimes physically rough with them as she moved them from one place to another. The director explained that she was aware of this situation, and that the center trainer and the lead teacher in the classroom were working with this teacher to address specific behaviors and strategies. She also explained that this teacher had already completed the discipline and guidance training module, but that they are requiring her to repeat that module. Repeating a training module is the standard procedure for teachers who are especially challenged in one area of professional development (FI 4-19).

After an administrator had discussed the importance of teachers making positive connections with the children and consistently engaging them in activities, she was asked how those kinds of topics are included in the training process. Her response was, "It's very hard for me as a director sometimes 'cause I don't supervise the trainer" (SSA-A #3, p. 5). So, the program director is responsible for implementing a high-quality program, which includes the consistent implementation of appropriate curriculum and schedule in the use of materials and equipment, but someone else supervises the trainer who provides

the early childhood information and mentoring for the teachers. Although she was concerned about teachers getting the training needed to be more effective in connecting with children, this is just one topic on a long list of topics important for teacher training.

One policy intended to support the process of the full-time teachers developing closer connections with the children, to more effectively engage the children in the use of materials and equipment, through the curriculum and activities, was the approach of primary caregivers. Each of the three full-time teachers was assigned to eight of the children in the classroom. Although all teachers are expected to interact with all of the children, the primary teacher is responsible for things like child assessments to support child engagement in activities, and connections with parents.

> We have primary caregivers because we want the children to bond with somebody… based on the theory of attachment. And that if the children are here for twelve hours a day, that means that they're not attaching at home during that time, and that possibly that they're not building attachments with anybody. Somebody came in with some research about children who weren't attached, and behavior problems and they basically said well, this is a solution. The teachers who are in the classroom, we'll assign them as a primary caregiver and we'll just assign them children kind of ad hoc as children come in…, but that we don't really let the children choose their primary (SSA-A #2, p. 4).

Although the policy of primary caregivers was intended to strengthen the program, this policy was not effectively implemented, and the teachers did not reflect the attitude that they were embracing this policy. While the policies and procedures established in the military system do provide guidance for a high quality program, one policy can create uncertainty about which teachers will be in a classroom.

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Emergency leave is quite an interesting thing…a military thing that people are able to just go on leave back to the States to be with their family for an indefinite period of time and we hold their position for them….And then trying to place people in their place, but letting those people know that they might not be there for very long; that as soon as the other teacher comes back, that they're gonna be removed. So that maybe that affects their attachment with the children or their willingness to be part of the team in the classroom, or to really jump in and take on projects if they know they're only gonna be there for a short period of time. That it's really not their classroom, but that they're just filling in as like a substitute" (SSA-A #2, p. 2).

Just before this research started, all three of the full-time teachers in this classroom were out on emergency leave at the same time, and there were lots of different people covering that classroom. This situation was described in terms of the effect on the children as well as the teachers.

They [children] seem to be resilient as far as emotions…the classroom was very hectic. I think their idea of expectations were different because probably when you put somebody in as a flex or as somebody who hasn't seen these children or isn't familiar with them, they don't know what to expect (SSA-A #2, p. 2,3).

This emergency leave policy is an important part of teacher support, but diminishes teacher consistency in the classroom. The level of teacher change was especially great because the teachers who left were full-time teachers, and they were replaced by a combination of several part-time teachers.

Summary of Objective 1 – A: Materials and Equipment

Although the Military Child Care Act of 1989 provided significant financial resources for enhancing the quality of materials and equipment in the Child Development classrooms, the organization and implementation of the classroom program was not conducive to maximum effectiveness in using these classroom resources for the benefit of

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the children. When there are changes in teachers, this leads to frustrations for the teachers and the children due to the inconsistency and unpredictability of the program. A related challenge is that when new teachers want to be involved in decision-making for the organization and implementation of the program, there is no system for transitioning new teachers into that process. This concern was especially relevant for late-afternoon part-time teachers who did not have the benefit of guidance by a full-time teacher. Teachers expressed experiencing stress related to needing guidance about how to use the materials and equipment for specific activities with the children. This lack of consistency and specific guidance when there are changes in teachers is clearly related to the abilities of individual teachers to effectively use the components of the classroom program in the process of engaging children in learning and developmental opportunities.

Objective 1 – B: Classroom Tone And Atmosphere

Objective 1: To examine variation in the use of classroom materials, equipment, and processes in relationship to the extension or hindrance of child engagement in activities when there are changes in teachers.

Question B: When there are changes in teachers, how are classroom processes related to the extension or hindrance of engagement in activities for the children?

The information in this section addresses the component of processes related to teacher affect and the tone of the atmosphere in the classroom. Although interactions are another major component of classroom processes, these components were separated, to address each more thoroughly. The following two research questions (Objective 2, A and

B) focus specifically on how teachers use initiations and responses in teacher-child interactions to engage the children in activities.

Preunderstandings

1. As a result of the Military Child Care Act (MCAA) of 1989, a lot of financial resources were infused into the child development centers to provide a professional trainer for each center. The intent was that this person would work closely with all teachers to mentor their professional development, and support them in implementing a high quality program.

2. The on-site teacher training includes specific information about early childhood principles and practices, including the processes of the program.
   There is a wide variety of early childhood education, experience, beliefs, and attitudes among the teachers in this classroom.

Generation Of Themes

For this objective, the documentation sources reviewed for analysis and interpretation were: the schedule documenting teacher change (SCH), the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STR), the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ECE), the Teacher-Child Interaction Scale (TCI), the semi-structured interview for adults (SSA–T for teacher, SSA–A for administrator, SSA–M for mother, SSA- F for father), the semi-structured interview for children (SSC), the structured interview for children (SIC), and field notes (FI). In addition, dates of observation or identification number of individuals are included.

The themes for this objective are about the tone or atmosphere in the classroom. This included what happens in the lives of the participants in the classroom, as well as in their lives as military families outside the center, and the impact on the classroom experience. These are about teachers not being clear about classroom practices and procedures, the related attitudes, and then the resulting stress for teachers and children when the classroom is not running smoothly. For this program component, two categories of themes, with four sub-themes emerged. There are the factors that affect the classroom atmosphere, The children decide what to do, and Our attitudes affect our work; and factors that are the resulting effects of the atmosphere, I'm bad and We're the bad room.

The Children Decide What To Do

Teacher affect and the resulting atmosphere in the classroom is related to the teacher's understanding of the role of a teacher in the classroom processes – the delivery of curricular materials and activities. During the two-hour naptime in which at least half of the children were awake and wandering around the room or using whichever materials were in reach, there were three adults in the room (two full-time teachers and a part-time teacher). The three teachers were in one corner of the room talking with one another about personal activities outside the center. Their interactions with the children were related to guidance and safety, intervening by calling across the room to remind a child, "Don't throw the Legos" or "Don't run in the room." When asked about their expectations of the children during the two-hour scheduled rest time, and their role as teachers during that time, teacher #3 explained, "It is a time for the children to decide what they want to do." The part-time teacher's only comment was, "I am just in the room

so we have the right number of adults while the teachers are taking their lunch break" (FI, 4-18). This approach of letting the children decide what to do was observed other times, since much of the program is free play, with limited teacher-child interaction, and much of the activity during this time chaotic, with children having little direction or in-depth engagement in activities (ECE, 4-04 & 5- 02; TCI, T #1, 2, 3, 9, 13).

Our Attitudes Affect Our Work

The difference in classroom atmosphere when there are changes in teachers is especially evident at arrival and departure. As children and parents arrive in this classroom, they are often not greeted (ECE, 4-04 & 5- 02). As discussed in more depth in the research question about parents, there was concern by parents that at departure they were not spoken to about the special things their child had done during the day, nor were they told goodbye and that the teachers looked forward to seeing them the next day. Whatever the reason for these behaviors, the absence of positive arrival and departure communications does not reflect a teacher attitude of enthusiasm for engaging children with materials and activities, and sharing that information with parents. Teachers described teacher affect and attitude as being related to teacher training and teacher quality, and how this attitude shapes the classroom atmosphere.

> In the case of one of the teachers in the afternoon, I see her have a very low tolerance level. Anything that's done pretty much is a reason for shouting or is a reason for kind of ridicule, that kind of thing. I think the reason why that happens is because the training isn't there to show that person, this is a different way that you could deal with this…. Present it as…a different way, and this may be the result. You'll most times find that this will be the result, as opposed to the struggle that you're having with the kids. Because the children, they pick up on that, our attitudes at work"(SSA-T # 3, p. 5).

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The teacher with the low tolerance level is a part-time teacher who had been scheduled as needed in this classroom for the past several months. The teacher expressing the concern was a full-time teacher who had been in this classroom for several weeks although she had worked in this center for over a year. This same teacher talked about how teacher attitude affects the children.

> It affects them [children]. I witnessed that yesterday when I was in there and teacher #4 was shouting at the children, "Clean up, clean up." And I said, "What would you like the kids to do?" "I want them to listen to me, you know. They won't listen to me. They won't do what I want them to do." Of course they won't, because they're not getting that from you. You know? You've got to be excited about your job if you want them to be excited about something you want them to do… And I said, "Okay, let's do this. Everybody come here. I want to tell you guys what we're gonna do." So it's just a different approach. They can feel it (SSA-T # 3, p. 6).

This teacher's frustration was clearly expressed, and for her the classroom atmosphere was negative, affecting her interactions with the children and how she attempted to engage them in the process of cleaning up the classroom. This kind of teacher affect is in stark contrast to another teacher who had been in the classroom for a few weeks, and led a group movement activity to a tape. Teacher #1 enthusiastically leads the exercises and encourages the children to try different movements. There are many smiles on the faces of the teacher and children, and much energetic movement to the various exercises (FI, 4-16). One kind of situation that influences teacher affect or attitude, as well as everyone else at the center, is the frequent rotation, the long-term as well as short-term deployment, of military personnel.

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They [teachers] can have a change in personality or a change in their lives, a lot of our teachers' husbands are in Kosovo or in Czechoslovakia right now, and will be going to Kosovo for six months. It tends not to affect as much when they're gone for short periods of time. Their lives change so drastically and, depression sets in, and they take on different roles in their family, and pressures are higher. Because, for six months they're single parents essentially, and how that comes out in the classroom and how their own children feel about that, as well as the children who are in the classroom having one parent gone. The whole tone can change…. The teacher can admit, "I'm sad today. My husband's gone. He's been gone for a long time and that makes me really sad…." In a few weeks eighty-five percent of the people who are military will be [deployed to Kosova], and their significant others will be left here….They rotate Kosovo rotations for dual military families, so that they're not gone at the same time. The next rotation comes up in May, so what will happen is one parent will go for the first six months and the second parent will go for the second six months (SSA-A #2, p. 10).

The classroom atmosphere is impacted by the extent to which the teachers' relationship with each child demonstrates genuine interest in the child as an individual. Children perceive these affect differences in individual teachers and the relationships with them. This relationship, in turn, impacts the teacher's effectiveness in engaging children in constructive activities.

They [children] know when a teacher really doesn't want to be there. When they…[are] asking the teacher for something… Can you tie my shoe? But the teacher is talking to another teacher and it's kind of, "No, I'm not worrying about tying your shoe." It hurts their feelings. They know really fast, "I can't go to that teacher if I need something." I think that it doesn't make them feel like they can get what they need in that environment (SSA-T # 3, p. 6).

There's a couple of kids, who, if a certain teacher ain't there, they're not getting the love they would normally get if that teacher was there. And they'll start feeling depressed, or be very… aggressive.You know, this is his area right now, 'cause he's feeling bad. He don't want nobody with him (SSA-T #13, p. 2).

When there is a negative classroom atmosphere, whether this reflects stress outside the center, or stress related to the classroom, this may have a negative effect on

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the children. Although there are positive child effects when the teacher has a positive

attitude, there were great concerns for the effect on the children when teachers had a

negative attitude, or inconsistent attitude. A new teacher described the classroom

atmosphere in relation to teacher attitude from the child's perspective, and the related

child behavior, or teacher-child interaction.

> The kids are the ones that really suffer for that. The start of the day you come in
> and you bring whatever problems that you have, or the problems from the day
> before, into the classroom, too. And the kids definitely pick up on that. I feel that
> they react according to your mood or to your persona. If you come in and you're
> in a good mood and no matter what, you're there and they know that you're happy
> you're there, and then they kind of feed off of that. But if you come in and you're
> like, "Oh, I don't want to be bothered," then they feed on that. I think that makes
> a big difference if you're the teacher and you're there and you're ready for the
> kids, because there's always gonna be change (SSA-T #1, p. 1).

> The children, they follow the teacher's lead so much…. if you want to be there,
> and your tolerance of different things they decide to do to try to test you…. If you
> come in with a bad attitude, or you used to be good but now she turns into mean,
> she's just yelling over everything and she's not really listening. She doesn't really
> care, and she's just getting angry. Then that makes a difference to the child, that if
> you come in and things may not go your way right, but, you deal with it and you
> just tolerate, and you redirect and you try to find new ways, even within yourself.
> It's a difference when you just give up. "Oh, I don't even want to be here." It just
> makes a kind of difference to the child. That's what's on their mind for the rest of
> the day, or when they're thinking about doing something,… or, " I could go over
> here and do what I'm not supposed to, well, she don't care, and she made me mad
> anyway." Then they're gonna go off the other way (SSA-T #1, p. 9).

In this classroom with 3 full-time teachers and 19 part-time teachers (SCH), the

various teachers who demonstrate differences in affect results in a continually evolving

atmosphere in the classroom. In addition to the ways inconsistency in teachers affects the

classroom atmosphere, there are variations among these 22 teachers in their sensitivity

and responsiveness to children, and how their interactions reflect their own enthusiasm or

frustration related to the atmosphere in the classroom. The classroom atmosphere affects the child's self-perception and engagement in activities.

I'm Bad

From the perspective of the children, the classroom atmosphere can contribute to an impression that they are bad, and that an important component of what happens in the classroom is following the rules. The children perceive differences among teachers in relation to the classroom atmosphere. In talking about the different teachers in this class, one child explained, "Whenever she [mother],… and you [researcher] are gone, I'm bad." When the researcher said that it was hard for her to imagine him being bad, he added, "Got poked in the eye, too" (SSC #2). Another child focused on the classroom rules when asked about a new child coming into the classroom and what the new child should know about this classroom. She said, "Um, no running, um, no hitting, uh, no punching and no biting. Um, uh, no biting the teacher or no interrupting" (SSC #20). In another situation, this same child described a different perspective.

> One morning as I greeted the child (#20) and her mother, the child pointed toward the researcher, saying, "That's her, that's her." The researcher introduced herself to the mother, explained her role in the classroom, and told her that child #20 was really a learner, that she loved reading books and talking about ideas, and that she was a delight to be with because she is so enthusiastic about everything. The mother said, "You must be the one she has been talking about, she says that you are the nice one." The child smiled and nodded yes (FI, 4-19).

It is acknowledged here that it was much different to be a researcher functioning as a participant observer, than to be the full-time teacher who had the responsibility for management of a classroom with 25 children and their families. Changes in teachers are

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related to the classroom atmosphere, which affects how children perceive themselves in this environment – whether they are rule followers or learners engaged in activities with teachers supporting of their learning and development. The following example illustrates major differences in the atmosphere resulted from the affect of different teachers.

> Child #10 and child #5 were playing in the Duplo area. Child #5 told child #10, "You stink." Child #10 said something back to child #5 (didn't hear). Child #5 started hitting child #10, and I started to move toward them to diffuse the conflict until a teacher arrived. Just then teacher #4 came around the corner to see child #10 hit child #5 in return. She quickly went to them, held their arms to stop the hitting, and told child #10 who had been hit first, "Say you're sorry… tell him you're sorry." Child #10 stands with his back against the wall, looking down toward the floor, pulling away from teacher #4. She says, "I said tell him you're sorry…say you're sorry." Child #10 tries to walk past teacher #4 to leave the area. She picks him up and carries him to the group area, she sits down with him between her legs, with her arms around his body and her legs over his legs so he can't move. He cries and squirms, she says, "You better sit still, you are just getting yourself into more trouble." Teacher #3 returns from break, as she comes in the door and sees child #10 and teacher #4, she goes to them, and asks, "What is going on here?" Teacher #4 says, "He was hitting." Teacher #3 said that they need to get child #10 involved in another activity. As teacher #4 releases child #10, she says "Just wait until your mother gets here this afternoon, just wait until I talk to your mother." When child #10's mother arrived, as she walked in the door, teacher #4 went to the mother, and without saying hello, said, "Child #10 was really bad again today, he was hitting and you have to make him stop doing that." None of the other teachers were near the door to hear this exchange (FI 4-29).

For teacher #4, her understanding of what it means to be a teacher in relation to the classroom processes, or interactions, has resulted in a negative atmosphere for herself, as well as the child and the parent. In addition to an overall positive or negative tone of the classroom atmosphere, the children's perceptions of the atmosphere are variable, based on their relationships with individual teachers. Results of the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STR) indicated that there were many more relationships described as

conflictual than described as dependent, and the relationships strongly considered to be close were the fewest. The forms were completed on 24 children, and for 12 of these children the teacher-child conflict was at a negative level of concern for at least one teacher; and for four of these children, all three full-time teachers reported a high level of negative relationship. In contrast, a high level positive teacher-child relationship was indicated for six of the 24 children; five of these having a positive relationship with one teacher, and one child having a positive relationship with two teachers.

This pattern is consistent with results on the Teacher Child Interaction Scale (TCI), in which there was a stronger pattern for Negative Statements or Regard, than for Positive Statements or Regard. The negative statements were not harsh or threatening, but more of an ongoing and repetitious reminder of the classroom rules. These included, "You are making bad choices….No running….You have to share….Walk, don't run…. Don't hurt each other….No, we don't play with that" (TCI, T #1). Or, repeatedly reminding the children to sit while the book is being read (TCI, T #2). When teacher comments to children are predominantly about inappropriate behavior, this reflects teacher belief about the nature of children, and it shapes child self-perception.

<center>We're The Bad Room</center>

A variety of circumstances have affected the atmosphere within this classroom, as well as the center-wide perception of this classroom. This is related to teachers not wanting to be in the classroom because it is chaotic, with minimal program planning and children being out of control; and the lack of a system for new teacher's to smoothly transition into the teaching team.

A lot of people don't like our room. They think it's like the bad room. You know, some folks cross themselves before coming in…. So I think new people go in, they can't handle it, so they want to be moved. Or they're put in there without being in there long enough to make a decision. New caregivers constantly, if they're put in there just to see if they like it or not. But I think that would be real important, 'cause I think actually in the end, there would be less moving around….Because there's a lot of people who come in saying, "Well, I was forced, not forced in here, but I didn't have a choice" (SSA-T #2, p.3).

I think it makes a difference, too, if the room is already [functioning smoothly], I happened to go into a room that was already having problems. They were having problems amongst the children… Everybody told me, "Oh, you're going into [research room]; it's out of control, those children have no structure there, they run everything." And then also the teachers were not on the same page. My first week being in the class, they had a meeting where they were like hashing at each other. There was no type of group. It would have been easier if they already had their group together. And …they had a schedule, "This is what we do. I'm coming in. Oh, you're new. This is how this is done. This is how we do things in here." Then I would join and do what's expected. But to go in and hear, "No, that's not the way we do it," or "Well, she's not right and she's always got to be controlling everything." So it made a world of difference. And with my way of being transitioned into the room affects the children also because they're seeing I am having to question everything. She doesn't really know. And, you know, she does this wrong. We don't do it that way. We do it this way. And I'm having to hear it from the children, and I'm getting more of my guidance on how the room is ran through the children, rather than the caregivers, who are there to,…the kids need the guidance and the structure. And that's our job to be there to provide it for them, and when they're not getting met and they're having to turn to another child who is giving the guidance that makes a big difference (SSA-T #1, p. 13).

A bad reputation about this classroom had developed throughout the center. This reputation, in turn, contributed to the frequency of teacher change, because teachers did not want to be scheduled in this room.

Summary Of Objective 1 - B: Classroom Tone And Atmosphere

The way the program was implemented affected the classroom atmosphere in a variety of way, and this atmosphere, in turn, affected the attitudes and experiences of the children, as well as the teachers. Teacher affect and attitude were affected by teacher

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understanding of early childhood principles and practices; and by teacher stress related to the classroom, as well as family stress, partially determined by the military experience. These factors framed the interactions between teachers and the children, which affected the child's experience in the classroom. Despite the quality of the teacher-child interactions, it was believed that teacher change had a negative affect on the child's perceptions of safety and security. In addition, the relationships among members of the teaching team, and their process for integrating new teachers in working together to implement the program, affects the atmosphere in the classroom.

<center>Objective 2 – A: Teacher Initiations</center>

Objective 2: To examine teacher-child interactions related to the extension or hindrance of engagement in activities, for the children, when there are teachers.

Question A: When there are changes in teachers, what are the characteristics of teacher initiations in teacher-child interactions that extend or suppress the extension or hindrance of child engagement in activities?

<center>*Preunderstandings*</center>

1. This Center has been working on the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation process, which addresses high-quality teacher initiations in teacher-child interactions.

2. This Center has incorporated the system of "primary teacher" to facilitate teacher knowledge of and connection with individual children; this knowledge would be expected to strengthen the quality and appropriateness of teacher

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initiations in individualized interactions between each teacher and the children

assigned to her.

Generation of Themes

For this question, the documentation reviewed for analysis and interpretation

included the schedule documenting teacher change (SCH), the Early Childhood

Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ECE), the Teacher-Child Interaction Scale (TCI),

the semi-structured interview for adults (SSA–T for teacher, SSA–A for administrator,

SSA–M for mother, SSA- F for father), the semi-structured interview for children (SSC),

the structured interview for children (SIC), and field notes (FI). In addition, dates of

observation or identification number of individuals are included, as relevant..

The themes generated for this research question are about the patterns of

teacher-child interactions for which the teacher initiates the interaction. This includes a

variety of components that inform and gauge interactions with children, understanding

the interests and needs of individual children, communicating to the children that the

teacher is available and interesting in interacting with them, and using information about

children to plan and initiate interactions. For this program component, the following four

themes emerged: Taking the time to get to know the children as individuals, Letting the

children know you are there for them, Developing a positive attitude and interest in the

children and parents, and Knowing what to do with the children.

Taking The Time To Get To Know The Children As Individuals

When administrators were asked about the most important guidance to give

teachers about initiating interactions with children, the relevance of connecting with

children was discussed. For these connections, there was an emphasis on understanding the needs and interests of the children as individuals.

> I think just taking the time to get to know the children as individuals. Don't just assume this is a bunch of children. I've got to herd them through this activity to that activity to that activity, because none of us like that feeling….And so as a teacher, if you take the time to get to know your individual children, then you're gonna have a lot more success. 'Cause you're gonna know that Johnny has to stop and pick up every ant on the ground, and check all the bugs in the window. And you're gonna know that Susie likes to get there as fast as she can go. And so you're gonna be able to allow for that as a teacher and consequently you're gonna get along better with those children. (SSA-A #3, p. 3)

It does take time, and intentionally initiating interactions to understand each child as a unique person. There is so much to learn about each child's interests and needs, as well as developmental information about different domains. When there are frequent changes in teachers, the new teachers or part-time teachers who spend less time with the children, are at a disadvantage for knowing how to gauge interactions with children. The lead teacher explained that a portfolio system was used to inform teachers about what children are working on, what they're learning as individuals, not just as the group.

> We try to work on them on a daily basis and most times we do it on a weekly basis. But we try to put in there what the child is developing, what is the child most interested in, so the teachers can have a little bit to pull from for each child. Most times teachers don't know that's a resource for them, so they don't access that resource. They just don't know [about individual children]. They kind of rely on the other staff members. "What does this child want to do?" or "What is this child working on?" Or we would say, "Can you help him with this. You know, he's really trying this, can you really encourage that?" When there isn't any regular staff, they have that resource to kind of go by…. They kind of rely on other staff, but unfortunately sometimes the regular staff isn't there, and so what happens is that the teachers don't know. (SSA-T #3, p. 8)

The portfolios (notebooks with dividers for developmental domains) were reviewed periodically throughout the research period. Most portfolios were empty, with a few having one or two drawings by the children. The drawings did not have dates or notations about developmental significance, and there was no other developmental information in the portfolios (FI, 4-30). The portfolios are a center policy, and could be very helpful for all teacher-child interactions if this system was implemented as intended. Alternatives for getting to know the children include talking with and playing with the children. A part-time teacher, who has been at the center for several months, and is scheduled in different classrooms as needed, described how he learns about the children.

I love kids, I can actually sit there with a kid for a few minutes and I can tell what they like. And if we have a lot of people going in and out of the room, they don't know individual childs. They don't know that this child likes to do art-work and this child loves dinosaurs. You know, instead of two teachers coming in, "Well, okay guys, we're all gonna go to the block area." You know, most of them are gonna be like uh, uh-uh. And that's when you have childs who act out. But when I go in a classroom I'm like, "Okay, who wants to do art-work? Who wants to do dinosaurs?" I think nobody really likes the blocks in here so I don't have to worry about the block area, so I can just do art-work and the dinosaurs and books. (SSA-T #13, p. 4)

Although this teacher expressed interest in getting to know the children as individuals, and he did have a relatively high frequency of teacher-child interaction, the quality of his interactions was limited due to his understanding of how to observe children, and use that knowledge to gauge interactions (TCI – T #13). He stated that the children do not like blocks, but several of the children have been engaged in the block area. In addition, he is aware of some of the favorite activities of the children, but did not

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demonstrate knowledge of how to use developmental information to support and extend

learning and development.

Letting The Children Know You Are There For Them

One of the administrators expressed concern about the negative effects of teacher

change, and how new teachers in the classroom interact with the children. She

emphasized the importance of how teachers approach the children.

> In talking with other caregivers, teachers over the years, the kindest thing that you can develop is giving a confidence to children …It's just the way of approaching the child in a trusting manner….It's just giving them a respect, but yet letting them know that you're there for them. (SSA-A #3, p. 2)

The connections that communicate that the teachers are there to interact with the

children are a foundation for supporting child engagement in activities throughout the

day. An administrator described how an interaction can help the teacher learn more about

the child, as well as helping the child understand that the teacher cares about him or her.

> Sitting down with the child where you see the child doing something that's interesting to them. Try to get to what that child is interested in. Find out something about them. And let them know about you: that you're interested, that you care, and that you're there for them. (SSA-A #3, p. 3)

The teachers discussed a variety of ways they initiate interactions with the

children, and the meaning of these interactions for making connections with the children,

as well as giving the children a sense of security in the classroom. Although it could be

beneficial for all of the center teachers to make connections with many of the children,

one teacher expressed a concern about too many teachers initiating some kinds of

interactions with the children. The children have a very long day in the center, and even

though they need to rest, some of them have a difficult time relaxing for naptime.

> In naptime we'll get people coming in to rub backs. Sometimes, we could use the help because the kids are just up,… but a lot of times I don't think that it's such a good thing, because you have a stranger now doing something that you find very comforting. And so I think that most of the time it should be a person that you're used to and comfortable with. Sometimes, you know, they'll say I don't want you to rub my back, I want Miss (teacher #2) to rub my back. (SSA-T # 3, p.11)

> They definitely need to feel secure, that they're in a safe place; that the people that they are around are gonna be loving towards them and help them to develop whatever they're working on…they need an environment that's going to help them grow physically and socially…teachers who are trained to provide this kind of environment...they're gonna have a good time. (SSA-T #3, p. 7)

The way in which an individual teacher initiates interactions with the children

affects the child's level of comfort, which in turn, affects the child's process of

engagement in classroom activities. Especially for children new to the classroom, the way

the teacher initiates interactions will affect the child transition into the room. Because

troops are assigned to this base throughout the year, or parents move children from other

childcare arrangements to the center, new children are frequently enrolled at the center.

These children are adjusting to a change in all teachers, as well as a change in classmates

and facility. A part-time teacher discussed this process.

> There's a lot of new children coming to the center, and I talk to them. Children love to talk…. They love the whole thing of learning…and something new. So when you sit there and you talk to them, they will basically tell you, if they can, what they want to do. Like, "Do you like art? You want to make a picture with me? Or do you want to do a puzzle? Or do you want to go play in dramatic play with these kids and do this?" When a new child comes in the classroom, you can introduce them to people. And if we have a constant change of teachers, they won't be able to get used to the environment and therefore they are never

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comfortable. But if you have a constant staff in the room, they know this teacher, this teacher's good, this teacher feeds me and helps me, so now I can trust the teacher. (SSA-T #13, p. 4)

From the perspective of the children, but especially for the new children in the classroom, it was not clear that all of the teachers were there for the children. There was great variability in the degree to which teacher initiations demonstrated caring about and understanding the children as individuals.

Developing A Positive Attitude and Interest In The Children And Parents

When there are changes in teachers, the attitude of each teacher will be evident in the way the teacher initiates interactions and activities with children. This affects the children's motivation and engagement with people and activities, as stated by an administrator.

If that teacher is not into it or getting the child involved and interested, if they feel that the teacher's not really wanting to do it, or they don't really have the time or whatever, then they're less likely to go along. You won't be able to persuade them to come over and do this with you if you're in a grouchy mood. They're not gonna want to come and be around you, it's really all in the child picking up on the teacher, or their way of being. And their enthusiasm in getting them involved. And if the teacher's not as enthusiastic and doesn't make it interesting, then the child is not interested, and they choose to go off. (SSA-A #3, p. 10)

For all of the children, when teachers have a positive attitude as they initiate interactions with the children, this is a way of expressing interest in who the child is as a person, what the child is doing, and the thoughts and ideas of the child. A part-time teacher discussed how the child's perception of teacher interest supports the relationship with the child, as well as the parent.

Kids love people who like to come up and talk to them. [Children] will love you if you can get a whole group of them together… get them to laugh, smile and have fun…. Because after that activity's done, they'll want to play with you more and more. And the more time they spend with you, the more time they'll like to be around you. That forms a really good bond with the children. And if you can form a good bond with the children and the parents can see this, you can form a really closer bond with the parents also. (SSA-T #13, p. 5)

Due to the importance of teacher attitude and interest, the classroom experience is enhanced by supporting the teacher's understanding of the relation between the way the teacher initiates interactions and the engagement of the children. The children demonstrated a closer relationship with, and a preference for interacting with teachers who expressed an interest in them. For some teachers, this became a reciprocal caring connection, that contributed to teacher-parent relationships..

Knowing What To Do With These Children

The Teacher Orientation Manual (p. 22-23) addresses the process of teachers initiating activities with children. The guidelines state: "Play with two to three children – engage children in activities, participate physically and verbally, use their names frequently, and talk about what is going on." This section of the manual includes distinguishing between closed-ended and open-ended question, and using questions to enhance children's thinking. As discussed by an administrator, there is a great deal of variation among teachers in the way they initiate interactions with the children, and how effective their interactions are in supporting child engagement in activities.

Their expectations were different because probably when you put somebody in as a flex or somebody who isn't familiar with them, they don't know what to expect. Or, their expectations in their classroom are either higher or lower, or they're used to something completely different. So the children tend to take advantage of that,

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as well as feeling maybe that they have less guidance; that there's less structure and that they're used to, you know, Miss So-and-So sitting down with them at ten thirty and reading a story, and the flexes don't know that, so they don't get that time. And they don't get that one-on-one recognition 'cause the flexes don't know them all by name, and they don't know who likes their back to be rubbed and who doesn't, and who takes a nap and who doesn't. (SSA-A #2, p. 2,3)

For classroom safety, initiating interactions or interventions depends on individual children. So, teachers less familiar with the children and the classroom will not be aware of children's capabilities, or how effectively children can manage dangerous situations or conflicts. A teacher discussed the issue of classroom safety, and generally knowing what to do with the children, when a new teacher is responsible for the children.

The major thing to kind of work on with the new person is to make sure that they know how to keep the kids safe. Sometimes a new person doesn't have the vision that you learn to have as a more experienced teacher. They're not really watching everything. They're not really aware of a fight going on…not really aware of how to catch it before it happens, how to really involve the kids. So, I kind of just try to tell them, you can go in there and just kind of really work with the kids on this. You know, sit down on the floor with them and kind of talk about what they're doing, and encourage their building and stuff like that. (SSA-T # 3, p.8)

Teacher initiations that engage children in more depth in activities, also provide more information to share with parents at the end of the day, contributing to the teacher-family connections. A part-time teacher discussed how knowing what to do with the children is important for connections with the children, as well as the parents.

If I'm in the classroom long enough and I do activities with children, when…the child's parent come in, I'll come up with the child…. I'll show them what we did and I'll tell them,… And the parents notice that I actually spend time with the children, actually know what the children did in a certain day, instead of just letting them run around. And they trust me more and if you get the trust from the parent, they're gonna respect you. (SSA-A #13, p. 6)

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Especially for the new teachers, there were minimal observations of them initiating interactions with the children. This teacher behavior was attributed to some teachers not understanding the developmental importance of these practices, and lack of familiarity with the children.

Summary of Objective 2 – A: Teacher Initiations

One of the challenges when there are changes in teachers is that the new teacher does not know the children, so the teacher does not have the information necessary for individualizing interactions with the children. Interactions initiated by teachers will be most effective when they reflect knowledge of development in various domains, as well as knowledge of the interests, needs, and temperament of individual children. A center policy to facilitate teacher knowledge of children is to maintain a portfolio about each child. This would be a very helpful resource for all teachers, and especially for new teachers, but this system is not being maintained as intended, so it does not contribute to teacher knowledge of children.

Teacher and administrators reflect an awareness of the need for all teachers to initiate interactions with the children, by engaging in a variety of activities. These interactions enhance the children's classroom experience, as well as providing the teachers with information about what the children enjoy doing and what they are able to do. This information, in turn, can be shared with parents, to enhance the center-family connection. However, it takes time to learn about each child, and with frequent teacher change. Many of the teachers have minimal knowledge about each child, limited positive

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initiations of interactions, and minimal sharing of information with parents. Teachers are somewhat aware of children's favorite activities, but not aware of developmental info and how to use that in initiating interactions with the children. These are both important, but very different kinds of information to have about the children.

The teacher attitude toward and expressions of interest in the children are described as important components of the way the teacher initiates interactions with the children. Both administrators and teachers thought this was critical in providing an environment which the children perceived as safe, and into which new children could comfortably transition.

<div align="center">Objective 2 – B: Teacher Responses</div>

Objective 2: To examine teacher-child interactions related to the extension or hindrance of engagement in activities, for the children, when there are changes in teachers.

Question B: When there are changes in teachers, what are the characteristics of teacher verbal or non-verbal responses in teacher-child interactions that extend or suppress the extension or hindrance of child engagement in activities?

<div align="center">*Preunderstandings*</div>

1. This Center has been working on the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation process, which addresses high-quality teacher initiations in teacher-child interactions.

2. This Center has incorporated the system of "primary teacher" to facilitate teacher knowledge of and connection with individual children; this knowledge would be expected to strengthen the quality and appropriateness of teacher responses in individualized interactions between each teacher and the children assigned to her.

Generation of Themes

For this question, the documentation reviewed for analysis and interpretation included the schedule documenting teacher change (SCH), the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ECE), the Teacher-Child Interaction Scale (TCI), the semi-structured interview for adults (SSA–T for teacher, SSA–A for administrator, SSA–M for mother, SSA- F for father), the semi-structured interview for children (SSC), the structured interview for children (SIC), and field notes (FI). In addition, dates of observation or identification number of individuals are included.

The themes generated for this research question are about the patterns of teacher-child interactions for which the teacher responds to an interaction initiated by the child. This includes information about how various adults in the classroom respond in different ways to the children, and that the children demonstrate an expectation of these variations. This discussion at times referred to the adults, not limited to the teachers, because some of the results referred to the administrators or the researcher interactions in the classroom. There is also information about center policies or other strategies for enhancing the quality of responses to the children. For this program component, the following four themes emerged: People respond so differently with children, Children expect different

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responses from different adults, The primary system goal is different from reality, and

What's important: Pay close attention and really listen to the children.

People Respond So Differently With Children

Among the 22 teachers in the classroom, there were many different ways in which

these teachers responded to the children. This included verbal and nonverbal differences.

There were also situational differences, such as if a child commented about a block

structure she was creating, one teacher might typically respond with criticism about the

child making a mess and the rule about cleaning up; another teacher's typical response

might be enthusiasm and interest in what the child is doing. An administrator described

her observations of differences in teacher responses to children.

> People interact so differently with children. Some people are very huggy and
> caring, and some people aren't. Some people don't want children to sit on their
> lap….That's okay, but children don't know what to expect, and so they're sort of
> gun shy, and they go to the people who they know. They know when I come in
> the classroom, I'm open to get hugs. So almost every time I come in I get two and
> three hugs at the door. Or they know that if they find a book, that I'll go and sit
> and read a book with them. So they come to me with that, and more than I see
> them coming to some of their primary caregivers with those same wants and
> needs. (SSA-A #2, p. 9)

Although there are differences among all of the teachers, the children may tend to

go to the familiar teachers because they know what to expect from them. So, when there

are changes in teachers, the children may not seek out interactions as much. Another

pattern of responsiveness is that several teachers demonstrated an awareness of what the

children were doing, and a willingness to help them as requested, but not discussing the

child's interest in or plans for the materials (TCIS - T# 1 & T #9). When children in the

block area asked to use trucks on a high shelf in the teacher storage area, a nearby teacher (#20) "got the trucks for the children, but did not speak to them about what they were doing in the block area, and then returned to her previous play activity" with another group of children (FI 4-15). While these teachers were responsive to the specific tangible needs of the children, their responses did not reflect an understanding of the potential of teacher responses for extending child engagement in activities.

The responses of other teachers reflect a greater sensitivity to the interests of the children in various situations. After inviting children near the book area to join her for reading a book during free play, the teacher responded with interest to the children's comments or questions about the book, and read another book as requested by a child (TCIS, T #2). In response to a child who was crying and saying that she wanted her mother, the teacher gently touched the child's shoulders, then hugged her, and suggested, "We'll sit down and write a letter to your mother." The teacher and child went together to the art area, where they sat together, with minimal interaction, while the child drew a picture (TCIS, T #3). Or, seated with the children at the snack table, the teacher said, "You're doing good at tasting these different things." That same teacher was later seated on the floor with the children in the block area, getting materials like vehicles and animals from the storage cabinet, as requested by the children. Comments to the children included, "What are you building? We all need to share the blocks. You're doing a great job building. What are you going to do with these animals? Your trucks are crashing into the building. Don't throw the blocks" (TCIS, T #13). While these responses of teachers #2 and #13 indicated an awareness of and interest in what the children were doing, the

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interactions, as measured by the Teacher Child Interaction Scale, were play interaction,

for which both teacher and child were engaged in the same activity, but did not include

teaching behavior, for which the activity is used as an opportunity to teach a particular

skill or concept.

Children Expect Different Responses From Different Adults

In the previous theme, an administrator suggested that children prefer to interact

with more familiar teachers. Another perspective is that children prefer people who are

responsive to them. When there are changes in teachers, and those teachers vary in the

way they respond to the children, this affects the way the children gauge their interactions

to individual teachers. Thus, the whole teacher-child interaction has a different tone and

content for each teacher and child combination, as described by the lead teacher.

> They can feel it, they know certain teachers are different. They know when a
> teacher really doesn't want to be there. When they see that the teacher- I'm asking
> the teacher for something, "Can you tie my shoe?'" But the teacher is talking to
> another teacher and it's kind of, "No, I'm not worrying about tying your shoe."
> They know, and it hurts their feelings. They know really fast, I can't go to that
> teacher if I need something. I think that it doesn't make them feel like they can
> get what they need in that environment. (SSA-T #3, p. 7)

There were indications that when there are changes in teachers, the children are

aware of these differences. For the most part, the children adjust to teacher changes by

interacting with the teachers who they perceive to be most responsive to them.

> The children… they're incredibly resilient, incredibly flexible…they seem to
> notice more that there's different teachers in there. When… a new flex comes in,
> a lot of children gravitate to that person. I noticed when you were in the
> classroom, a lot of children gravitate towards a new person. And when I go into
> the classroom, they want hugs and love and attention. That seems to be kind of

the area that the flexes fill. A lot of them are able to give hugs and, sort of that positive feedback. But it's interesting to me that they would seek that from somebody that they don't know more than they would seek it from their primary teacher that is supposed to be. (SSA-A #2, p. 3)

One way the children were aware of differences in responses among teachers, was the children's awareness of which kind of teacher response they prefer, based on their own mood or in which activity they are interested. A part-time teacher gave the two following examples of how teacher response affects child preference for activities, as well as the child's mood.

> Kids have spurts of like who they really want to be around, it depends what type of mood they're in. If they're in a sad mood, they might come up to me because I'll hug them, I'll pick them up….But if they're like in really excited fun mode, they might play with [teacher #1] or [teacher #16]…. Like if they really want to do a lot of artwork, they might wait for one teacher to come in to ask and do art with them, 'cause the teachers give them a lot of ideas. Or, if they really want to read a book, they know I'll read a book to them any time. (SSA-T #12, p. 1)

> Kids really want to have that certain feeling of the same constant emotion with them…. the kids expect me to be hyper, pick them up, play with them, run with them, read them stories…. If I come in the classroom and I'm not feeling too good, you know, I'm not hyper like I normally am, that affects the child also. They see me not doing it, so they don't want to do it, so they're gonna imitate me. So, they'll just sit around and be quiet, stuff like that. (SSA-T #12, p. 2)

It was believed that because the children develop an expectation that different teachers will respond in a particular way, when there are changes in teachers, the children do not know what to expect from the new teachers. The teachers responsiveness to the children affects their level of engagement in activities in a variety of ways.

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The Primary System Goal Is Different From Reality

Based on a concern about the importance of teacher responsiveness when there

are changes in teachers, the administrators of the Child Development Program established

the system of primary teachers to assure that there was at least one teacher focused on

being supportive of and responsive to every child as an individual.

> The system that was set up was under the theory that each child would have a
> primary caregiver, and that each primary caregiver would have a maximum of
> five children. So, that they would actually bond with the children. If you're
> bonded with a child, they would seek you when they have an injury or when they
> want that positive attention, and that maybe, they would seek a flex for something
> else. But it seems to be very much the opposite: that they really go towards the
> people who—and maybe because the flexes are more apt to react quickly to a
> child who's injured or a child who is crying, because they don't have any
> preconceived notion of this child cries every day, or this child any time she gets a
> scratch, cries and cries and cries for hours. And some of the other teachers have
> become accustomed to that and have sort of adjusted their response to that. Or
> that sometimes the lead teachers or the consistent teachers are busy trying to do
> some of the routine things like setting the table or getting the children ready,
> washing their hands. And they're focusing so much on that that they're not
> noticing that, so-and-so is in the cubbies crying. But the flex would not be maybe
> doing those things and be more visual and see that. (SSA-A #2, p. 3)

While the intent is that there will be a closer relationship between the primary

teacher and the children assigned to her, this relationship may be jeopardized when the

primary teacher goes on extended emergency or personal leave, a benefit provided by the

military system. An administrator discussed the following concerns.

> That's been a problem for the teachers in the classroom, especially with one
> person still out on emergency leave. Flexes are not primaries; they're not
> assigned to children. Which is so funny, because that's the person that the
> children have been coming to and seeing as a natural nurturer. [The other
> teachers have said] they've taken on the other children. But it doesn't seem to me
> that they've actually formed any bonds with them, or that the child would even be

able to, in three weeks, get over a bond that they had built with their primary, had they built a strong bond. If a child had built a primary caregiving bond with a teacher, then it would be very traumatic for them if the teacher had just up and left one day in the middle of class and never came back, with no notice of when they're coming back or whether they're coming back. (SSA-A #2, p. 4)

Although there could be advantages to using the primary caregiver system, it is not working as intended in this classroom. The teacher responses to the children did not reflect the kind of interactions expected when teachers are focused on supporting the learning and development of the children.

What's Important: Pay Close Attention And Really Listen To The Children

When asked about the many changes in teachers, and what could enhance the kind of teacher responses that support individual development and learning, a new teacher explained the importance of being sensitive to and responsive to the children.

The most important is to listen, to really listen, get on their level and listen, and actually take in what they're saying or how they're feeling. Even the smallest things with kids, you can gain so much. From just asking certain questions,… they will tell if you get down, if they know that they can trust and that you're actually listening and that you care,…just to really listen. And, pay close attention to exactly what they're saying and how they're feeling. (SSA-T #1, p. 2)

Although this teacher explained an important practice for being responsive to the children, her behaviors did not typically reflect what she stated should be done. Another kind of response in interactions that is based on knowing individual children, is understanding their moods or needs or interests, as explained by a part-time teacher.

Look at their face you can tell the child if they're sad… if they're just standing there, looking around like they're confused or scared. Come up. "Oh, baby, what's wrong? You okay? You know, do you need something? Are you thirsty?

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Would you need to use the bathroom? Or do you want me to take you over to a certain area and play?" And if a child's hyper and wants to play, then I'll come up,… how about we take all this energy you have and run over here and do an art project with it. You know, see what you can make for your mom and dad. And if they're really, really hyper, I can just basically, "Hey, you want me to tell you a story. I can tell you a good ghost story….Okay, guys, circle time." Run over there and they'll all run after me and I'll sit down…"I'll tell you a ghost story." Turn off half the lights in the room and just tell them a ghost story and they'll just sit there for as long as I tell them stories. (SSA-T #13, p. 6)

By being attentive to the children, and trying to understand how their interests and needs in the classroom, this teacher was able to suggest options for the children to be more engaged in an activity. This kind of teacher-child interaction reflects an awareness of being in the classroom for the children.

Summary of Objective 2 – B: Teacher Responses

The variation in teacher responsiveness was evident among all teachers, with some being sensitive to and interested in the children's activities, and others being more distant and responding as requested to help with a particular task. The difference in responsiveness related to teacher change was that newer teachers did not know the children well enough to individualize their responses. There was a clear indication that the children had a pattern of initiating interactions in different ways with different teachers, or other adults. Some of the participants believed that children were more likely to go to teachers or other adults who were most familiar. Other participants believed that children approached teachers or other adults who they perceived to be most responsive, regardless of whether this person was a full-time or part-time teacher, or an establish or new teacher, or even if this person was not a teacher.

The center had intended to implement a policy of primary teacher, to strengthen the relationships and interactions between the teachers and children. However, this system was not being implemented as intended. Also, the kind of relationship expected between a primary caregiver and child is not consistent with the practice of teachers leaving without notice and being gone for an extended time, a military policy intended to be supportive of families. Even though the primary teacher system was not effective for enhancing teacher responsiveness to the children, teachers had other ideas for engaging in interactions based on responsiveness to the needs and interests of the children. These practices included being on the children's level and really listening to what they were saying, as well as being sensitive to the children's moods and what they weren't saying.

Objective 3 – A: Teacher Perspective

Objective 3: To describe the classroom experience from the perspective of those engaged in the early childhood program when there are changes in teachers.

Question A: When there are changes in teachers, how does the teacher perceive the classroom experience?

Preunderstandings

1. The Military Child Care Act has provided for hiring teachers with more formal training in early childhood education.

2. The Military Child Care Act has provided for full-time trainers at each military base, to work closely with classroom teachers.

3. The teachers are spouses of active-duty military personnel, and one is the young-adult child of active-duty personnel.

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Generation of Themes

For this question, the documentation reviewed for analysis and interpretation included the schedule documenting teacher change (SCH), The Early Childhood Work Environment Survey (WES), The Work Attitude Questionnaire (WAQ), The Scale of Organizational Commitment (SOC), the Teacher-Child Interaction Scale (TCI), the semi-structured interview for adults (SSA–T for teacher, SSA–A for administrator), and field notes (FI). In addition, dates of observation or identification number of individuals are included as relevant.

The themes generated for this objective are about the perspective of the teachers in this classroom. It includes descriptions of what it is like to work in this classroom, and related feelings about interactions with other teachers, the children, the parents, and the administrators. For this program component, the following six themes emerged: It affects the center as a whole; We're butting heads; I don't have to listen, you're not my teacher; People have to form bonds here; We need for management to listen to and understand us; and She really liked that other teacher.

It Affects The Center As A Whole

"Teacher change, honestly, it affects the center as a whole….If you have a steady routine in the classroom to make the children happy, you'll keep the parents happy, and you'll have a smooth run center" (SSA-T #13, p.13). Although teacher consistency in the classroom is desirable for a variety of reasons, it is not easily attainable. During the five-week observation, the same three full-time teachers comprised the basic teaching team in this classroom. However, including the thirteen months prior to the start of the research,

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there have been various combinations of ten full-time teachers assigned to this classroom, and one of the current teachers has indicated that she has requested a transfer out of this room (SSA-T #2, p.1). She explained that, a couple of months before the research started, "I went on vacation two weeks. I came back and the three people I worked with were gone" (SSA-T #2, p.4). "Within the-the last couple of months, my room in particular has been through drastic teacher changes" (SSA-T #3, p.1). Even though there were many changes in teachers in this classroom, this change was not recorded as 'teacher turnover' because the teachers who left the classroom had either moved to other classrooms, or were out on emergency leave and were expected to return to the center.

In this classroom, changes in teachers is a daily experience, especially in the late afternoon. The two following statements by a teacher and the researcher, describe the challenges of teachers and children knowing one another when there are changes.

> It is very inconsistent every day. Even with certain staff members that have been coming in the afternoons, sometimes they're out and they're the flexes, that's not the consistent part. But I think that especially in the afternoons, there should be, a person there that's always there, who they know. Because that's the going home part. (SSA-T #3, p.2)

> One afternoon, a woman walked in the classroom and sat in one of the child chairs near the art area. The researcher asked teacher #1 who this was, whether she was a parent or staff member. Teacher #1 explained, "She is an afternoon part-time, I don't know her name, but she is in here sometimes." (FI, 4-16)

A teacher expresses concern about teacher scheduling being based on child-staff ratio, rather than daily needs of the classroom and the characteristics of individual teachers. "I always hear you're in ratio, you're in ratio. [We should] always have that extra person in there. That makes the difference in the kids, but it also makes the

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difference if someone is gone, you still have the same person…. " (SSA-T #2, p.14). In

addition to the familiarity of teachers, the characteristics of individual teachers are related

to the effects of teacher change in the classroom, as explained by a teacher.

> It depends on the type of teacher change. If the teacher comes into childcare with
> experience or if they don't and it's like totally new to them, that's a big
> difference. Teacher change can be really good especially if it's a teacher who's
> come in fresh and ready and excited about being there…. For the children,
> they'regaining a teacher who is ready to take on whatever challenges or
> everything through the day, as opposed to a teacher that's been there a while and
> they're kind of getting burnt out. (SSA-T #1, p. 1)

In response to a question about what it is like for new teachers to transition into

the classroom, and how they might support children in handling teacher change, a new

teacher shared the following thoughts.

> [Helping the children] comes with having experience…a newer teacher may not
> be able to observe and notice that, and be ready to jump right in, as a teacher, a
> caregiver who has the experience. It depends on the person. If they're fresh, and
> they're just getting into it, then, they have a lot of learning to do. It's something
> that's a process. But if it's one who's had experience and who's been there, and
> knows what to look for and how to observe…how a child is reacting to certain
> things, then that makes a difference too. (SSA-T #1, p. 2)

> Each classroom is just so different. With me, dealing with the change, going from
> one preschool program to another, and then to another, and seeing like the total
> difference and so it depends on what the classroom is, or what is viewed as age
> appropriate and what's not. (SSA-T #1, p. 7)

Therefore, part of the reason that the effects of teacher change depend on

individual teachers, and how they as individuals adjust to the change of being in a new

classroom, with new children, a new teaching team, and possibly a new program.

We're Butting Heads

Each time there is teacher change, the teaching team readjusts to incorporate the new team member(s). This adjustment can be more challenging if the change involves one of the three full-time teachers who are more familiar with the classroom program and routines. However, anytime there is a change in individual teachers, the system changes, as described by two of the full-time teachers in the following statements.

> It's different if you've come together as a team,… If that team goes together smoothly or if it's kind of a butting heads, not on the same page, that's the big thing. Because if a new teacher comes in, with leads, everything is disrupted as far as ideas and views of what is age appropriate and what's not, that type of thing…. And then, you know, there's the kids there, the whole time, sitting there listening and watching…it takes a toll on the kids. So then we're getting in a debate. I'm not wanting the debate. And, the kids, 'cause they're all standing around, so that makes it difficult. (SSA-T #1, p.2- 3)

A teacher who had previously been part of another teaching team explained, "I made sure that each had time out of the room and to contribute to lessons…. So we all did something, and it got done, … We plan it and it gets done, it's really nice" (SSA-T #2, p.1). It takes time for a teaching team to work out their system, so when the team changes often, there are challenges in establishing and maintaining the team system. The teacher who returned from a two-week vacation to find that her three co-teachers were gone, explained, what it was like for her to adjust to a new teaching team.

> It was like a whole new change and I had been working there for four months but I was a caregiver, I wasn't a lead or anything. I'm not really up to this is how it is. So I stepped back and they had their routines… they changed the routine. I gave my opinion once in a while, but I was just basically there. (SSA-T #2, p.4)

If they [children] are doing something that they need to stop, they need to stop, and if the teacher says that a bit too sharply, I need to back off. Because there are gonna be new people dealing with them if I leave, and I can't - 'cause I've had it done to me - step in and overstep another caregiver. (SSA-T #2, p. 12)

Even though this teacher had been in this classroom the longest, she found herself in a position of trying to figure out the new system when two new teachers were assigned to the room, and feeling reluctant to give feedback to other teachers. Related to the challenge of new teachers trying to figure out the system, there does not seem to be a supportive procedure for integrating new teachers into the classroom, or an emphasis on a teaching team that works together to plan and implement a cohesive program. A new teacher relates her experience joining the teaching team.

My situation is just not the easiest right now, but, I'm trying to fix it…. I told the people I'm in the room with, "I am not here to be best friends or buddy-buddies. I'm here for the children and they're the most important thing…. If you don't like me when you go home, that's okay. But while we're in the classroom, we need to be professional. We need to be here for the kids and the parents…." I've had a couple of parents come to me to say, "I'm paying all this money for him to learn bad habits." I'm like, "I'm working on making changes, and we're trying to get it to more of a preschool program, but I'm new, I'm also only an assistant." And [teacher #3], this is her room, and she's came… quite a few times, to remind me of that. So I'm already stepping on toes…. I have to do what's best for them [children] and voice my opinion. That's all that I can do. I hope for the best. It's just taking its toll. (SSA-T #1, p. 13)

Because of the challenges of working with other teacher, a preference was expressed for giving staff more say in decision-making about which teaching team they are part of, as well as planning the program and procedures within the classroom. The teacher who had been in the classroom the longest shared the following thoughts.

They need to start giving us more at the beginning and letting the teachers, all actually, have a say in where they want to go, or who should be with them. You know, not total say, but have an opinion on things. So I think they really need to look at that and see if people are willing to stay for a long time or if it's a short-term thing. (SSA-T #2, p.7)

Due to the frequent change in teachers, each day there could be a different combination of teachers in the classroom. This resulted in teachers not being familiar with one another, evidenced by teachers not knowing each others names, sometimes mistaking a parent for a teacher, and the absence of positive relationships among the teachers. This lack of connections among teachers was part of a cyclical pattern in which there was no process for incorporating new teachers into a teaching team which provided an organized classroom program, the lack of a coherent teaching team led to a more chaotic classroom, which led to more teacher change because teachers did not want to stay in this classroom. The teaching team is the foundation of what happens in the classroom. When this is not a smoothly functioning team that incorporates new teachers into the system, the classroom environment can feel out of control.

The Children Don't Listen, They Don't Know I'm The Teacher

In a classroom that does not have an organized program, teacher change can result in more chaos, and challenging child behaviors, as explained by a new teacher.

[Teacher change is]…creating more of an uproar because it's somebody new. They [children] don't know what's going on, so we can kind of rule…. And then the kids are showing off more, or they're doing things that they maybe probably wouldn't do before as more of a look what I can do. Or I don't have to listen to you because you're not my teacher. Or you may not be here long 'cause we've had five teachers in here within the last two days… That's just what happened when I went into [research room]. (SSA-T #1, p. 8)

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In addition to the children in general testing the limits when there are changes in teachers, the children whose behavior can be challenging can be even more difficult because the new teachers do not know how to address the individual needs of these children. The teacher who had been in this classroom the longest discussed this idea.

Each challenging kid…you know what to do to get them calmed down and stuff. And new teachers, they don't know… When there are changes in teachers, the challenging kids, it makes them act out a lot more. Or, it seems like more because they're acting out all day instead of isolated incidents, because that teacher doesn't know what they need. Like certain kids need a hug or certain kids, needthat one-on-one. You know, let's sit on my lap and talk or just let's go play with whatever…. but the [new] teacher doesn't know…. And so it's very frustrating for the teacher, which makes it frustrating for the kids, 'cause they could feel that. They get more challenging, and it rubs off on other kids. Or the other kids aren't watched as they should be, because you're one-on-one with this kid for so long. And the other kids think, oh, this is fun, we can get away with this. And, then it kind of goes out of control. With the challenging kids, I've seen the new teacher come in and right away they're getting bit, spit at, cussed at. (SSA-T #2, p. 5,6)

In contrast, when there is less teacher change, the teachers have an opportunity to form a bond with the children, and learn how to work with the children as individuals, as well as in the group. The following two teacher statements reflect this sentiment.

We have a lot of staff in the same room, instead of constantly rotating staff around because a child will form a bond with a teacher…. They'll form a more bond with the teacher who is here all day because the teacher sees them. And children [think]… I'm gonna be good with that person. (SSA-T #13, p.1)

They were doing their job. I've seen them and they're so good with kids. I don't see that much animosity that would go towards the kids or anything. New people I don't know,… but the old people that I know for a long time, I've watched them with different kids. And I don't see it towards the kids, or anything that would affect them. (SSA-T #2, p. 6)

Even though this room could feel out of control for new teachers, when teachers were in the room long enough to get to know the individual children, those relationships enhanced the classroom experience for the children, as well as the teachers.

People Need To Form Bonds Here

There were comments by teachers and administrators about the importance of the teacher-child connections, and how to support their development. "That's the whole point that people have to form the bonds here." (SSA-T #13, p. 12). Considering how to enhance the teacher-child connections, a part-time teacher who had been at the center for over a year, talked about how to develop relationships with children.

> Observations on kids....this child likes artwork. So if I can sit there with this child for like maybe five minutes every two hours or something, it's not that long with him. You just sit there and draw a little art project with them. You know, color, tell them how beautiful their artwork is. Make them respect you more, therefore they get a closer bond with you....Each child can form a bond (SSA-T # 13, p.4)

These teacher-child connections are affected when there are changes in teachers, whether the teacher is full-time or part-time, or the circumstances of the teacher's leaving. A part-time teacher described how the children respond when they have a close relationship with a teacher, and then the teacher leaves the classroom.

> When a teacher [is] on emergency leave…, that affects the child in ways of like one child may be really attached to me, and one child really might be attached to [teacher #3]. But if [teacher #3] was…on emergency leave, then that kid would for like half the time she's gone, for a while, she's gonna be sort of down. She really don't have that inspiration she normally would have….And then they will start recognizing there's more than one teacher in the classroom and they'll form a good bond with you .too. (SSA-T #13, p. 1)

When [previous teacher] left, they all trusted her and they all loved her. And when she left the room, that really affected them a lot. [Child #19] formed a really, really close bond with [previous teacher]. And she would sit there with the children and, you know, calm and relaxed voice, sit there and play and everything…. But now that [previous teacher] is gone, [child #19] is always around me now. And just now when I left, now she started crying. So, when they see a certain teacher gone, or a certain teacher moving out of the room, that makes a big, empty hole for them. They're not getting what they normally get and so that makes them feel depressed and sad. And so they'll bond with another teacher and when the same thing happens, it will constantly happen over and over. They'll always feel upset. Some children actually can block teachers out through not letting them get emotionally involved with them and stuff. (SSA-T #13, p. 8)

Given the importance of these connections, the teachers talked about how they help the children understand changes in teachers. In discussing how she supports her own child in making changes, especially related to military moves, a teacher explained, "I talk to him a lot about it and get his opinion, and just make sure he's aware of it, and, any time he has a question or something, I answer it….as much as I can, try to prepare him for whatever change" (SSA-T #1, p. 5). Previously, to help new teachers connect with the children, the change was explained to the children, but this is not currently done. "It's just so commonplace now. I mean, like every day two or three new ones can come in. So we don't even explain it any more" (SSA-T #2, p. 3). The lead teacher explained the process of informing children about changes in teachers, thinking this would facilitate the new teacher-child connections.

In an ideal situation, we would know that the teachers are coming in ahead of time. Most times the teachers just pop up in the room and she's your relief…. And she's a brand new face. [One] time, I had just come home from emergency leave, one of our new kids' parents had come in, and I thought she was a staff member. I was like, "Hi, who are you?" And she told me she was a parent, and I said, "I'm sorry," and I introduced myself…. We have so many new faces that I mistake a parent for a staff member. You know, what does that mean? And in circle time

what I'll do is I'll talk about it. If I know I'm leaving, I'll talk about it for a couple of days…. If there's a teacher that's coming in to replace somebody, then we'll talk about the other teacher, why is she leaving, where is she going, talk about where she's going, what's gonna happen when she gets there. She's gonna have a new classroom full of friends, you know, and we're gonna get a new friend in here. That's an ideal situation. Most of the time, the teacher just pops in, and the kids are doing free play, and you're kind of just okay, this is my relief. And this is when I feel very uncomfortable to leave my kids, because they don't know this teacher, and they don't know if they need something they can go to her. [Teacher #1] is there, they know [her]. [She] is actually new, but they know her and I think that because of the high staff turnover, they seem to get to know the teachers pretty quickly. I introduce the teacher to [teacher #1]. I'm gonna introduce the teachers who are relieving me, on my way out. Um, I had not been waiting to introduce the teachers, and maybe I should… this will make it better for them. (SSA-T #3, p.10)

Although all four of the teachers interviewed talked about using the circle time to introduce new teachers to the group, this would typically be done just for the full-time teachers. The circle time is not done every day, but is done after breakfast when it happens. However, most of the teacher change occurs during the 2:00 to 6:00 period, when there are no planned group activities in which new teachers are introduced. A teacher who had requested a transfer out of this classroom talked about having developed important relationships with the children, but felt compelled to leave the room, and wanted to be sure that the children understood why she was leaving. \"I'll still see my kids in the mornings, 'cause I'll still be the early person, I don't want to leave my kids" (SSA-T #2, p. 2). "I'll let them know I'm right over there. I want to talk to the parents too about that. As I see them I'll tell them and explain to them" (SSA-T #2, p. 13). Although the teachers talked about informing parents and children about changes in teachers, there was no evidence that this kind of information was being exchanged, and the children and parents were expressed confusion about who the teachers were.

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We Need For Management To Listen To And Understand Us

The three work environment questionnaires were completed by the three full-time teachers. Results of the Early Childhood Work Environment Survey indicated that the teachers did not have a positive feeling about this center as a place to work. The relationship among various staff members was not positive, and the program was not perceived as being organized or having a common vision. But, as stated by one of the full-time teachers who had worked in the center for several months, the greatest strength of this center is the "love of children" (WES-T #2).

The teacher responses on the Work Attitude Questionnaire were striking in their variability, with only a few items for which at least two of the three teachers indicated the same opinion. For only one of the fifty items did all three teachers have the same response, that they all strongly felt that they were not in a dead-end job. They indicated either 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that their work gives them a sense of accomplishment, and their work makes an important difference in their student's lives. The items representing relationships among co-workers and with supervisors, indicated negative or non-supportive relationships.

Responses on the Scale of Organizational Commitment also had much variability in responses. The general pattern is that the three teachers did care about the fate of the center, had some loyalty to the center, and were willing to work hard to help the center be successful. There was more variability in the degree to which the teachers felt inspired to do their best, or feeling that their values were consistent with the center's values.

In the interview, the teachers expressed a desire for more and different kinds of

support and training, which was related to the teacher's thoughts about leaving the

classroom or program. A new teacher discussed personal motivation for teachers.

> If the teacher had less of an incentive to change, like me, I choose to be here and I
> deal with whatever because this is the field that I want to be in. But, some of the
> ladies that I talk to, they're just here because they can't find another job or
> whatever. That makes a difference, they're more likely to leave than me. I am
> sticking at it… no matter what, 'cause I want to be in childcare and preschool.
> So, if [others] don't have the training and support and things to keep them
> interested and involved, to help them along with it, then they're more likely to
> leave. They don't have that incentive to stay. (SSA-T #1, p. 10)

There was a perception that all staff would benefit from more administrative

support, "Even the new staff, or staff members who are struggling… I think that there's

potential. But if it's not encouraged, then you could just forget about it … A lot of the

staff here feel unappreciated" (SSA-T # 3, p.3). The need for support was also related to

the teachers desire for administrators to understand their perspective in the work they do.

> It is hard work. And I think that when you're out of the room, you kind of look at
> the room from a different perspective. You walk in and you see it's chaotic and
> you think you know why. Everybody needs help. And then you walk out and then
> that room never gets help. Or, you walk in and you see the teacher is trying to
> deal with it, but that's never addressed. You know, you really gave a lot of effort
> in trying to help the kids get ready. A lot of times it's more the criticism without
> anything else to go along with that. So, it feels like you're always being put down.
> And then you just kind of feel like you know what, I'm doing a really hard job,
> and you have no idea what's going on in my room. (SSA-T # 3, p.3)

Teachers expressed some frustration about the emphasis on child assessments and

feeling that there was not time to do that. They believed that they were individualizing for

the children, but teachers sometimes had the impression that administrators were not

aware of their competencies in areas like knowing and adjusting for individual children.

Relating comments by an administrator who was concerned that the portfolios were not

being done, "Do you know what level your kids are? They're not quite there yet or

they're already there. But you don't know it because you're not assessing the children

and doing the portfolios." The teachers reaction was, "I know my kids!! And I take great

offense to that, but management has that perception" (SSA-T #3, p. 6). The teachers

wanted recognition for their competencies related to individualizing, but there was not

evidence that any of the teachers were aware of specific developmental levels of

individual children, and were gauging interactions based on that information.

All three of the full-time teachers identified a critical need to feel supported when

they made specific, urgent requests. They felt that they were working very hard in the

classroom, and occasionally needed help, as well as moral support.

> One day, we had twenty-two kids and two caregivers. We had like a couple kids that were just totally out of control. I kept calling up front to see if we could get somebody else in here. They were getting angry and smart-alecky and snappy with me for calling up front. So in that instant I was just so frustrated…. If I had more support at that time, then those feelings wouldn't have had to be there. That's support to where the management is on top of it and aware, and if you need help or you're in a stressful situation and you call for help, then they're available. But they weren't…so I think that makes a big difference as far as support and being there to listen to. We're supposed to listen to the children. Then the management is supposed to listen to the caregivers and kind of support them. We're here to support the children, help them through their day, through their life, and we need the same, our little bit of backup. So it would have helped then, plus…getting breaks or making sure that you have the things that you need. Or if you have a child or a couple children that are just totally- you know, you cannot get through to them, they're not wanting to listen to you, then to have somebody else step in, you know, to kind of help, so support in that way. I think that makes a big difference. (SSA-T #1, p. 11)

Having a trainer to help with specific classroom issues was thought of as a very supportive part of the overall program. But, the trainer was not available as often as needed, because she had taken on other responsibilities.

> When we did have our full-time trainer, she would be in the room, constantly with the kids.… She is not here to supervise…here to help. The trainer is pretty much a role model in what is appropriate language when children have difficulties some days. We always don't have a great day, and that goes the same for the kids too. But it's important that we know how to deal with that…that we know what's going on in their family situations as well, because sometimes we need to be a little bit more sensitive to one child because there's an issue, so the trainer's there to kind of role model stuff like that. That really plays a part on the teacher attitude, the teacher experience, the teacher training, which kind of plays a direct part on how the children react to the teacher, because if you're not giving me what I need, why should I give you anything. (SSA-T # 3, p.5)

Part of the training responsibility is assumed by the full-time or more experienced teachers, who help newer teachers understand and apply specific classroom practices. The situation of teachers providing training for other teachers can be challenging, as reported by one teacher who had observed another teacher talking to a parent.

> She [teacher #4] was talking to [child's] mom [#12] the other night and I was like okay, good. You know, even though it was that she [child] didn't have her listening ears on or something. At least she knows and she's talking to parents. Hopefully she's saying good things to them about these kids. (SSA-T #2, p.12)

The full-time teacher who described this situation in which a part-time teacher was giving parents negative feedback about the child, explained that she often feels concerned about some behaviors of other teachers, and would like for that to change, but does not feel comfortable giving feedback to others. So, she is in a position of having

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information to share with teachers with less education or experience, but does not have

the strategies or confidence for sharing that information, and would like more support.

The need for support was also related to a classroom identity, or feeling of

personal territory, and wanting that to have a positive atmosphere. A full-time teacher

who had been in the classroom the longest, talked about what this meant to her.

> Our rooms are our homes. (SSA-T #2, p. 6)   We lost a lot of our identity, I think, as a room… And that's when a lot of stuff started going down. And actually management did say that they had put way too many challenging kids in one room….And so they had to start putting them in different rooms, to spread it out. Because, I mean, it was like five or six and there was only two of us, and, I mean, it was bad. And with only two people, and three when [teacher] was there. You need that one-on-on a lot…it really started going down. (SSA-T #2, p.5)

A major component of the support needed is that teachers want administrators to

listen to their concerns and support them in resolving problems. They really want the

administrators to understand their perspective.

> The management needs to learn that we are people too, and that they need to listen to us and not to say, "Oh, I understand" and then not do anything. Because then people would stay where they are….I'm leaving [to another room], …It's not the room, it's not the kids at all,…but it's mentally and physically exhausting. And people can only take so much of it….I won't be working with the same person any more, that's basically the only thing that would get me out of there… Everyone in the room has a problem with the person, but management won't listen to us so meanwhile, what can we do… it makes the work environment hostile. (SSA-T #2, p.7, 8)

One of the full-time teachers explained some things she thought would be helpful

in regard to support and training. She also thought that some of these strategies could

help decrease teacher change.

More help in the room; management listening to them and actually caring about them. With parents, when they go to complain or something, they don't say that caregiver's bad or whatever….Tell them this is policy, we have to do it that way….You find not only management but other caregivers talking about caregivers. And that really brings animosity from the parents too, because obviously if these caregivers don't trust each other, if they're both working with my child. I mean, it's like putting your child in a broken home, basically. So I think, if we had seminars in actually letting everyone know the impact that does have on parents and caregivers and the children. (SSA-T #2, p.12)

The comments of this teacher reflect an understanding of how everyone in the classroom is affected by what happens. Her concern was about the interrelationships of management, caregivers, children, and parents.

She Really Liked That Other Teacher

In the military, children and their families have so much change to deal with, and frequent teacher change in the classroom can be an additional complication. A part-time teacher who grew up in the military, discussed some of these issues.

Especially dual military, or even single military, it's basically the same.But, dual military, that's when both parents are in the Army, when they go out, both of them go to the field at a certain time or Kosovo…. You know, they [children] are basically changing homes. They're gonna live with this woman for the next month or the next seven….. Or just one, dad goes to the field and mom's at home, you're just with mom all day. Mom goes; you're with dad all day. Or if dad's always gone, you're either home with your mom, when she's not in the military. You know, they're used to seeing people they care for and love going away. They're gonna ask for them a lot. They don't know when they're coming back, but they know that they leave. And when they see certain caretakers move, it's basically the same thing, they sort of respect the caretakers as parents…. Especially, you can form a really good relationship with children in the center who like they only live with their moms. You know, that's a lot of cases, with the single parents... (SSA-T #13, p.9)

Given the changes the children are dealing with at home, the teachers understand the parent concerns about changes in teachers and how that affects their child. A teacher who had been in this classroom for several months discussed her perception of the meaning of teacher change for the families.

> Sometimes it's the same person they always want to come to. The parent, I can tell, likes it too. They get upset if a certain caregiver's not in the room 'cause their kid likes to go to that caregiver. They don't want to go to any other caregiver just in the mornings (SSA-T #2, p.11)

> [Parents] get very upset when they come in and it's like a person that is just relieving someone or last hour, they don't even know who the kid is… You don't even know who my child is…how they're gonna get taken care of all day. I really think they ought to have the same people close every day. 'Cause these parents, they see these faces, they start trusting us, and then they get strange [teachers], then they don't know to tell the parents about the day. (SSA-T #2, p.11)

When there is so much teacher change, the parents "are not inquiring where the teachers are, 'cause they're so used to them being gone or something" (SSA-T #2, p.13). The high level of teacher change resulted in challenges for families in feeling connected with the classroom program and knowing what is happening with their child. A teacher discussed these concerns and how they could be addressed with the parents.

> Families feel like the class is kind of…not really together,… and when that happens that they don't know who to go to about their kids…. The parents know…who the primaries are. They're supposed to take care of the parent conferences, the portfolios, the paperwork for your child, things like that. But of course the development of the child, we all do it,….But, when you see your child can get a new primary teacher, and that teacher like in a month is gone, you really kind of feel is your child's development really being observed…. How is [it] affecting the other kids? When they see lots of different teachers, they are confused. (SSA-T #3, p.8)

And sometimes they withdraw and they kind of keep it all inside, and then they just get fed up. They walk in and they see another teacher and they say what is going on. My kid is in there and my kid really liked the other teacher, and now she's gone. And there's a new teacher that just replaced that teacher and she seems really mean. You know, what's going on? But what we try to do to kind of offset it is, we try to make sure to let them know what's going on. Before we have any teacher changes, we try to put out a newsletter and, …we'll put out a parent reminder. I think that there are ways to try to decrease the staff turnover. You can't stop it completely, but I think there's ways to decrease it…While it's happening, I think it's important that we keep the parents of every class informed of what's going on in the classroom. Letting the parents know what's going on in the lesson plan for the week coming up. Letting them know when there's these staff changes. And this is what's gonna happen with your child while…I'll be responsible for your child. (SSA-T #3, p.9)

The teachers did seem to be very aware of and concerned about the effects of teacher change on the children and their families. The suggested strategies of keeping parents informed about changes in teachers, as well as the weekly curriculum plan, would be expected to be helpful for minimizing some of the negative effects of teacher change.

Summary of Objective 3 – A: Teacher Perspective

When there were changes in teachers, the entire classroom was affected. In the previous several months, there were drastic changes in teachers in this classroom. The greatest daily change was in the late afternoon, from 2:00 to 6:00, and the full-time teachers were concerned about the need for teacher consistency during this time. During the research period, there were 3 full-time teachers and 19 part-time or substitute teachers. Even the teachers had difficultly being familiar with other teachers, evidenced by not knowing the names of other teachers, or mistaking a parent for a new teacher.

The frequent changes in teachers resulted in challenges for having an effective teaching team, because there were frequently new teachers to be included. This challenge

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was exacerbated by the situation of not having an organized program with a curriculum and regular schedule, and not having a system for smoothly integrating new teachers into a teaching team.

It was believed that the frequent teacher change, combined with challenges of the teaching team, resulted in a classroom environment that teacher and administrators described as out-of –control. This situation was partially linked to some children described as having challenging behaviors, and that other children did a lot of testing the boundaries when there were new teachers. When teachers were new, they did not know individual children and how to engage them in constructive activities.

A concern discussed by many of the administrators and teachers was that when there was frequent teacher change, the important teacher-child connections were not being developed. This, in turn, meant that teachers did not have the information about each child to most effectively support individual learning and development.

The teachers identified areas in which they would like more support and training, especially to feel that they are listened to, understood, and appreciated by management, and that they get help in the classroom as requested. Given the many changes that children and their parents are dealing with as military families, the teachers expressed concern that the families need more support and information about teacher change.

Objective 3 – B: Child Perspective

Objective 3: To describe the classroom experience from the perspective of those engaged in the early childhood program when there are changes in teachers.

Question B: When there are changes in teachers, how does the child perceive the classroom experience?

Preunderstandings

1. The children in this classroom have either one or both parents who are active-duty military, and therefore, have had at least one major move in their lives.

2. Because of their parent's military rotation assignments, the children have enrolled in this classroom at various times of the year.

3. The children in this class have been in a variety of non-parental childcare arrangements before enrolling in this classroom. Some had been in another classroom at this center, some at family daycare homes on the military base, some at German childcare facilities in the local community.

Generation Of Themes

For this objective, the documentation sources reviewed for analysis and interpretation were: the schedule documenting teacher change (SCH), the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STR), the Teacher-Child Interaction Scale (TCI), the semi-structured interview for adults (SSA–T for teacher, SSA–A for administrator, SSA–M for mother, SSA- F for father), the semi-structured interview for children (SSC), the structured interview for children (SIC), and field notes (FI). In addition, dates of observation or identification number of individuals are included, as relevant.

The themes for this objective are about the child's experience in this classroom. This involved the children's experience as part of a military family in which at least one parent was often away from home, and how this change at home was related to the changes in

teachers at the center, understanding what it means to be a teacher, and wanting

connections with people in the classroom. For this program component, the following six

themes emerged: Spending more time with teachers than with parents, What happens

next? Living through change at home and at school, Who are the teachers? What does a

teacher do? Hey lady, do you want to play? Don't leave, please stay.

<p align="center">*Spending More Time With Teachers Than With Parents*</p>

At this base, soldiers are often gone for a few days training in the field, or

deployed for several months to another country. Because the active-duty military parents

have very long workdays, especially when they are doing training in the field, many of

the children are in the classroom for ten to twelve hours per day.

> Some children are here from 5:45 in the morning till 6:00 at night. That's twelve hours… When they go home at six o'clock at night, and get fed and get a bath and get to bed. So they spend a lot more time with us, except for like the weekends and stuff. That's when on Mondays they have a lot of, I don't want to be here. I want to be with my mom and dad. (SSA-T #13, p. 10)

The children experience a lot of change related to military life, moving from one

base to another, then the active-duty parent(s) may be away for several days training in

the field, or away for several months on deployment, or the whole family returning to the

States for a few weeks on leave. The children are in a situation of having a lot of change

to adjust to at home, and of spending long days away from home in the classroom. A

teacher discussed how the additional teacher change in the classroom affects the children.

> [It] is more stressful. I think they get to know the teachers a little bit quicker,… but I think that it has a lot to do with the teachers making themselves known… I don't think that preschoolers are at this point used to change. I think they're at the

stage where they're just still kind of wondering what's going on. And they have all these new faces coming in the class and their dad is gone from home. He went to Bosnia or wherever. Mom's gone at the same time, or Mom's really having a hard time with Dad being gone. Or vice versa. The children may come in and they have those kind of days…when they're just not doing so great, and maybe the only teacher that can help them is the teacher that's been there the longest… I think it is harder for them… it's hard to go through this, especially the dual military families…. They're only three, four, five, they're not yet accustomed to drastic changes in their lifestyles. (SSA-T #3, p. 12)

The active-duty military parents may be accustomed to change, as they are stationed at different bases, and then sent on deployments from that base. But, for young children, they may not understand these changes. It may be stressful for the child to figure out what it means that they are with their families less time than they are in the classroom, and their active-duty parents come and go with variable schedules. Due to the changes at home, it would be especially helpful to the child to have consistent teachers.

What Happens Next? Living Through Change At Home And School

Having frequent teacher change was related to the classroom atmosphere, and, in turn, related to the children's feelings of security. One factor in the classroom atmosphere was the relationship with individual teachers, so this atmosphere changes as teachers change. A full-time teacher discussed how this situation affects the children.

It's important to have the same teachers throughout the day, particularly because it makes the children feel secure and safe… We're the consistent staff. When we leave, they feel, I think, "Now my security is leaving,… My day is kind of starting to be a little shaky, a little rocky. I'm not quite sure about what's gonna happen next." And that affects the behavior that the teachers in the afternoon experience and just the general atmosphere of the room. (SSA-T #3, p. 2)

When the children feel less safe and secure in the classroom as a result of teacher change, they are likely to be less engaged in activities and interactions. Each time a change occurs, the children are taking stock of the situation, and adjusting their expectations and behavior. The teachers expressed concern about how the family changes affected the children, and how these effects were related to changes in teachers. The effects for individual children are, "…just different, the whole family life, and it just all depends. There's just so much in there, where they came from, what they're used to, what they're changing to" (SSA-T #1, p. 6). "Military children have are more subject to be used to the change, because they get used to it from an early age, it's just inevitable" (SSA-T #1, p. 6). Some children "may be able to handle it [change] more because they're military family, because they're used to the change, but only maybe,... it could be to a point they've had so much change they're just ready to bust and one little thing could like turn it around" (SSA-T #1, p. 7). The full-time teachers described the behavior of children during these times of change at home, as well as the classroom changes, indicating a variety of reactions for individual children.

> The parents being gone, in particular, makes them act crazy; sometimes they're very aggressive. Not really wanting to do social activities at all. Sometimes very cuddly, they just need to be held, whimpering a whole lot. That's why it's so important that we know what's going on too. (SSA-T #3, p. 12)

> They still ask about some [teachers] that's left six months ago, or one that went to a different class. And it's really good, like [previous teacher], she comes in to check in on the kids, and they really like that, 'cause they know that she didn't leave because of them,… one kid actually thought that he was bad so that that's why she left. (SSA-T #2, p. 2)

When there are changes in teachers, not all teachers know which children are having changes at home, and how that situation affects the behavior of individual children in the classroom, or how changes in teachers affect individual children. "You know just by the way kids are acting that their parents are gone. You can tell just by the way they come in and talk [When there are changes in teachers, the new teachers] don't know the cues" [to understand individual children] (SSA-T #2, p. 10). Teachers explained the importance of being familiar enough with children to be able to individualize supportive interactions related to home and school changes.

> Some people have a really hard time adapting to the Army life, children are the same way. So it affects certain childs in certain ways…. You know, when a certain caretaker leaves that they normally talk to, it makes them become more isolated…. But some kids who form a really close, loving bond with teachers, and that teacher leaves or they leave, that really affects them. (SSA-T #13, p. 11)

> Especially overseas military, you come for three years and then you go, and then somebody new comes in to fill in. It's best if it wasn't, you know, 'cause the kids get comfortable with the teacher, it kind of depends, they know that they can depend on that teacher being there for them. I guess it just totally depends on the child and how they can handle the change. It really just depends on who is doing the changes, what they're changing to, and who's involved with their changing. (SSA-T #1, p.1,6)

Even though change affects children in different ways, the teachers had ideas about what would be helpful to all of the children. When children experience a lot of change, especially children in military families, they need "attention, love, all that stuff, because…father's gone all the time, or the mother's gone all the time… it's inconsistency with a lot of these kids…. and that's when most of the problems come out…. Let them come here and have some consistency" (SSA-T #2, p. 10). All of the children were

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having changes at home in addition to the teacher changes in the classroom, but they responded in different ways to these changes. New teachers were less familiar with the children and their changes at home; this teacher inconsistency resulted in individual children not receiving optimal support in dealing with changes at home.

We Don't Have Any Teachers, All Our Teachers Are Gone

During all of the hours children spend in the classroom daily, there were many adults in the classroom, and they had various kinds of interactions with the children. In addition to the three full-time teachers, and nineteen other teachers, there were the two cooks who deliver the meals, custodial staff who come in after breakfast and lunch to sweep and mop the floors, maintenance staff as needed, parents, administrators, and visitors, who interact with the children while in the room. From the children's perspective, with so many adults in the classroom, and the teachers not clearly implementing a curriculum, it is not clear who is a teacher, as described by a teacher.

> You constantly have people coming in and out of your classroom, giving breaks, janitorial staff. There's tons of new faces in the classroom throughout the day. It's a constant barrage of new people coming in and out… the maintenance guys or just people calling in sick and…they pull in somebody new for the day to fill in. It's really hard to see all these new faces throughout the day…. and there's crying because of just, who are you and what are you doing in here. With people coming in that they…are not familiar with….With the preschoolers, you can see it in their behavior and the way they act up and showing off… (SSA-A #1, p. 12)

The daily situation of frequent changes in teachers, and having a variety of other adults in the classroom, resulted in the children being confused about whom, if anyone, was their teacher. This situation was reflected in the following vignette.

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During free play, two boys in the block area asked me if they could use the trucks in the cabinet (pointing to a high cabinet). I explained that they needed to ask their teacher, because the researcher was a visitor in the classroom, and the teachers needed to decide about that. One boy said, "We don't have any teachers, all our teachers are gone." The researcher motioned toward teacher #20 who was playing with children near the block area and suggested that they ask her about the trucks. She got the trucks for the children, and without speaking to them about what they would be doing with the trucks in the block area, she returned to her previous play activity with the other group of children (FI 4-15).

Part of the confusion about whom is or is not a teacher stems from how the teachers refer to or introduce themselves. The two afternoon teachers come in at one or two, they're arriving during naptime and then, "children are waking up with different teachers in the room, and it's awkward" (SSA-T # 3, p.10). "Miss [teacher #9} was introducing herself as a new friend. I don't ever think that Miss [teacher #4] introduced [herself]… They don't do it" (SSA-T # 3, p.11). So, when there are changes in teachers and the new teachers either do not introduce themselves, or they introduce themselves as a friend, the children would not clearly understand that these are their classroom teachers. The following situation provides additional insight related to children's confusion about who is a teacher.

Teacher #2 was at the teacher work station. Child #11 walked up to her and said, "Teacher, can I~" Teacher #2 interrupted him and said, "Don't call me teacher, my name is Ms ~~, you need to call me by my name, say Ms ~~ and then tell me what you want." The child did as requested, "Ms ~~ , can I use those wrinkly things?" as he points to the art closet. Teacher #2 smiled, and in a pleasant voice said, "Yes, you may use them," as she goes to the closet and gets a package of crinkle shredded paper strips, hands them to the child, and tells him, "Let me know when you are done and I will put them away." She then returns to the teacher workstation. The child sits alone at the art table and pastes the paper strips onto construction paper (FI, 4-26).

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From the child's perspective, this teacher was communicating that she is not a teacher, or at least did not want to be referred to that way. As the children were trying to make meaning of their classroom experience, especially who the adults were and expectations for their interactions with these adults, it was confusing to them to be told that someone who they presumed to be a teacher was not. They may be questioning this person's role and responsibilities in the classroom, as well as feeling confused about their own role and expectations in relation to other adults presumed to be teachers.

What Does A Teacher Do?

In addition to not knowing whom the classroom teachers were, it may not have been clear to the children what it means to be a teacher.

> A teacher who, a few months previously had been a full-time teacher in this room, and had transferred to another room, came in to visit with some of the children during free play. One child got some markers off the desk at the teacher workstation, and was walking toward the art area. This visiting teacher said, "I don't think you are supposed to do that, are you supposed to get those?"   The child shrugged his shoulders and continued walking to the art area, sits and uses the markers (FI, 4-30).

Even though this teacher had been one of the full-time teachers in this classroom until about a month ago, she was not sure of current expectations. But, the child may have perceived her as a teacher who did not know about classroom procedures. This lack of consistency in behavior of teachers was also evident in the way different teachers responded to the same child. In the vignette cited previously in the section about classroom atmosphere, a part-time teacher responded by trying to control the child, force him to apologize, and threaten to report to his mother. In contrast, the full-time teacher

responded with support to engage the child in an activity. This great difference in teacher behavior would be confusing to the child about what it means to be a teacher, just what a teacher does, or expectations for interactions with someone who is a teacher. The differences among teachers were observed in a variety of situations, as in this example.

> Just before snack time, teachers #1 (new full-time teachers) and # 4 (old part-time teacher) had been walking around the room, observing children and commenting on inappropriate behavior. When it was time for snack, their comments were limited to directing the children, like, "Go to the lunch table,… eat your food, this isn't the time for talking…take your plate and trash to the cart…go use the bathroom…go play." In contrast, at this same time teacher #20 (new part-time teacher), had been sitting with the children in blocks and housekeeping and playing with them. When the other teacher announced snack time, teacher #20 encouraged the children to go with her to the snack table, she sat with the children and had conversations with them, then after snack she returned to blocks with the children and continued playing with them. (FI, 4-15)

Through these interactions, the children are learning about the teachers. The lead teacher talked about how "the teachers make themselves known [to the children]" (SSA-T #3, p. 12). This happens in the process of how teachers introduce themselves to the children, and how they interact with the children in a variety of activities and routines throughout the day. As illustrated in the previous vignette in this section, the teacher interrupting the child to explain how he needed to address her, the teacher was making herself known as someone who will assist the children in getting materials, but does not engage in the activity with them. Although this teacher did not engage in the child-initiated activity, she did at times invite the children to join her for teacher-led activities.

> Teacher #1 enthusiastically leads the exercises and encourages the children to try different movements. There are many smiles on the faces of the teacher and children, and much energetic movement to the various exercises. Teachers #2 and

#21 are in a different part of the room, seem to be doing something at the teachers' desk area. After the exercises, children are told, "Okay, you can go play for awhile." (FI, 4-16)

As the teachers were making themselves known, the children received many inconsistent messages about what a teacher does. These messages about teachers included: some teachers get materials, but do not engage in child-initiated play; some are focused on rule enforcement and others are more of a play partner in activities; individual teachers may invite children to participate in teacher-initiated activities, but not participate in child-initiated activities; activities are led by one teacher, while other teachers do other things, and that participation in individual group activities is not valued by all teachers. Children are learning about who wants to interact with them.

Hey Lady, Do You Want To Play?

There were a variety of ways in which the children expressed a desire for teachers to spend more time interacting with them. Some easily invited adults to join them.

As I walked in the classroom and was putting my materials away in the cabinet near the door, children #2 and #24 who were in the block area near the door, called out to me, "Hey lady, do you want to play?" I said that I would be right there, and joined them after checking in with the teachers in the room. I asked the boys about what they were doing in blocks, and they proceeded to enthusiastically tell about having used the blocks to make tall buildings that were on fire, and they were the fire fighters putting out the fire. There were three teachers in the classroom at this time – one was seated at the teacher work station near the block area, one was seated in a child chair on the other side of the room, looking toward the children at the art table (about six feet from her), and the other teacher was walking around the room, looking at what the children were doing, and reminding them of rules, but not engaging in the activity with them. (FI, 4-30)

In a child interview, child (#2) who had asked me to play in the previous vignette, indicated that he did not think of the teachers as play partners. When asked what he likes to play with at the center, he said, "Art and blocks." For the follow-up question about which teacher he likes to do that with, his response was, "I don't play with the teachers very much." When asked which teacher he likes to play with on the playground, his response was, "No, they don't play, I would like for them to play." This same child did identify the three full-time teachers as teachers he likes to read books with (SIC #2). Another indication of how much the children want teachers to engage as play partners, is illustrated in the following vignette.

> During the afternoon free play, child #23 called me to the art and writing table to show me what he was drawing. Child #2 and child #24 were also at the table, and showed me their drawings, and that they were coloring their fingernails with markers. Child #23 asked if I would read a book to him, and I explained that I needed to go talk with someone (had a parent interview scheduled), but that I would be back tomorrow. Child #2 said, "Are you going to play with us again?" I said that I would because I enjoyed playing with them; and asked what kinds of things they would like to play tomorrow when I came back. Child #2 said, "Everything." I asked which they most liked for me to do with them – to read books or play with Duplos or do things with playdough or build with blocks. All three boys said they liked for me to do all of these things with them. As I left they said, "Come back tomorrow." I told them that I would look forward to seeing them tomorrow (FI – 4-29).

For these three children, it seemed to be fairly easy for them to ask other children, as well as adults, to play with them, especially if they perceive that adult as being interested in interacting with them. Other children do not express their needs and interests as easily, so these children especially need teachers who express interest in them and initiate interactions with them. Documentation from the Teacher-Child Interaction Scale

indicated that there was a minimal amount of play interaction, or mutual engagement of

teachers and children in activities. All classroom observations indicated that most of the

days were spent in free play, so there were many opportunities for interactions, but those

experiences were not happening for the children.

Don't Leave, Please Stay

For some children, it is especially important that the teacher initiate the

interactions. Even though the child may want those connections, he or she may not know

how, or may not feel comfortable asking for the teacher to spend time doing something

together. There was a lot of evidence of children wanting more connections with

teachers, but not many of these connections were happening. It is easier for children to

ask for more interactions when the teacher has expressed interest in and developed a

basic relationship with the child, as demonstrated in the following vignette.

> In the afternoon on the playground, I walked up the steps of the climber to the platform and sat with two girls (#19 and #26), asking about what they had been doing, and whether there was something they might like for me to do with them. Child #26 sat quietly, and child #19 talked about what the three of us had previously been doing with playdough inside – making different sizes and shapes of snakes and flat pieces of dough with various tools to make designs. Then, child #19 said that she was going to the swings (one had just opened up), and that she wanted us to watch how high she could go. This conversation had been a few minutes, but child #26 sat quietly, not participating in the conversation, and I thought she might just want some quiet time alone. I asked whether she would like for us to do something together, and she shook her head no. I started to get up to leave, explaining that I was going to go see what some of the other children were doing. As I did this, she reached out and touched my hand, saying, "Don't go, please stay." As we sat together, I asked whether there was something she wanted to talk about, and she shook her head, 'no'. I talked about some of the things there were to do on the playground, and how child #19 who had previously been with us, was swinging very high on the swings. After a long pause, she asked, "Could we walk around and see what there is?" We did, and she cautiously tried using some of the equipment and materials. (FI, 4-30)

This child clearly wanted a connection and interaction, but that needed to be

initiated by an adult who patiently established a relationship based on an interest in the

child as an individual, and support of what was meaningful to the child. Other kinds of

expressions of the desire or need for connections with teachers include the following -

the hesitation of the child in the above vignette is in contrast to a child who very easily

expressed his desire for a connection - as I walked into the classroom and stood at the

door, child #13 walked up to me with a big smile and wrapped both of his arms around

my legs in a big hug (FI, 4-26), and another child was very responsive to my initiating a

connection when he was sad, as illustrated in the following vignette.

> Child #23 was sitting beside the door with his head down and tears in his eyes. I
> asked him what was wrong and he said that he wanted to see his mom. I explained
> that his mom couldn't come to see him now, but that I would help him write a
> letter to his mom if he would like that. He nodded and walked with me to the
> writing area. I got a piece of paper and a pen and asked what he wanted to say in
> the letter. He said that he wanted to write to his brother. When I asked what he
> wanted to write in his letter, he got the book, Chicka Chicka Boom Boom (about
> the alphabet), saying, "Here are some letters we can write" (FI, 4-29).

This interaction was not only important for building a positive relationship with

this child, but was an example of how these interactions provide opportunities for

learning about this child. My comment about a letter was related to a note, but his

comment about a letter referred to the alphabet, so it was also a teaching-learning

opportunity. This kind of interaction, comforting a sad child, and engaging in a mutual

activity, is very important for building meaningful relationships, as indicated below.

> The last day in the classroom, I was spending a few minutes with individual
> children, thanking them for letting me be in their classroom, and saying goodbye.

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> As I walked out of the classroom the last time, child #23 followed me to the door, and said, "Ms. ~~, will you read me one more book?" I explained that I needed to leave now, that someone was waiting to give me a ride, and I encouraged him to ask another teacher to read to him. He silently and slowly shook his head 'no'. I walked back in the room with him and helped him get connected with a teacher who sometimes read with the children (FI, 5 -10).

While this child did enjoy reading and talking about books, this request seemed to be more that he was asking for a connection, to spend time together doing something. Some parents had expressed concern that their children were not comfortable or connected in the classroom. Part of their concern was that they felt that the teachers had noticed that the children were not connected. When a parent arrived to pick up her daughter, she observed, "I saw the kids playing and she was kind of in the corner, kind of close to the door, like I want to get out… and she's just sit down, waiting and waiting [for me to come get her]" (SSA-M #26, p.8). Or, another parent explained their experience when her daughter first enrolled in the classroom. "None of them [teachers] … when we first came here, no one talked to us, no one said anything to child #25. I thought that they didn't even recognize her being there at all. That was probably one of the hard things" (SSA-M #25, p 25).

These examples reflect a general desire by parents and children for closer teacher-child connections. In addition, a specific reason for closer connections is that the children will feel that they have someone to talk to when they are upset about something.

> During naptime, after asking child #2 if he would like to have his back rubbed, and he said yes, I sat on the floor beside him and started rubbing his back. He soon closed his eyes and seemed to be going off to sleep, when he said, "Why doesn't (child #10) like me?" I asked what (child #10) did that made this child think that he didn't like him. (Child #2) said, "Sometimes I want to play with him

and he won't play with me, I want to do things with him and he goes away." We discussed this briefly as he went to sleep. (FI, 5-3).

Although close connections with teachers could facilitate development and learning for the children, as well as facilitating closer connections among the children, the teacher-child relationships were generally not close. The Student-Teacher Relationship Scale provided the teacher's perspective about whether their relationships with each child were characterized by conflict, closeness, or dependency. Although this is not the child's perspective, the teacher's perception of the relationship with the child would influence the interactions, which in turn, would affect the child's experience in the classroom. Some of these results are reported in the section on the teacher perspective, but it will be insightful to consider some of the individual relationships between teachers and children. Each of the three full-time teachers completed questionnaires on twenty-four children. Of these seventy-two individual teacher-child relationships represented, seven of them were considered to be overall positive relationships, and twenty-four were considered to be of concern. The twenty-four relationships of concern represented twelve children, for four of these children all three full-time teachers reported an overall relationship of concern with the child. For the other eight children in relationships of concern, at least one teacher had a more positive relationship with those children. This pattern of relationships does not reflect the kinds of connections the children expressed a desire for in the above documentation.

Summary of Objective 3 – B: Child Perspective

Because these children are in military families, they are experiencing a lot of change at home, the parents are assigned to different bases and can be deployed for several days up to several months. This situation is especially difficult, with less home consistency for single-parent homes, or homes in which both parents are active-duty military. Most of the children in this classroom spend more time with the teachers than with their families, with some being at the center from 6:00 am until 6:00 pm.

When there are a lot of changes in teachers, this additional lack of consistency can be stressful. During the research period of five weeks during April and May, there were 22 teachers in this classroom, with additional major changes previously throughout the program year. The children did not seem to understand who the teachers were, or what a teacher does. This confusion stemmed from teachers referring to themselves in various ways, as a friend or visitor, or even telling the children not to call them teacher. In addition, there was great variation in teacher-child interaction, so there was not a clear expectation of behavior for those in the role for teachers.

There were many statements by the children, as well as the parents, that indicated a strong desire for a closer teacher-child relationship. The desire was for teachers to be interested in the children and engaged in various activities, as well as to be available when children were upset about something. There were great individual differences in the children's abilities to request teacher connections. The Student Teacher Relationship Scale results indicated that several of the relationships in this classroom are categorized as conflictual, with only a few categorized as close.

Objective 3 – C: Parent Perspective

Objective 3: To describe the classroom experience from the perspective of those engaged in the early childhood program when there are changes in adults in the role of teacher.

Question C: When there are changes in adults in the role of teacher, how do the parents perceive the classroom experience for themselves, their children, and the teachers?

Preunderstandings

1. All parents were invited to participate in the interview, those actually interviewed were the mother or father who typically drops off and picks up the child, so their perspective is based on their experience of being in this classroom daily for several months. Parents were expected to sign their child in and out each day, so they actually came into the classroom at these times.

2. When invited to participate in the interview, all parents expressed a very positive attitude or appreciation for the opportunity to discuss their experience of having a child in this classroom.

3. All families were connected with the U. S. Army, and beyond this common thread, there was much diversity. In some families, one parent was active duty, for some both parents were active duty; and there were a variety of single, married, divorced, and blended families. There is much ethnic diversity within and among the families, and one family in which neither parent is a U. S. citizen.

Generation of Themes

Analysis of the parents' perspective is based on information basically from three sources: the schedule documenting teacher change (SCH), field notes (FI), and the semi-structured interview for adults (parent) (SSA; M=mother, F=father). Of the 25 children in this classroom, 17 parent interviews were completed. Four other parents had expressed interest in and willingness to do the interview, but they were not able to schedule a time to complete the interview. There was one exception, one mother did not want her child or herself to participate in a research project in any way. Some interviews were mother only, some father only, some mother and father, and for a few the child was present, as requested by the parent.

The themes from the parent perspective are about the parent's connections with the program - and their perception of their child's connection with the program. This included a desire that parents and teachers recognize one another and know names; and that parents understand what is done in the program, as well as teachers being aware of unique characteristics of the children. It also included acknowledgement that teachers have a difficult job, but that parents would like to feel more a part of the program. For this program component, two themes with seven sub-themes emerged. For the theme, Connection to teachers, the sub-themes were: Hello – and what's your name? Do you know who I am? What's my child doing here? Do you know my child has a vivid imagination? For the theme, Child's connection to teachers and other children, the sub-themes were: Interest in and involvement with the child, Being in the Army, and The hardest job in the world.

Hello – And What's Your Name?

    As parents responded to the question about the occurrence of changes in teachers, it was evident that some parents had been aware of a lot of teacher change in this classroom throughout the year, with others having minimal awareness of teacher change. Among those who had been aware of the frequent changes, some were concerned, while others did not consider it to be a problem. Their perception of this was expressed in a variety of ways.

    As one mother discussed her interactions with teachers, she explained that with so many changes in teachers when she wanted to ask a teacher how her son's day had been, that, "Whether it's a new teacher or not, even I have begun to say, 'Okay, what's your name?'" (SSA-M #2, p. 4). Even though some of the teachers may look familiar, there are frequently unfamiliar teachers in the classroom. Officially, there is a team of three full-time teachers assigned to this classroom, but with the variety of changes there were 19 other teachers in this classroom over the five-week observation. The parents were unsure about who would be their child's teachers on a given day. A few months previously, when the lead teacher had to temporarily return to the States, families were notified about this major change in the center newsletter, but there was not information about the ongoing daily changes. "We're not really told …the classroom is getting a new teacher in, they just happen to show up." (SSA-M #14, p. 2) Several parents expressed concern about not knowing who the teachers would be on a daily basis.

> Well, I've kind of noticed that the same teachers aren't there from when he had started, which was just a few months ago… we got a newsletter saying that some emergencies happened, they had to go back to the States. So I was thinking they

would hire someone that would be more stable in the classroom now. 'Cause I really prefer him to be, you know, stable with somebody, you know, where they're not changing so much. Where it's like okay, here's another teacher, here's another teacher." (SSA-M #2, p 2)

Other parents did not feel that there had been much change, but typically did not know the names of the teachers, and did not have much interaction with them. As one father discussed the teacher he would be most likely to talk with about his child, he named a teacher who had been gone from the center for a couple of months, and then referred to another teacher, "I forgot what the lady's name is, but I still see her in the room though." (SSA-F #24, p. 4). Or, "I haven't really gotten to know any teachers in her room, really. But I haven't really noticed a change either, 'cause we're usually in and out" (SSA-M #14, p. 1).

There was a lot of variation in the parent's awareness of changes in teachers, and concern about change when they were aware. The difference was that parents who wanted more of a connection with teachers were more concerned about the frequent changes in teachers, and how that affected their children.

Do You Know Who I Am?

Among the parents, there was a strong thread of feeling that they did not have a meaningful connection with the teachers. This lack of connection was interpreted as, "It seems kind of like really there's not too much care there." (SSA-M #4, p. 10) This lack of connection was related to frequent teacher change.

If I were to get to know the teacher, then the teacher would get to know me and I'd know who to talk to. If I have concerns or worries or whatever the case might be, you know, feeling comfortable to tell them that. But if I don't even know who

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the teacher is, how I'm supposed to do that? I don't know, and that matters to me. It matters how the parents feel or how the kids feel. It's… kind of like meeting in the middle somewhere, either from the teacher or from the parent. Because there is no connection there… that's kind of strange, I find. (SSA-M #4, p. 10)

The meaning of the connection with teachers is reflected in a basic expectation that parents expect the teachers to know which parents and which children go together, but this wasn't always the case. In the late afternoon, between 4:00 and 6:00 the full-time teachers had gone for the day or were taking care of other responsibilities, and a variety of part-time teachers were scheduled in the classroom. This daily time of more frequent teacher change was also the time that parents were coming to pick up their children. As expressed by one mother, "They don't know who I am and I don't know who they are. They are like, 'Are you here to pick up someone, who are you here to pick up?'" (SSA-M #7, p. 9). The parents really wanted to know what kind of day their child had, but the teachers did not know. "In the afternoon…I might ask and they don't know what she's done during the day" (SSA-M #21, p. 11). Being able to talk with a teacher at this pick-up time was especially important to parents, because most of them were quickly in and out of the classroom when they dropped off their children in the morning, but the teachers in the classroom at departure time had not been with the children most of the day.

While many of the parents talked about wanting to know if their children misbehave at the center, they also commented about not wanting the negative information to be all that they heard about their child. They wanted more of a connection with the teachers than just addressing their child's behavior when it was a problem for the teacher. This kind of interaction was observed late one afternoon, as a parent arrived to pick up

her son. "As the mother walked in the door, teacher #4 went to the mother, and without saying hello, said, 'Child #4 was really bad again today, he was hitting and you have to make him stop doing that'" (FI 4-29).

The parents were specific about what would make the connection more meaningful to them. They expressed surprise that throughout the year they had not been invited to meet with the teachers to discuss the classroom program and how their children were doing in the program. "I would like to have a teacher meeting at least twice a year" (SSA-M #4, p. 10). Or, "I do wish they would talk to me a little bit more…. I wish that could happen" (SSA-M #20, p. 6). Parents also indicated that it would be meaningful to have the kind of relationship in which teachers could be supportive in times of stress in the family, but did not feel they had a connection within which personal information could be comfortably shared. A mother who is active-duty military, with at least a ten-hour work-day, had recently been separated from her husband and he is now away on a dangerous deployment, but she has not shared this information with the classroom teachers (SSA-M #6, p. 5).

Parents discussed a variety of reasons for wanting more of a connection with teachers. This included wanting teachers to know which child was theirs, and to be able to share some positive information about the child's day; to have conferences or regularly discuss how their child was doing developmentally; as well as having the kind of relationship in which they felt comfortable sharing some personal information for which the teacher could be supportive of the child and family.

What Is My Child Doing Here?

Changes in teachers was linked to classroom curriculum and activities. Most parents expressed concern that either they did not know what was happening in their child's classroom, or there were concerns about what they observed. This was related to not feeling connected to a teacher with whom they could discuss these things, and feeling that different teachers were not consistent in implementing the intended program.

This concern was especially strong for parents who dropped off their child early in the morning, before 7:00 and did not pick up the child until after 5:00. So, the early children were combined in a classroom until 8:00 when the preschoolers moved to their regular classroom. The lead teacher came in at 8:00 and left at 4:00. Parents who talked about feeling connected to or comfortable with a specific teacher named either the early morning teacher or lead teacher, one of whom left at 2:00 and the other left at 4:00. This lack of connection with a particular teacher made a difference in parent's perception of meaningful sharing of information about their child. There were two kinds of desired information discussed by parents, understanding about the curriculum and activities, and wanting end-of-day information about unique things their child had done, as well as routines, like eating and napping.

There was a concern or confusion expressed by parents, that they had the understanding that the teachers were not allowed to teach (SSA-M #14, p. 3; SSA-M #21, p. 13; SSA-M #22, p. 11). "I really don't know what she (daughter) does,… I'm pretty sure they don't do numbers and the alphabet and stuff like that… it's more like she's just playing all day, or doing art work" (SSA-M #14, p. 3). Or, "You ask your child what they

did, 'Oh, I played'". (SSA-M #15, p. 1). While these parents' genuine concern is acknowledged, these responses also indicate that the parents had not been informed about the value of and process of children learning through play. In addition to parent questions about general curriculum or classroom activities, there were concerns about consistency in these activities when there were changes in teachers.

> I think it's not consistent, some days someone's in there, they might decide to do it [lesson plan]. Another – maybe thinks oh, well, I didn't do the lesson plan, I'm not going to do that. I think she [daughter] senses that. Perhaps she realizes that so-and-so doesn't do art, so maybe we're not gonna do art. Or, someone coming in and didn't know that's what we were supposed to do. (SSA-M #9, p. 3)

Related to the curricular activities, and the teacher's awareness of the children's skills, interests, and needs; the parents expressed a strong interest in hearing more about the special things their child did throughout the day.

> For parents, you feel like kind of cheated out, that you would not be in there the whole day. You cannot see everything. And then, he's doing something new maybe…and you don't know about it. I understand too that just one teacher can't know about everything….But, if you've got questions, it's kind of hard sometimes to find the right person to talk to. I know there is the primary caretaker… they are not there the whole time. (SSA-M #23, p. 9)

The parents had many questions about the program in this classroom, whether there was a curriculum, and if so, what was involved. Several parents had the impression that teachers were not allowed to teach specific knowledge or skills. Especially with frequent teacher change, the parents did not know which teacher to ask about what their child did during the day, or what was in the lesson plan.

Do You Know My Child Has a Vivid Imagination?

Related to parents wanting to know more about what their children were doing in the classroom, they discussed the importance of the teachers being aware of their children's unique skills, interests and needs. They expressed concern that when there are changes in teachers, that not all teachers know these special things about their child. The parents had a strong desire for the teachers to know the children and parents as individuals in order to be most effective as teachers, as well as providing a generally supportive environment for their children during the day.

One mother talked about some of these things that impressed her about her child, "He's got a very vivid imagination, he'll go and play all day and just make up things, he's a scuba diver or whatever" (SSA-M #2, p. 5). Or, children have special needs during the day, some really need a nap, but may need help getting to sleep. Due to the nature of the work on this military base, some parents have to be at work by 6:00 am. A mother explained that she drops her daughter off about 5:45 am, and that she really needs a nap after lunch. But, based on conversations with her daughter, "She can't go to sleep because her friends wake her up and she wants her backpack"(to get her blanket, but she feels that this is not allowed by the teachers) (SSA-M #20, p 5). Another parent talked about how new teachers do not consistently implement classroom procedures.

> I told them to make sure she uses the bathroom before she lays down. They said she did….But I don't know….I came early to pick child #7 up and she was still napping and she had wet herself. I told the lady she was wet and so she went to look at her, and I went to get my other child from the other room. When I came back, she had child #7 in the bathroom, and she was trying to change herself but she was still sleepy and she was having a hard time.And so I was like, are you gonna help her or (shrugs shoulders), like the lady wasn't gonna help. I don't

know if they make them do it theirselves or what. She said, "Well, no, I'm normally- I'm not used to, um, I'm not used to doing this." I said, "Oh, you don't work here?" She said, "Yes, but I'm just normally used to the infants." That stood out in my mind, 'cause I knew I had never seen her before. It affected me more than I think. I was thinking like why aren't you helping her, you know. No, you're sitting there and looking at her struggling and you're just sitting there. I'm thinking well, is it like this all day. You know, if you do that in front of me, what will you be doing if I'm not around. (SSA-M #7, p. 2 & 8)

Children's special needs are also related to the cultural diversity of the families. When there was frequent teacher change, it was difficult for all teachers to be familiar with the needs of all the children. As illustrated in the following example, this situation can be challenging for the children, as well as the parents.

In one family, the mother was German, they lived in a nearby German town, and the child's first language was German. Both parents explained that he had a difficult transition to the Child Development Center (CDC) full-time classroom, that he loved the German kindergarten he had been going to, and had seemed comfortable with the hourly care at CDC. The mother had started working full-time and needed to have him in full-day care. Their son had started saying, "I don't want to go no more. I want to go back to the German kindergarten." The mother added, "The language thing was a part for him too, was really hard. With the English, he understands some things, but he didn't want to talk really. He would say something in German…the other kids didn't understand him… it was hard on him… he started wetting the bed." It meant a lot to these parents that one teacher was sensitive to their son's needs, "Teacher #1, she really took care of him, hugged him too and, told him it's okay." They also expressed concern that many other teachers seemed unaware of his needs. (SSA-M & F #23, p. 2-3)

One of the ways the lack of close connections with teachers affected the families was that parents did not feel the teachers were aware of the unique characteristics or special needs of the children. This was important to the parents because they wanted to know that their children were being supported in both of these ways. With frequent teacher change, parents did not know who to tell these things about their child.

Interest In And Involvement With The Child

Related to parent comments about their own connections with the teachers, the

parents also discussed their children's connections with the teachers and other children.

The parents were aware of changes in their children's behavior when there were teacher

changes, especially when teachers the children liked most were not there.

> I do notice when she changes teachers that her attitude towards school is not as
> good as it is when she gets used to teachers being there. She has gotten attached to
> a couple teachers and they went on leave for emergencies, and we had some
> teachers filling in. But otherwise I think she's doing good with the teachers when
> she gets used to them. (SSA-M #25, p. 1)

When asked which teachers the children seemed most attached to, of the parents

who discussed this, each named one or two of the three full-time teachers or two part-

time teachers. For the teachers identified as having a more attached relationship with the

children, all had spent more time in this classroom, but also the parents talked about the

importance of specific teacher behaviors with the individual child. These behaviors were

typically described in terms of acknowledging the child's presence, especially at arrival,

as well as demonstrating interest in who the child was, and what he or she was doing.

When parents were dropping their children off early and they had a long work

day, it meant a lot to them to know that their child would be comfortable in this setting.

One teacher knew that a child was dropped off at 6:00 in the morning and will not be

picked up until 6:00 pm, and "would let her go back to sleep if she wanted to…" (SSA-M

#1, p. 8). There was a general belief that the impact of the changes in teachers for

children "depends on how close the teacher and the child is." (SSA-M #7, p. 4) "If a

caregiver leaves that a child really has a bond with, then that's gonna definitely affect the child in a bad kind of way" (SSA-M #9, p. 8). When discussing the kind of teacher-child relationship she would like for her daughter to have, a mother described a teacher who had left the classroom a couple of months previously. "She always made sure that she approached and greeted the children there, you know, made them feel welcome, that they were part of that class and someone special" (SSA-M #19, p. 3). In the following vignette, a parent described her daughter's experience when a teacher-child connection was not evident.

> When she first started here she didn't know any kids, she was very shy and I don't really think she did much, because… she wasn't too interested at all in coming. And she peed in her pants a couple times because she didn't know to tell a teacher to come into the building. She was outside. She just didn't know how things worked… so it was kind of hard for her to learn… they [late afternoon teachers on the playground] didn't seem to know that she was new. (SSA-M #25, p. 6)

Related to the importance of teacher-child relationships, parents also talked about the importance of relationships among the children, which can have positive or negative effects. One perspective is that consistent friendships among the children could minimize the negative effects of changes in teachers. "It doesn't matter so much who the teacher is, the kids make friends and kind of take care of each other" (SSA-F #14, p. 3). In contrast, some of the relationships among children are not positive. A mother reported her daughter's comment, "Mommy the kids get on my nerves" (SSA-M #1, p.1).

The parents discussed a variety of ways the teacher-child and child-child relationships affect the child's experience in the classroom. Because the children spend so many hours each day in the classroom, it was especially important to the parents to

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feel that their children were being well cared for by the teachers. A concern was that

teacher change had resulted in less program consistency and less appropriate classroom

behavior, that it felt very chaotic, especially in the afternoon when there were more

frequent changes in teachers, and this had a negative effect on the children.

Being In The Army

Army life for active-duty military families with young children has quite

variable meanings for individual families. A father commented on the positive aspects of

this lifestyle, "The good thing about being in the Army… you go places" (SSA-F #24, p.

6). When asked about whether teacher changes were a concern, given other changes like

moving or deployment, or whether children become accustomed to change in their lives,

both parents of one child indicated that change was just part of life in the military.

> The father explained, "Yeah, I grew up in military, all my life," and his wife
> concurred, "I feel that way." Then she added that everyone in their family was
> outgoing and was comfortable in various situations, that effects of change could
> depend on individual children. "I can see that it would affect the child if that child
> is really not an outgoing child, where she's more like attached to a teacher, or he
> or she is like real shy and doesn't know how to get out there into a group." The
> father agreed with this, explaining about their daughter, "She don't run straight to
> the teacher, she goes and plays with the kids. (SSA-M & F #14, p, 4)

Childcare that is dependable and perceived as comfortable for the child is a high

priority for parents. A mother who is active-duty and has long work days, described her

situation. "I am a soldier, but I work with… some males that are not sympathetic to what

a woman's job is when she's a mother" (SSA-M #6, p. 2). Due to her work situation, it

was especially important to her to feel that her son was in a good child care program. "I

think they're (teachers #2 & 20) making a big positive impact on his life. I'm happy, because it's not so hard for me to leave him…" (SSA-M #6, p. 2 & 8).

For these parents who had chosen a military career, there were advantages and disadvantages with this lifestyle. But, they all depended on the Child Development Center to provide dependable, quality care for their children. There was a belief that children who were less connected with other children would be more affected by teacher change, especially if they had a relationship with the teacher.

It's The Hardest Job In The World

Throughout the documentation, there are indications that parents believed the effects of teacher change depended on the individual teacher. There was a clear sentiment that parents believe the teachers were working hard, and that some of the classroom teachers demonstrated interest in and were responsive to the children, while others were disengaged and seemed to be just putting in their time. The challenge of being an effective teacher was creatively expressed by a parent as, "It doesn't take a genius to be a childcare giver, but it is the hardest job in the world." (SSA-M #22, p. 17).

The variability in teacher involvement with the children was described in terms of teacher-parent interactions, as well as parents sharing comments made by their children about specific teachers. When asked about the effects of teacher change on the children, a mother responded,

> It does affect them, their attitudes change. You get teachers that are just there for the money, they're not there for the kids. That makes a big difference…. They're not as caring and they don't do as much with the children, and they don't interact with them, and I think that makes it more difficult for the child, because the child knows that they're not really there if they need them…. (SSA-M #15, p. 1)

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When teachers were more involved with the children, parents observed a greater impact on the child when that teacher was no longer in the classroom. A parent explained her daughter's reaction when a favorite teacher was away for a couple of weeks on emergency leave.

> She [daughter] goes straight to her in the morning, gives her a hug, so I think that's her most favorite [teacher]. When that teacher was gone, she wasn't interested in coming at all and would say she didn't want to go to school today... Since (teacher #2) is back, she wants to go every day, on the weekends, all the time she wants to come to school. She's very happy about it. (SSA-M #25, p. 2)

Parents acknowledged that some teachers worked hard and tried to do a lot with the children, but that others were uninvolved with the children. Parents seemed to be more concerned about what individual teachers were or were not doing with the children, that is, the teacher-child interaction, rather than the concern focusing on whether there had been a change in teachers.

Summary of Objective 3 – C: Parent Perspective

The parents discussed issues related to their own and their child's connections in the classroom. This included a desire for closer parent-teacher relationships, to know who is caring for their child and to have more of a mutual sharing relationship with the teacher. They wanted the teachers to know who their children were as individuals, and wanted to know what their children were doing during the day. One of the challenges for parents was that at the end of the day when they were picking up their children, part-time teachers were in the classroom and did not know much about the children.

In discussing life in the military, the parents acknowledged a variety of challenges with rotations to different bases, deployment that can be several days to several months, the unique challenges of single parents and dual-military families, and typically ten- to twelve-hour workdays. Because of this, the parents depended on the Child Development Center to provide good quality care for their children. The parents recognized that the teachers have challenging jobs, and that there is variability in the teacher's dedication to and effectiveness in working with individual children. Because of the differences in teachers, the parents felt that teacher effectiveness was a greater concern than teacher change.

<div align="center">Objective 3 – D: Administrator Perspective</div>

Objective 3: To describe the classroom experience from the perspective of those engaged in the early childhood program when there are changes in teachers.

Question D: When there are changes in teachers, how do the administrators, the directors and trainers, perceive the classroom experience?

<div align="center">*Preunderstandings*</div>

1. This Child Development Center has three full-time administrators – center director, assistant director, and trainer.

2. Of the three administrators, two of them have been involved in the Military Child Development Program, although not this center, for at least eight years; the third one has been involved for less than a year.

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3. All three administrators expressed much interest in and support of this
   research project, facilitating the project by providing office space and access
   to people and materials.

Generation of Themes

Analysis of the administrators' perspective represents information basically from three sources: the schedule documenting teacher change (SCH), field notes (FI), and the semi-structured interview for adults (administrator) (SSA-A).

The themes generated for this research question are about the classroom experience from the perspective of the three administrators: the director, the assistant director, and the trainer. This information included the challenges of continually hiring and training new teachers, and dealing with the effects of teacher change on the children and parents. For this program component, the following eight themes emerged: Help wanted, Just a babysitting gig, You fill them up with so much information and then they quit, Helping children with the constant rotation of significant people in their lives, We need to support children when there is teacher change, It takes time to get to know the children, Parent connections with the program, and It's an ongoing constant challenge.

Help Wanted

 The strongest themes among administrators were related to the challenges of continually hiring and training teachers. In the hiring process, there were three categories of teachers: "flexible on-call (flex), permanent part-time, and permanent full-time" (SSA-A #3, p. 1). The following reasons were given for the frequent teacher change.

> We've had a lot of turnover, and we anticipate a lot of turnover in the next six months [for rotations]… At this base, soldiers are frequently deployed…. the stress that it puts on everybody, all the people in the staff, on the children, on the parents… it's constant change in the military. (SSA-A #3, p. 9)

> The teachers are spouses of the soldiers, and they are rotated frequently. So I'm trying to hire now to be ready for that turnover, so these people will be on board and be comfortable when the skilled people leave. About half the people on any given [monthly] list of six to ten people will accept a position….It's kind of hiring any warm body that walks through the door. (SSA-A #3, p. 6)

> If they have a bachelor's degree, they usually don't stay very long…. we get young mothers,… eager to learn. They want to know how to be a good mom and are really interested in the training… All too often it becomes overwhelming for them to deal with a young child and then come to the center and deal with the children all day, and it's very stressful for them. (SSA-A #1, p. 2)

In addition to teachers leaving the Center because their spouses are rotated to another base, general teacher retention is a challenge. "A lot of effort on the military side is trying to figure out how to keep the good employees. Not only just for the normal rotation but, for job opportunities in the community that would take them away, perhaps pay more" (SSA-A #1, p. 6).

One of the challenges for administrators in dealing with daily changes in teachers is working out the schedule. The person who had this responsibility talked about it not being very fulfilling, or what she expected to be doing with a degree in early childhood education. She explained how decisions were made about which teachers would be in which classrooms daily.

> There are so many daily changes with teachers sick, taking personal leave days, being in the States or someplace else on emergency leave, or quitting without much notice, most of my day every day I spend working on and changing the schedule. A lot of it is just who is available to go in a classroom that needs another person. (FI, 4-29)

Of the three administrators in this program, one started her position eight weeks previously (SSA-A #2, p.1), and another started her position eight months previously. The high administrative turnover was also related to teachers not feeling connected within the program, and the challenges of teacher retention.

> It [teacher change] comes even into play when you look at administrators leaving programs… not staying consistent in management positions either. It's just constant flux in and out. And so there's no consistency in philosophies and practices and not building really long-term relationships with caregivers and really getting to know them as people. Having a program so large and not having the time and energy to really know about [teachers], where is she from and what does she want to do with her life. And making people feel like they're really part of a community and part of a family here. (SSA-A #1, p. 14)

The administrators spend much of their time and effort in hiring and scheduling teachers, to manage the frequent teacher change. There is also frequent change in administrators, which contributes to challenges with teacher retention, and thus, increased need for administrators to focus on hiring and training procedures.

They Think It's Just A Babysitting Gig

An outcome of needing to frequently hire teachers from an applicant pool with minimal background in early childhood education, results in lowered expectations (warm bodies) by administrators, challenges for trainers, and unrealistic expectations on the part of the newly hired teachers.

> I think that a lot of them [teachers] come into it thinking it's just a babysitting gig, or thinking it's easy money, just play with the kids all day. And they don't understand until they get into the position…our expectations of them are really high. Some just quite frankly aren't willing to put that much effort into it. It's not that meaningful to them. (SSA-A #1, p. 7)

I don't see very much of that [individualizing development] happening. I see a lot of kind of feeling like they're just filling in as a warm body. And they've actually been told…that we just hire for warm bodies. We're just hiring to get enough people to cover, so they don't really have expectations of themselves. Most of our flexes, they're hired based on the fact that they have a high school diploma and they're eighteen years of age, and not that they have any formal background or any informal background dealing with children. So most of them don't really understand child development. (SSA-A #2, p. 3)

Some of the newly hired teachers, without an early childhood background, embrace this professional opportunity and become very good teachers. However, the administrators have demands on their time and energy to work with other teachers who have potential, but are more challenging, as illustrated in the following example.

You get the parents coming to tell me why is there someone new in my child's room again. Or this new person you put in the room is swinging from the light fixtures. How could you put them in there? That happened once. And when the kids were napping he [teacher] crawled into the gross motor room and he took a nap…. the assistant director came and got me and said come here, come here, you've got to look. Look at him. He made a nest and he went inside it. So you get these people that - I don't know what they think. But haven't figured out how to weed them out yet [in interviews]. (SSA-A #3, p.7)

The high level of teacher change and some misunderstandings about what it means to be a teacher creates an ongoing need to train many teachers, to help them have more realistic expectations about what it means to be a teacher. "When I'm orientating new people to the program, I let them know up front that this is a very difficult job and that it can be very stressful, and it's not for everybody" (SSA-A #1, p. 3).

They have that kind of vague understanding that, I should be able to deal with this, it's just children. And if they've never had the dynamics of so many, it makes them get short with the children, or they wind up doing things they regret.

And it's just because…as much training as we try to give them, they're just really not prepared for it. (SSA-A #1, p. 3)

From the administrator's perspective, the classroom experience is affected by unrealistic low expectations by teachers, which is related to their life situations. The administrators discussed the link between family stresses, teachers who apply for a job they think will be easy, and the effects of the resulting teacher attitude at work.

With life situations, stresses on them, in the home, with their husband being deployed, being cut off from their family, being young, a young mother, really adds to a lot of problems with them coming here and working with the children. (SSA-A #1, p. 3)

Sometimes with the attitude, okay, I've started here, I'm enthusiastic, and now I'm burned out and I'm not enthusiastic any more. And that attitude can permeate the whole center. Or, one staff member having a hard day because her husband is deployed to Kosovo, and that can get all the way around too. And it's so hard to bring that back up, because it's gonna change tomorrow, because tomorrow somebody else will quit, or somebody else will come in and be enthusiastic and wake this person up. (SSA-A #3, p. 9)

After teachers are hired, the administrators have the challenge of helping the new teachers have realistic expectations of what it means to be a teacher, that it is hard work. This early childhood education goal is balanced with the understanding that teachers are in military families, and they experience stress related to being away from extended family, as well as having spouses deployed to possibly dangerous areas. This is related to teacher expectations because the stress of discovering how hard it is to be a teacher is exacerbated by family stress. The on-site training addresses some of the teacher stress.

You Fill Them Up With So Much Information and Then They Quit

The high rate of teacher change, especially job turnover and position turnover throughout the center, resulted in on-going challenges for the program trainer to support the teachers. "The majority of the people that I'm required to train, a lot of the caregivers come in and this is the only job on the base that they can get" (SSA-A #1, p. 2). The need to provide support and training to new teachers happened so often that for the administrators, it became more of a routine and less individualized for the teachers.

> Having new…caregivers coming in on a weekly basis, and trying to train them and having them, turn around and leave, maybe two, three months down the road…. It's a frustration for me. You spend so much time and energy trying to get them off on a good start and, you fill them up with so much information, and then they turn around and realize this isn't for them, or they're not getting paid enough or it's just too stressful and they quit. (SSA-A #1, p. 1)

> Sometimes as administrators, we almost get a hardened heart, to new people, because we see them so often. Just one more new person….It's not hey, we have Jackie starting on Monday and this is what she's about and this is her background. It's just like we have another body in the building. Can you train her? You know, not who is she, where did she come from. You know, none of that is important or relevant. It's just another…person to train. (SSA-A #1, p. 14)

Due to the frequency of changes in teachers, the responsibilities of the trainer are extensive. At this military facility, there are typically two trainers, one to work with teachers in the center and one to work with family-home child care (FCC) providers. But, the trainer position for the FCC programs was vacant, so this center-based trainer was expected to cover those programs as well. "I have seventy some-odd people that I'm responsible for their training right now, so that's a huge responsibility" (SSA-A #1, p. 2).

Even though the continual process of hiring and training new teachers is challenging, all of the administrators excitedly talked about the teachers who come in without an early childhood background, and become effective teachers.

> The success stories are the people that come in and genuinely have a love for children, who take it with a light heart and are fun and playful, and don't have that need to control, aren't needing to be in power over the children… The children naturally gravitate towards these people who are just lovable and caring. Those are the people that stay for many years and are successful. (SSA-A #1, p. 13)

The administrators believed that the teachers who became most successful had inherent personal characteristics that were important for making connections with the children. "I don't know if that's a trainable thing. I come to management saying, 'I just don't think this person is trainable. I think it's not the time and energy that's gonna go into it, their heart's not in it'" (SSA-A #1, p. 13). Another administrator concurred with this belief about whether some core teacher characteristics can effectively be part of the training process. "I don't think so. I think there's some people that they might be able to write it down in papers, they might be able to tell you that, but to actually do it, some of them can't. And I don't know why that is" (SSA-A #3, p. 3). "I haven't figured out how to get at that in an interview either. Some of them will have the best of intentions,…but they can't make that connection when they get in the room" (SSA-A #3, p. 4). An administrator had thought about how to use the training process more effectively to minimize changes in teachers.

> I'm looking at what's causing that [teacher change]. If these people are quitting so soon after beginning, then they're not getting something in the training piece they need to be successful…. They are not getting some introductory piece, some

important information to help them make those connections, be comfortable in the job, and stay with us. Because unfortunately a lot of people are here as a job, they're not here as a profession. (SSA-A #3, p. 6)

The administrators discussed the challenges related to the demands for training. When there are frequent changes in teachers, there is a continual need for training, and this resulted in the training process becoming an impersonal routine. Training was considered to be a resource for increasing teacher retention, but it was believed that some teacher characteristics are not trainable, like interest in making connections with children.

Helping Children With The Constant Rotation of Significant People In Their Lives

The administrators expressed concern about how to address the effects of changes in teachers for the children, especially because this is combined with other changes in their lives. "So much of their life is constantly moving and changing that they, they try and hold on to what they do know" (SSA-A #2, p. 8).

As far as the children being affected, it's been really hard to know whether there's a direct affect on the children in the classroom that the teacher left from. And what's been interesting to me is I haven't had any of the children ask me where she is or why she left or really to notice that there's been nobody really in her place. Because when she left, we didn't place a new teacher in there [a combination of part-time people was scheduled]. (SSA-A #2, p. 1)

The trainer, who had worked in military child development centers for eight years at different bases, believed that when there were frequent changes in teachers, this resulted in less comprehensive training for teachers, affecting classroom management.

I definitely see a big part of it in the amount of behavior problems that we have in children. I've noticed that as a strikingly obvious thing from all the bases. I've never, in the civilian sector, dealt with children with so many severe behavior

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issues as I have in the military. I have talked to people and, it just seems to keep coming back to the fact that there's just this constant rotation out of significant people in their lives…caregivers, parents, grandparents, friends. (SSA-A #1, p. 3)

You know, every six months they're rotating out, and we have children whose parents go away for six months at a time, and they [children] either go home to the States, you know, stay with Grandma, or they'll stay here with another friend when their parents are gone…. Both parents can be deployed at the same time….[for] single parents, it was one parent struggling and then she or he would have to go away for six months and then, um, the child…. (SSA-A #1, p. 4)

As they considered the impact of change in the lives of children, all of the administrators discussed a renewed commitment for doing more explaining to the children about what was happening when there were changes in teachers.

We had quite a few teachers in the preschool out on different types of leave, annual leave or emergency leave, for different lengths of time. That seemed to affect the children more because there was no explanation to them, that they were going; that they just called us and said I'm not coming back. And there's sort of an indefinite feeling with that. We can't tell the other teachers when they're coming back, 'cause we have no idea. And they can't tell the kids when they're coming back, or if they're coming back. (SSA-A #2, p. 2)

 I haven't seen any of them [children] ask to go visit one of the other teachers that's still here [previous teacher moved to another classroom], or that the new teachers encourage any of that either. I think some of them [children], it does hit their stress point in that they've got no consistency in their lives. And if they're here for the majority of their waking hours in a week they're spending here, some of them twelve hours a day, five days a week, you would want this to be the most consistent environment for them, especially with knowledge that their parents are deploying and coming in and out. And that the consistency doesn't have to be keeping the same staff in there, but… informing the kids about why that person is leaving. And it's not because they don't like you,… really explaining to the children what's going on. (SSA-A #2, p. 8)

The administrators were very aware of the many changes in the lives of the children at home, in addition to the teacher changes in the classroom. The directors and

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trainer discussed the responsibility to support the children in dealing with these changes, especially to do more explaining to the children about what was happening.

We Need To Support Children When There Is Teacher Change

There seemed to be a negative cycle of children experiencing stress related to teacher change, and this reaction made the teacher's job more challenging. Especially if teachers started with the idea that it was just a babysitting gig, it would be shocking and stressful as they become aware of the high expectations and challenges of teaching. "It's stresses on both ends, for the child and for the caregiver" (SSA-A #1, p. 5).

Supporting the children in understanding the changes in teachers in their classroom will not eliminate the negative effects of teacher change, but being informed could help the children more easily adjust to and be engaged in the daily activities. The director related her own previous experience as a lead teacher in hourly care.

> It [teacher change] has a huge impact. I was their stability; I was their comfort figure. And I could predict, just looking at the day's list, who was gonna have a hard day that day. Because there would be some that had bonded very closely with me, and that were not good with strangers. And even though these other flex people would be in there, they were still strangers. The children were only there periodically and hadn't bonded with them at all. And it was very difficult for them and you could see it in their eyes when they walked through the door. It was difficult for the parents, 'cause the parents again knew me. (SSA-A #3, p. 1)

> Even when we shift schedules around and we have the same caregivers coming in at different times, that throws the children off. They expect to come in and see the same face every morning and when they don't see it, they don't know how to react. I think it just adds on to the stress that they're already experiencing…, it just is one more thing to get them confused and upset. (SSA-A #1, p. 4)

The effect of the unpredictable expectations about who will be their teacher is observed in children's behavior. This challenge was discussed by the trainer.

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We'll get the children calmed down from a big turnover or losing a room teacher. We're starting to work with behavior issues and getting the children to feel more comfortable with the changes, and then, inevitably somebody else will leave. And it just, it throws everything off; the children- they start acting up again. We have, situations with biting and hitting and just children out of control, and, it just seems right after the change or the turnover is. And we have new caregivers coming in and so the children are testing them and pushing their limits, seeing what they can get away with, and then, having to reestablish again that connection, that bond. Inevitably you see it coming out in the children's behavior. (SSA-A #1, p. 4)

As with other issues, when individual children need extra attention, the teachers are less available for the group of children as a whole. "When you have a child in the room that's really got issues, and you're working so hard on that, to the exclusion of all else" (SSA-A #1, p. 12). This negative reaction of the children was related to the amount of time daily that the children spend with the classroom teachers. Most of the children spend at least ten hours a day at the center, with some of them there for twelve hours, so they have many hours each day in which to be affected by the changes in teachers. When the children's behavior becomes more challenging or aggressive, this adds to the stress of the teachers, some of whom are new in the classroom.

The caregiver [thinks],…"I just can't handle all this"…and then trying to control them. Making them all sit quietly while she does something. And nobody can eat until I get to the table. And feeling like they have to go to the other extreme to get some sort of control over them and to understanding the long-term process of getting to know them, establishing relationships before we are gonna listen to you and before you can expect a lot from them. (SSA-A #1, p. 12)

The parents had talked with administrators about concerns with behavior changes in their children, and they related this to the lack of consistency in classroom teachers.

For me it's really disconcerting to hear parents say… "I don't know why they behave that way in this Center".… Some parents are honestly truthful that their children only are having behavior problems or only having toileting issues or only having certain things that we don't expect of children, or that are not typical of children that age, happening just here in the Center. Some of that could be linked to the fact that there's no consistency; that they really feel like they're in a whirlwind. I can't imagine how I would feel if each day I came in to my office and there were different people in there, and I had no idea who they were or what their expectations were of me, or what my role with them was.(SSA-A #2, p. 9)

The administrators discussed a concern that many children have negative reactions to changes in teachers, and that this can result in challenging behavior for the new teachers. All of the administrators expressed a commitment to do more to support children when there are teacher changes, especially to keep the children informed about who the teachers are in their classroom.

It Takes Time To Get To Know The Children

One of the challenges related to changes in teachers is getting to know the unique characteristics of each individual child. This includes knowing which children more easily connect with new teachers, and which children are more negatively affected by changes in teachers, and need more support in building the new connections.

There were some [children] that enjoyed the excitement of meeting a new person, or finding someone new and different. But there are others that their personalities were more quiet and more shy, and they wanted the familiar person….[The difference was] the time with him [child], to get to know him and to build the trusting relationship with him. And they had the best of intentions, and some of them were wonderful teachers. But he didn't know them. (SSA-A #3, p. 2)

When teachers know more about individual children, this results in a less stressful experience for both the teacher and the child. This information provides a foundation for more effective teacher-child interactions, and for facilitating individualized instruction.

> It takes so much time to get to know the individual children and how they react to stress,..[or] when they're sad…how do they express themselves. All that takes so much time and energy on the caregiver's part to really figure out each child, and who they are and what they're about. So they can pick up on those cues and they can know when a child needs some one-on-one, and they can tell when a child is needing to be left alone, and all those things. A lot of caregivers, have their own daily stresses that prevent them from being able to do that. (SSA-A #1, p. 12)

This situation of teachers not knowing children was especially acute with the "afternoon people who are flexes, and don't even know the children" (SSA-A #2, p. 6). The trainer suggested a system to support teachers in establishing and maintaining relationships with the children, as well as providing a smoother transition for children whose families move to another base.

> At another Army base, we were trying to implement… the whole time the child was in our program, they would stay with the same group of caregivers from age group to age group. That we wouldn't just cut them off at one year and two year and have them change rooms, because we knew that that was just one more thing we were adding to an already stressful situation…. It was having the problem with bonding…and then developing a relationship with them and the relationship with the families and then them having to pick up and leave. And we started portfolios so that we'd have something to give to the parents to take to whoever were to take the child at their next base. They could see, this is this child and this is all the child's done and how they've grown. (SSA-A #1, p. 9)

The stress experienced by children when there are changes in teachers was linked to the process of learning and development for the children. In addition to teachers

needing to learn who the children are as individuals, the teacher-child relationship needs

to be established for the most effective engagement in developmental activities.

> It's hard to get them to those higher levels of thinking again…when they're just wanting to feel secure and bonded and comfortable. They're anxious and…just to get them to a place where they are able to learn and freed up of all those other stresses so that…they can do some higher order thinking is really a challenge. Unfortunately a lot of our time isn't spent doing that. It's spent again dealing with behavior issues, and things that come out that prevent them from being able to really learn and develop as they should. (SSA-A #1, p. 4)

A disadvantage of frequent teacher change is that the teachers do not know the

children as individuals, their development, needs, and interests. Part of the challenge of

facilitating individualized learning and development, or engaging in interactions like

involving children in higher level thinking opportunities, is related to the time and effort

it takes for teachers to get to know the children and to individualize learning experiences.

The administrators, especially the trainer, expressed concern about teachers needing to

establish supportive relationships with each child, as well as the families.

Parent Connections With The Program

As explained by a director, the parents can experience negative affects when there

are changes in teachers, and the importance of being sensitive to what it is like for parents

to leave their children with unfamiliar teachers.

> That impact is big. I always look at the child as a connection to the parent. It's such a close bond in most cases. Leaving your child with somebody is like leaving your arm, and so they get to trust, hopefully, the person that they're leaving the child with and build a relationship. And so every time you take that teacher away, then the parent's got to worry all over again, who am I leaving my child with. Then they don't have that confidence while they're gone all day that their child's okay. (SSA-A #3, p. 4)

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In addition to acknowledging the negative effects on parents when there are

changes in teachers, there was a strong sentiment of the need for parent support of and

involvement in the child development program. Also, the parents don't know what the

children are doing at school and how to extend that. As indicated in the following two

examples, the administrators had specific ideas for a stronger partnership with families.

> [We need]…better parent support…of the staff at the center. We need to present ourselves professionally…. Parents, unfortunately, a lot of them have very low expectations of our programs. They're coming in and see a new face every other week. I notice parents just don't even don't even ask any more "who are you"?. They're just used to always new people being in that room, whether it's the same staff members in the building, only just coming in and out of certain classrooms, so a lot of irregularity in scheduling and consistency in the classroom. Parents just kind of taking it all in stride, but they're not connecting with the program at all. I think their expectation is that it's just a place to leave the kids, where they'll be safe, but they don't really expect anything else to go on here. That's unfortunate. Part of it too is parents not really knowing about child development and what kind of growth goes on, you know, at their child's age. And not being supported with a lot of encouragement from the caregivers talking about well, let's see what your child's doing and this is what they're learning. This is where they're developing at this stage, and making them aware. (SSA-A #1, p. 8)

> With teachers coming and going so much, and especially having flexes in the evening when you're gonna have most parent contact, that the parents are really detached from the classroom, and that they don't really view it as a partnership, or that it's a respect, or that they really appreciate the fact that these people are really raising their children twelve hours a day five days a week. (SSA-A #2, p. 5)

The administrators have worked to address some of the negative things that have

happened in the teacher-family interactions, to build more positive relationships. The

negative incidents tend to impact the reputation of the Center as a whole, because the

families are all in this military community, and talk with one another outside the Center.

We've actually had instances where a parent will come in to pick up their child and it will be a new flex, somebody that's just being trained, and they'll actually say to the parent, "Well, I don't know who your child is." You know, the parent will say, "Oh, I'm looking for my child." "Who is that?" "Oh, I don't know, you'll have to look for them." To a parent, you only have to say that once for them to just discount anything, and to just really feel like their child is in a hectic environment where everything is changing and that they probably feel that. And what saddens me is that not very many of them have voiced that to us; we hear a lot of concerns in the PX food court. So that it's going around the community, but they're not addressing it at the source, and maybe they just feel uncomfortable doing it because there's no consistency…. Or, that their input wouldn't be heard, wouldn't be dealt with… For them to all spend an hour of their time with you [researcher], that's really telling to me that they had something to say, or that they were concerned,… that they felt that they needed to spend the time to tell somebody. (SSA-A #2, p. 6)

One concern in relationships with families is related to child rearing beliefs and practices, because some of the parents use harsher discipline and guidance strategies than are practiced in the center. The administrators believed that some of the classroom child behavior issues were related to the inconsistent guidance practices in the child's life.

A lot of time they're very young, very immature parents, who don't know about children or how to raise them. Most of them… don't have any sort of educational background… the dynamics of being cut off from their support system… having to deal with this young child. Their husband may be gone, maybe they had never left their small town, they don't know how to really manage… and you have children who are just having real issues. (SSA-A #1, p. 10)

A lot of that traditional discipline of do as I say, don't question me, don't talk back, I'm the authoritative person and you're gonna listen to me. You have parents, you call them about problems and they spank them all the way out to the car. So, children are role modeling that out when they're in the classroom by hitting their friends. That's how they deal with their frustration and their anger. We're trying to get them to understand a better way, but a better way that requires more time and energy and skill and patience than they're willing to put forth. It's too quick and easy to threaten a child than to talk about it. (SSA-A #1, p. 10)

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The administrators were sensitive to parent stress, what that meant in the daily lives of the families. The family stress was related to parental disciplinary practices, how that impacted child behavior in the classroom, and the need for stronger connections.

> A lot of them are in a crisis mode. "I just want to get through today, I just need to get through tonight… I can't deal with this child, who's so demanding of me and who requires so much time and energy. I just don't have it to give." They [children] can feel the tension, the stress. They're gonna hear it when they've done something wrong. They're gonna be the brunt of it a lot of the time. So it's really hard to have that inconsistency between home and school; between an environment where they're threatened constantly or physically reprimanded, to an environment where we talk about our feelings, we express ourselves through words….They're out of control because there's nothing working on those internal controls. There's no link between home and school. (SSA-A #1, p. 11)

This classroom situation was contrasted to a comparable situation with the home care providers, in which there are typically stronger family-childcare connections.

> In the family childcare homes, I see a lot of parents building relationships with the providers and… really confiding in them…because it's their only person in their lives that's connected to their child, like an extension of their family…. When you only have four or five kids, it's much more feasible to establish that rapport. (SSA-A #1, p. 11)

To begin establishing relationships with the families, parent orientation is done with small groups as families enroll at the center throughout the year. Given the challenges related to teacher change, an administrator was asked whether the topic of changes in teachers was discussed in parent orientation, or follow-up workshops.

> I don't really address it [teacher change] at that point. I do let them know that many of our teachers are military spouses, which in itself, if you've been around the military, indicates there will be change. I do suggest to them that they talk to the teachers, that they tell them about their child, they ask about room policies,

things like that…. Unfortunately we don't do enough [about parent partnerships] with them. (SSA-A #3, p. 4)

There were suggestions for meaningful ways to get the parents more involved. [Invite them to be] "part of an activity or something that's going on, versus inviting them for a tea or something like that." (SSA-A #2, p. 7). Even though some things are being done to build connections between the families and the classroom, the administrators expressed concern about the negative effects of teacher change on relationships with parents. There was a strong desire to have parents be better informed about the early childhood program, and to address issues related to inconsistent home-center practices, like discipline and guidance.

It's An Ongoing Constant Challenge

Because of the negative effects of teacher change, some of the military strategies for reducing turnover include, "…better salary, better benefits, that sort of thing" (SSA-A #3, p.8). "A big important aspect, the amount of support a new employee gets and the amount of training, would help. And, why people turn around and leave so quickly is just not knowing and not understanding children and why they do what they do" (SSA-A #1, p. 6). Although the military system is addressing conditions to minimize teacher turnover, the high rate of teacher change in this center was related to the nature of this particular military base. Contrasting this base with another base having minimal teacher change, a director explained, "It's a small Stateside post and it's mostly senior folks, and they don't deploy. And they've had the same staff there, most of them for fifteen, twenty years… their center looks a lot different, because it's stable" (SSA-A #3, p. 9)" "It's just an

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ongoing constant challenge, especially in areas like this where the troops deploy and the

people move so often" (SSA-A #3, p. 11). This frequent rotation of troops, and resulting

change of staff affects the stability of administrators, as well as teachers, because of the

inconsistent connections between administrators and teachers.

> That has a lot to do with it [teacher change] too. It's not being able to give them
> more individualized time and attention. That's to me such an important part of
> being in the training position is being able to do that. And being stretched as far as
> I can be stretched at this point, I'm not able to. Seeing other people in the
> administrative positions, with the constant flux of people going in and out, they
> don't really bond with people. Because, you're gonna be gone in a few years and
> I'm just gonna have to deal with the misery of losing you and then trying to find
> and build another relationship. You see that as adults even. (SSA-A #1, p. 14)

 An administrator who started work at this center about three weeks before the

research started, and two months before the interview, reported that none of the teachers

in the research classroom had permanently left the center, but some change classrooms.

> People permanently leave to a different classroom... they wanted to be in a
> different classroom, or they weren't happy in the classroom and, as soon as they
> were changed to a different classroom with less stress and a lower child to teacher
> ratio, that they've been more successful. (SSA-A #2, p. 1)

As reported by the administrator most familiar with the scheduling, "The

preschool classroom has probably seen at least fifteen different teachers in the past eight

weeks" (SSA-A #2, p. 8). However, according to the teacher schedule documented for

this research, there were twenty-two teachers during that five-week period (SCH). In

discussing the process of scheduling teachers, especially when one room has challenging

issues and a lot of teacher change, concern was expressed about one way the work

environment is not supportive of new teachers when there are problems in a classroom .

> We just got through with that [working on major challenges] with another room, it
> was the slum room, the ghetto room. So it's now gone over to [research room].
> And it's almost like people feel like they have to have something to talk about.
> There's always one sore spot, and the sore spot right now is [research classroom].
> Unfortunately,…everybody gossips and the gossip spreads. Oh, there was this
> incident in that room. Oh, there was that incident in that room. The next thing you
> know, everybody's saying all bad things about the room. (SSA-A #3, p. 10)

When asked about directly addressing that observation and how it impacts the

whole center, the administrator explained, "It's something that I've talked about doing,

and we haven't done it as a large group. I've done it with the leads before, with both

infant-toddler leads and preschool leads" (SSA-A #3, p. 10). In discussing some of the

continual challenges of the center, the administrator referred to the book, *The Visionary*

Director (Curtis & Carter, 1998). The question was asked about where she would

consider this center in the model explained in this book, where they would be on the

continuum between surviving and thriving. She acknowledged, "Unfortunately we are at

the lowest level of surviving, we are in survival mode every day, and for a lot of reasons

that is because we have so many different teachers in and out of the center" (FI 5-02).

This situation was frustrating for the administrators, but they were working to address

issues to improve the quality of their program.

A big part of the reason that this center was in survival mode was that the

administrators spent much of their time and energy hiring and training new teachers, and

scheduling all teachers for classroom coverage. In addition to being challenged by issues

related to changes in teachers, there were also recent changes in administrators, which had affected the building of relationships with teachers.

Summary of Objective 3 –D: Administrator Perspective

For the administrators, the frequency of teacher change in the classroom resulted in many challenges, and became the focus of their work as center directors and trainer. From their perspective teacher change was clearly a systemic process, affecting many aspects of the program. Due to the nature of this military base, there were frequent rotations, and because most teachers were spouses of active-duty military personnel, this was one of the reasons for teacher change. Many people were hired as teachers, but had no training or experience as teachers of young children. This resulted in newly hired teachers having unrealistic low expectations about the demands of being a teacher, which exacerbated the stress of the teacher responsibilities. In addition, because the trainer was expected to cover the responsibilities for another unfilled trainer position, she had limited time to support the teachers in gaining knowledge and developing skill in being a classroom teacher. As the children experienced their own stress related to changes in teachers, some of their behavior was challenging and aggressive, providing more challenges for the teachers.

Other results of teacher change of concern to administrators were related to the quality of teacher-child interaction because new teachers did not know about the children's development, interests, and needs. This meant that the teachers did not have the foundation of information to effectively gauge interactions and support learning and development for individual children. The limitations of teacher connections with children

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were related to the absence of a family-center partnership. When there was frequent

teacher change, the teachers had fewer opportunities to build relationships with families.

Summary of Results Chapter

All of the themes gleaned from the results, based on the research question,

indicate that when teacher change occurs, whether it is teacher turnover or daily teacher

change, the effects are pervasive. All of the research participants – teachers, children,

parents, and administrators indicated that when frequent teacher change occurs, there is

confusion about who the teachers are, what the teachers do, and how the teachers work

together to plan and implement a high quality program. The level of teacher change was

very high in this classroom, and it had negative effects on everyone involved. The next

chapter addresses the meaning and implications of these results.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this interpretative inquiry was to observe, describe, and analyze the experience of the children, as well as the adults, in an overseas military child development classroom when teacher change occurs. The intent was to gain an understanding about the effects of daily teacher change from the perspective of the people experiencing that change.

Although the following discussion about the effects of changes in teachers is based on the results of research conducted in a military child development program, it is expected that the results and related understandings are applicable for civilian child development centers as well. As noted in the pilot study, cited in the introduction, that civilian center had an eight percent official teacher turnover rate, and a four out of five star state licensing evaluation. However, there were frequent daily changes in teachers, with related negative effects for the children and families. Like the military child development centers that are demonstrating higher quality as a result of the support provided by the Military Child Care Act of 1989, the civilian center had taken advantage of community support for enhancing the quality of their center. Even though these centers were dedicated to providing high quality care for their children, the changes in teachers were many and the effects were pervasive.

The intent of this discussion is to analyze the patterns and effects of the changes in teachers and, to identify the educational implications for minimizing the negative effects when there are changes in teachers in an individual classroom. The phenomenon of teacher change is best understood in terms of the overall system in which teacher change occurs. This analysis was done through the identification of overall themes gleaned from the themes generated in relation to the research objective. For this analysis, four overarching themes emerged, with eleven sub-themes. The first theme - Change is everywhere and frustrating for everyone – reflected the pervasiveness of teacher change. Two sub-themes explained these changes: (1) These children are out of control, and (2) We are in survival mode. The second theme - The meaning of being a teacher – spoke to being a teacher in an environment with frequent change. Two sub-themes helped describe this theme: (1) Nomenclature for referring to teachers, and (2) Defining one's role as a teacher. The third theme was about how the teaching team functioned in light of frequent teacher change - Planning for the children. These sub-themes included: (1) Choosing appropriate activities, (2) The children decide what to do, and (3) Teachers need to individualize for the children. The fourth theme – Being connected - was about the relationships among various people in the classroom. This theme was characterized by four sub-themes: (1) I wish the teachers would play, (2) We need support from the parents, (3) The children play with each other, and (4) We don't have to be friends.

<div align="center">Change Is Everywhere and Frustrating For Everyone</div>

The major insight from this study is that even though there was no official turnover in this classroom, there was a lot of teacher change. Of the three full-time

teachers that had previously been in the classroom, one had returned to the States for extended emergency leave and expected to return to the center, and another had moved to a different classroom in the center. This would not be considered teacher turnover (Whitebook & Sakai, 2003). However, from the perspective of the children, there was a lot of teacher change. During the five-week research period, there were 3 full-time teachers and 19 part-time and substitute teachers in various combinations to maintain a 1:8 teacher-child ratio. An understanding of what happens in a classroom is more effective when that approach focuses on the daily changes in teachers, which includes, but is not limited to teacher turnover. The sub-themes in this section are: (1) These children are out of control, and (2) We are in survival mode.

These Children Are Out Of Control

One of the themes evident in all documentation, and strongly expressed by the teachers and the parents, was that the children were out of control, and that the classroom felt chaotic by almost everyone who was in it. It was believed that this was the result of frequent teacher change. Because of the extreme nature of this situation, there was the reputation in the center that this was the 'bad classroom'. Indeed, it was reported that some of the teachers who were assigned to this room would cross themselves before entering the room (SSA-T #2, p.3). This was a very stressful classroom in which to work, so it was not conducive to teacher retention. This situation was very frustrating, especially for the teachers, and they did have some ideas about why this was happening, but there were a lot of things that could have been done to improve the atmosphere in the classroom. By understanding and addressing classroom management, the classroom

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could be less stressful and more pleasant for the teachers, so they would be more willing to continue working in this room. Addressing these issues would make a big difference for the children; it could mean spending ten to twelve hours per day in an environment that is safe, stimulating, and conducive to constructive interactions with teachers and other children, rather than being in a chaotic environment for so many hours per day.

Some of the teachers and parents identified the concern about consistency throughout the program. Although there is a posted schedule and expectation that a curriculum will be used, neither of these are done. Some of the comments made about consistency include how difficult it is for any of the teachers to really know what is supposed to be done in the classroom, especially if the lead teacher and other full-time teachers are not following through on a schedule and curriculum. The only parts of the program that are consistent from day to day are the meal times and nap time. It was explained that meals have to be at a certain time because the kitchen staff delivers food to the room at a specific time, and the custodial staff come in twice daily, after breakfast and lunch, to sweep and mop the floors, so the children have to be finished eating then. Then, after lunch, there is a two-hour naptime scheduled. Other than meals and nap, the day is spent is free play, with minimal teacher-child interaction. There are occasional times when an individual teacher will encourage children to join a large group for movement to tapes, reading a book, a gardening project, or an art project. So, from the perspective of the children, they are basically on their own, to do what they want to do for many hours eacn day. So, more consistency in the program, a predictable, though flexible, schedule that includes daily group activities, and a curriculum with some focus for holding the

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children's attention would provide a more supportive structure for the children, and extend their depth of engagement in activities. From the perspective of various teachers in the classroom, a more supportive structure would also make their jobs easier.

One of the patterns related to discipline and guidance, mentioned in the previous section about the role of the teacher, is teacher behavior that reflects a teacher perspective of either a rule enforcer or a facilitator of learning and development. Whichever perspective the teacher has will shape the teacher-child relationship and interactions, thus shaping the effectiveness of the program, and the experiences of everyone involved in the program. In this classroom, there were a variety of patterns of teacher behavior, some predominantly rule enforcers, some more facilitators of learning and development, and some demonstrating a combination of the two. The patterns did not seem to be related to the education or experience of the teachers, but was more of a personal belief about how to interact with children. This was especially evident in the case of the one teacher who was cited several times in the documentation, her discipline and guidance strategies were harsh at times, more of a punishment for the child, and she often reported inappropriate behaviors to the parents at the end of the day. Some of the teachers talked about feeling the need for more guidance practices when there were changes in teachers, because the children seemed to do more testing each time a new teacher came into the classroom. According to Bloom (1997), when there is frequent teacher change, the teachers tend to revert to more interactions that are guidance and discipline, rather than teaching-learning interactions, especially if they do not feel confident about the classroom procedures.

The difference in application of direct and indirect guidance procedures (Gartrell, 2004) is related to changes in teachers and the experiences of everyone involved in the classroom. The direct guidance procedures are those that are used after a problem occurs, like talking about alternative behaviors, reminding children of the rules, diffusing a conflict, any intervention intended to change a behavior of concern. The indirect guidance procedures are those that are implemented to keep children engaged in stimulating and constructive activities. These are the kinds of early childhood practices discussed in previous sections - the predictable schedule, a curriculum and activities that are based on developmentally appropriate materials, activities, and interactions. One of the observations in this classroom was that many of the activities and materials were not very challenging for the children, so in their process of exploring and finding more interesting activities, their behavior was defined as inappropriate by the teachers. The children in this classroom could easily be engaged in much more challenging activities. For example, if the full-time teachers implemented a program like thematic curriculum or the project approach (Katz & Chard, 2000), the children would have a variety of related activities in which to be engaged. In addition, for other teachers coming into the classroom, especially if documentation boards (Reggio Children, 2001) are done, the children and teachers would have clearer direction about what to do, and how to work together in the collaborative teaching and learning process (Bodrova & Leong, 1996). This kind of strategy could make the transition smoother for teachers who are in the classroom infrequently or for a partial day.

We Are In Survival Mode

When there is frequent teacher change, there is so much focus on continually hiring and training teachers, that there is minimal attention to relationships among people in the center. The administrators expressed a desire for more positive relationships between themselves and other administrators, as well as the parents, teachers, and children. The directors and trainer described this as a cyclical relationship related to teacher change. The high level of teacher change in the classroom contributed to a negative situation that had to be addressed by the administrators, resulting in less positive relationships. These less positive relationships, they believed, in turn, contributed to more teacher change.

Although they were all trying a variety of strategies to make improvements in this classroom, there were many challenges. The administrator who commented on the book, *The Visionary Director* (Carter & Curtis, 1998), concluded that the center is at the lowest stage of organizational health, that they are in survival mode. She is working at making changes, and would like to lead the center to the stage in which teachers work together for a shared vision. Her challenges in making this happen are diverse, and many of them are related to teacher change. The military Child Development Centers have made major strides in improving the quality of the centers, as well as drastically reducing teacher turnover. Evident in the insights from this research, the daily teacher changes in the classroom are problematic for maintaining high quality care for children, as well as maintaining positive relationships. At this military base, the teachers are typically the spouses or young adult children of active-duty military personnel. Therefore, the teachers

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move to and from the center as their spouses are transferred. Also, sometimes when the active-duty personnel are deployed on another assignment where family members cannot join them, the teachers may return to the States on extended leave to have time with other family members.

Another challenge to having positive relationships is that many of the people who apply to be teachers in the center have minimal or no experience or education in early childhood. The administrators reported having developed a hard heart, or thinking of some of these teachers as warm bodies who can fill a slot in the schedule, because they are hiring new teachers every month. This also provides challenges for continual training of teachers. With the focus on continual hiring and training, and working on the teacher schedule to assure classroom coverage, the time and energy is not being invested in building relationships within the center. Because of the frequent changes in teachers, and the need to hire many teachers who have no early childhood experience or education, it was not always clear to the teacher what it meant to be a teacher, the next theme.

<center>The Meaning Of Being a Teacher</center>

In the bioecological framework (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), the process of teacher-child interaction is a critical component. In the field of early childhood education, there is a shared meaning, or intersubjectivity, about what it means to be a teacher, applying specific principles and practices based on the criteria of high quality programs. One very strong theme across all documentation in this research was the absence of a shared meaning about being a teacher. This understanding is related to the language used to refer to the classroom teachers, as well as the roles and responsibilities of a teacher.

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The two sub-themes in this section are: (1) Nomenclature for referring to teachers, and (2) Defining one's role as a teacher.

Nomenclature For Referring To Teachers

There was great variation in the terms used to refer to teachers, and who was thought of as a teacher. The full-time teachers with at least an Associate Degree in early childhood were typically referred to as teachers, others were referred to as caregivers, subs, flexes (flexible on-call), warm bodies, afternoon people, friend, visitor, or adult. From the beginning of the research period, the researcher was aware that there were several teachers in and out of the room. The importance of the child's perspective was clear when the researcher encouraged a child to ask his teacher about something, his response was, "We don't have any teachers, all our teachers are gone" (FI, 4-15). A full-time teacher who had been in this classroom the longest explained her role, "I was a caregiver, I wasn't a lead or anything,…but I was just basically there." (SSA-T#2, p. 4). When a child initiated a request to a full-time teacher by saying, "Teacher, can I~" Teacher #2 interrupted him and said, "Don't call me teacher, my name is Ms ~~, you need to call me by my name, say Ms ~~ "(FI, 4-26). A part-time teacher (#9) who was in the classroom regularly from 2:00 to 6:00 in the afternoon, "was introducing herself as a new friend…[the others] don't do it [introduce themselves]…but I'm sure that they [children] know her [teacher]" (SSA-T #4, p. 11).

The practice of using this variety of terms resulted in confusion on the part of the children about whom, if anyone, was their teacher. Many of the specific terms used by the teachers themselves also tended to devalue what it means to be a teacher. There

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was also an absence of any reference to a teaching team, the reference was more to which individual teachers happened to be in the classroom at the same time. The lead teacher had told other teachers that the room was hers (SSA-T #1, p. 13), which didn't elicit a sense of working together, or community. The language one chooses is critical because it is not neutral or value-free, it embodies and reflects cultural values which have a great effect on one's quality of life (Van Den Bergh, 1989). Renaming is a practice of feminist ideology, which empowers those who have been devalued by language (Van Den Bergh, 1989). Even having consistency in what all teachers called themselves would have improved this learning environment.

Defining One's Role As A Teacher

The teacher's perception about her or his role as a teacher also affects the teacher-child relationships and interactions, which, in turn, affects the child's experience in the classroom. This includes the teacher's perception of purpose in the classroom, such as, to provide breaks for other teachers, get materials as requested by children, conduct teacher-planned activities, or enforce rules.

Similar to teachers being referred to by various names, and the lack of clarity for children about who was a teacher, there were also a variety of perceptions about the role of a teacher. A part-time teacher was asked about her role in the classroom, and she explained, "I am just in the room so we have the right number of adults while the teachers are taking their lunch break" (FI, 4-18). Although this teacher was pleasant to the children, and responded when they made specific requests of her, like getting materials out of a storage closet, her behavior was not that of a teacher engaged in high-quality

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interactions. This teacher expressed no understanding about her role related to interactions with children, her concern was more about the safety requirements. She did not demonstrate that she valued herself as someone who had the knowledge and skill to shape the learning and development of the children; and did not demonstrate that she valued the children as competent learners. This level of teacher engagement was typical, and was demonstrated in a variety of ways.

For example, during free play when a child asked this teacher for crinkle paper by calling her 'teacher' rather than by her name, her first response was to interrupt his statement to explain how she expected him to demonstrate his respect for her (FI, 4-26). Her behavior reflected how she perceived her role as a teacher. She was not focused on initiating interactions with the children and, this interaction did not include an expression of interest in and respect for the child's idea about what he was going to do with the crinkle paper. Another example occurred when the children asked teacher #20 to get trucks from the storage cabinet for them to use in blocks. She did promptly get the trucks, but did not speak to them about what they were doing in the block area, and then returned to playing with another group of children near the block area (FI 4-15). In both of these situations, the teachers were very helpful in getting materials, but did not reflect an understanding of the teacher's role in using these situations and materials to talk with the children about what they were doing, or to use the process of scaffolding for individual children, to extend the way they were thinking about the activity and the variety of materials available.

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Most of the observed teacher behavior was of teachers sitting and observing children or walking around the classroom and commenting on inappropriate behavior or reminding children of rules or; moving children through routines, like meals, bathroom use, or moving outside. Less frequent teacher behaviors were of teachers planning and conducting structured activities, like movement or exercise tapes; sitting with children at tables or on the floor for child initiated activities; or spontaneously inviting children to join a group for an activity like reading a book. This pattern reflected teachers perceiving themselves more as managers of behavior and activities, than as facilitators of learning and development throughout the day, a typical pattern with a high level of teacher turnover (Bloom, 1997). Another indication from this pattern is that teachers do not value children as learners, who are capable of engaging in meaningful self-selected activities, which can be supported by teachers (Gandini, 1993). This is especially relevant when there are changes in teachers, because as new teachers come into the classroom, the perspectives of teachers currently in the classroom will influence the new teachers expectations of self as well as expectations of the children. These expectations of teachers and children are further explored in the following themes related to planning and implementing a program for the children.

Planning for the Children

The Military Child Care Act of 1989 focused on providing high quality care at affordable costs for military families. Several components of quality early childhood education were evident in the themes generated in the results related to the effects of changes in teachers. These were: developmentally-appropriate activities; child-directed

and teacher-structured activities, and individualizing development and learning. The sub-themes related to this theme are: (1) Choosing appropriate activities, (2) The children decide what to do, and (3) Teachers need to individualize for the children.

Choosing Appropriate Activities

The standards of quality care are guidelines for teacher practices, based on what is developmentally appropriate for a given age group, but also what is appropriate for children as individuals (Bredekamp, S. & Copple, C.,1997; Wardle, 1999; Copple & Bredekamp, 2005; Elkind, 2005). While the criteria for appropriate practices is widely accepted in the field of early childhood education, the process of making these decisions daily in the classroom may be a challenge, especially when there are changes in teachers who are not familiar with the established criteria, and how it is applied in this classroom. The three full-time teachers who had not been working together very long expressed frustration with their disagreements about what was or wasn't appropriate for the children.

As one teacher stated, "Developmentally we've got three- to five-year-olds in there, and… I'm not finding much preschool stuff. With the lead teacher…she thinks that it's not age appropriate… we're here to help them developmentally and we had a little bit of a spat there…over what's appropriate and what's not appropriate…. We need to enhance and we need to make it interesting for them" (SSA-T #1, p.3). Even though there was interest expressed in doing additional planned activities with the children, the predominant activity in this classroom was free play. Some of the artwork done by the

children during free play was representative of what might be expected of children who are developmentally younger than these three- to five-year-olds.

The parents also expressed concerns about the appropriateness of the activities their children were doing. There was a confusion expressed by parents. They had the understanding that the teachers are not allowed to teach (SSA-M #14, p. 3; SSA-M #21, p. 13; SSA-M #22, p. 11). "I really don't know what she (daughter) does,…I'm pretty sure they don't do numbers and the alphabet and stuff like that…it's more like she's just playing all day, or doing art work" (SSA-M #14, p. 3). Or, "You ask your child what they did, 'Oh, I played'" (SSA-M #15, p.1). While these parents' genuine concern is acknowledged, these responses also indicate that the parents had not been informed about the value of and process of children learning through play, the learning and developmental goals of various activities, or the teacher's role in that process.

It is understandable that the parents had not been given this information, because the teachers themselves were not demonstrating behaviors reflecting this knowledge. In addition, the teachers were not distinguishing between developmentally-appropriate and age-appropriate; those terms were used interchangeably, but most often they referred to age-appropriate activities. The teacher manual states that the "child development programs are based on the knowledge that play is children's work" (p.1), and the intent is to "promote the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and creative development of young children" (p.1). Developmentally appropriate practices, including activities, materials, and interactions, provide the foundation for promoting the intended comprehensive development of children through engagement in play. Therefore, the

teachers lack of a clear understanding about developmentally appropriate practices is a critical missing piece in the implementation of a program intended to be a positive experience for the children.

The three full-time teachers had the most training in early childhood education, which consisted of two of them having an Associate degree in early childhood education, and the third one having completed several of the military training modules. The nineteen other teachers who were scheduled in this classroom as needed had even less of this foundation for understanding how to engage in appropriate activities with the children. The teachers seem to be missing an understanding of the distinction between an area of knowledge or skill, and how the children are engaged in related learning and development. For example, there was concern expressed that it was not developmentally appropriate to teach the children letters, numbers, colors, shapes, or other specific information. It would be beneficial for the teachers to understand that many kinds of information are appropriate and important for children to learn, but the procedures used in imparting that information must also be appropriate. Building on this understanding of developmentally appropriate practices, the next section address how those practices are implemented.

<div align="center">The Children Decide What To Do</div>

Related to the appropriateness of knowledge and skills is the process through which the children engage in learning and development. In early childhood education, children engage in activities that are teacher-structured, for which the teacher plans and conduct a specific activity; or child-directed activities, for which the child makes

decisions about which materials to use and how to use them, with the teacher functioning more as a supportive partner in the learning process. In this classroom, there were some misunderstandings about the meaning of these two approaches to learning, and the roles of teacher and child(ren) engaged in the process.

In discussions with individual teachers, as well as sitting in on two staff meetings with the teachers of this classroom, it was evident that the teachers had the belief that 'child-directed' meant that the teachers should not interfere with the children's activities. From their perspective, this lack of engagement was applying the center policy that 'play is the work of children'. During the two-hour naptime in which at least half of the children were awake and wandering around the room or using whichever materials were in reach, there were three adults in the room (two full-time teachers and a floater who was covering for lunch breaks). The three adults were in one corner of the room talking with one another about activities outside the center, their interactions with the children were related to guidance and safety, intervening by calling across the room to remind a child, "Don't throw the Legos" or "Don't run in the room." When asked about their expectations of the children during this scheduled rest time, and their role as teachers during that time, the teachers explained that it is a time for the children to decide what they want to do (FI, 4-18).

As in a previous section about what teachers are called, the teachers use of language to describe the activities of the children reflects how the teachers define the meaning of child play and its relation to development and learning. Although the posted schedule included a daily large group time, most of the time from arrival at 6:00 am to

departure at 6:00 pm was spent in free play, with minimal teacher engagement with the children. When the teachers refer to what the children are to do after routines like meals or nap, they typically say, "Go play." There were no comments like, "Go use the learning centers," and no discussion about which learning centers were available, or what materials or activities might be available there for children to explore. This language and the corresponding teacher behavior of generally sitting back to observe children, and intervening for safety or discipline, devalues the role of play and the potential of the teacher to support learning and development. This kind of language and teacher behavior is critical when there are changes in teachers, because when new teachers observe these established practices, this shapes how they define the meaning of teacher and child and early childhood education.

Classroom observations, parent comments, and participation in the classroom staff meeting indicated that there is no curriculum implemented. The Creative Curriculum (Dodge, Kolker & Heroman, 2002) was at the teacher workstation, and the teachers, as well as the trainer, mentioned use of this resource. However, the impression of the full-time teachers was that this curriculum was about setting up the classroom in clearly defined learning centers, and then letting the children play independently in those centers. They had missed the major component of this curriculum that focuses teacher interaction with the children in each of the learning centers, based on specific opportunities for learning and development in each learning center. This curriculum also has sample letters for parents about how children learn through play, and many examples of specific

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questions and comments the teachers could use to stimulate and extend, or scaffold, learning and development in each of the learning centers indoors and outdoors.

This kind of curriculum resource could be a very effective tool in a classroom where there is a lot of teacher change, because it is based on teacher-child interaction, which is a skill that teachers could learn and apply regardless of which classroom they are in on a particular day. Because this resource has examples of teacher questions and comments that can be used to gauge interactions with children in each learning center, some of these statements could be posted in each learning center to provide daily guidance to all of the teachers, regardless of how new they are to the classroom. This resource also has information about specific opportunities for learning and development in each learning center. This information could be posted in individual learning centers as a helpful reminder to teachers. It could also serve to empower them as teachers as they realize their potential for making a difference in the lives of each individual child. This kind of posted information could also be a source of information for parents to understand more about what their children are doing at the center, and how activities that look like play contribute to their child's learning and development. It may also empower parents in developing their own skills in constructive interactions with their children.

By being more effectively engaged with the children during child-directed activities, the teachers have the opportunity to learn more about each child's interests and abilities. This knowledge then informs the teacher for more effectively individualizing learning and development, as well as providing positive and interesting information to share with parents.

Teachers Need To Individualize For the Children

In addition to teacher practices being based on what is developmentally appropriate for a given age group, these practices also need to reflect a knowledge of children as individuals, and what is appropriate for them (Bredekamp, S. & Copple, C.,1997; Wardle, 1999; Copple & Bredekamp, 2005; Elkind, 2005). This center has supported the process of individualized instruction by organizing notebooks as portfolios for each child. These are divided by domains for physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and creative development. Some of the notebooks were completely empty, and a few had pieces of drawings for which children had used markers on light-weight paper. This was inconsistent with one of the full-time teachers comments that the portfolios are worked on at least weekly, and intended to be used by all of the teachers to get ideas for how to work with each child.

The center policy is for the teachers to do assessments of each child, organize this information in portfolios, and for all teachers to use this information to individualize child opportunities for learning and development. However, this was not being done, and there seems to be a variety of reasons for this. Although the lead teacher had a general understanding of the benefits of child assessment, her impression was that assessment was something done to provide information for other teachers who were less familiar with the children, or if there was a concern about a child who needed to be referred for screening or assessment. She was adamant in her comment, "I take great offense to that [suggestion that all children should be assessed], I know my kids!" (SSA-T #2, p. 6). So, if the lead teacher is not demonstrating the value and process of developmental

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assessment, the other twenty-one teachers are not likely to embrace this early childhood practice. A misinterpretation here is the belief that the request to have a system of ongoing assessment for each child is not a criticism that the teacher does not know the children, but that this allows all teachers to monitor and be informed about the children. Given the twenty-five children in this classroom; the five developmental domains for each child; the hundreds of individual skills, interests, and needs for those domains; and the rapid pace at which children develop and learn, which can change the developmental information daily, it is not feasible for one teacher to know all of this information about all of the children. A current portfolio can empower all teachers to more effectively gauge their activities and interactions with the children, especially when there are changes in teachers, or some teachers are not in the classroom many hours per day.

One of the theoretical frameworks for this research, Vygotskian theory, provides guidance for how teachers use information about individual children to gauge developmental and learning opportunities. Obuchenie, the core component of this theory is that the teacher and child engage in a collaborative teaching and learning interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). Through this collaboration, the co-construction of knowledge occurs, the critical role of interaction. This interaction is most effective when the teacher is sensitive to the child's perception of the interaction, and understands how the child is processing information. Assessment information on the children is used by teacher to determine the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult supervision

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or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978. p. 86). Optimal teaching-learning interactions occur through the process of scaffolding, through which practical teaching based on the ZPD begins toward the zone's upper limit, where the child is able to reach the goal only through close collaboration (obuchenie) with the instructor (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Bodrova & Leong, 1996).

It is through this process that maximum learning and development occurs, but in this classroom, several of these pieces are missing. The assessments were not being done to provide information about the actual developmental level, so the teachers do not know how to gauge the use of materials and activities for individual children. In addition, there is minimal teacher-child interaction, which is essential for scaffolding to optimize development and learning. The children were spending most of the day in free play in the learning centers, which would be an optimal environment for scaffolding if the teachers were actively engaged with the children.

When there is frequent teacher change, the teachers who are less familiar with the classroom will not know where materials are or how they may be most effectively used with the children. Also, because this process requires that the teacher be sensitive to how the child is perceiving the interaction and how the child is processing information, teachers who are not familiar with individual children will not know how they process different kinds of information, and will not be aware of the cues related to how they may be perceiving the interaction. Therefore, having current assessment information is critical for all teachers, and it could be beneficial to have newer teachers work with teachers who are more familiar with individual children, to model how to use a variety of information

about individual children to apply this collaborative process of teaching and learning between the teacher and the child. This can be a very powerful process for supporting learning and development of all children, but especially for children with disabilities. The goals and objectives and specific skills can be broken down into component parts and addressed through this collaborative process.

In an attempt to address concerns about child assessments and how this information is used to support development and learning of individual children, the child development center implemented a system of primary teacher. This involved assigning one-third of the children to each of the three full-time teachers, who were then responsible for completing the assessment information, maintaining contacts with parents, doing any record-keeping, and being especially aware of what was happening with those children. Even though each teacher had specific responsibilities for some of the children, all teachers were expected to interact in supportive ways with all of the children. Although the primary teacher system has the advantage of an individual teacher focusing on these responsibilities for individual children, this system has some major disadvantages in a classroom where there are a lot of changes in teachers. When there are changes in the full-time teachers assigned to specific children, there can be a critical gap in the optimal support of the development of these children while the new teacher is becoming familiar with the individual children and the classroom. In addition, the military has a policy of supporting families, who are also the teachers, by having a generous provision for emergency leave, as well as sick leave and personal days. While this is important for the families, when the primary teacher is away for three weeks on

emergency leave, much knowledge about those children is also away with the teacher. A more effective system for classrooms or centers that have frequent changes in teachers may be to assign teachers to a classroom and have them stay with those same children until the children leave the center.

Relationships and interactions also are important components of early childhood education. Because the themes generated in the results chapter had so much information about the connections among the children, teachers, parents, and administrators, the effect of teacher change on these connections is addressed in the following separate section.

<div align="center">Being Connected</div>

One of the strongest themes across all sources of documentation was the desire for and the need for positive connections among the individuals involved in this classroom (Baker & Manfredi-Pettit, 2004). There were many indications that for the parents, children, teachers, and administrators, their lived experiences did not include the kinds of relationships and interactions that empower them as individuals, as a group working together for a common goal, or as educators intent on minimizing the negative effects of teacher change. This section addresses various combinations of connections among the people involved in this classroom. The sub-themes for this theme are: I wish the teachers would play, We need support from the parents, The children play with each other, and We don't have to be friends.

I Wish The Teachers Would Play

In every interaction between individual teachers and children, the child and teacher are defining and expressing their own meaning of the interaction. Each interaction involves an initiation and a response, it can be positive or negative, and it can affect the intensity of the child's engagement in an activity. As described by Bronfenbrenner (1992), the characteristics of the person, that is, the teacher's dispositions and resources determine the effect of the interaction. The degree to which the teacher expresses interest in and support of the child's thoughts and ideas influences the depth of the child's engagement in activities; the teachers awareness of each child's individual development and interest informs the process of scaffolding as children are engaged in activities; and the tone of the initiation influences the child's interest in engagement in the activity. This is a cyclical process within which these components of the teacher-child interaction affect the continually developing teacher-child relationship, which in turn, influences the effectiveness of the teacher-child interactions. This relationship has relevance for supporting learning and development, but also when children perceive a closer relationship to the teacher, they are more inclined to share personal thoughts and concerns (Pianta & Steinberg, 1992). This information facilitates the process of the teacher supporting children when a parent is deployed (Allen & Staley, 2007).

One of the teachers commented that the development of relationships and interactions is based on the teachers making themselves known to the children. There were many examples of differences among teachers and how the children might have perceived them, some very positive and some negative. There was a general pattern

across the sources of documentation that the relationships between the teachers and children were not positive, and there were several indications of conflictual relationships.

These differences among teacher were observed in a variety of situations. As a manager of routines, for several of the teachers, the typical interaction with the children was to move them methodically through the routines of the day, while others use the routines as opportunities to connect with the children. Several teachers interacted with the children in order to get materials for them, but did not discuss what the children were doing with the materials. The child who commented that he wished the teachers would play with the children reflected the sentiment expressed by many children.

We Need Support From The Parents

There were many indications of interest by parents to have more of a connection with the teachers, and teachers expressed a desire to have more understanding and support from the parents. Although both parents and teachers discussed this desire for a closer connection, there was very little evidence of efforts to develop this connection. This was often related to the frequency of teacher change, with so many different teachers in the classroom, the parents were not sure who the teachers were, and the teachers were not sure which parent and child were in the same family.

When teachers are engaged with children in individualized learning and developmental activities, whether teacher-planned or child-directed, this gives the teacher a variety of information to share with the parents (Keyser, 2006) – even for those teachers in the classroom just from 2:00 to 6:00.

The Children Play With Each Other

One of the major insights of this research came from the parent interviews. The parents talked about the importance of children being connected with one another, and how those connections can help minimize the negative effects of teacher change. This was discussed in relation to various parts of the program. Several parents talked about the importance of arrival time, and the differences in teachers related to how familiar they were with the children, and personal characteristics of the teachers. Some teachers went to the children and greeted them warmly, and other teachers did not acknowledge the arrival of the children. Although the parents expressed a desire for teachers to greet their child and help the child get involved in activities, several parents thought their children were compensating for the lack of a greeting by unfamiliar teachers. They described situations of arriving in the room, and being aware that their children were looking around to see who was familiar, and if there were unfamiliar teachers, the children would go to other children they knew.

This strategy seemed to work well for children who had made connections with other children, and were comfortable joining others who were already there. There were other children, however, who had not made connections with classmates, and the lack of a connection with a teacher or a child resulted in a difficult arrival transition for some. Parents described situations in which their child would scan the room at arrival, and if they did not see anyone they wanted to be with, they would ask the parent to take them home; or parents would arrive at the end of the day to find their child sitting alone at the door with their coat on, waiting for the parent to come take them home.

Although it is critical to help all teachers develop a variety of strategies for developing positive relationships and engaging in positive interactions with all of the children, there are important implications for child-child connections. By supporting children through activities and discussions to develop many positive, in-depth relationships with other children, the children will be empowered with a strategy that could be an important contribution to their lived experience in the classroom when there are changes in teachers. The children can develop the skill and interest in greeting one another, and inviting one another into their play activities.

We Don't Have To Be Friends

The relationships among teachers in this classroom were not conducive to teachers feeling empowered in the work they do, or for minimizing the negative effects when there are teacher changes. The three full-time teachers in this classroom had started working together just a few weeks before the research began. They functioned as three individuals working in the same space, but none of them shared the perspective that this was a teaching team, working together to plan and implement the program. All of the teachers did make some positive comments about one another, but they also expressed frustrations in trying to work together. As one teacher explained, she told the other teachers that they did not have to be friends, but they did need to try to work together enough to have a good program for the children.

Summary: It Is What The Teachers Do

There was so much teacher change, although no official teacher turnover, in this classroom during the research period. The insights that emerged from the documentation

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were related to the link between teacher quality and teacher change. The teachers, parents, and administrators all strongly indicated the need to have less change in the classroom teachers. However, the teacher behaviors and interactions with the parents and children were very important for minimizing the negative effects of teacher change. Some of the parents indicated that what the teachers did was actually more important to them than whether the teacher was the same one who had been there the previous week.

The patterns of teacher behavior were understood in terms of interactions on a continuum, with the categories of reactive, neutral, or proactive. Whether or not teachers were new to the classroom, their behaviors could be described by these categories. Some teachers were basically reactive, accommodating children's requests for materials or commenting on inappropriate behaviors. The teachers who might be described as neutral were those who seemed to be aloof or disconnected from the children, as well as the program. Examples would be the teachers who spent a lot of time at the teacher work station, organizing or making materials, while other individual teachers led a large group activity, or the teacher who described herself as, "Just another adult so we have ratio while the teachers are on break." The teachers who would be described as proactive are those who demonstrate more of the teacher behaviors consistent with high quality early childhood education, especially behaviors related to teacher-child or teacher-parent interactions. With these teachers, their verbal and nonverbal behaviors expressed interest in the child or parent. It is these kinds of behaviors that support the development of relationships and positive interactions, as well as supporting child engagement in

activities for learning and development, thus minimizing the negative effects of teacher change.

It was evident that a critical factor determining where the teacher was on this continuum of reactive, neutral, or proactive, was the commitment of the individual teacher to maintaining high-quality practices in the early childhood program. The afternoon schedule included a two-hour naptime and then a two-hour outdoor time. For much of this afternoon schedule, as the children played independently, the teachers sat together visiting with one another, typically conversations not related to the classroom. They were not demonstrating an understanding of the potential they had for making a difference in the life of each child in the classroom, or an understanding of high quality early childhood practices.

Teacher education and training was a continual challenge for the administrators who were charged with hiring and training new teachers. However, teacher quality is critical for minimizing the negative effects of teacher change, and there are several relevant insights gleaned from this research that could be incorporated into teacher training. Applying the feminist theory goal of empowerment, training that addresses the effects of teacher change, and how to minimize the negative effects, will empower teachers to fulfill their responsibilities more effectively and with less stress. It is acknowledged that teacher education is especially challenging in a center with frequent teacher changes, so the most critical issues need to be addressed using the most effective training strategies. The understandings from this research should contribute to the reduction of teacher change, as well as minimizing the negative effects of change when it

does occur. Maintaining an awareness of the perspective of the child, as well as the adults in the situation, will enhance the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the effects of teacher change, whether that be teacher turnover or the daily changes in the classroom. This approach will contribute to intersubjectivity, the shared meaning of teacher change and how to most effectively minimize the negative effects for the various people involved in the classroom.

<center>Educational Implications</center>

Several educational implications were gleaned from the theme analysis of this study, with the implications intended to minimize the negative effects of teacher change. Categories of implications are: the meaning of teacher change, clarifying who the teachers are and what it means to be a teacher, classroom connections, and early childhood practices and procedures.

The main implication is for early childhood programs to think more in terms of total teacher change in the classroom, rather than being limited by the official definition of teacher turnover. It is especially helpful to think about this in terms of the child's experience in the classroom. Related to a focus on the experience from the perspective of the child, it will also be important to clarify who is a teacher, being intentional and consistent about referring to everyone who has the responsibility for a given group of children, as teacher, and talking with the children about what it means to be a teacher. This process can be facilitated by a teacher orientation that is very specific about the roles of the teachers and the children as a team in the process of learning and development. Also, teacher training that supports teachers in clarifying how they perceive themselves

as teachers and how they perceive children as learners, with the intent of empowering teachers by helping them to understand their potential as facilitators of learning and development.

Another series of implications relates to the classroom teachers understanding the basic difference between age-appropriate and developmentally-appropriate. This distinction is critical because it is the basis for gauging interactions with children, information that would be especially important for teachers new to the classroom and the children. Within this context, classroom teachers will be strengthened by an understanding of the distinction between the appropriateness of specific knowledge and skills, in relation to the appropriateness of how children are engaged in the development and learning of the knowledge and skills.

Because all teachers, even those very new to the classroom, need to be engaged with the children, it is critical for them to understand the value of and process of children learning through play, the learning and developmental goals of various activities, and the teacher's role in that process. This would include clarifying the meaning of child-directed and teacher-structured activities, and the role of teacher and child for each, including how children can participate in decision-making in both approaches.

Teachers who are substitutes or part-time, who do not spend much time in the classroom, are less likely to understand how these particular children are most meaningfully engaged in activities. It would be helpful to organize classroom information that would be easily accessible and useful to these teachers who are less familiar with the classroom and the children. An example would be to post information in each learning

center, so teacher have information about how those activities and materials provide

opportunities for learning and development, including examples of teacher comments and

questions, or other interactions that support and extend the child's learning and

development. Part of this process would include supporting teachers in consistently using

more indirect guidance methods to minimize the need for direct guidance (Gartrell,

2004), to address the concern about teachers doing more classroom management, rather

than teaching-learning interactions when there is teacher change (Bloom, 1997). This

process would include empowering teachers to perceive themselves as facilitators of

learning rather than as rule enforcers.

All of the teachers would benefit from support in learning simple, easy to do child

assessment procedures, how to organize this information, and how to use this information

throughout the day to support and individualize comprehensive learning and development

(McAfee & Leong, 2002). In addition, supporting all teachers in learning the components

of and the process of obuchenie, the collaborative teaching-learning interactions, that

include the process of scaffolding to build on the assessment information for individual

children (Bodrova & Leong, 1996).

It would also be beneficial to support teachers in developing skills in helping

children develop more meaningful and in-depth connections with one another (Baker &

Manfredi-Petitt, 2004). These abilities would include children's developing interest in

and learning specific skills for greeting one another, inviting others into play activities, or

asking to join others in play. This principle of classroom connections could be extended

to establish consistent practices for teachers and parents to know one another and work

together as a team, supporting the learning and development of the child. All of these educational implications for the classroom would be enhanced by supporting classroom teachers in functioning as co-teachers, to establish a teaching team working cooperatively in planning and implementing the program.

<center>Research Implications</center>

The research implications are related to minimizing the frequency of teacher change in the classroom, as well as minimizing the effects of teacher change when it does occur. It would be very helpful to have much more research about the patterns and effects of daily changes in teachers, including but not limited to teacher turnover. This would provide information about staffing decisions related to the classroom experience, as well as provide information about what is actually happening in relation to daily change. This is a new area of research, there are many research possibilities.

Because the child-child connections are potentially one way of minimizing the effects of teacher change, it would be beneficial to conduct more research about how these connections are established and maintained. Related research would be the meaning of child-child relationships for the children when there are changes in the teachers, including how child-child relationships are related to individual teacher-child relationships.

Because of the crucial nature of teacher quality in relation to teacher change, it would be beneficial to conduct research about teacher awareness of child effects in relation to teacher change, and how other teachers support children's understanding of the experience of teacher change. In relation to this, it would be insightful to include

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research about teacher training practices that most effectively build a clear understanding of the crucial nature of high quality early childhood principles and practices, and the development of a commitment to consistently implement such, especially in relation to child effects when there are changes in teachers. The effects of teacher change are closely linked to teacher quality and the functioning of the teaching team. It would be beneficial to simultaneously conduct research about teacher change in two classrooms within the same center that has frequent teacher change – to understand how the functioning of the teaching team is related to the effects of teacher change.

The insights from this research were especially meaningful because they focused on the perspective of the classroom participants: teachers, children, parents, and administrators. More research that is grounded in feminist methodology or other approaches that focus on the perspective of the research participants would be a very beneficial contribution to the early childhood field. An example of this kind of focus would be the relation between teacher quality and nomenclature, or what we call the teacher. In this research, the teachers were referred to in many different ways, and this seemed to be related to their self-perceptions and the quality of their interactions with the children. Information gleaned about this process could be invaluable for informing decisions made by program directors and trainers.

Limitations of The Study

Because this study was limited to one classroom in a military center, and the focus was on a systemic understanding from the perspective of the participants, the specific results would not be applicable to other classrooms. In addition, the results and

conclusions would have been more meaningful and provided more extensive insights if the research participants had greater involvement in the analysis of data and generation of themes. The remote location of the research site and the very busy schedules of the research participants resulted in the lack of some follow-up for data clarification that may have contributed to an understanding of the lived experience.

<div align="center">Concluding Thoughts About This Research</div>

This research identified and described a missing piece in the understanding about the pervasiveness of daily teacher change in an early childhood classroom. Prior research had focused on teacher turnover, that is, permanent changes in classroom teachers. The process of addressing the effects of changes in teachers will be based on a much stronger foundation by integrating information about both of these components – teacher turnover as well as daily changes in teachers.

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APPENDIX A

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Semi-Structured Interview For Adults

Teacher Questions:

1. What is it like for you to be the teacher of this group of children in this program?

2. What are your greatest challenges as an early childhood teacher?

3. What are your greatest satisfactions as an early childhood teacher?

4. How is your interaction with children affected when a co-teacher is out of the classroom for several hours or a few days?

5. How is your interaction with children affected when a co-teacher resigns and is replaced?

6. How do you think children are affected when either teacher is out of the classroom short-term or resigns and is replaced by another?

7. What teacher characteristics do you think are most important in promoting child adjustment and involvement in activities?

8. If you were going to plan a workshop for early childhood teachers, what skills and areas of knowledge do you think teachers need most?

Parent Questions

1. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of your child's classroom?

2. What do you think makes it difficult for teachers as they interact with children in the classroom?

3. What do you think your child likes about this classroom? What does your child like to do?

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4. What is it like for you when your child has a new teacher? Or your child's teacher is out for the day? Do you see this affecting your child, any behavior change or verbal comments about teacher change?

5. What would you like for new or substitute or part-time teachers to know about working with your child?

Administrator Questions:

1. What does it mean to you to be an early childhood program director for this group of children and parents?

2. What are your greatest challenges as an early childhood program director?

3. What are your greatest satisfactions as an early childhood program director?

4. If you were going to plan a workshop for early childhood teachers, what skills and areas of knowledge do you think teachers need most?

5. What helps you do your job well and what are the barriers? What would help you do a better job in planning for teachers and children, especially in relation to teacher change in the classroom?

6. How is the teacher-child interaction affected when a teacher leaves? How is this interaction affected when substitutes or floaters are in the room?

7. In what ways does this particular program affect teacher-child interaction?

8. What teacher characteristics do you think are most important in promoting child adjustment and involvement in activities?

9. What do you think are the characteristics of an excellent program for young children?

10. If you could make changes in this program, what would be the most important ones? Why?

Semi-Structured Interview For Children

The child interview is done as casual conversation during typical play, a

recorder is worn by the interviewer to be as unobtrusive as possible.

1. What is it like being in this classroom?

2. If a new child came to your classroom, what would you tell that child so he or she would understand the kinds of things you do here?

3. If you were the teacher in this classroom, what things might you do as the teacher?

4. What things do you enjoy most in your classroom?

5. What things do you not enjoy very much?

6. What is it like when you have a different teacher in your classroom?

7. What would you like for a new teacher to know about you?

8. What is it like when you play with other children or with your teacher or with me (after interacting with child(ren))?

Structured Interview For Children

Date_____

Child Name_____   Child ID#_____

The child will be shown pictures of teachers and be asked to point to the picture of the person with whom they most like to do the following, and then asked with whom else they like to do these things.

1. Who do you like to help you fall asleep at naptime? _____
   Who else?_____

2. Who do you want to help you if you fall down and get hurt?_____
   Who else?_____

3. Who do you like to play house with in the dramatic play area?_____
   Who else?_____

4. Who do you like to read books with?_____
   Who else?_____

5. Who do you like to play with playdough with?_____
   Who else?_____

5. Who do you like to sit at your table with you for snack or lunch?_____
   Who else?_____