9-2016

The Influences Of Teacher Self-Reflection Practices While Interacting With Families

Nena M. Cunningham
University of New England

THE INFLUENCES OF TEACHER SELF-REFLECTION PRACTICES WHILE
INTERACTING WITH FAMILIES

By

Nena M. Cunningham

BA (University of Maine Farmington) 2011
MS (University of Maine Farmington) 2013

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Affiliated Faculty of

The College of Graduate and Professional Studies at the University of New England

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the degree of Doctor of Education

Portland & Biddeford, Maine

August, 2016

Nena M. Cunningham
August 2016
Educational Leadership

THE INFLUENCES OF TEACHER SELF-REFLECTION PRACTICES WHILE
INTERACTING WITH FAMILIES

Abstract

Self-reflection in early childhood education is one reform effort that has taken hold in the
education community. This study shares some of the findings of a qualitative study that explored
how five teachers identified and implemented strategies of self-reflection, and how these
strategies informed their practice. The purpose of this study was to better understand self-
reflection and how it influences interactions with families. The theoretical framework originates
in the works of Touchpoints® and Bandura, and applies a theoretical framework to give voice to
the teachers within the context of their community action program. Four themes were culled
from the data and categorized within three methods. These themes highlighted how the teachers
internalized and practiced self-reflection in this program. The findings suggest that these teachers
had a sophisticated understanding of self-reflection and learned to reflect through various
opportunities, and in different contexts. This study has implications for the ways in which
teachers learn about self-reflection, practice strategies while interacting with families, and is
insightful for teacher to become reflective practitioners.

University of New England

Doctor of Education
Educational Leadership

This dissertation was presented
by

Nena M. Cunningham

It was presented on
August 1, 2016
and approved by:

Michelle Collay, Ph.D., Lead Advisor
University of New England

Carol Burbank, Ph.D., Secondary Advisor,
University of New England

Beth Hatcher, Ph.D., Affiliate Committee Member
University of Maine Farmington

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter 1

Introduction

Early Childhood (EC) teachers of young children can often be described as caring individuals who love and respect the children in their care. Many times, children and their families form special bonds with their teachers and view them as a part of their family units. Often minimal training is required for the job and teachers depend on training opportunities to help them grow professionally. These teachers are faced with a wide variety of situations and having formal training in self-reflection will promote strategies to support each teacher. Within EC programs, there are resources that teachers can utilize to grow professionally. One of the resources that can be utilized is the process of self-reflection. EC Teachers form close working relationships with not only children and their families, but with their peer teachers as well.

Utilizing self-reflection practices as a tool for professional growth can be a powerful aspect of transforming one's practice. This practice may include understanding multiple aspects of parenting, personal relationships, or using constructive criticism as a venue to deepen knowledge (Purvis, Cross, Jones, and Buff, 2012; Shivers et al., 2004). Teachers can provide peer teachers with encouragement and serve as role models for other individuals within the program. Self-reflection can provide new insights to transform one's self, the organization in which one works, and in the communities that they live. Most teachers want to be viewed as competent and knowledgeable regardless of their educational path. Self-reflection can provide teachers with an opportunity to reflect on their interactions, thoughts, and perceptions of different situations (Baum and Swick, 2008; Eberly, Joshi, & Konzal, 2007). Teachers can use self-reflection as a means of improving their practices and understand who they are as teachers.

Teachers who have utilized their reflective practices as resources can influence their peer teachers and other individuals that work within the same organizations or programs towards common goals (Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002). These resources can be identified as self-reflection practices. Teachers may begin to support others work toward the same goals and eventually create an organizational culture of helping and learning to use self-reflection practices as a tool for personal and professional growth. Teachers who work to support each other and are able to use self-reflection strategies may develop leadership practices to enhance professional development.

Statement of the Problem

Many teachers have never been asked to formally self-reflect on their behaviors and personal biases. Bevins, Jordan, and Perry (2011) demonstrated that the ability to grow professionally is enhanced by the practice of self-reflection. This study will provide data that can demonstrate self-reflection's efficacy. Researchers like Yost (2006) and Yang (2009) have pointed out the need to understand how multiple strategies and practices in self-reflection support teacher self-efficacy skills. Thus, there is value in research that supports the use of self-reflection that leads to a change in practices as a way of enhancing communication and fostering professional development. The Touchpoints® approach may be utilized as a tool for practicing self-reflection.

The Touchpoints® approach is a developmental model and relational framework that helps to guide individual ECE teachers in order to practice self-reflection. The developmental model focuses on prenatal development to childhood development of the students. This model serves as a foundation for child development and teacher knowledge while working with

families. Teachers use this developmental model to build on the relationships between family members and their children.

Recent research by the Brazelton Touchpoints Center® urges more researchers to examine self-reflection with respect to the Guiding Principles and Practitioner Assumptions (Brazelton Touchpoints Center®, 2015). These Guiding Principles and Practitioner Assumptions will be discussed in detail, in Chapter Two. Early childhood teachers working in organizations have the opportunity to grow as professionals though systematic reflection while they work with families and children in their care. Touchpoints provide a reflective framework, but reflective practice more generally is the focus of this study.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this phenomenology case study was to uncover individual stories from new teachers who began to use self-reflection practices as a means of improving interactions with families. Phenomenological research seeks to uncover or gain different perspectives into a phenomenon or experience (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012). This study includes five newly hired teachers and assistant teachers who are working for a community action program that includes Early Head Start and Head Start. Their stories add to the existing body of research by uncovering self-reflection practices as they pertain to interactions with families.   In turn, these results demonstrate that self-reflection practices strengthen teacher's relationships with families and understand professional development and self-efficacy. This study examined the following questions:

1. What do teachers think about their interactions while communicating with families?
2. How do they practice self-reflection to improve their interactions with families?

3. What strategies do teachers use in order to reflect on their interactions with families?

4. Which strategies do they find to be most helpful when thinking about in interaction they had with a family? Why?

5. What influence has the Touchpoints® approach training had on teacher/family interactions?

Conceptual framework

This study identified the ways self-reflection can influence self-efficacy and communications with families as teachers are faced with a variety of situations. Self-reflection practices were examined through individual participant journals, interviews and by participation in a focus group. The researcher utilized the Touchpoints® approach as one of the theoretical frameworks because it "examines the multiple roles of teachers in the school culture and explains the relation of individuals, small groups, and the whole process of change" (Anfara & Mertz, 2006, p. 8). The theoretical framework for this study has elements of Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy model as teachers use their prior experiences to learn and make changes over time. Bandura (1997) states "people analyze the situations that confront them, consider alternative courses of action, judge their abilities to carry them out successfully, and estimate the results the actions are likely to produce" (p. 5).

Working with families who struggle with difficult situations can be emotionally draining. The importance for Early Care and Education teachers to process these situations is to help them reflect on each aspect of their teaching styles. Self-reflection about parenting can be a challenge if the situation does not match one's personal beliefs or family cultures. Utilizing self-reflection practices in order to understand personal biases may influence a teacher's initial reaction to families. Reflection over time can strengthen interactions with those families. This process of

self-reflection requires each individual to be vulnerable, to think beyond personal perspectives and to set aside personal biases.

According to Anfara and Mertz (2006), "useful theory is one that tells an enlightening story about some phenomenon. It is a story that gives you new insights and broadens your understandings of the phenomenon" (p. xvii). The stories shared by these participants will help other teachers and professionals understand how they use different reflection strategies. This study fits within phenomelogical research because of the focus on individual perspectives that helped to uncover how each teacher views themselves as reflective practitioners. Saevi (2014) describes phenomenology in educational research as "subject to educational interests, purposes and moral considerations, from which it cannot be separated" (p. 4). Phenomenology "aims to open up possibilities for creating formative relations between being and acting, between who we are and how we act, between thoughtfulness and tact" (van Manen, 2007, p. 13). Wertz (2005) and Manen (1984) state that a phenomenological study discovers and conceptualizes a specific subject matter while exploring a new real-life experience. While Merriam (2009) describes phenomenology as "uncovering and individual's experience" (p. 93). These perceptions can help past and future research understand self-reflection practices used by teachers. They describe "building blocks of theory" as concepts that allow us the ability to relate history and past events with future research and theory (Anfara & Mertz, 2006, p. xv). The preliminary literature review is grounded in the Touchpoints® approach, because of its focus on the individual reflective practices and practices within groups. These practices are examined through the individual participants and their reflections of the interactions with families.

Teachers, like children, learn through various methods. Some learn best listening to others share their experiences, while others verbally share reflections on their work. All learning

takes place in the context of "disorganization" (Brazelton, 2015). Through disorganization, one can reflect within a group setting, with a peer teacher or a mentor. This disorganization process of learning self-reflection directly relates to this study. The Touchpoints® approach is designed to help teachers and other practitioners think about their personal style and move through the developmental process of becoming a great teacher. Touchpoints® is a collection of various theories and frameworks that shape child development, research and philosophy. This is similar to what Piaget (1952) refers to as assimilation/adaptation. He believed that no matter the age of the individual, this process of learning takes place in "a manner consistent with the basic tenets of evolutionary theory" (as referenced by McLeod, 2009, p. 35).

At its essence, the Brazelton Touchpoints® approach is a reflective one. Reflective Practice is woven throughout Touchpoints® training as facilitators share the core concepts, guide each activity and encourage active reflection. The Guiding Principles serve as a guide to reflective practice, with the Practitioner Assumptions as attitudes that help apply the Principles as strategies. Reflective coaching is designed to support providers who are working to integrate the Touchpoints Approach®. Reflective coaching is described as "a well-defined and crafted practice that carries very specific meaning and associated action" (Loughran, 2009, p. 33). Reflective practice serves as a catalyst for critical thinking about past interactions and Touchpoints® is a tool for enhancing reflective practices.

Touchpoints® is based on an evidence-based theory of child development that refers to specific points in a child's life, where he/she begins to do something new. T. Berry Brazelton and his colleagues at the Children's Hospital in Boston and communities around the world base this theory on more than sixty years of research. Touchpoints® is a tool for strengthening parent-child relationships, continuing through the early childhood years. It also provides parents

and caregivers with the opportunity to carefully observe and support each other understand child's behaviors, strengths, and growing capacities. This is a communication tool for childcare providers and parents who are seeing the same child at different points of the day. Yet, its function as a tool depends on the ability and willingness of teachers to internalize the strategies offered.

This study identified how individual self-reflection practices affect interactions with families, as teachers are faced with difficult situations and how they make sense of these situations with their peers. The researcher utilized the Touchpoints® approach as a foundational strategy and framework, because it "examines the multiple roles of teachers in the school culture and explains the relation of individuals, small groups, and the whole process of change" (Anfara & Mertz, 2006, p. 8).   The results, built on this strong foundation, demonstrate the power of these tools. However, the results move beyond the Touchpoints® approach to track the often-sophisticated developmental application of these tools as teachers use self-reflection to move from *how they behave* to *who they are as professionals.* Figure 1 illustrates how theory influenced the research.

Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework Tree*

Conceptual Framework

Note: Conceptual framework created from the literature review.

Assumptions and Scope

During the course of this study, it was important to assume that teachers were working towards individual outcomes and goals for improvement. Every new employee within the researchers program attends the Touchpoints® Individual Level Training within his or her first year of employment. Then they are required to attend a minimum of six reflective practice sessions over the first year to complete the training. It can be assumed that some individuals are attending to meet the minimum requirements, while others are fully engaged in the process. The

program adopted the Touchpoints® approach as a framework to guide teachers' interactions with children, families, community partners and peers.

It may be assumed that the researcher's presence within the group might have supported or hindered individual responses based on comfort level. Each participant went through the initial training with the researcher as one of the three facilitators. Most of the teachers are familiar with the researcher professionally and have known her prior to the training. Others joined the training at the beginning of their employment with the agency. The researchers' interest in individual stories was based on previous experiences and curiosity that drove the research. The researcher's presence within the center supported the practice of self-reflection and aided professional development among all teaching staff.

Significance

This study addresses teacher self-reflection practices within a high quality-training program with interactions with families to illuminate positive relationships and professional growth. Positive relationships are viewed as working beyond the traditional role of a teacher, including collaboration with parents and being actively involved with the greater community. (Campbell-Evans, Stamopolous, & Maloney, 2014). Teachers not only have the opportunity to influence young children and their families, but also can grow within a field where professional standards are present throughout many high quality programs.

Definition of Terms

Early Childhood Education – The study or practice of teachers who work with children from
 birth to five years of age and their families.

Touchpoints® – A relational model and developmental framework that promotes partnership

between providers, children and families. A way of understanding and being with

families. An evidence-based theory and approach to working with families in early

education and care settings. An approach to changing systems of care to support

professional development and change in individual practice (Brazelton Touchpoints

Center®, 2015).

Self-Reflection – The process of thinking about one's actions, thoughts, and responses before,

during and after an interaction.

Practitioner Assumptions – Statements that focuses on building relationships as an integral goal

of the practitioner interactions in diverse settings.

Guiding Principles – Statements that offer reflective opportunities to effectively join the system

of care around young children and their families.

Conclusion

Individual teacher stories are the heart of this research study. Teachers who utilize self-reflection practices with peer teachers to process interactions they have with families learn about their own biases. Identifying and processing individual beliefs and biases may support more positive interactions with families. Teachers identify strategies for self-reflection based on their learning styles and personalities. These differing styles help to support a multitude of learners along their developmental path.

The literature review explores work from the Brazelton Touchpoints Center®, Harada, Lum, and Souza (2003), Bayat (2010), McFarland, Saunders and Allen (2009), Baum and Swick

(2008) and many others that place this study in context. These researchers have the concept of reflection within their studies and bring multiple viewpoints depending on each study.

The strategies reviewed in the literature include self-reflection as a professional development process. These strategies are depicted through the eyes of five teachers who work within the Early Childhood Education field. Their stories uncover and support a deeper understanding of self-reflection practices in action. The researcher collected their stories, analyzed the themes, identified phenomena, documented findings and made recommendations for additional research to gain an understanding of self-reflection strategies, and how trained teachers have shifted their strategies after being trained.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This literature review considers past and present themes related to self-reflection of Early Childhood Teachers and identifies common themes embedded in the Touchpoints® approach. The following themes are discussed throughout this literature review: practitioner self-reflection, practitioner views about their interactions with families, and professional development for early childhood professionals to refine and develop skills. Development of reflective practices is essential, so teachers can use the skills they have as a tool for processing their interpretations of interactions they have with families.

Effective communication is the key for working collaboratively with families (Maring & Magelky, 1990). Teachers who use professional development and reflective practice opportunities to strengthen their communication skills can improve their interactions with families and between family members and other service providers. The Touchpoints® approach is used throughout this literature review as a guide towards teacher self-reflective practices and strategies to improve teacher development.

Touchpoints® Approach

Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, a pediatrician who worked with young children and their families for decades, developed the "Touchpoints®" approach. He argues that children's development comes in bursts and pauses and their parents are the experts and hold the key to their child's developmental path. Parents build stronger relationships with their children during a developmental burst. "The health and development of a baby, is directly influenced by the

quality of care and experiences a child has with their parents and other caregivers" (Brazelton Touchpoint Center®, 2015).

Much of the Brazelton Touchpoints® research conducted is within the medical field. More research is being published as it relates to Early Care and Education. Currently, researchers at the Brazelton Touchpoints Center® in Boston, Massachusetts is collecting data about child development and the parent-child relationship Early Care and Education professionals await the final reports, in order to provide legislative officials with data to support local and federal funding. Dr. Joshua Sparrow, Director of Strategy at the Brazelton Touchpoints Center®, notes "whenever you feel frustrated about what a parent is doing, or feel [yourself] making a judgement about a parent who is doing something negative, it is the signal to stop and check in with yourself" (Sparrow, 2013). This is a process of self-reflection and setting aside personal beliefs and judgments.

The Touchpoints® approach is a relational framework that promotes the parent-child relationship and focuses on the development of children. It requires professionals to reflect on their own biases while working with families from many different backgrounds and life experiences. While this approach focuses on child development and the relationship between parent and child, it also challenges teachers to think beyond their knowledge based on previous experience. Teachers' own experiences are culturally-bound according to Hedges and Lee (2010).

Becoming aware of one's own biases allow teachers to work collaboratively with families in school settings. Once teachers recognize how their personal thoughts or beliefs influences their interaction's, they can learn to set them apart from their work with families.

Principles and Assumptions of Touchpoints®. When ECH teachers can be a

supportive presence in a family's life, they promote healthy relationships that serve as the

foundation to a child's success. This strength-based approach offers teachers a worldview about

teacher-family relationships that is culturally affirming and collaborative (Walsh, 2002). There

are eight guiding principles and four practitioner assumptions teachers explore on a regular basis.

These principles and assumptions are the framework to the Touchpoints® approach.   Table 1

outlines these guiding principles and practitioner assumptions.

Table 1

Touchpoints® Approach

Touchpoints® Guiding Principles	Practitioner Assumptions
Recognize what you bring to the interaction	Each practitioner is the expert within the context of his/her practice setting
Look for opportunities to support mastery	
	Practitioners want to be competent
Use the behavior of the child as your language	
	Practitioners need support and respect of the kind we are asking them to give parents
Be willing to discuss matters that go beyond your traditional role	
	Practitioners need to reflect on their contribution to the parent-provider interactions
Value and understand the relationship between you and the parent	
Focus on the parent-child relationship	
Value passion wherever you find it	
Value disorganization	

Note: From the Touchpoints® approach Trainers Guide (Version 3.0).

EC Teachers trained in this approach may feel challenged to believe the principles and

assumptions because of their personal beliefs about parental roles. Teachers may not able to take

different perspectives because of their lack of cultural competence. Providers need to reflect on

their contribution to the parent-provider interactions. The provider assumptions can be viewed as a belief system that can be used when thinking about interactions with families and are relevant to this study because of the aspect of self-reflection. These tools are valuable to this study because, like Khales and Meier (2013), teachers "bring their own interests and experiences" (p. 66) when connecting with families.

Hedges and Lee (2010) believe teachers' "espoused positive beliefs about partnership are often enacted in practice, particularly when the diverse experiences of families in education settings are unfamiliar to teachers" (p. 257). They also agree when teachers are faced with an unfamiliar setting they may experience a moment of hesitation. This hesitation often generates reflection and provokes changes in knowledge and beliefs. Sparrow (2013) illustrates this point when he discusses the importance of self-reflection and setting aside personal beliefs and judgements.

These are the suggested strategies that the Touchpoints® approach trains teachers to use when working with families; Why. Am. I. Talking (W.A.I.T.), active listening, common language, strength-based approach, and self-reflection. The teachers in this study use this terminology and try these strategies throughout the study. These strategies exist within the Touchpoints® theory, but are not original to the approach. They draw from previous work from researchers such as, Kansanen (1995), Walsh (2002), and Edwards and Thomas (2010). For the purposes of this study, these research-based strategies served as a useful foundation for discussion and exploration of self-reflective practices.

Practitioner Self-Reflection

Early Childhood (ECH) teachers who work with children and families must consider their own values and beliefs and learn how to set them aside in order to work effectively with families.

Self-reflection by practitioners has been studied over the past century, and researchers such as Kansanen (1995) views self-reflection as a shared aspect of teachers and learners. Viewing teachers as learners is a common view according to Nickel, Sutherby, and Garrow-Cliver (2010). They emphasize effective teachers as having learned from effective mentors. These mentors can provide honest feedback, promote knowledge and share techniques.

Teachers are learners and they provide mentoring and coaching for their peers. Many researchers share similar views, but for the purpose of this review, only recent resources are utilized. One research study by Bayat (2010) focused on journal writing and video technology as methods of productive reflection. The researcher found that teachers were more likely to reflect on their actions when they were able to think independently or watch themselves in action. Another study done by Leiberman (1995) suggests that teacher learning is closely related to student learning, which include active involvement through thinking about and articulating what they have learned. A wide range of teacher's especially early Childhood teachers practices self-reflection. These teachers work closely with families and need to take time to think about their role within the context of each family.

Reflective Practice by ECH Teachers. The origin and definitions of self-reflection has been re-framed in literature over the last decade. Edwards and Thomas (2010) state that reflective practice cannot be taught as a "prescriptive set of skills" (p. 404). In fact, they believe "it can never…be a form of education to be drawn up as a blueprint and applied" (Edwards & Thomas, 2010, p. 405). While McFarland, Saunders and Allen (2009) believe that "self-reflection allows educators to distance themselves from their thoughts and actions, make sense of how and why particular practices worked or didn't work, and use new understandings of these

processes to adapt practices to be more effective in the future" (p. 506). In contrast, Galea (2012) argues that:

> [ECH] Teachers can develop their own thinking about their own practice with the aim of changing it according to students' needs, educational transformations would not have to necessarily adhere to some linear predetermined scheme. They would open up to the very differences in the learning that could proliferate in educational possibilities. (p. 245)

Self-reflective Early Childhood teachers may be more effective working with families because they are able to take on different perspectives. Harada, Lum, and Souza (2003) stated teachers and families "bring their own interests and experiences" (p. 66) as they work together. Similarly, Khales and Meier (2013) belive that highlighting reflection promotes perspective taking and expereinces in implementing an inquiry-based approach to learning. Effective teachers put their personal biases aside and focus on individual family cultures. Teachers who are able to reflect on their view points, biases, and individual family cultures may serve as links to connecting other teachers within their organizational community.

Practitioner Views

Practitioner (Teacher) views are seen in a variety of ways based on personal biases or family cultures. These views can be as simple as child rearing practices or discipline techniques. Teachers working with families that may clash with their own personal beliefs can create challenging situations. For example, if a family believes in spanking as a form of discipline and the teacher believes in redirection, it could present as a challenge working effectively with the family. Each individual teacher must reflect on their own attitude whether they are positive or negative in a manner supporting their students and families.

Personal Biases. Teacher dispositions towards families can vary depending on their past relationships and personal reflections. If teachers exhibit a positive attitude toward the families they work with, they will be able to work collaboratively with them (Baum & Swick, 2008). Working with families on varying degrees and from different cultural backgrounds is important, because teachers need to "understand parents' beliefs and child-rearing practices" (Eberly, Joshi, & Konzal, 2007, p. 21). If teachers can take a step back and recognize what they are bringing to the interactions, they can provide support and guidance during difficult situations. They are more likely to view the situation from an outside perspective and can provide guidance appropriately.

Personal biases can affect teachers' ability to connect with families and children. Teachers are often seen as experts who have the answers and hold an authoritarian position. While some families are comfortable with their child's teacher, many have personal experiences that act as barriers (Baum & Swick, 2008). Some teachers are unable to understand these barriers if they have not undergone similar experiences.

Culture. Family cultures differ from family to family. Individuals within different family structures bring their own thoughts, beliefs, and personal experiences to their role as a ECH teacher. Purvis, Cross, Jones, and Buff (2012) defined culture as "the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterize an institution organization or group" (p. 12). It is the teacher's responsibilty to look for personal strengths within each family member and help them to feel more confident in their abilities. Eberly, Joshi and Konzal (2007) use the term "judging others" (p. 21) when teacher and family members exhibit judgemental attitudes when interacting with one another. Shivers et al. (2004) believe that "teachers and childcare

programs are embedded within ethnic communities and culture" and "there are many ways culture influences constructs relevant to a child's development" (p. 168).

ECH teachers may become more understanding when their personal lives change. One study in Finland found that teacher attitudes changed dramatically in half of the participants because of their ability to use self-reflection as a tool for development (Happo, Maatta, & Uusiautti, 2013). Some of the participants described how their attitudes changed after they had their own children. They were more understanding and thoughtful towards families they work with because they could understand parents' perspective at a personal level.

Teachers who move beyond their comfort zones and enter environments that may be unfamiliar may gain a different perspective than before. In a study done by Hedges and Lee (2010), student teachers were asked to reflect on their educational journey and what strategies encouraged them to reflect on their practices. They found that many students often "emulate their associate teacher(s) in order to achieve a pass grade, rather than take the opportunity to observe a range of approaches, and theories and reflect on these" (Hedges and Lee, 2010, p. 260). They also found that many student teachers placed themselves within settings they were unfamiliar. For example, one student teacher chose a setting where she could learn more about different family cultures that varied from her own. These brave acts may be developed by time, experiences or encouragement from peer teachers.

Practitioner views can influence their interactions with families and their peers. In order to understand personal viewpoints teachers must participate in professional development opportunities to reflect upon these views. Professional development happens within many contexts for practitioners beginning in pre-service settings and continuing through organizations. Where teachers have many years of experience. Interactions with families, both positive and

challenging, can help to shape a teachers worldview As teachers participate in professional development opportunities they may have an opportunity to expand their knowledge base and understanding of not only child development but of self-reflection.

Professional Development

Teachers learn new skills with every experience and conversation. Professional development occurs within the context of other teachers, coaches and mentors, and personal inquiry (Galinsky, 2012). Many teachers who have been in the field use their skills to support new teachers growing as professionals. Learning from experiences and personal reflections often help to shape the teachers' insight into who they are as professionals (Klentschy, 2005).

Head Start Pre-Service Teachers. Many ECE work in Head Start/Early Head Start programs, with a wide variety of teachers with varrying experiences. Pre-service teachers enrolled in teacher preparation programs explore a variety of theories and practices. In order for pre-service teachers to flourish in this type of setting, they must be prepared in their educational journey to address multiple challenges with all families. Maude et al. (2011) describe Early Care and Education programs as diverse and complex. They state "opportunities for effective professional development must be expanded to build a competent workforce in early childhood education" (p. 357).

A few of the best ways Early Care and Education programs have provided pre-service teachers with experiences is by using specific strategies like scenarios, site visits, and personal stories from families (Maude et al., 2011). These strategies help teachers understand family cultures and differences they are going to encounter once they start working with young children and families. The Brazelton Touchpoints Center® (2015) provides these Early Care and

Education programs, creating opportunities for professional development for pre-service and experienced teachers to continue their professional development and self-reflection practices.

Teacher qualification expectations vary depending on the program and its standards. For example, Head Start programs have been viewed in the past as hiring under-qualified staff members. However over the past century, Head Start Programs across the United States changed their professional development standards, now mandating that 50% of Head Start programs need to have teachers with baccalaureate degree by September 30, 2013 with the goal that an increase of those numbers would continue (Head Start Performance Standards, 2014). Now teachers in ECE classrooms must have a four year degree in Early Childhood Education or a minimum of a two year degree and currently taking courses toward a four year degree. This shift has increased the potential outcomes for children and families and promotes the process of learning for children, families and teachers as they work towards their personal goals (Head Start English Language Learners Project at Community Development Institution, 2014).

Process of Learning Self-Reflection. Developing the ability to reflect on personal and professional biases is a learning process. Many teachers are naturally self-reflective, while others are unable to look at themselves with a critical eye. The method of learning self-reflection is viewed in a multitude of ways. One way, described by Carlo and Hinkhouse (2010) is "Personalistic Reflection" (p. 59). This concept is designed for teachers to think about their professional actions and how they relate to their personal lives. They may ask themselves if how they teach students reflects who they are personally. For example, they may ask: (a) "Do they like what kind of teacher they are?" and (b) "Are they liked by their students?". All of these personal questions directly relate to their abilty to self-reflect and their connection to beliefs of their teaching style (Carlo & Hinkhouse, 2010).

In order for teachers to connect with their students they need to undertand the families they serve and the cultures of those families come from. Such as their home lives, personalities, cultural backgrounds, and even likes and dislikes. Carlo and Hinkhouse (2010) state "personalistic reflections encourage teachers to become more familiar and aware of their students' diverse backgrounds and also how to teach to those backgrounds" (p. 59).

When teachers take new postions that are in different cultural communities than their personal backgrounds and experience, they may find themselves culturally incompetent. These teachers may become frustrated or unsure of how to respond to families from different communities (Kearney, McIntosh, Perry, Dockett, & Clayton, 2014).   Kearney et al. (2014) focused on the individual stories of teachers throughout their progression as teachers who work with families outside of their comfort zone. Each teacher focused on their communication strategies to build relationships with the families.

In order for teachers to be successful teaching students, they need a lot of support, training, and professional development. When teachers are provided with opportunities to enhance their learning, they are more effective working with families (Miretzky, 2004). Teachers who work towards building relationships with families, often increase their collaboration between themsleves and the families (Vickers & Minke, 1995; Brazelton Touchpoints Center®, 2015).

"As populations change and diversity grows in all areas of the country, strategies for overcoming this obstacle are vital for everyone who works with infants and toddlers" (Nemeth & Erdosi, 2012, p. 54). They also need to understand where they are coming from and how to avoid influencing their beliefs and culture upon their students. They may not have the life

experiences to support their new teaching challenge, but they often can pull resources based on their educational experiences.

Hedges and Lee (2010) draw from Guskey's ideas about teachers' resistance to change. They belive that self-reflection may be "insufficiant as a strategy if teachers lack self-awareness or are unwilling to examine aspects of their beliefs and practices" (p. 267). In another study done by Ruth (2014), the researcher examined the beliefs about teaching and the need to distinguish the practice of teaching from the apparatus that is used to provide support for teaching. Ruth (2014) states "by promoting this distinction conceptually and in practice we may better fulfil our vocation as educators" (p. 263) and in turn promote the practice of learning.

Experience. Professional experiences occur over time and practice develops in the context of teaching and learning. The lens through which teachers view their experiences is dependent on their educational journey, personal reflections, and willingness to be vulnerable. Cornish and Jenkins (2012) look at using lenses to evaluate colleagues' experiences. This may be challenging for teachers because it forces them to be honest with their peers and provide feedback that may be tough to hear. It also "gives another perspective and more guidance in learning how to reflect" (Cornish & Jenkins, 2012, p. 166).

Teachers' educational experiences such as course work, trainings, and workshops provide them with a knowledge base to build upon. This foundation is the first step towards becoming a great teacher who can support those in the same process. Building upon formal knowledge allows new ideas and concepts about the process of learning to develop and refine over time. Teacher education in Early Childhood Development continues to change, so teachers continually need to further their education and stay up-to-date with current studies. Teaching is a dynamic

profession, and all levels of preparation and staff development need to evolve. Then, teachers need to have those resources available to them to grow as learners.

Development of Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is seen as a process of learning. This learning occurs within the context of peer interactions, group processes, mentors, and coaches that provide guidance and individual attention to each participant. Support and encouragement are key factors throughout the process for each participant. As individual teachers think about their self-reflection strategies, they may identify which works best for them. There are multiple venues for teachers to practice self-reflection. Kruse (2012) identifies one-on-one techniques to support reflection, while Bevins, Jordan, and Perry (2011) refer to utilizing the group process. Others such as Klentschy (2005) and Campbell-Evans, Stamopolous and Maloney (2014) discuss the use of coaches and mentors.

Teacher-to-Teacher. Another type of professional support comes from peers. When teachers are able to connect with each other, they open up a deeper thought process. They can ask questions and make suggestions to each other in a confidential manner. Connecting peer-to-peer allows for personal connections based on mutual trust and respect. Each teacher is able to reflect on personal frustrations and utilize their peers to help them through the process.

Kruse (2012) states that teachers can "offer a hand" (p. 5) to each other in a manner unlike any other. Teachers are able to understand each other's perceptions and support one another. Having a relationship with a co-teacher integrates a partnership that supports professional development and collaboration. Peer reflection encourages leadership qualities that promote instructional advice.

Teachers have greater potential to impact families learning about child development learning by fostering an environment of instructional collaboration. Peer interaction and the opportunity to reflect with each other, improves professional development and personal inquiry. The ability to ask questions and receive constructive criticism is an essential aspect of working with other teachers to improve professional development.

Group. Reflective practice within a small group can create a community of learning. This learning community develops trust that promotes group process. For instance, Bevins, Jordan, and Perry (2011) studied a group of nine teachers and lecturers who deveopled a community of practice within a school system. They emphasized the importance of group process as a means to improving professional development. Teachers who attend a regularly scheduled learning community group develop self confidence in their skills because they are able to ask questions without feeling incompetent. Bevins, Jordan, and Perry (2011) stated that "teachers agreed that consistent contact with the project team allowed them to tap in to the team's expertise to inform their own thinking and decision-making, which in turn enhanced their confidence to develop new stages and stimulated them to ask more questions" (p. 408).

Working within a group helps each member develop a sense of ownership and collaboration. Asking questions, as well as providing answers and comments supports the group process. Teachers whose personalities are more reserved may become engaged and begin to speak more in a comfortable environment. Each member of the group develops a sense of ownership to whatever the group is working towards. This ownership can often be described as common goals for the greater good of the program. Trevino & Brown (2007) identify leaders within these groups who are "committed to furthering moral goals as just and right" (p. 104).

Mentors. Mentoring provides teachers with support from an individual who can relate to their challenges and successes. They "offer professional development in a way that connects the relevance of lessons to the actual classroom as well as address the personal and professional challenges of the teacher" (LoCasale-Crouch, Davis, Wiens, & Pianta, 2012, p. 316). They can offer insights to the learner from common knowledge and experiences. Mentors use their own experiences to guide learners as they travel through professional development stages. Head Start English Language Learners Project at Community Development Institution (2014) described ongoing mentors as individuals who form relationships that last over time. This promotes trust and comradery between the mentor and mentee. It also supports the mentee to be confident in their skills and "reinforces good practices" (p. 3).

Mentors paired with a specific person are able to enhance the skill set of the mentee based on their learning style. Individualized support is tailored in order to meet the needs of the mentee. Campbell-Evans, Stamopolous and Maloney (2014) describe individual support as interpersonal skills of effective leadership. Many times, people who provide support as a mentor often experience professional growth and learn as much about self-reflection as their mentee. They learn how to enhance learning in others and can reflect on their teaching styles.

Mentoring is a "field-based approach to professional development that encourages staff to build their skills in… areas within a supportive environment" (Head Start English Language Learners Project at Community Development Institution, 2014, p.4). Mentoring can physically take place within the classroom, office, or local coffee shop. The space in which mentors meet with their mentees is not important; it's the content they discuss and process that makes it significant. The Touchpoints® approach uses the mentor model within its reflective practice sessions to build individual connections among teachers. This strategy allows for a mentor and

mentee to connect on a more personal level to discuss communication among families they work with.

Mentors can be seen as an individual who can listen to frustration without passing judgment. They can be supportive because they may have or are facing the same frustrations. Mentors are often peers that are in similar positions or have been in the past, such as teachers who have been trained in the Touchpoint Approach who are paired up with a new teacher. They typically do not play a supervising role, in order for the mentee to feel comfortable. These mentors provide charismatic behaviors, inspirational motivation, provide intellectual stimulation and treat their mentee with individual consideration (Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002).

Coaching. Coaches play a different part because they typically are present for a specific role. Many times, coaches hired by organizations provide ongoing training and reflection opportunities for teachers to develop their skills. The focus of these sessions are to help teachers attain higher levels of performance by utilizing the expertise of the coach. Baum and Korth (2013) refer to one program with teachers as "coaching teachers" with two important meanings. The first one "embodies the classroom teachers' expected mentoring role with preservice teachers" and second "acknowledges them as experts" (p. 187).

Coaches provide methods of self-reflection that can promote changing teaching methods and knowledge based practice. Klentschy (2005) identified three outcomes from coaching methods that stimulate self-reflection in teachers. They include the need to think about the relationship between teaching and learning, being exposed to alternatives and situational judgement to know when to employ which method. These sessions allow teachers the "opportunity to practice, reflect feedback and share with their colleagues" (p. 5). "These three

recommendations are based upon a belief that theaching is a cultural activity rather than as something one learns to do by studying" (Klentschy, 2005, p. 2).

Reflective practice is a challenging aspect of professional development. Many teachers and other professionals learn to utilize these skills in order to communicate more effectively with others. They are able to consider their choice of words before they communicate to assure the message is perceived in a positive manner.

Cross-Cultural Communication

Communicating with families and other teachers is an essential aspect of a teacher's job. Many teachers have an added case management role and must discuss topics that may go beyond their traditional role. A study done by Fenton and McFarland-Piazza (2014) illustrated the use of a "strengths based" (p. 23) approach by practitioners when working with families. They refer to using a "different way of looking [and communicating] with individuals, families and communities" (Fenton and McFarland-Piazza, 2014, p. 24). The Touchpoints® approach can be a lens through which teachers can view their interactions with families in order to improve their practice. Some families may not be ready to hear the messages, depending on their educational background and culture, so teachers who are trained in Touchpoints are able to acknowledge this reluctance and deliver the message in a non-authoritative manner that promotes trust.

Teachers need to reflect with their peers about their delivery methods to families. This peer interaction allows them to talk about how families may have received their messages in order for the teachers to reflect upon and improve their strategies. There are many strategies; teachers can practice in order to communicate effectively with families. Rosenbaum (2011) identified the following strategies for effective communication with families: use an opening approach as an opportunity to establish common ground, utilize a strengths based approach and

asking families questions that are focused sets the tone for open communication and that teachers value their parenting skills. Tone of voice and nonverbal signals are powerful aspect of communication.

Non-verbal Communication. Non-verbal communication is much more than body language and facial features. Working with different families becomes a journey for each teacher. "Recognize what you bring to the interaction" is the first guiding principle of the Touchpoints® approach, which helps teachers to identify their inner knowledge and reflection. Borysenko (2011) stated "when you know how you respond to challenges and have a clear understanding of your unique needs profile, inborn temperament, and personality, you'll bring your best to whatever you do" (p. 88). If a teacher's temperament is quite different from the family they are working with, it can be challenging to set their own personal biases aside. Being able to accept another culture or thought process is one way teachers practice non-verbal communication. They may not have to say anything, but their actions speak louder than words.

Tone of voice. Speaking with families in a friendly and encouraging tone is an important aspect of working effectively. Teachers must be mindful when speaking with families since sometimes messages can be hard to deliver and even harder for families to hear. Having a soft and compassionate tone of voice can help ease the family's perception of the message.

When teachers need to deliver messages that reflect the families' child, a teacher must think about what they are going to say and how they are going to say it. One study that focused on delivering difficult messages to families found that there was a need for staff training. They studied messages to families regarding children's diagnoses. One participant stated, "I'm sure it can come across as being uncaring and a bit harsh and they think we're trying to get it done as quickly as we can. It's very hurtful for parents" (Harnett & Tierney, 2009, p. 262).

Some teachers struggle with delivering any type of message because they do not feel confident in their current role. Sometimes new teachers do not have adequate training to prepare them to work effectively with families. One reason is the concept of family is diverse compared to what it was in the past. One study that focused on working with families who are homeless found "building trust" (Swick & Bailey, 2004, p. 212) by using a calming tone of voice was a critical apsect of working with the families. The Brazelton Touchpoints Center® (2015) illustrates the importance of non-verbal communication as an intrical dance between provider and parent.

Effective communication skills both verbal and non-verbal are a necessity for teachers working with families. Teachers often face difficult conversations that can be emotional for families to face. When these messages are delivered with a calm tone of voice, warm and inviting body language and a view of the parent as the expert, teachers are more effective and can reach parents where they are.

Conclusion

Self-reflection is an essential aspect of all teaching and learning. Teachers who are able to self-reflect build deeper, more meaningful connections with their peers, children and their families. Another important aspect of working with families is their first impression of us as teachers. Anderson (2013) states that it only takes two to four seconds to make a first impression. The research suggests that these first impressions are a critical step for positive, supportive and welcoming environments. In order to gain a deeper understanding of how teachers use and practice self-reflection, this study was designed to document and illustrate personal stories of self-reflection practices.

Limited research has been conducted to measure the effectiveness of teacher self-reflection practices after being trained in the approach in regards to interactions with families. An important question to think about is how do teacher beliefs and assumptions change or shift after they are trained in the Touchpoints® approach and has it been an influential aspect of that change? This study will begin to fill a void in the current literature related teacher self-reflection strategies and Touchpoints. Teachers who actively practice self-reflection along with the Touchpoints® approach may improve their interactions with the families they work with. These assumptions lead to the methodology chapter to identify practices teaches use to enhance self-reflection.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The literature review provided a wide range of self-reflection strategies alongside a detailed description of the Touchpoints® approach. This study focused on each participants' perception of their interaction with families. Teachers will be encouraged to reflect on their interactions with families while relying on the Touchpoints training as a tool for self-reflection. It will uncover the nature experience of teacher self-reflection practices. This study examined the overall questions;

1. What do teachers think about their interactions while communicating with families?

2. How do they practice self-reflection to improve their interactions with families?

3. What strategies do teachers use in order to reflect on their interactions with families?

4. Which strategies do they find to be most helpful when thinking about in interaction they had with a family? Why?

5. What influence has the Touchpoints® approach training had on teacher/family interactions?

This study also identified common themes among teachers practicing self-reflection strategies.   The group of individuals who participated in this study were trained similarly in self-reflection practices based on the Touchpoints® approach. The researcher focused on the collection of self-reflective formal practices. All the data were collected through individual interviews and journals, and focus group notes.

Setting

Many Head Start programs across the country are using the Touchpoints® approach as a tool for understanding child development and gaining professional knowledge. One school in a New England state has been using this tool for 5 years with the support from Local Head Start Offices and The Brazelton Touchpoints Center®. About 55 staff members who work at the program include classroom staff, administration, management and maintenance. This research could help those individuals understand how self-reflection can be used to influence their practice and interactions with families.

Almost all of the staff members within the selected site have been trained in the Touchpoints® approach. The researcher was a prior employee of the selected site, yet continues to provide consultation for reflective practice sessions for the remainder of the school year. The researcher meets monthly with individuals who were trained in the Touchpoints® approach in June 2015.

Each participant knows the researcher as a leader within the organization and within the monthly learning groups. While each participant had the choice of participation, the researcher requested his or her permission with a written consent. The researcher acquired written documentation of release for each participant in order to begin any data collection.

The study was conducted at the Head Start site, utilizing the training rooms or conference room. The researcher reserved meeting space ahead of time to assure the focus group and interviews could be conducted. The researcher had access to the room reservations calendar and easily reserved space. This reserved space allowed the researcher to designate time in order for the participants to reflect on their journals and interviews, while connecting with their peers.

Participants/Sample

This study focused on five female teachers (teachers and assistant teachers) who began employment less than a year ago. All of them work with children ages 6 weeks to 3 years, and work full-time, which is between 30 and 40 hours per week. These five employees were chosen because they were trained in the Touchpoints® approach in June 2015 with the larger group of 25 participants. The other 20 participants were not included in this study because they declined or they do not work directly with children and families. This allowed the researcher to focus directly on the Head Start programs site and gain perspectives of these new teachers' self-reflection processes. The following table illustrates the role of each participant within the program.

Table 2

Individual Participants

Teachers	Teacher	Assistant Teacher
Teacher A	X	
Teacher B	X	
Teacher C	X	
Teacher D		X
Teacher E		X

Note: These teachers work in Early Head Start classrooms that serve children 6weeks to 3years.

Individual perceptions aligns with the study's purpose because participants have differing views about their self-reflection processes. This allowed the researcher to examine these views and develop common clusters of meaning. These clusters determined similarities and differences among the participants within the data.

The relational framework of Touchpoints® focuses on guiding principles and practitioner assumptions that promote self-reflection practices. These principles and assumptions are the

backbone to the approach. They challenge teachers to think about each family's influence as a

on a child's development and themselves as a partner to promote wellbeing among the family

members and the children.

The researcher's personal influence and connections with teachers as they develop skills

had an impact on the study because she continued to provide ongoing mentoring aside from the

research. Most of the teachers and staff members within the program are women with the

exception of a few male employees. Ravitch and Riggan (2012) state that "personal interests

include your own curiosities, biases, and ideological commitments, theories of action, and

epistemological assumptions, all of which are profoundly influenced by your social location,

institutional position, and life experience." (p. 10).

Data Collection and Analysis

This study provides a highly descriptive, detailed presentation of the setting and

participants. Data collection started at the beginning of February 2015 and lasted through the

beginning of May 2015. Data were collected through three methods validating triangulation:

interviews, individual journals, and notes/observations from a focus group. This study's

transferability is a fit/match between other research contexts and readers. Each form of data

collection are detailed in the following paragraphs.

The interviews were scheduled for the participants' convenience in early February 2015,

and lasted no more than 1 hour. The researcher audio recorded each interview for transcription

and coding. Each participant was offered the choice of reviewing the researcher's recording

after each interview was completed. Participants were asked questions (Appendix B) in order to

provide consistency among interviews. At the end of each interview, the researcher provided

each participant with an overview of the study and as a way to set the stage for weekly journal writing. Each participant was asked to write about one interaction they had with a family each week. The criteria was broad so participants could have full control of the process. They were asked to reflect on anything that stood out and how the interaction went from their own perspective. The researcher recorded and transcribed each interview.

The researcher used a color coding system to identify common concepts and recurring phrases. Such as, specific language, strategies, reflections on their practices, and personal feelings that came through in their writing. After the initial analysis of the interviews, the researcher began to identify two emergent themes; specific language used such as "I wonder" statements, and the concept of Why. Am. I. Talking. (W.A.I.T.) as a strategy.

Journaling was the second method of data collection. The researcher reminded participants to write in their journal weekly through email. The researcher encouraged participants to write in a manner that is convenient for them, whether it be hand written or typed. Appendix C illustrates an example of how participants were encouraged to reflect through journal writing. Participants provided their entries to the researcher on a weekly basis, by inter-office mail or email. The researcher divided the entries by participant in order to assure organization. Based on the journal entries the researcher engaged in open coding to form initial categories. This was done by using the same color coding system as the interviews. Based on input from participants, the researcher assembled the data in a new way called axial coding.

Once these two methods of data collection were completed, the researcher identified larger categories or clusters of meaning. Four colors were assigned to the following emergent threads; (green) common language, (orange) strategies, (yellow) personal reflections/feelings,

and (blue) lessons learned for future interactions. The researcher identified emergent threads because each participant referenced or identified them within their journals and interviews.

The last method of data collection was conducting a focus group session. The focus group met in a large conference room after each participant had completed eight weeks of journal entries and all five interviews were transcribed and the initial analysis completed by the researcher.   The focus group was to provide the researcher with an opportunity to gather collective data and to introduce emergent threads among participants. The researcher was able to present the individual data trends/differences to the group to see how/if their perspectives have changed or shifted. Participants were able to hear their peers' experiences and identify similarities and differences.

In preparation for the focus group, the researcher gathered post-it pads, sticky notes, markers, and notes pads in order to increase productivity and represent the thoughts and feelings of the group. The emergent threads were presented to the focus group to open up discussion amongst participants, as they were encouraged to share individual scenarios from their journals. Four participants shared specific scenarios during the focus group as examples for participants to explore. One participant's participation in the group was minimal, as she did not share a specific scenario. As individual scenarios were shared, other participants would reflect and provide feedback to the participant sharing.

After each participant had an opportunity to share a scenario, they co-constructed ideas with the large post-it pads. Then with smaller sticky notes, they identified specific items used within each scenario while interacting with families. The researcher then moved the items into clusters of meaning and asked for agreement from the participants. The participants identified

the process of self-reflection as three steps. Before interactions, during interactions, and after interactions with families. They also identified a cluster of specific language used when interacting with families. This specific language was identified as a strategy commonly used. The researcher allowed participants to review any/all materials documented during the focus group.

During the focus group, the researcher noticed one participant who verbalized her own feelings while sharing her scenario. She identified missed opportunities where she could have practiced specific strategies to improve the interaction between her and the family. Other participants identified similar views and new insights gained listening to others share their scenarios.

The researcher created a network model (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) to illustrate the interrelationships between variables. Using "naturalistic observations" (Brannick, Levine, & Morgeson, 2007, p. 11) allowed the researcher to ask questions about particular behaviors the participants disclose. The researcher Data from all three methods were triangulated to see what ways they support, clarify or conflict with each other. Statements were documented throughout these steps to identify "significant statements" or "quotes" in order to provide an understanding of how participants have collectively experienced using the Touchpoints® approach. This is also referred to as "horizonalization" (Creswell, 2013, p. 82). All of the data collection methods followed a systematic approach that moved from significant statements/thoughts to detailed descriptions in order to identify emergent themes.

Participant rights

The researcher submitted a research plan to the Institutional Review Board for approval. The researcher reviewed the consent form with each individual to assure understanding and

consent (Appendix A). Teachers were encouraged to ask questions about the form if needed. After they had reviewed the consent form, they were asked to sign if they agree to participate. Each participant was assigned a letter to ensure confidentiality. No names were revealed or identified during the course of the study. All audio recordings were labeled with each individual's identified letter and kept confidential. All data will be disposed of at the end of the study. When sharing results, both verbally and in writing, the researcher used a pseudonym for each participant to ensure confidentiality. Any teacher was able to withdraw from this study at any point during the research process. Any participant that withdraws from the research was noted and all data will be removed from the findings.

Any unintentional outcomes were discussed with each participant to create a plan of action based on their preference and professional standing. These outcomes included; conversations outside of the interviews with non-participants, making changes to interview responses they may have provided, or making connections to families that are discussed during the focus group or journal writing.

Potential limitations

This study took place in one location operated by a multi-site agency. The five participants all work in one location with similar expectations and self-reflection practices. Self-reflection functions best when surrounded by individuals who embrace it as part of their everyday practice and where there are leaders who model and promote reflection daily. This was as an opportunity for the researcher because the teachers have prior relationships with team members who can support their learning within their center.

Personal and professional biases are, in this study, exposed because they are at the heart of self-reflective practices. Each participant, group facilitator and managers may share biases, or

have divergent ones as well. Biases are often viewed as a negative aspect of an individual's thoughts and actions. However, throughout this process individual biases help to guide conversations with participants by promoting self-efficacy and knowledge. These conversations and reflections help to support the significance of the study and individual professional growth.

Another important limitation of this study was the participants were all teachers, while the parents' perspectives and thoughts were not accounted for during this study. The focus of this study was recording teacher voices and stories.

The researcher's previous role within the program may be seen as a potential limitation. The researcher was one of three facilitators and a co-worker for most of the participants. While the researcher was never in a supervisory role to the participants, she was in a supervisory position to other staff members within the program, many of whom looked to the researcher as a leader within the program. The researcher assured each participant that she clearly understood her role as a consultant and that her expectations were to provide mentoring throughout the program year. This offered participants consistency within the program and familiarity to discuss scenarios with the researcher.

Another potential limitation was the researcher's extensive knowledge of the Touchpoints® approach. This may have inhibited some of the newest teachers when providing their perspectives. However, many of the participants use the researcher as contact person to reflect their thoughts. All of the participants have only been practicing this approach for a few months, while the researcher has been practicing for over 5 years.

These potential limitations may have been seen as a conflict of interest. However, the researcher provided consultation to the group as part of her work within the program. It was in

the programs best interest, for the researcher to continue to provide consultation on a regular

basis. This also served as continuity for the participants within their learning groups.

Researcher's Voice

The researcher had been working within the same community action program for the last

11 years, until leaving prior to beginning the research study. Throughout the past years, the

researcher trained teachers in the Touchpoints® approach, reflective practice, and quality

teaching techniques.

The researcher believes that reflective practice is necessary for quality teaching. When

teachers understand their values, beliefs, and personal feelings, they play an active role in

perpetual growth and critical reflection. Larrivee (2000) championed this by stating, "The path

to developing as a critically reflective teacher cannot be prescribed with an intervention formula.

The route cannot be preplanned- it must be lived" (p. 306).

Promoting teacher competence and development was a large portion of the researcher's

role. Wilkerson and Irby (1998) describe quality-teaching practices as a way to empower

[teachers] to excel in their role as educators and, in doing so, to create organizations that

encourage and reward continual learning" (p. 392). The researcher believes that each teacher has

something valuable to contribute through the learning process, no matter how large or small.

Since the data collection, the researcher has returned to the program in a supervisory role,

overseeing five classrooms with twenty-two teachers. None of the participants in this study are

supervised by the researcher. However, they continue to contact her when needed for support

when faced with difficult situations.

Conclusion

Over the last two to three months, the researcher continued to provide consultation within the program. The researcher met with each participant and encouraged journal writing, and conducted a focus group to collect data during her time in the program.

Teachers who practice and utilize self-reflection practices such as mentors, reflective practice groups and individual coaches will continue to improve on their teacher development. Utilizing Touchpoints® as a tool for professional growth can be a powerful aspect of transforming one's practice. The teachers who participated in this research study had multiple opportunities to reflect on their self-reflection practices and their professional development.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis and Findings

The purpose of this phenomenological case study was to uncover individual experiences from new teachers who are beginning to use self-reflection practices as a means of improving their interactions with families. This study included five newly hired teachers and assistant teachers who are working for a community action program, which includes Early Head Start and Head Start programming. The focus of this study was to uncover what teachers thought about their interactions while communicating with families and how they practice self-reflection to improve those interactions. Participants recognized reflecting on their language strategies as their most powerful aspect of interacting with families. The Touchpoints® approach served as a tool by providing influenced language while interacting with families.

The researcher collected data through individual interviews with each participant, eight weeks of individual journal entries and a final focus group with all participants. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed to identify common themes. The themes included: Transformative Process: How to Who, Increased Awareness of Self-Reflection, Language of Reflection, and Systematic use of strategies. Each participant reviewed their transcription and was encouraged to make edits as needed. The researcher and participants took time to review each transcription to assure accuracy. Participants were asked to read their transcriptions and write comments or questions regarding their responses. The researcher reviewed each transcription with participants before making edits.

After participants finalized their journal entries, a focus group was held with the researcher to talk about common threads, which acknowledged into steps for self-reflection in terms of interactions with families; before interactions, during interactions, and after interactions.

Then participants used small post-it note pads to write down the different topics identified as common strategies from their interviews and journal writing.

The participants themselves categorized each strategy under the three self-reflection steps of an interaction with parents. They were able to hear from each other in the process and move strategies around through multiple conversations. This idea of a three-step process for self-reflection goes beyond the Touchpoints® approach to skills development and increased self-awareness. This concept of **Increased Self-Awareness** will be discussed in chapter five. Participant discussed strategies they used for self-reflection throughout individual participant scenarios.

Table 3

Self-Reflection Steps and Strategies

Before Interactions	During Interactions	After Interactions

Recognizing personal feelings before interactions	**Thinking in the moment (W.A.I.T.)**	Formal reflection strategies
		   -Team Meetings
		   -Supervision Meeting
		   -Reflective Practice
		    sessions

Using peers to role-play conversations	Knowing how your body is responding, body-language	

Knowing what your agenda is beforehand (purpose)	Actively listening and repeating what you heard	Informal reflection strategies
		   -Alone time
		   -Car ride home
		   -Quiet space

Note: Self-reflection steps and strategies emerged from data collection. The bold strategies are identified as Touchpoints® strategies, while others emerged from the research.

Before interactions is described as the process of thinking about how an upcoming interaction would go before they actually happened. Participants in this study identified three specific strategies they use most often in preparation for any interactions with families. *During*

interactions is described as thinking in the moment while interacting with families. Participants identified three strategies they use most often during interactions with families. Finally, after interactions are described as the process of reflecting on how interactions went by using both formal and informal strategies.

Touchpoints® Influences and Practices

Participants acknowledged the Touchpoints® approach as an effective and practical tool for self-reflection. In the three stages of communication they identified as a group, a fourth category was developed to capture Touchpoint® language and practices. This category was identified as separate because some things "didn't belong" under the three main categories or the practices were functional within all three stages of self-reflection. These tools were then labeled as characteristics or influences they have applied to their self-reflection strategies and/or practices.

During the focus group, participants took it upon themselves to look for personal and professional language and practices that were Touchpoints® influenced. They used highlighters and post-it notes to create a list of their language that speaks to the approach. Once they created their list, they discussed how each one directly related to their stories or parts of their journal entries. The following table illustrates their list.

Table 4

*Influenced Language and Practices*_____

Language	Moments I could validate
• I wonder statements	Practices
• I felt…	• Understand my relationship with the parents
• Tell me more about…	• It's okay to let go of my agenda
• I put myself in their shoes	• Listening is key
• I took the time to think	• We don't need to "fix it"
• Together, the parent and I…	
• I didn't say anything	

- Focus on the parent/child relationship

- W.A.I.T.(Why Am I Talking)

Note: This table represents the common language and practices found within individual participants' journal entries.

The first theme participants identified was anticipating how an interaction might go beforehand. They identified strategies they most often use before interacting with families. These strategies speak to how they prepare for a meeting with families and how they prepare for those interactions. They identified the interactions when they use self-reflection strategies most often as during formal meetings, pick-up and drop-off conversations, or home visits. Each participant described their thought process before an intentional conversation with a family member. They identified the concept of thinking about what they were going to say and how they were going to say it.

They further identified the second and third themes or areas in which self-reflection applying the Touchpoints® tools was useful. During an interaction, different tools for self-reflection were needed than those used before and after the interaction. This discussion demonstrated a sometimes sophisticated and generally strategic application of the tools. Their journals and discussions also explored their professional and personal challenges and their connection with self-reflection.

During the focus group, participants agreed that recognizing their own personal feelings is a challenge when working with multiple families. They stated that they need to "fix it" was hard to put aside when families come to them with challenging situations. As participants moved through the process of organizing data during the focus group, they identified self-reflection during interactions as the most challenging aspect. They agreed that thinking in the moment about how they are feeling, and reacting/engaging with families is not an easy task. Participant

C emphasized the challenge of keeping herself in check, when her initial reaction did not match the parents in the moment.

As participants shared their individual stories and thoughts during the focus group, they bounced ideas off each other, shared stories, and worked collaboratively to construct lists of their common language statements used in their journal entries. They identified the focus group meeting as an effective method of reflecting on their journals with their peers. They were able to look back on their entries and discuss them, at will, with their peers. They also reflected on their individual styles, identifying their strengths and weaknesses, while simultaneously acknowledging strengths and challenges in each other.

During this research study, the researcher noticed the participants seemed to be eager to voice their thoughts and opinions. Each participant completed the interview and all eight weeks of journal entries without reminders. They all prioritized time out of their busy classrooms in order to attend the focus group meeting. Each participant had the opportunity to be fully involved in reflecting on their practices, and in analyzing the data before the researcher made any conclusions. The following scenarios shared by each participant have integrated *strategies (that are italicized)* during their interactions and reflections with families.

Individual Stories

Participant A.

Reflection on Self-Reflection Process. Participant A was the only participant that did not share an individual scenario, but recognized both by the researcher and by group participants as a role model for active listening (Gordon, 2003) and internalizing the approach to *Who She Is* rather than *How She Is*. The researcher developed this **Transformative Process** logic model of *How you are* to *Who you are*, to reflect her observations of the process of internalizing an

effective approach beyond behavioral changes, while interacting with families. This process will be described in Chapter Five. When Participant A interacted with her peers, she listened to their stories and provided meaningful input as appropriate. During the focus group, she provided comments and feedback that forced other participants to think beyond their comfort zone, in a professional way. For example, when exploring one scenario with group members, she asked, "What do you think it was like for the parent to hear about all the changes that were coming?" This question forced the other participants to think through the parent's perspective, rather than their own.

Participant A shared her need to *think about her feelings* interacting with a parent. She spoke about understanding and putting labels on her own feelings before even thinking about the interactions with families. "I have to understand where I'm coming from first, and recognize how I feel towards this parent or situation before I can doing anything. Once I know those things for myself I can move forward and think about how I want to move the conversation with the parent" (interview, February 16, 2016). This idea of thinking about interactions before they happen directly relate to one of the first strategies of self-reflection as *knowing what your agenda is beforehand (see Table 3).* After sharing this specific strategy with the group, other participants agreed and identified this as something that takes time to master. It was helpful for participants to think about their before strategies, after their interactions with families. Each participant agreed that going back to their before strategies are key when thinking about making changes for future interactions. These post interaction reflections can be useful so teachers can think about their delivery of messages to families.

Participant A stated that she often uses the *concept of W.A.I.T.*, which stand for *Why Am I Talking,* with families. "It's easier for me to listen to a parent, you know really listen, before

giving them my feedback" (interview, February 16, 2016).   She emphasized this as her first priority when interacting with any parent because "Most parents just want someone to listen to them and really hear them. They want to feel valued and understood in the moment. That's what I try to do each time" (interview, February 16, 2016). The concept of W.A.I.T. is linked to the Touchpoints® approach. However, teachers using that concept to self-reflect in the moment in order to move into compassionate active listening is a concept that emerged directly from the participant's application of the tool. She stated "They really fit together pretty good! I am quieter, so I just like to listen to the families and keep comments to myself unless I really need to say something" (interview, February 16, 2016). This language statement and practice integrated into her personality style and quiet demeanor, illustrating her ability to internalize the approach to support her natural strengths rather than merely modeling the practice.

Participant A self-identified her language statement most used in her journal entries as "I didn't say anything" (focus group, February 16, 2016). When Participant A shared her thoughts after interactions during the focus group, other participants were quiet, then verbalized their excitement and agreed with her. Her actions seemed to be consistent with the concept of *W.A.I.T. and active listening*. Other participants spoke up in that moment and identified these as her strength when working with families. Participant B said. "It makes you a valuable part of your team. Not everyone needs to be talkative, just like the different families we serve" (focus group, February 16, 2016). Participant A's personal qualities align with active listening. This is different from remaining quiet; it is listening with a purpose and identifying when to voice thoughts or opinions in order to serve the situation and families involved.

Participant A utilized the focus group as a *formal reflection strategy* in order to process with her peers and in a small group. Participant A stated, "This is a great opportunity to really

think about what everyone else is doing in their work. We can share ideas and different

scenarios with each other to get feedback" (focus group, February 16, 2016). She identified

other strategies such as reflective supervision and weekly team meetings as methods of reflection

along with informal practices such as reflecting on her day while driving home.

       Participant B. Participant B shared this personal story during the interview and later

discussed it in more detail during the focus group session. This interaction speaks to the use of

repeating back what was heard and *validating another person's feelings*. She shared the

interaction she had with a parent.

> A mom came in to drop off her child this morning and wanted to talk to me about a
>
> concern she had. We went into the office and she said that she is worried that another
>
> boy in the classroom is picking on her child. I asked her to tell me more, so she said that
>
> her child comes home and talks about how "D" pushes and yells in her face. She said
>
> that she is worried about her daughters' safety and feelings. I said something like "I can
>
> see how that would be very upsetting as a parent, especially pushing and yelling in your
>
> daughters face" and then we started to talk about things we could both do in school and at
>
> home to help her daughter find her voice. (interview, February 16, 2016)

       Before the interaction. Participant B wrote about this new parent in her classroom

throughout her journal. She used her *peers to role-play conversations* in order to assure her

messages were being delivered in an appropriate manner. She also identified thinking about how

she was feeling before interacting with the parent. She knew this was a new parent and was

worried the conversation might not go the way she was planning.

> I try to think about what exactly I'm gonna say. I run it across my team members and see
>
>   if they have any suggestions about how I could revert something so that I am not coming

across offensive, because sometimes people take things in different ways. So I do try to go through it in my mind and with my team members". (interview, February 16, 2016)

During the interaction. One very specific strategy brought up by participants was the practice of not only *actively listening* but also *repeating back* what you heard to the families to assure they feel validated. During the interaction, Participant B shared a few thoughts that were running through her head. She described recognizing her feelings in the moment. She felt anxious and unsure of how to react to the parent in the moment because of their developing relationship. She also said she was thinking about what to say and how it should be said. Participant B identified that thinking about her own feelings and language during the interaction was distracting because she was more focused on herself rather than on the parent in the moment. Participant B said that she felt as though the conversation could have gone in a very different direction if she had dismissed the mothers' feelings and tried to find a solution first.

After the interaction. Participant B identified that she often uses "I felt" statements when reflecting on an interaction. During the focus group, she shared more of the story about the concerned parent who was not feeling comfortable with her as a new staff member in the classroom. She stated:

> I felt so bad a first because she didn't know me and it's hard to kind of start a relationship when you come in and you expect that the other teacher to be there or one that knows your child's really fond of or knows well and you come in and you see this new teacher and you're like 'Not that I don't trust you but…' it takes time to build that trust. So in that moment you might not because your child hasn't really build that much of a relationship with the teacher". (interview, February 16, 2016)

This was an example of not only using "I felt" statements as a method of identifying her personal feelings, but also using *formal reflection strategies* as a method to understand her relationship with the parent. During the focus group, she provided an overview with the other participants and asked for specific feedback from her peers around how she could have provided better feedback to the parent. Participant A said, "I think you really listened to this parent in the moment and heard what she was saying" (focus group, February 16, 2016). Participant C said, "Yeah, so do I. I also think you took into account that it is not on you to figure everything out. You really seemed to work together with the parent to come up with ideas and different strategies for helping her little one" (focus group, February 17, 2016). Participant B then said that she sometimes feels like she has not done much and she really needs assurance herself. Each participant agreed that it is challenging not to "fix it" and to learn to let that part of the job go. She was able to identify and understand her role with the parent at a vulnerable time. She later stated, "It was more intentional and it was a more one-on-one connection. I really showed interest in the child, so the parent was happy and felt good and had a great experience with me" (focus group, February 16, 2016).

Participant C. During the data collection process, Participant C began a transition into a new role within the center. She went from working with eight families in one classroom to sixteen families in two classrooms. She identified this as a struggle to build new relationships with twice the number of families. She noted that using multiple strategies "helped me to really think about what my new role is and what's most important" (personal communication, February 17, 2016). She shared this story about a parent meeting.

This week in a parent meeting, I told the families about my new position and the transfer of some of their children to a new classroom and working with a new team of teachers. I

was nervous. I knew there are families that have a hard time transitioning or opening up to a new classroom and a new set of teachers. I told these families in the beginning that I was there for their child as the primary care provider and now six short months I transitioned. I was sure that I was going to have many questions. However, not even one asked a question. When I was describing the transition, I tried to focus on what I was bringing to the interactions and focusing on the parent/child relationship. I knew that some transitions would be difficult while others would be easier. I wanted to support the families in knowing that this transition is to meet the needs of every family. By having this new position I feel I'm able to offer more support to our families when it's needed". (interview, February 17, 2016)

Before the interaction. Participant C identified two strategies she used when faced with the difficult conversation with families. She identified her *agenda beforehand* in order to understand her purpose and her *non-verbal communication* while delivering the messages. Participant C said that she really struggled with the idea of identifying her agenda because she wants to be able to give parents something concrete when they come to her with a crisis or issue. She identified the importance of families knowing what changes were coming and how she needed to make sure they got the information from her directly. She was concerned that some families would not feel comfortable talking to other staff with issues after the changes. She said, "It's hard for me to think about how I feel when they are telling me certain things. I just want to make it better for them and I know I can't" (interview, February 17, 2016). Her perspective on supporting families is much like the other participants, because she wants to "fix it" for them. She focused on thinking about her feelings and trying to separate them from her work with families.

During the interaction. Participant C identified her strategy as paying close attention to her own *body language, facial expressions and other non-verbal cues*. She shared that she is "always *thinking about how I am being perceived*" and will often "focus on the messages I'm trying to deliver" (interview, February 17, 2016). During the interactions, these strategies could have backfired if she was unable to see how others perceived her, or if she was unable to separate her own feelings from her interactions with families. Participant C said that she was nervous talking in front of the group, even though she knows most of the families. She also spoke about observing parents body language during the meeting and felt as though some lacked interest or were disengaged. In turn, that made her feel more uncomfortable and unsure if they were receiving the information she intended.

After the interaction. Participant C shared more of her Parent Meeting story with the focus group. She said she was "unsure if families really understood what was happening" and that "it's was a lot of information thrown at them in one meeting" (interview, February 17, 2016). She provided an overview of the information that was shared during that specific meeting to the other participants. They each agreed that it sounded like the families may have been focused on the classroom changes that would affect their child rather than the changes in her position. Participant C said, "I guess I didn't think about the amount of information that was being presented to them" and "No wonder they didn't have any questions" (focus group, February 17, 2016). Participant C stated, "Next time I'll need to think about the amount of information being presented and not just how I'm presenting it" and "I was so focused on the how and why that I forgot the what" (focus group, February 17, 2016).

Participant C was able to reflect on the situation after it happened and was satisfied that she prioritized the parents in the moment. She shared after her interactions that she felt grateful

for spending the time with the families, despite her understanding that she could have improved the interaction. Self-reflection helped her realize the gift of having intentional interactions with family members.

Participant D. Participant D focused on a child and her mother as she tried to engage the mother in conversation while checking the child's head for lice. Here is her story.

The mother walked in with the child and just stared at me. I said good morning to her and explained that I just needed to check the child's head where she did get send home the other day because of lice and if there were any live bugs then she would have to go home again. The mom said okay, so I asked if we could go into the bathroom just to set the child on the changing table so I could get a better look at the child's head, she said okay. Before we got to the bathroom, just to make light of the whole situation, I told the mother that another teacher in our classroom was much better at looking for lice then I was and just chuckled. The mom did not say much to this comment. When we reached the changing table, the mother set the child down. As I was looking through the child's hair to make sure the live lice were gone, I stated that I did not see anything. The mother then said in an angry voice that she did not see any the day we sent her home but was not going to argue so she just took her home. In that moment, I did not say anything. I looked at the infant and said that she was all set and handed the child to mom. After we left the bathroom and got settled in, mom said goodbye to the child". (interview, February 18, 2016)

This experience is extremely challenging for any teacher working in a classroom. The participant was able to think in the moment by actively listening to the parent's tone of voice, watching body language and practicing the W.A.I.T. strategy. The teacher was in a vulnerable

situation because she was unsure of what to say in the moment. She was in a new position and lacked the experience to prepare for an interaction of this nature. The parent was frustrated with the situation and it added to the overall stress level. Participant D shared her thought process and reflected on her actions before, during and after this particular scenario.

Before the interaction. Participant D shared her thought process before interacting with the parent. She knew this conversation was going to be a challenge because of the reaction the mother gave when picking the child up the day before with live bugs. She met with her peers in the classroom to talk about how this interaction might look.   Participant D stated, "Sometimes I talk with my co-workers depending on what it is that needs to be talked about. I feel like talking to other people, like in my classroom about it really helps me a lot to pretend they are the parent" (interview, February 18, 2016). She needs to prepare herself because it helps her feel more confident. They practiced and discussed several strategies to interpret how the parent might react. They used *role-play as one strategy* to practice the language she might use. Participant D identified this as a useful strategy because she can practice and use Touchpoints® influenced language in her role-play. She also identified her peers as supporting her self-reflection by giving her constructive feedback on how her body language was being perceived during their role-play. For example, Participant D said, "It's great to hear what other people think, you know, through their eyes" (interview, February 18, 2016).   This idea of *understanding your body language*, relates to *During Interactions* as illustrated by the participants. However, in this case they practiced it before any interaction took place.

During the interaction. Participant D shared that she could tell the mother was frustrated and upset in the moment. She said, "I felt so bad for this mom, she just had to deal with lice and now it's back again. I could tell by her body language and tone of voice that she was irritated"

(interview, February 18, 2016). She explained how she tried to make light of the situation with humor. Participant D *identified an uncomfortable feeling* in the moment and trying humor as her first strategy. When that did not work, she said, "I didn't really know what to say, so I figured I wouldn't say anything at all" (interview, February 18, 2016). She was able to use the concept of *W.A.I.T. in the moment* and chose not to say anything, when she did not know what to say. Participant D illustrated an **awareness of strategic use of strategy** that was appropriate in the moment with the parent. This will be described in Chapter Five.

  After the interaction. Participant D shared her Head Lice story during the focus group. Each participant agreed with Participant D's use of W.A.I.T. was a good choice of strategy because she did not think the mom was ready to hear anything she had to say. Participant C then said, "It sounded like you did what you should have by not saying anything else. I'm thinking that if you kept talking it may have made it worse for you and the parent" (focus group, February 17, 2016).

  Participant D identified understanding the parent was not upset with her personally, but with the situation. She also *referenced her own feelings* during each stage of the interaction. She said, "I felt good talking to my peers about what might happen, but then in the moment it all went out the window" (focus group, February 18, 2016). She described this as a moment of panic when she did not know what to say, but then making a conscious decision to say nothing at all. She referenced her personal feelings was done at each phase of self-reflection. She identified before interactions that she was nervous about interacting. Then during the interaction, she panicked and did not know what to say, so chose to say nothing at all. Later she was able to bring the scenario to her peers in order to understand and reflect on how she was feeling after the interaction.

Participant E.   Participant E shared a story that emphasized how she was able to recognize her feelings after documenting in her weekly journal. Participant E wrote:

A child's dad called and said that he was supposed to pick up that night but couldn't because he got called into work. He wanted to come and visit the child before he went to work so the child would not be upset when another family member came to get him. When the phone rang in the classroom at naptime, I felt annoyed because the phone usually wakes up the children. When I answered and dad explained what he wanted to do my heart melted. I was so overjoyed that he cared to explain his change of plans to his son and wanted to spend some time with him. After dad came to visit, I told him how much I appreciated him coming and how taking that time really made a difference in his sons' day. Dad was so happy that I said that and that I recognized his efforts. Next time I will not get annoyed when the phone rings at naptime. That opportunity to see the bond between father and son was priceless". (interview, February 16, 2016)

Before the interaction.   Participant E identified her own frustration before interacting with the parent because the phone rang during naptime. She recognized her immediate level of annoyance and said she was irritated right up until the father told her why he was calling. Then she said it was as if a switch turned off and her irritation was gone. Participant E was able to *recognize her own feelings* before interacting with the parent, and she was able to understand why those feelings were there in the first place.

Regardless of the interaction, she feels the need to create a list of topics in order to assure she does not forget anything. From her list, she is able to self-identify the *purpose of the interaction* with the family. For example, she stated, "I like to make my list of things that need to be discussed, that way I know what my plan is and why. It is pointless to go into a meeting

without it because then you may forget something. Plus, it gives me time to think about what's most important" (interview, February 16, 2016). She identified the purpose of knowing what is on her agenda, even though there is always room for flexibility.

During the interaction. Participant E focused on something positive during her interaction with the family. Once she was able to recognize her own feelings and understand why the parent was calling, it changed her demeanor. She acknowledged this and said, "When I interact with a parent, I always try to say something positive before any conversation takes place" and "It just changes the mood for the better" (interview, February 16, 2016). She stated she usually looks at what the child is doing in the moment and makes a comment about what she sees. "It's like narrating their actions in the moment and helping to build that relationship between me and the parent," stated Participant E (interview, February 16, 2016). The focus on the child's behavior is a direct link to the Touchpoints Approach, but using it in the context of self-reflection is a new finding in this study. Using specific language in order to reflect, promotes the idea of **Language of Reflection.** This is detailed in Chapter Five.

After the interaction. Participant E was able to look back on this interaction and think about her own feelings in the moment. She identified using informal self-reflection strategies when she reviewed the journal entries independently. She gave herself the time to reflect on her own terms and in her own space. Participant E identified her strategy to promote self-reflection as being in a quite space without disruption. She chose to review her journal entries on a Sunday morning, outside on her swing. She said, "It's my favorite place at home because it's quiet and no one bothers me" (interview, February 16, 2016). While she practices formal reflection strategies, she is the only participant that referenced informal reflection strategies directly as their primary method of self-reflection. Moreover, this participant has internalized the approach

and made it more than *How She Is* with families. This has become *Who She Is* with each family and children in her classroom.

Participant Thoughts

Participants agreed to share their final thoughts and reflections on the process of self-reflection. Three chose to share their reflections during their interviews, while two chose to write in their individual journals. Each method of reflection illustrates individual style, personality and choice of self-reflection practice. Each participant brought their own strengths and challenges to this study depending on their education level, years of experience, and roles in the classroom.

Participant E shared her thoughts on what the process has done for her and her ability to practice self-reflection. She said, "It's all a part of my language and how I feel. When I go to reflective practice sessions, I leave there and feel rejuvenated and so much more motivated. I can't wait to get back to my classroom to just be able to practice and watch others do the same thing as me" (interview, February 16, 2016). Participant E described her competency point when she said "it just comes natural I guess more so, it's in me. I don't really have to think much about what I'm going to say because it comes out sincere. It's become part of who I am" (interview, February 17, 2016).

Along those lines, Participant A shared her thoughts during her interview on how the approach has influenced her self-reflection practice. She stated, "It's opened my eyes to a different way of thinking. It is having those dual hats and different ways to look at the assumptions and the principles and using them in different situations. I often say things to myself like 'okay I can see how this works and how can I shift to change my perspective'" (interview, February 17, 2016). In one of her journal entries she wrote, "I feel like I know what I

should say in the moment, but then nothing comes out right. That's why I have to practice with

my team members" (personal communication, February 16, 1026). This is a clear indicator of

teacher-to-teacher reflection practices. She utilizes her peers to role-play a conversation

beforehand. Kruse (2012) references this in the literature as a way to promote trust and

collaboration.

Participant D reflected on her self-reflection practices over the eight weeks of journal

writing. She wrote the following quote in her last journal entry. "Instead of jumping to the gun

about certain things, I guess I take more time to process through it and really think about it.

Instead of spewing out words and getting angry about certain situations I'm able to stop and

think" (personal communication, February 17, 2016).

Participant D shared a very honest opinion during her interview that related to what

Baum & Swick (2008) describe as personal biases. She had a hard time internalizing the

approach and moving beyond her own personal beliefs and values to honoring the families

values and beliefs when they differed from her own. She shared "I have to recognize that's what

I want the family to do, but it may not be what they want to do. That's really frustrating when I

know it will benefit the child and their family as a whole" (interview, February 18, 2016). She

seemed to struggle with the process of self-reflection, even though she has an awareness of her

challenges.

Participant C shared her struggle with language statements she identified as most used in

her journal entries. She has been working to improve the language she uses while interacting

with families. The top two statements in her journal entries were "I took the time to think" and

"I put myself in their shoes" (personal communication, February 17, 2016). Participant C's

struggle when interacting with families was proven through her honest feedback and personal

recognition of her frustrations and feelings. Even though she primarily focused on her personal

feelings toward family situations, she has identified these feelings independently and has begun

the process of recognizing what she brings to each interaction. Participant C is cross trained in

Social Services and had previous experience working with multiple families with differing

cultural backgrounds.   She tried to focus on the strengths while working with families, but was

challenged because of her inability to believe in the approach as a whole. The strengths based

approach is directly related to one of the Parent Assumptions within the Touchpoints® approach;

all parents have strengths.

Participant B shared one simple quote during her interview that illustrates how she has

begun the process of self-reflection to enhance her professional development. She said, "This

process has made me think about the changes I've made. Thinking about reflection, it has been

so valuable. I think I've learned more about the teacher I want to be, rather than what I've been

doing" (interview, February 16, 2016). Participant B identified another level to utilizing the

approach that was not identified by other participants. She describes utilized the approach

working with other classroom teachers alongside children and families. She stated, "It is one of

those tools you can use that will fluctuate depending on who you are using it with. It just needs

to be tweaked, but you can use the same strategy" (focus group, February 16, 2016).

Conclusion

The data collected through individual journal entries, interviews and a focus group were

horizontalized for common themes. There were four major findings during this research study.

First, teachers identified a **Transformative Process: How to Who**, in terms of internalizing an

effective approach while interacting with families. Second, teachers had an **Increased**

Awareness of Self-Reflection as they developed a simple yet sophisticated process for self-

reflection.   The teachers in this study identified the process of self-reflection as three-step

process with multiple strategies within each step, an extension and personal/professional

application of the Touchpoints® approach that goes beyond the trainings provided for the tools,

and demonstrates sophisticated application of self-reflection practices. They utilized the

Touchpoints® approach as tools that force individuals to think beyond their comfort zone by

providing them with specific influenced language and practices. These influenced language and

practices are the third theme: **Language of Reflection**. Finally, teachers who are able to practice

self-reflection are then more cognizant of their professional development. Teachers developed

an **Systematic use of Strategies** depending on multiple influences in the moment. The final

chapter will discuss the implications of these findings for self-reflection and teacher

development, and on their interactions with families, and provide suggestions for further

research.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Suggestions for Future Research

As the literature suggests, self-reflective practice comes in multiple forms and takes time and practice. Carlo and Hinkhouse (2010) viewed teacher self-reflection as understanding individual teaching practices. This study focused on teachers self-reflection practices and their thoughts pertaining to their interactions with families.

Each participant chose to focus on one family as they told their stories. The stories themselves add to the existing body of literature by uncovering some of the dynamics that shape the ECE teacher/family relationship.

Documenting the stories was possible because teachers were systematic in their self-reflection practices as they relate to interactions with families. This data is especially important for practitioners working with families as they broaden their reflection practices. Having first hand examples of the strengths and challenges everyday teachers face will be a benefit to other teachers looking to understand how Touchpoints® skills-based training influences self-reflection practices, and how self-reflection itself influences teachers' personal and professional development.

The Touchpoints® approach has guided teacher self-reflection practices by providing specific strategies that force the teacher to think beyond their personal biases. These strategies are used in order to understand where families are coming from and have more positive outcomes when building relationships with families.
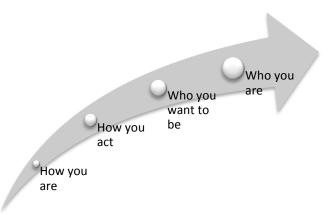
The strategies also promote personal and professional development. Teachers who continue to deepen their understanding of self-reflection and how they use it to further their

personal and professional development will gain more skills over time. These skills will help to

support newer teachers as they begin their self-reflection process.

The teachers in this study identified an **Increased Self-Awareness**, and **Systematic use**

of Strategies. Participants also identified the process of self-reflection as a mechanism to

increase their professional development. This self-reflection process was influenced by

Touchpoints® language and guided by the embedded practices of the approach. The research

suggests that utilizing the **Language of Reflection** supports the evolution of self-reflection.

Teacher's move beyond a single application of these techniques by applying self-reflective tools

as a way to think about their **Transformative Process: How to Who**.

Transformative Process: How to Who

Teachers who practice self-reflection guided by the Touchpoints® tools identified

personal movement at a more rapid rate. Two in particular applied self-reflection more deeply

than the other participants did. The following figure illustrates teachers personal/professional

development related to the self-reflection process.

Figure 2: *How to Who*

Note: This How to Who arrow was created to illustrated the personal/professional development

of self-reflection.

Teachers who applied self-reflection deeply had a different aspect of transformation, which went from *How you are* (behaving, speaking, and interacting) to *Who you are* (internalizing, thinking, reflecting, and becoming different). Teachers who moved through this process of *How to Who* shifted their personal/professional view of themselves as an early childhood professional. They identified the first phase of *How you are* when interacting with families as understanding their sense of self. This is an important part of the self-reflection process because it allows growth to continue based on each individual's personality and demeanor.

The second phase, *How you act* is gaining an understanding of individual behaviors and when practicing self-reflection strategies. This is important because as teachers identify their individual strategies for self-reflection, they develop a sophisticated understanding of their developmental needs. Moving from understanding personal views to understanding personal needs is the logical next step towards moving through the process of self-reflection.

One of the participants in this study identified this third phase, *Who you want to be,* as where she is in her self-reflection process. At this point, she has a strong understanding of who she is as a teacher and what strategies she needs to use in order to practice self-reflection effectively. *Who you want to be* is identified as a point when teachers understand their teaching and self-reflection practices and they use this understanding to work towards the teacher they want to be. They observe other professionals, ask questions and practice new strategies to improve their development.

The last phase of self-reflection is called *Who you are*. At this point of self-reflection, teachers have deeply internalized self-reflection strategies as part of their practice. One teacher identified this final phase as her stage of development. She prioritizes time each day to practice

self-reflection strategies. She also models and promotes her choice practices with other peers as a way to increase their development.

When fully integrated, this sophisticated application of self-reflection becomes internalized, moving teachers from a space of *how they behave* in interactions to a new professional presence, a new expression of *who they are*.

Increased Self-Awareness

Teachers related this developmental shift to their own competency during the Touchpoints® skills-based training. Regardless of their title, role or education level, participants all identified the importance of putting children and family needs before their own and applies tools strategically during each phase of development as a useful professional step. Each participant agreed the Touchpoints® tools were effective while interacting with families. Even those that did not apply it deeply, acknowledged its usefulness.

Participants referred to stages of competency indirectly as they thought about their own development and were able to reflect on their progression over time. This research suggests that once individuals were trained in the Touchpoints® approach they move from unconsciously incompetent through unconsciously competent. Individuals begin with no concept of the practice, but once trained they become aware of their professional competencies. They then move through each phase at different rates depending on the individual. Many move through and spend a fair amount of time in each phase. Most participants in this research study seemed to be consciously competent of their development. Two individuals have started to move into the final phase, which is described as the point in which they have internalized the approach and are able to use it most effectively.

Language of Reflection

According to participants, the Touchpoints® approach has influenced their language statements while guiding their practices when interacting with families. Participants utilized specific language during their interactions with families and felt they strengthened their relationships between them and the families. Once given the Touchpoints® influenced language during the skills-based training, teachers developed a sophisticated understanding of self-reflection as a professional tool of practice. However, Touchpoints® does not provide specific training that breaks down self-reflection as a process or practice for professional development.

This study suggests that the relational framework of the Touchpoints® approach has guided the process of self-reflection by encouraging teachers to think about interactions they have with families in a new way. It has embedded language that teachers identified as supportive to their self-reflection practices before, during and after interactions with families. Teachers used this sophisticated tool to develop a personalized system of applying these strategies and understanding which ones they need to use when, depending on who they are, when they work, and how they work.

Systematic Use of Strategies

Participants expressed throughout their scenarios how they naturally used specific strategies depending on each situation. By thinking about the family's individual needs, how the family might react, and when the interaction took place, allowed each participant to choose one or multiple strategies that may be effective. This strategic process enabled each participant to think about her role and relationship with the family and try to connect with them in the moment.

One example of utilizing a specific strategy was when Participant D chose to use the Why. Am. I. Talking. (W.A.I.T.) strategy with the parent who was upset her child was being

check for lice. In the moment, she was unsure of what to do, so she was able to use one strategy she felt would help to keep the situation from escalating.

Sophisticated Process of Self-Reflection

This study uncovered and has illustrated how new teachers used the self-reflection to develop a sophisticated personal awareness system in order to self-reflect and enhance their professional identity. Each participant presented specific stories and examples of how they have begun to interpret their language and how it has encouraged them to reflect on their practices. Some of the participants stated the three-step process has shifted their thinking from *How they are* to *Who they are* with the justification that self-reflection has motivated their thinking to change them personally and not just in their teaching/self-reflection practices. The three steps of self-reflection; before, during and after interactions with families are necessary steps to enhance the self-reflection process. Two participants were challenged with the three-step process because they have not internalized the Touchpoints® strategies, therefore struggled with the first two steps of personal development through self-reflection.

Participant A and Participant E were able to internalize the influenced strategies demonstrated an increased willingness to be vulnerable and brave when sharing their stories with their peers. They did not care about being judged for their thinking and were able to share their thoughts with their peers. These two teachers used self-reflection strategies as a means of increasing professional development and practiced them in daily interactions. These qualities were not present in all participants, but observed by the researcher during focus groups and individual journal entries within the two participants. These two participants identified their own personal/professional growth higher than other participants did.

Time to practice self-reflection. This research suggests teachers utilize self-reflection in order to enhance relationships with families and professional development. However, finding time during the day can be especially challenging for those working with multiple families. Planning and scheduling *protected time* is a vital aspect of self-reflection. The idea of *protected time* is to assure teachers have the physical space, resources and time they need. Teachers needs will vary depending on the family situation and their personal thought process. Allowing teachers to individualize the amount of time they need is important because some may need more time than others may.

Participants in this study identified both formal and informal strategies to practice self-reflection. These strategies all directly relate to *protected time*. Formal strategies, such as individual supervision meetings or reflective practice sessions need to be protected because teachers need to have the time to connect and think aloud with peers. Informal strategies, such as the car ride home and having a quiet space to sit are just as important. These provide teachers with the opportunity to think about their actions without being in a vulnerable position.

Links to the Research Questions

This study examined multiple aspects of what teachers thought about their interactions with families. Overall, the participants in this study felt they had positive relationships with the families they work with. Two of this study's research questions specifically focused on uncovering teachers' use of specific strategies. Teachers identified multiple strategies such as, Why. Am. I. Talking. (W.A.I.T.), active listening, and being aware of body language as means to effectively communicating with families. Participants' awareness of specific strategies was one of the most helpful concepts because it allowed for flexibility and personal choice, depending on which family they are working with at the time.

The Touchpoints® approach influenced specific language participants used while working with families. This language was most helpful when participants were directly interacting with families. Two Touchpoints® strategies also guided participants as they reflected on the process of self-reflection. Recognizing what you bring to the interaction and Why. Am. I. Talking. (W.A.I.T) were the two specific strategies that participants identified as commonly used form the Touchpoints® approach.

Recommendations

Many professionals would benefit from using the process of self-reflection as a tool to inform their practice. Self-reflection is something that can be taught if teachers are provided the time, resources and guidance. The Touchpoints® approach can be used as a tool to promote the process of self-reflection because of its emphasis on time as a process and on-going guidance of teachers. Together, they complement professional development and support relationship building between providers and families. More teacher training is needed to promote self-reflection practices and guide ongoing professional development. Teachers need for ongoing self-reflection is a critical aspect of understanding teaching strategies and informing their practices.

More teacher training is needed in order to support staff development and to promote positive relationship building with families across cultures. Teachers are faced with more perplexing children and family situations each day. These situations often need to be discussed and analyzed in order for teachers to understand their role and what they are bringing to each interaction. Teacher training and support would help to increase retention and decrease teacher burn out rates.

Focus groups can help to reassure teachers when they are faced with new or complicated situations. This promotes staff development by opening discussions with multiple viewpoints. Regardless of the approach, training that includes time and support to integrate self-reflection strategies will support teacher self-reflection practices and deeper application of these strategies to move from a technique to part of a teacher's professional identity. Programs and program administrators need to build more time for small group sharing, communities of practice and other protected time in order for teachers to connect with their peers for self-reflection.

More research is needed to understand how teachers identify personal growth from one competency point to the next, both on the journey to skill competency in using Touchpoints® tools an in a more **intense** process of developing a self-reflective identity rather than simply behaving self-reflectively. Research and training would benefit from exploring the following questions: What resources are needed in order for individuals to self- identify and move through each phase of applied development? Can individual movement be measured in relation to self-reflection practices? At what point does the approach shift from *how you are* to when it becomes *who you are*? Moreover, does it shift for every individual?

Summary and Conclusion

This research study has proven to be significant in terms of understanding the self-reflection process for teachers working with families in the Early Care and Education field. The Touchpoints® approach served as a tool that guided specific strategies for teachers to utilize when interacting with families. The more sophisticated application in the field of Touchpoints® strategies, through phases of self-reflection, extends and expands this effective toolkit in ways that demonstrate the importance of self-reflection as personal and professional development. Self-reflection reduces vulnerability over time even though it asks individuals to be vulnerable

during the process.   This process is meant to be supportive to professional development and individual growth. According to the research, the Touchpoints® approach was an effective tool that served to be effective. Each participant identified at least one aspect on the approach as useful when thinking about the process of self-reflection.

Self-reflection is vital for teachers, particularly new teachers, at any level to be effective in their role working with families. Therefore, self-reflection practices are important in several ways. These practices support cross-cultural communication between teachers and families, build trusting relationships that establish common ground, and promote the relationships between family and teacher.

Teacher self-reflection practices are an essential part of professional development. Each teacher improves their professional development by understanding their personal and professional reflections. This in turn, when teachers are able to understand their initial reactions, it helps the collaboration with families. The tools imbedded in the Touchpoints Approach are incredibly useful in providing skills for self-reflection. The use of these strategies supports teachers and allows them to have meaningful interactions with families.

Most importantly, though, these strategies have increased teachers' awareness of their professional development for those who internalize them by moving their consciousness of *How they are* when interacting with families to *Who they are* in their everyday connections with families. The process of self-reflection has forced new teachers to think beyond their comfort zone and be vulnerable when sharing their initial thoughts. Personal stories and reflections identified the challenges of being vulnerable in the moment when thinking about their responses during interactions with families. Responding honestly and receiving criticism can make a

teacher feel vulnerable, especially when they are new to their role. It is important to consider this in relation to any tool used for self-reflection.

Teachers who become brave and are able to share personal thoughts with their peers have been able to deepen their self-reflections skills and inform their reflective practice techniques. When teachers understand their professional development skill set, they can attend specific trainings and course work to increase that skill. This promotes targeted training, especially those who have self-identified what skill they want to deepen.

When teachers who internalize the Touchpoints® approach and make a shift from *How they are* behaving to *Who they are*, they are using self-reflection in a new way, beyond the Touchpoints® skills-based training. This process reflects the individuals' application of the practice, central to which is the transformation from techniques to identity-based practices. The Touchpoints® approach focuses on language and strategies to use with families and it is up to teachers to create a more integrated practice with their professional and personal interactions, internalizing the strategies strategically. The framework provided support and a common language, then maturing practitioners used it as a springboard to move into a more sophisticated and integrated practice.

Touchpoints® is a skills-based extrinsic process, which participants acknowledged as helpful. However, self-reflection is also an intrinsic and transformative process. This study demonstrates the importance of internalizing self-reflection practices as a way of increasing teaching competence and improving interactions with families. This development is not only professional but also personal, supporting a journey from *how* a teacher interacts to *a state of being* in which self-reflection becomes part of their presence as a person.

Teachers in early childhood education are often expected to come with self-reflection skills, and sometimes even the ability to quickly and easily integrate these skills into effective relationships and a flexible presence. However, since self-reflection is rarely part of teacher training, it is a way of being that needs to be at the forefront of teacher support and developmental programs. These programs need to take into account that integrating and internalizing self-reflection skills takes time, personal commitment, and institutional support.

The process of moving from *how they behave* to *who they are as professionals* is a gradual one. This study indicates four key steps. First, teachers learn specific strategies in order to begin their practice of self-reflection to support interactions that are more effective. Second, they implement those strategies, choosing the most effective interactions and their own personal preferences. This second step is mirrored in study participants' assessment of the stages of an interaction, and the self-reflection strategies best applied in each stage.

Third, after practice in interactions, formal and informal self-reflection gives teachers a chance to assess successes and challenges, and to use that process, to consider how they might become the teacher they want to be. They begin to recognize their own personal strengths as well as areas they are not as competent as they would like to be. Here, the process of self-reflection has started to take root and intrinsically motivate them to continue to work towards self-improvement.

Finally, from their intrinsic motivation, they have adapted those strategies and practices into their everyday interactions. Ultimately, competence in these practices has become a part of who they are. This is a messy process, and quite disorganizing. However, once teachers can self-identify *this is the teacher I truly am,* they begin to own their own process, and the practices fall into place. The teacher uses self-reflection naturally to become a teacher-leader.

Self-reflection is a critical aspect of teacher development, growth and overall performance. Without self-reflection practices, new teachers are at danger of alienating parents, jeopardizing their relationships with families, and minimizing their overall career pathway. From this research, it is clear that self-reflection is more than a tool for communication, as it is presented in Touchpoints® trainings. It can also be a profound experience of personal and professional growth to enhance a teacher's career success and satisfaction.

Appendix A

Teacher Informed Consent Form

Title of Dissertation: Teacher Self-Reflection Practices and Influences with Families.
Principal Investigator: Nena Cunningham
Faculty: Dr. Michelle Collay
Lead Advisor: Dr. Carol Burbank
Explanation and Purpose of the Research: The purpose of this phenomenology case study will be to uncover individual stories from new teachers who are beginning to use self-reflection practices as a means of improving interactions with families.
Research Procedures: I will study this by collecting data through: interviews, journaling and a focus group.

I, _____, have carefully reviewed and fully understand the purpose of this research and the procedures to be followed. I understand that my records will be kept confidential, my participation is voluntary, and I may withdraw at any time without penalty. If I have any questions about my rights as a subject or the manner in which this research is conducted, I can contact the principal investigator, Nena Cunningham, from the Graduate Studies program, at the University of New England, at (207)441-6600. I fully understand the above and give my consent to serve as a subject. I also give permission to be recorded on audio associated with the project, and understand that these clips, along with any other research data will only be used for a dissertation and actual names will not be used.

_____   _____

Participants Signature of Consent   Date

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

_____   _____

Signature of Principle Investigator

Appendix B

Interview Procedure and Questions for Participants

Thank you for your willingness to meet with me in order to conduct this interview. I have a series of six questions to ask in order to gain a deeper understanding of how you perceive self-reflection practices /strategies. If you have questions or need further explanation feel free to stop me and we can discuss. This interview will be recorded for decoding and will only be viewed by myself and/or a professional transcriptionist. Are you ready to begin?

1. What do you do to prepare for a meeting with a parent?
2. How did you get yourself ready before hand so you felt ready to have a positive connection?
3. In a typical day, what does self-reflection look like for you? How and when does it happen?
4. What specific self-reflection practices do you find most effective?
5. Why do you think these strategies work best for you?
6. Can you share an experience, when you felt you used the Touchpoints® approach during a conversation with a family?
7. How has the Touchpoints® approach influenced your self-reflection practices with families?

Thank you for participating in this interview. Once the transcription is complete, you will be able to review all of the data and edit any comments you have provided. You may do this at any time during the data collection process.
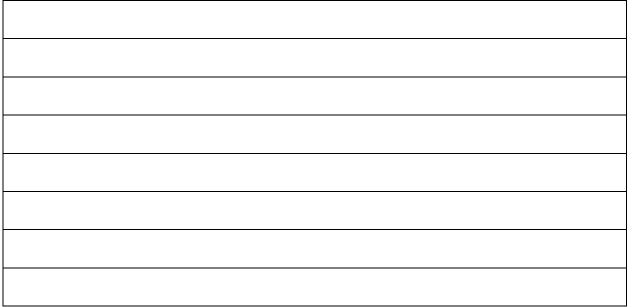
Thank You,
Nena

Appendix C
Journal Entry Form

Please use the space provided (but not limited too) to reflect on one interaction you had with a family each week. Since you have been trained in the Touchpoints® approach, I would like you to think about how you felt before, during and after the interaction. What worked and seemed to go well from your perspective? Is there anything you would change and do differently next time? Why?

Week 1

Week 2

Week 3

Week 4

Week 5

Week 6

Week 7

Week 8

References

Anderson, K. (2013, December 10). *Kare Anderson on the importance of self reflection*.

    Retrieved from YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9D8iuVghfU

Anfara, V., & Mertz, N. (2006). Theoretical frameworks in qualitative research. Thousand Oaks:

    Sage Publications.

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: the exercise of control.* United States of America: W.H.

    Freeman and Company.

Baum, A. C., & Korth, B. B. (2013). Preparing classroom teachers to be cooperating teachers: A

    report of current efforts, beliefs, challenges, and associated recommendations. *Journal of*

    Early Childhood Teacher Education, 34, 171-190.

Baum, A., & Swick, K. (2008). Dispositions toward families and family involvement:

    Supporting preservice teacher development. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 35*,

    597-584. doi:10.1007/s10643-007-0229-9

Bayat, M. (2010). Use of dialogue journals and video-recording in early childhood teacher

    education. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 31*, 159-172.

Bevins, S., Jordan, J., & Perry, E. (2011). Reflecting on professional development. *Educational*

    Action Research , 19 (3), 399-411.

Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. (2012). Completing your qualitative dissertation: a road map

    from beginning to end. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Borysenko, J. (2011). *Fried; Why you burn out and how to revive.* United Kingdom: Hay House

    Inc.

Brannick, M., Levine, E., & Morgeson, F. (2007). Job and work analysis. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Brazelton Touchpoints Center. (2015, July 3). *The importance of early learning starting from birth*. Retrieved from http://www.brazeltontouchpoints.org/

Campbell-Evans, G., Stamopolous, E., & Maloney, C. (2014). Building leadership capacity in early childhood preservice teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 39(5), 42-49.

Carlo, D. D., Hinkhouse, H. & Isbell, L. (2010). Developing a reflective practitioner through the connection between educational research and reflective practice. *Journal of Science Education and Technology, 19*, 58-68.

Cornish, L., & Jenkins, K. (2012). Encouraging teacher development through embedding reflective practice in assessment. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 40*(2), 159-170.

Creswell, J. (2013). Qualitative inquiry and research design. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Eberly, J., Joshi, A., & Konzal, J. (2007). Communicating with families across cultures: An investigation of teacher perceptions and practices. *The School Community Journal, 17*(2), 7-26.

Edwards, G., & Thomas, G. (2010). Can reflective practice be taught? *Educational Studies , 36* (4), 403-414.

Fenton, A., & McFarland-Piazza, L. (2014). Supporting early childhood preservice teachers in their work with children and families with complex needs: A strengths approach. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 35*, 22-35.

Galea, S. (2012). Reflecting reflective practice. *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 44*(3), 245-258.

Galinsky, E. (2012). Learning communities: An emerging phenomenon. *Young Children,* 20-27.

Gordon, T (2003) *Teacher effectiveness training.* First Revised Edition. New York: Three Rivers Press

Happo, I., Maatta, K., & Uusiautti, S. (2013). How do early childhood education teachers preceive their expertise? A qualitiative study of child care providers in Lapland, Finland. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 41*, 273-281.

Harada, V., Lum, D., & Souza, K. (2003). Building a learning community. *Childhood Education, 79*(2), 66-71.

Harnett, A., & Tierney, E. (2009). Convention of hope-communicating positive, realistic messages to families at the time of a child's diagnosis with disabilities. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities, 37*, 257-264.

Head Start English Language Learners Project at Community Development Institution. (2014, August 27). *National Center on Cultural Linguistic Responsiveness.* Retrieved from Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center: http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/ecd/early-childhood-development-learning.html

Head Start Performance Standards. (2014, November 13). *Staff qualifications and development*. Retrieved from Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center: http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/pd/fsd/All%20Staff/Sec648AStaff.htm

Hedges, H., & Lee, D. (2010). 'I understood the complexity within diversity': Preparation for partnership with families in early childhood settings. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacheer Education, 38*(4), 257-27

Kansanen, P. (1995). *Discussion on some educational issues.* Helsinki, Finland: Collected Works.

Kearney, E., McIntosh, L., Perry, B., Dockett, S., & Clayton, K. (2014). Building positive relationship with indigenous children, families, and communities: Learning at the cultural interface. Critical Studies in Education, 338-352.

Khales, B., & Meier, D. (2013). Toward a new way of learning: Promoting inquiry and reflection in Palestinian early childhood teacher education. *The New Educator, 9*, 287-303.

Klentschy, M. (2005). Designing professional development opportunities for teachers that foster collaboration, capacity building and reflective practice. *Science Educator, 14*(1), 1-8.

Kruse, T. (2012). Making the match: Culturally relevant coaching and training for early childhood caregivers. *Early Childhood Research and Practice, 14*(2), 1-8.

Larrivee, B. (2000). Transforming teaching practice: becoming the critically relfective teacher. *Reflective Practice, 1*(3), 293-307.

Leiberman, A. (1995). Practices that support teacher development: Transforming conceptions of professional learning. Division of Research, Evaluation and Communication, 67-78.

LoCasale-Crouch, J., Davis, E., Wiens, P., & Pianta, R. (2012). The role of the mentor in
    supporting new teachers: Associations with self-efficacy, reflection, and quality. Taylor
    and Francis, *20*(3), 303-323.

Loughran, J. (2009). Effective reflective practice: in search of meaning in learning about
    teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education, 53*(1), 33-43.

Manen, M. V. (1984). *"Doing"phenomenologocal research and writing: an introduction*. Albert:
    Curriculum Praxis Monograph Series.

Maring, G., & Magelky, J. (1990). Effective communication: key to parent/community
    involvement. The Reading Teacher, 606-607.

Maude, S., Brotherson, M., Summers, J., Erwin, E., Palmer, S., Peck, N., . . . Weigel, C. (2011).
    Performance: A strategy for professional development in early childhood teacher
    preparation. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 32*, 355-366.
    doi:10.1080/10901027.2011.622244

McFarland, L., Saunders, R., & Sllen, S. (2009). Reflective practice and self-evaluation in
    lerning positive guidance: Experiences of early childhood practicum students. *Early
    Childhood Education, 36*, 505-511.

McLeod, S. (2009). Jean Piaget. *Simply psychology*.

Merriam, S. (2009). Qualitative research: a guide to design and implementation. San Francisco,
    CA: Jossey-Bass.

Miles, M., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). Qualitative data analysis: a methods

      sourcebook (Vol. 3). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

Miretzky, D. (2004). The communication requirements of democratic schools: Parent-teacher

      perspectives on their relationships. Teachers College Record, 814-851.

Nemeth, K., & Erdosi, V. (2012, September). Enhancing practice with infants and toddlers form

      diverse language and cultural backgrounds. *Young Children*, 49-57.

Nickel, J., Sutherby, L., & Garrow-Oliver, S. (2010). Innovations in eearly childhood teacher

      education: Reflections on practice. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 31*,

      49-62.

Participant, A. (2016, February 18). Personal interview.

Participant, B. (2016, February 16). Personal interview.

Participant, C. (2016, February 17). Personal interview.

Participant, D. (2016, February 16). Personal interview.

Participant, E. (2016, February 17). Personal interview.

Purvis, K., Cross, D., Jones, D., & Buff, G. (2012). Transforming cultures of care: A case study

      in organizational change. *Reclaiming Children and Youth, 21*(2), 12-20.

Ravitch, S., & Riggan, M. (2012). Reason & Rigor; how conceptual frameworks guide research.

      Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Rosenbaum, P. (2011). Communicating with families: A challenge we can and must address! *Physical & Occupational Therapy in Pediatrics, 21*(2), 133-134.

Ruth, D. (2014). Teaching strategy: Reflection on professional practice. *Teaching in Higher Education, 19*(3), 254-265.

Saevi, T. (2014, June 16). Retrieved from SlideShare: http://www.slideshare.net/HEASocSci/phenomenology-in-educational-research-ton-saevi

Shivers, E., Howes, C., Wishard, A., & Ritchie, S. (2004). Teacher-articulated perceptions and practices with families: Examining effective teaching in diverse high quality child care programs. *Early Education & Development, 15*(2), 167-186.

Sparrow, J. (2013, July 11). *Touchpoints: Supporting Parents*. Retrieved from YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3LhJ2dZdpW8, 22, July, 2015.

Swick, K., & Bailey, L. B. (2004). Communicating effectively with parents and families who are homeless. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 32*(3), 211-215.

Trevino, L. K., & Brown, M. E. (2007). Ethical leadership: A developing construct. In D. L. Nelson, & C. L. Cooper, *Positive Organizational Behavior* (pp. 101-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.

Van Manen, M. (2007). Phenomenology of practice. *Phenomenology & Practice, 1,* 11-30

Vickers, H., & Minke, K. (1995). Exploring parent-teacher relationships: joining and communication to others. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 133-150.

Walsh, F. (2002). A family resilience framework: innovative practice applications. *Family*

Relations. 51(2), 130-138.

Wertz, F. J. (2005). Phenomenological research methods for counseling psychology. *Journal of*

Counseling Psychology, 52(2), 167-177.

Wiklerson, L., Irby, D. (1998). Strategies for improving teaching practices: a comprehensive

approach to faculty development. *Academic Medicine, 73*(4), 387-396.

Yang, S.-H. (2009). Using blogs to enhance critical reflection and community of practice.

Educational Technology & Society, 12 (2), 11–21

Yost, D. (2006). Reflection and self-efficacy: enhancing the retention of qualified teachers from

a teacher education perspective. *Teacher Education Quarterly,* Fall, 59-76.