BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF ANTI-BIAS CURRICULUM
IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS
By
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For My Sweet Lord
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ABSTRACT

The ever-changing composition of early childhood classrooms brings many challenges as well as chances for teachers to be more responsive to the needs of children from different backgrounds. In order to better prepare early childhood teachers to meet the challenges presented by an increasingly diverse student body, this case study explored teachers’ beliefs and practices of anti-bias curriculum in stated funded preschool, kindergarten, and 2-3 grade settings.

Data of this study were collected through document analysis, interviews, observations, and surveys. Qualitative analysis of the data revealed the factors that challenged teachers’ practices of anti-bias teaching as well as the aspects that contributed to their continuous efforts to implement an anti-bias curriculum with the regular curriculum. The results of the study indicate teachers’ classroom practice was strongly influenced by their beliefs as suggested by the belief systems theory (Rokeach, 1968) and their beliefs and practices were congruent across the three settings.

The results of this study ought to be considered to be the thinking tool for future discussion and research. This study seeks to support the need for better teacher preparation in the area of diversity education and multicultural studies. Additionally, the need for collaboration among colleagues, children’s families, and support from the administration is called for. The results of the study also led to recommendations for future research in the areas of anti-bias teaching and early childhood education.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

U.S. teachers are now required to serve a more culturally, ethnically, linguistically, and racially diverse student population than in any previous historical period (Corso, Santos, & Roof, 2002; Jones, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2005; Major & Brock, 2003; McMinn, 2001; Milner, 2005; North Central Regional Educational Laboratory [NCREL], 1998). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2006), the percentage of public school students who were racial/ethnic minorities increased from 22% in 1972 to 43% in 2004. Over 19 percent of American children ages 5-17 were from non-English-speaking homes. Among these children, the number who spoke English with difficulty also grew markedly during this period. In contrast, 83 percent of the teaching workforce is white (Strizek, Pittsonberger, Riordan, Lyter & Orlofsky, 2006), middle-class, and monolingual (Sleeter, 2001). These changing demographics dramatically affect the tasks that teachers take up in the twenty-first century, as teaching to a diverse student body requires increased cultural sensitivity.

Changes in demographics are having a profound impact on education. Banks (2001) states that the nation must be prepared to make the necessary adjustments to face ethnic and cultural change in society. In order to address these changes teachers are being encouraged to explore and to respond to content themes in a way that both promotes their growth as professionals and deepens their thinking about the role of diversity curriculum in the classroom and its effect on children. For those teachers who are committed to that task, finding the means to help children make sense out of their lives while empowering them to become positive and active forces in their communities has become a fundamental part of their everyday routine.

Early childhood educators are also facing new challenges as they examine the role of culture in children’s development (Kendall, 1996). Early childhood educators across the country are discussing the importance of anti-bias curriculum for children, families, communities, and society. The purpose of anti-bias curriculum is to nurture children’s development by addressing issues of diversity and equity in the classroom (Derman-Sparks, 1989; Bullock, 1996). The ever-changing composition of early childhood classrooms brings many challenges as well as chances
for teachers to be more responsive to the needs of children from different cultures. Therefore, implementing a curriculum that is culturally responsive and inclusive to assist culturally diverse children’s needs (Gay, 2002; Hein, 2004; Montgomery, 2001) and teach children how to overcome prejudices is imperative.

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers’ beliefs and practices of anti-bias curriculum in order to better prepare early childhood teachers to meet the challenges presented by an increasingly diverse student body. The specific objectives of this study were: (i) to explore teachers’ beliefs on their practice of anti-bias curriculum in early childhood settings, (ii) to explore parents’ beliefs on teachers’ practice of anti-bias curricula, and (iii) to uncover barriers to and working strategies of incorporating anti-bias curriculum in early childhood education. To meet these objectives, this study used a multi-method case study approach including interviews, observation, document analysis, and surveys.

This study explored early childhood teachers’ beliefs and how beliefs affect their discretionary use of anti-bias curriculum. The need for this study is reflected in the literature that argues teachers are facing the challenge of meeting the needs of children from diverse backgrounds (e.g. Gay & Howard, 2000; Milner, 2005; Van Hook, 2002). Enhancing teachers’ competence to work with culturally diverse students has become a major challenge for the educational reform movement (Gay, 2002; Jones, 2004).

One goal teachers have is to help children strive for academic excellence and to attain social and emotional well-being as well. Freire (1998) postulates that educators need to know what happens in the world of the children with whom they work. They need to know the universe of their dreams, the language with which they skillfully defend themselves from the aggressiveness of their world, what they know independently of the school, and how they know it. Children need teachers who believe in them and continually affirm those beliefs in order to satisfy their needs. Freire further notes that teachers who are to become progressive agents of change should have the understanding that:

we cannot doubt the power of cultural inheritance, cannot doubt that it makes us conform and gets in the way of our being. But the fact that we are programmed beings, conditioned and conscious of the conditioning and not predetermined, is
what makes it possible to overcome the strength of cultural inheritance. (p.70)

The study of teachers’ beliefs is critical to educational practice (Kagan, 1992). Kagan proposes that beliefs may be "the clearest measure of a teacher’s professional growth" and that understanding them is “instrumental in determining the quality of interaction one finds among teachers in a given school” (p.85). Bandura (1986) and Dewey (1933) infer that beliefs can be the most significant predictors of the decisions that individuals make throughout their lives. Rokeach (1968) argues that beliefs are the best indicators of the decisions made by individuals in the course of their lifetime. Pajares (1992), in a review of the research on the topic, suggests that individuals’ beliefs strongly affect their behavior. This finding is consistent with what Bandura and Rokeach found; people tend to act according to what they believe. For example, what a teacher believes about what is important for a child to learn will influence the subject matter she will choose to teach, as well as the techniques she employs. Similarly, a teacher’s belief in her capability to teach the material will have an impact on the way she will interact with children.

Teachers’ beliefs and the influence of beliefs on their practice have been addressed in many research studies (e.g., Kagan, 1992; Richardson, 1996; Wallace & Kang, 2004). Renzaglia, Hutchins, and Lee (1997) argue that “one’s beliefs and attitudes are reflected in decisions and actions, and there is evidence that teachers’ beliefs and attitudes drive important decisions and classroom practice” (p. 361). Additionally, Brand and Glasson (2004) propose that teachers’ early life experiences and ethnic and racial identity influence their beliefs on diversity and their teaching pedagogy and philosophy. Their findings are consistent with the findings of Nespor (1987) and McAllister and Irvine (2000) who assert that teachers’ beliefs about education are shaped by substantial episodes in their lives and racial and ethnic identities. According to Jones (2004), these preconceived ideas about issues of race, ethnicity, gender, and class will play out in the actions and practices of teachers.

The understanding of teachers’ beliefs can also contribute to educational reform. Stuart and Thurlow (2000) argue that teachers need to bring their beliefs to a conscious level, and articulate and examine them, because the student population has changed dramatically and many of the beliefs teachers and children hold are counterproductive to the teaching-learning
process. Also, as noted, the teaching population is increasingly white and middle class. Pajares (1992) argues that teachers’ belief systems serve an adaptive function that directs the way teachers act because it makes sense for them to do so. In that view, the teacher’s primary task is to recognize that their beliefs drive classroom practices and that those practices have a significant impact on their students’ learning. Stuart and Thurlow claim that, “they [teachers] will be in a position to break this cycle [counterproductive beliefs], but they will be incapable of doing so as long as beliefs of which they are not cognizant drive their classroom practices” (p. 119). In other words, if teachers are to become change agents, they need to be aware of the beliefs that underlie their decision making (Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996). Solomon (1995) suggests that, “schools need faculty [in higher education] who will encourage teachers’ introspection and self-examination to uncover how their own socialization has influenced their beliefs and assumptions about diverse groups in society” (p. 257). The significance that these researchers have placed upon the influence of teacher belief on practice suggests that further research into the relationship of belief and practice is warranted.

Another important element that is often missing in diversity education is the supporting of parental involvement. As pointed out by Pattnaik (2003), “education that fosters a critical world-view in children begins at home and is inextricably linked to the social and psychological atmosphere of the children’s families and communities” (p.19). Pelletier and Corter (2005) suggest that parents hold certain beliefs about what attitudes their children will need to succeed in school, that parents’ beliefs influence the activities they engage in with their children, and that the variety of parents’ beliefs about education can challenge traditionally held notions of schooling and what is important for children to learn. Parents have long been recognized as their children’s first teachers (Winter, 1995). Parents’ beliefs and practices toward diversity can influence and shape children’s attitudes toward those who are different from themselves (Derman-Sparks, 1992). Diversity education includes emotional, intellectual, and social components. For that reason, Pattnaik (2003) asserts that parents’ involvement in schools’ diversity education policies and practices can facilitate their children’s understanding of diversity. These conclusions suggest that, without parents’ participation, the task of preparing all children for a multicultural world will remain incomplete. If educational reform is to take
place, it is important to understand and explore parents’ attitudes and knowledge about diversity.

Integrating diversity curriculum with the regular curriculum should be the goal of every childhood classroom (Cater, 1998; Keenan, 1997; Levy 1996; 1997; Sherman & Thompson, 1994) if we are to prepare children to have the ability to stand up for themselves in the face of bias and become critical thinkers; to analyze what is being presented while simultaneously learning about acceptance, respect, and tolerance. Because of the fear, uncertainty, or discomfort of many teachers and teacher educators, implementing a diversity curriculum does not come without difficulties. Van Hook (2002) found some teachers have difficulties discussing sensitive topics in the classroom and are not able to recognize and accept diversity. Furthermore, many teachers find it difficult to recognize the way personal perspectives consciously and unconsciously shape and shade one’s relationships with children and children’s families. Hartke (1997) argues that some early childhood educators are struggling to create a curriculum that prepares children for a multicultural world. However, Bernhard et al. (1998) argue that without appropriate understanding of the formation of racial identity in themselves and their students, teachers will not feel comfortable raising these issues with children and families.

**Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

Research on teacher thinking has called for understanding teacher’s beliefs, actions, and the nature of the process of learning to teach specifically through the use of qualitative longitudinal case studies (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996). This qualitative study was undertaken to provide data regarding teachers’ beliefs and practices of anti-bias curriculum based on guidelines from the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation standards and criteria. Additionally, areas of the program, curriculum, teachers’ perceptions of bias and challenges they face by implementing anti-bias curriculum, as well as parents’ attitudes toward diversity, will be studied.

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers’ beliefs and practices of anti-bias curriculum in order to better prepare teachers to meet the challenges presented by an increasingly diverse student body in early childhood settings. How educators’ beliefs are
associated with their practices in classrooms has been investigated extensively (e.g., Charlesworth, Hart, & Burts, 1991; Charlesworth et al., 1993; Goodwin, 1994, 1997; Pohan & Aguilar, 2001; Stuart & Thurlow, 2000). However, we know little about the content of teachers’ beliefs and the nature of the relationship between beliefs and practice (Bryan, 2003; Richardson, 1996), especially in early childhood settings. Bernhard et al. (1998) propose that teachers of young children play a critical role in helping children combat personal prejudice and institutional bias. Practitioners’ perceptions and beliefs about anti-bias curriculum is, therefore, an important aspect to be investigated. Research questions constructed in this study are:

1. How do teachers’ beliefs about anti-bias curriculum relate to their practices in early childhood settings?
2. What are the barriers or contributions to incorporating anti-bias curriculum in early childhood settings?
3. How do parents’ beliefs relate to teachers’ practices of anti-bias curriculum?

Table 1 delineates the relation between the research questions and the methodology used to answer them.

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**Significance**

Much of the research on anti-bias curriculum has focused on reducing children’s gender bias (e.g., Kim & Lewis, 1999; Rainey & Rust, 1999). Very little is known about educators’ perspectives of anti-bias curriculum and whether they are consistent with teaching practice.
Implementing an anti-bias curriculum in the classroom is a challenging task; it takes time and effort. Many barriers have been considered in textbooks about diversity. However, no empirical studies have investigated teachers’ perceived barriers and the difficulties they face (Van Hook, 2002). When teachers are not able to accept and embrace diversity, confront issues themselves, and reflect upon their own experiences, they may not be able to help children to identify racial bias, defend themselves in the face of bias, or become critical thinkers. The need to identify early childhood teachers’ barriers, challenges, and needs in implementing an anti-bias curriculum is essential.

This study was significant because it related to teachers’ beliefs and how they affect children’s academic achievement, social and emotional development, and children’s concept of self and others, as well as the changing demographics in American society. Furthermore, it gathered information not only on reported practice but also on observed actual practice and examines how teachers conceptualize their work. Results of this study may support the need for further pre-service and in-service preparation in the area of diversity education and multicultural studies. Additionally, understanding parents’ beliefs about diversity may contribute to teachers’ practice of diversity education that is developmentally appropriate and meaningful for their students. It may also identify specific topics in diversity education relevant for teacher education programs.

As Bryan (2003) states, the body of research on beliefs about teaching and learning is expanding; however, to date it has focused mainly on teachers at the middle and secondary levels. This study expanded the discussion in a much-needed and promising area of research: that of perceptions of bias, beliefs, and practices regarding anti-bias curriculum. Results of the study can also raise the awareness about the fact that no change in practices can exist unless it is accompanied by a change in teachers’ beliefs. This study hoped to fill the gap in early childhood and anti-bias curriculum education research literature that seldom addresses the challenges teachers face by contributing to a greater understanding of the barriers and ways to integrate an anti-bias curriculum in early childhood programs.
Theoretical Framework

The focus on the belief system has been examined by educational researchers who try to understand the nature of teaching and learning in school settings. Rokeach (1968) suggests that beliefs are structured along a central-peripheral dimension based on their structural interconnectedness. A growing amount of literature suggests that teachers’ beliefs have great influence on both their perceptions and judgments, and that these in turn affect their behaviors in the classroom. Teachers’ beliefs and attitudes are believed to be major factors that determine teachers’ practice and pedagogy (Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992). Therefore, the belief system is an essential part of improving both professional preparation and teaching effectiveness (Bishop, 1999; Maslovaty, 2000; Mewborn, 2002; Nespor, 1987; Ruddell & Kern, 1986).

This study is grounded in belief-systems theory. According to Rokeach (1968), “a belief system may be defined as having represented within it, in some organized psychological but not necessarily logical form, each and every one of a person’s countless beliefs about physical and social reality” (p. 2). Belief systems are groups of beliefs that are static and they are most likely to change because of a gestalt shift (Nespor, 1987) instead of logical reasoning. Grube, Mayton, and Ball-Rokeach (1994) maintain that belief-system theory provides a framework to understand the organizational structure of an individual’s attitudes, values, and behaviors, as well as the conditions required to keep them stabilized or to change them. Beliefs are inferences that a person makes about the world (Rokeach).

There are three hypotheses about beliefs that provide the scientific basis for research in this area (Rokeach, 1968). They are: (i) beliefs vary in centrality; not all beliefs are equally important; (ii) the more central the belief, the more resistant to change; and (iii) change in central beliefs lead to overall change in belief systems; change in peripheral beliefs lead to less change in overall systems. These assumptions must be considered when addressing identification and changes in teachers’ beliefs. Nespor (1987) found belief systems are markedly more influential than knowledge in discerning how teachers frame and organize tasks. Belief systems were found to be stronger predictors of behaviors in his study. The findings of
Nespor’s study imply that belief systems directly and indirectly affect an individual’s decisions and in turn her behaviors (see Figure 1).

Beliefs are psychological constructs that consist of understandings, assumptions, or propositions that are felt to be true (Kagan, 1992; Richardson, 2003) and that guide a person’s actions and decision making (Pajares, 1992). They are also linked to personal, episodic, and emotional experiences (Nespor, 1987), and they differ from knowledge in that beliefs do not require a condition of truth (Richardson). Wallace and Kang (2004) claim that a teacher’s actions represent one aspect of his/her beliefs and should be perceived from the belief system as a whole. This notion is stressed by Rokeach (1968) who proposes that beliefs do not exist outside the belief system. Nespor (1987) argues that beliefs should be perceived as a theoretical construct that teachers rely on instead of their academic knowledge when determining classroom actions. These views suggest that what a teacher actually does in the classroom is a reflection of his/her beliefs.

Wallace and Kang (2004) argue that “there is a complex interaction between teacher beliefs, which are mental, and teacher actions, which take place in the social arena” (p. 938). It involves cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. Examining teachers’ practices and cognitively perceived beliefs can help us understand the complexities of a belief system as it plays out in context (Richardson, 1996). After examining 480 elementary school teachers’ strategies for coping with socio-moral conflicts, Maslovaty (2000) found a significant relationship between teachers’ beliefs and their pedagogical style. She concluded that teachers’
belief systems determine their behaviors. The need to understand how teacher’s beliefs are constructed and how these beliefs influence their decision making in classrooms is crucial.

Teachers are a critical component to education reform as they decide the milieu of children’s learning environment in school (Beck, Czerniak, & Lumpe, 2000). Beck, Czerniak, and Lumpe argue that teachers’ beliefs are a crucial change agent in this reform. It is important for the underlying beliefs of teachers’ to be uncovered and acknowledged if reform initiatives are to be succeeded. Thus, this study use theories of beliefs systems as its framework in understanding how early childhood teachers translate their thought processes into practice in their classrooms.

Definition of Terms

Beliefs

Beliefs are the building blocks of attitudes (Pajares, 1992). Beliefs refer to “inferences made by an observer about underlying states of expectancy” (Rokeach, 1968, p. 2). Beliefs are instrumental in defining behavior, organizing knowledge, and making decisions.

Teachers’ Beliefs

Teachers’ attitudes about education, teaching, and learning are referred to as “teachers’ beliefs.” In this study, teachers’ attitudes are equivalent to educational beliefs since professional/educational beliefs are strongly and positively correlated with each other (Pohan & Aguilar, 2001). Teachers’ beliefs are defined as constructs that provide an understanding of a teacher’s practice (Nespor, 1987; Richardson, 1996).

Anti-bias Curriculum

Derman-Sparks (1989) defines anti-bias curriculum as an active/activist approach to challenging prejudice, stereotyping, bias, and the ‘isms’. An anti-bias curriculum is one way to address diversity in education. It urges the valuing of diversity in many forms (e.g., gender, culture, race, language, lifestyle, disability) and the promotion of equity.
Diversity

Diversity is referred to types of differences-race, ethnicity, cultural, language, aptitude, sex and sexual orientation (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The terms, anti-bias and diversity will be used interchangeably in this study.

Early Childhood Settings

Early childhood settings refer to pre-kindergarten to third-grade classrooms.

Chapter 1 has provided a contextual overview for the study of early childhood teachers’ beliefs and practices of anti-bias curriculum. The problem, related to incorporating an anti-bias curriculum with the regular curriculum, and the importance of understanding teachers’ thought processes were addressed. A summary of how teachers’ identity and experience may affect their beliefs and perceptions about diversity education was outlined. Using belief systems theory as a framework for investigating teachers’ beliefs and practices regarding implementing an anti-bias education in early childhood settings was also presented.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To frame the discussion of anti-bias curriculum in regard to early childhood education, this chapter relates this study to the larger, ongoing discourse of these fields. Because this study is exploratory, previous literature is used here primarily to set the stage for the problem. Consistent with the methodological assumptions of this qualitative research, previous literature is used inductively and not to drive the present research question, which was presented in the previous chapter.

The review of the literature is divided into two sections. The first section focuses on research related to anti-bias curriculum, with subsections pertaining to the importance of an anti-bias curriculum and integrating an anti-bias curriculum in early childhood programs. The second section presents research on teachers’ beliefs and attitudes in educational practice with emphasis on teachers’ beliefs regarding culturally diverse children and teachers’ attitudes toward anti-bias curriculum.

Studies on Anti-bias Curriculum

We live in a very diverse country and our education and teaching need to reflect our kaleidoscopic society (Marulis, 2000). Education that values diversity is the one that ensures everyone’s voice be heard regardless of her skin color, language, ability, race, gender, religion, class, and so forth. In other words, classrooms should be places where differences are valued and respected. Teaching children to respect individual rights to self-identification and to recognize that no one culture is intrinsically superior to another is the goal of diversity education. Using an anti-bias approach, teachers are able to help children learn about the diversity of community, lay the groundwork for children to construct knowledge, learn how to confront bias and prejudice, and recognize diversity as an essential and valuable part of the society.

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Milner (2005) suggests that educators should be “change agents” who help students of all levels confront reality critically, while objectifying and acting upon that reality. He found that teachers could change their perceptions, beliefs, and actions about diversity when they were convinced that diversity really was an issue, and they were receptive to being convinced. Freire (1997) adds that, “the progressive educator must always be moving out on his or her own, continually reinventing me and reinventing what it means to be democratic in his or her own specific cultural and historical context” (Freire, 1997, p.308). Teachers can become influential change agents who can make a difference in children’s lives if they believe they have the power to make a difference and are empowered.

Derman-Sparks introduced the anti-bias approach and anti-bias curriculum in her seminal book Anti-Bias Curriculum (1989). Anti-bias curriculum is a popular means to address diversity (e.g., gender, culture, race, language, lifestyle, disability) in education and promote equality. The concept of anti-bias curriculum has greatly influenced educational practices in Great Britain, Australia, America, and many other Western countries since the 1990s (e.g., Jacobson, 2000; Kim & Lewis, 1999; Owen, 1993).

Anti-bias education is based on Freire’s notion of the “practice of freedom” or, “the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world” (1972, p. 15). Freire argues that freedom can only occur when the oppressed reject images and fears imposed by their oppressors and replace them with autonomy and responsibility by developing consciousness and understanding their power to transform reality. Specifically, the oppressed have to perceive clearly their roles in the society and take on the role of a change agent (Beilke, 2005) as the practice of freedom is fundamental to anti-bias education (Freire).

Anti-bias curriculum draws on the philosophy and goals of transformative education, which uses constructivist pedagogy in which students actively, construct and reconstruct knowledge (Share, 2003). Its aim is to develop educational processes that help children think critically about their social world and take action against injustices (Department of Education in Tasmania, n.d.). Swachuk and Taylor (1997) identify that the value of anti-bias commits one to
eliminating racist, sexist, ageist, and homophobic attitudes in oneself and in society as a whole, and affirms the fundamental moral equality of all human beings.

An anti-bias curriculum is a teaching style, method, philosophy, way of thinking and seeing things. Marulis (2000) argues that it may take the form of an interdisciplinary curricular theme or that it can penetrate every aspect of schooling. Because looking at curriculum through an anti-bias lens affects everything a teacher does, Derman-Sparks (1989) suggests that an anti-bias approach should be integrated into, rather than added onto, existing curriculum. An anti-bias curriculum is an approach to teaching that incorporates multiple perspectives to help children to like themselves just the way they are and that teaches children to respect all people and take positive account of race, gender, or disability (Owen, 1993), and to relate to each other and get along with people who are different than themselves (Marulis). Derman-Sparks defines anti-bias curriculum as:

an active/activist approach to challenging prejudice, stereotyping, bias, and the ‘isms’. In a society in which institutional structures create and maintain sexism, racism, and handicappism, it is not sufficient to be non-biased (and also highly unlikely), nor is it sufficient to be an observer. It is necessary for each individual to actively intervene, to challenge and counter the personal and institutional behaviors that perpetuate oppression. (p. 3)

Thomson (1993) adds that, “an anti-bias curriculum focuses not only on the richness of various cultures, but also on seeing cultures as different responses to common human needs—for food, shelter, fellowship, governance clothing, and other necessities. Thus, cultures and people are not superior or inferior, merely different.” (p. 4). It is evident that the term “anti-bias” broadens educational emphases beyond, and that anti-bias education takes an active, problem-solving approach that is integrated into all aspects of an existing curriculum and a school environment. An anti-bias curriculum helps teachers become aware of and eliminate social limitations, and to promote social justice for all. It also helps teachers better recognize prevalent stereotypes and evaluate materials more carefully (Shawchuk & Taylor, 1997). An anti-bias curriculum is designed to help children become responsible for their learning; contribute to their strengths; learn with an enhanced sense of self-worth, identity, and confidence; and
become active in confronting and challenging inequality and injustice (Department of Education in Tasmania, n.d.). The goal of an anti-bias curriculum is to foster each child’s ability to stand up for herself in the face of bias, become a critical thinker, and analyze what is being presented while simultaneously learning about acceptance, respect, and tolerance.

**Importance of an Anti-bias Curriculum**

Almost every aspect of child-rearing is influenced by cultural beliefs and values. How we talk to young children, touch them, bathe them, dress them, and feed them are all cultural behaviors. Over time, children learn who they are and what to do through these experiences; they learn language(s), traditions, cultures, and racial identities. Corson (2000) argues that culture and identity are intimately bound up with the language(s) the child speaks. Because young children form ideas about themselves and other people long before they begin school, it is important that anti-bias lessons begin early (NAEYC, 1997; Pulido-Tobiassen & Gonzalez-Mena, 1999), so children can learn to appreciate differences and recognize bias and stereotypes when they encounter them. Bias based on race, gender, disability, or social class can impede children’s healthy development, and if children are to learn to interact fairly and productively with different types of people, they must develop healthy self-esteem. Pulido-Tobiassen and Gonzalez-Mena argue that many children face racism, discrimination, other kinds of bias and these encounters often leave scars that can last a lifetime, affecting goals and feelings of self-worth.

**Children’s identity and attitudes.** Children construct their identity and attitudes through interacting with their bodies, their social environments, and the people around them. Erikson (1968) and Sullivan (1953) suggest that the dimensions of both autonomy and connectedness are children’s foundations to develop a mature sense of identity. In this view, children as young as two years old have already tried to determine who they are and what this world means to them. Bakken and Derman-Sparks (1996) contend that the development of this identity is life-long and that it begins in infancy and lasts through adulthood. Furthermore, Derman-Sparks (1992) postulates that children do not come to school as blank slates on the subject of diversity, but already with some schema of various aspects of people’s characteristics. Vandenbroeck (2000) argues that young children become aware of gender, race, ethnicity, and
disabilities and begin to absorb both positive attitudes and negative biases attached to these aspects of identity by family members and people around them. According to these views, children have constructed theories about diversity long before they enter the school. Children are aware at a very young age that color, gender, language, physical, and mental ability differences are connected with privilege and power (Derman-Sparks, 1989, 1993; Hohensee & Derman-Sparks, 1992; York, 1998). After interviewing 100 children, Ramsey (1990) concluded that preschoolers were able to recognize concrete attributes related to wealth and poverty and were able to classify pictures accordingly. Ramsey’s findings suggest that race, gender, and class differences potentially influence children’s perceptions of themselves and others. Furthermore, bias and stereotypes about various aspects of human diversity have a profound influence on children’s developing sense of self and others (Derman-Sparks, 1989; NAEYC, 1997). It is evident that children learn by observing differences and similarities among people and by absorbing the spoken and unspoken messages about those differences.

The early years are learning years for children to develop strong, positive self-images and grow up to respect themselves and others. MacNaughton and Davis (2001) found children learn about other cultures or people not only from media but also from the people around them such as friends, teachers, and parents. They argue that teachers and parents have the responsibility to find ways to prevent and counter the influence of bias and stereotypes before it becomes too deeply ingrained in their children. Active intervention by teachers can help children develop positive attitudes about people of different races and physical abilities, but this requires adults to provide experiences in which children have direct contact with children and adults of various backgrounds and abilities.

Media such as television, books, magazines, and photographs, as well as human interactions can have a powerful influence on children. If parents and teachers do not address the influence of popular culture, their children will not be able to understand their cultural heritages or about the struggles of individuals to gain equality and justice. Pulido-Tobiassen and Gonzalez-Mena (1999) contend that children will fear, rather than appreciate differences, if we do not discuss them openly. For example, Derman-Sparks (1989) argues that if adults do not talk about differences in physical ability, children cannot determine ways of modifying their
environment. She discovered how a preschool classroom came to appreciate differences: A boy’s father had difficulty visiting the class because he was handicapped. The school provided no handicap parking spaces, so the class made a handicap parking space in the parking lot. This shows how children’s learning takes place, and how it is based on and emerges from the daily life of the children.

Empowerment. Empowering youngsters is a primary goal of educators (York, 1998). When students are empowered they have the ability to change not only their lives, but the lives of others as well. To help students acquire the knowledge and skills needed to critically examine the historical, political, and economic structures of the society in which they live is necessary if children are to be empowered. Students need the knowledge and skills to discover issues, address issues, and find means to help create a more just society and world. McLaren (1989) argues that empowerment is “the process through which students learn to critically appropriate knowledge existing outside their immediate experience in order to broaden their understanding of themselves, the world, and the possibilities for transforming the taken-for-granted assumptions about the way we live” (p. 186). In other words, students need the opportunity to construct knowledge themselves. Banks (1991) claims that this process is an effective vehicle that helps students understand how knowledge and values are formed in various groups.

Empowerment helps children make sense of the world in which they live. It means to understand, appreciate, and respect what children bring with them to the classroom. Cummins (1986) suggests that empowering education programs work with students and their home communities to build on what they bring. Further, Sleeter (1991) contends that empowering means teaching students how to advocate effectively for themselves and others as well as work collectively for social justice. Empowerment involves more than just acquiring cognitive or social skills; it also includes the ability to think critically and stand up for oneself in the face of bias.

Anti-bias curriculum has proven to effectively increase both male and female students’ awareness of anti-bias gender roles (Kim & Lewis, 1999; Rainey & Rust, 1999). Skattebol (2003) also found significant evidence of preschoolers’ gender and racial identities change over time in
an anti-bias learning environment. The positive effect of the anti-bias curriculum in early childhood programs is not limited to reducing gender-role stereotyping. The anti-bias curriculum can also be a great tool to enhance children’s pro-social skills that help them to get along with others. Increased pro-social behavior and emotional intelligence was found in children at-risk after receiving an intervention and prevention program that was integrated with an anti-bias curriculum that included specific violence prevention and multiple intelligence lessons (Kolb & Weede, 2001). The encouraging results of this study indicate that the targeted preschoolers demonstrated an increase in pro-social behaviors and emotional intelligence, and that newly learned social skills transferred across the curriculum.

Advocates of anti-bias curriculum argue that it should be grounded in a developmental approach, and that teachers need to understand what children know and what their interests are in order to develop activities that will truly reflect their concerns and needs (Sherman & Thompson, 1994; Swadener & Miller-Marsh, 1993). To better facilitate children’s sense of self-esteem, critical thinking, and ability to stand up for themselves and others, they should be equipped with the skills to know when a situation is unjust or insensitive (Anti Defamation League [ADL], 1999, 2001; Araujo & Strasser, 2003; Carter, 1998; Derman-Sparks, 1989; Keenan, 1997; Pulido-Tobiassen & Gonzalez-Mena, 1999; Vandenbroeck, 2000). A developmentally appropriate anti-bias curriculum is one that takes children’s perspectives into account. Ideally, children are encouraged to ask questions, raise issues to be discussed, engage in problem solving, and make choices.

Previous research has suggested that children can understand that there is nothing wrong with the differences they find among people. Cowles (2005) suggests that color actually is an important part of our identity and awareness of color acknowledges the racial disparities and affirms the whole person. In a recent study, Levy et al. (2005) examined the impact of messages about uniqueness and similarity between groups of people on Black and Latino children’s social attitudes. They found that a combination message suggesting that people are both similar and unique to be the most effective in improving social tolerance levels. Thus, only when teachers actively confront their prejudices and biases will they be able to create a classroom where children celebrate diversity (Araujo & Strasser, 2003; Carter, 1998; Corso,
In turn, all children can be taught to value and celebrate diversity and learn to respect and value themselves and others regardless of their backgrounds, physical abilities, the language spoken, or skin color.

**Integrating an Anti-bias Curriculum in Early Childhood Classrooms**

Many researchers have advocated the integration of diversity curriculum into the regular curriculum of every early childhood classroom (Carter, 1998; Keenan, 1997; Levy, 1997; Sherman & Thompson, 1994; Swadener & Miller-March, 1993; Wasson & Jackson, 2002; Wellhousen, 1996). Derman-Sparks (1992) argues that it is possible to implement an anti-bias curriculum into the total curriculum if we integrate learning about diversity into all aspects of the program and choose developmentally appropriate and contextually relevant content for a particular group of children.

To create an anti-bias learning environment, teachers must infuse their curriculum and teaching with anti-bias concepts and ways of thinking (Marulis, 2000). Students’ knowledge is constructed through their whole experience. This whole experience may be both formal and informal and it has a great impact on their perceptions about themselves and their attitudes and ways of relating to others. Children are whole beings (Rosegrant, 1992) and the social situations they encounter daily at school influences their internal process and eventually their social output. Instead of separating the anti-bias curriculum from other elements of the teaching and learning environment, it should take place every day and every where (Derman-Sparks, 1989; Marulis; Riehl, 1993).

The diagram below demonstrates the relationship among the students, teachers, and curriculum in an anti-bias classroom (see Figure 2). The overlapping relationship illustrates that students, curriculum, and teachers share equal power in the learning process. Namely, students’ abilities, interests, and backgrounds should be taken into consideration when teachers plan curriculum; students’ participations should be encouraged and respected. This model is based on what Freire (1972) proposes: when the teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration, she reflects her earlier considerations as the students express their own. In
other words, the students are not just listeners; students are actively involved in the process of planning.

![Figure 2: Relationship among Teachers, Students, and Curriculum](image)

How can we as educators help children to learn about and gain respect and appreciation for human diversity, as well as standing up for themselves and working with others to challenge bias? York (2005) proposes that anti-bias education is implemented through classroom materials and planned activities. In anti-bias classrooms, children are decision makers. Based on the above diagram, it is evident that children can have a great impact on teachers who plan activities and prepare materials for them in an anti-bias classroom. In other words, teachers are to help children make their choices and decisions and include them in classroom arrangement instead of making choices for them. Also, in anti-bias classrooms, children are given opportunities to work cooperatively (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2005; Hohensee & Derman-Sparks, 1992). By working with others, not only will children learn to see things from different perspectives but also develop their problem-solving and critical-thinking skills.

Messages about bias are everywhere (Riehl, 1993). Therefore, teachers need to make conscious decisions to include anti-bias concepts somewhere, everyday. Teachers can find out what children know about diversity through ongoing observations and by interviewing them (Hohensee & Derman-Sparks, 1992). Riehl discusses the fact that since teachers teach different children, it is not possible for anti-bias classrooms to look the same. In this view, teachers should try to connect the anti-bias activities to their children’s interests and needs. NAEYC
proposes that teachers give children messages that deliberately counter stereotypes by providing books, dolls, toys, wall decorations, TV programs, and records that illustrate people of color and disabilities, various types of families and family activities, men and women in non-traditional roles, and so forth.

Teaching children to be critical thinkers, specifically about prejudice and discrimination, is essential in anti-bias teaching (Pulido-Tobiassen & Gozalez-Mena, 1999). Hohensee and Derman-Sparks (1992) argue that this requires teachers’ effort to raise their own awareness of anti-bias issues related to themselves, their program, and the children in their care. Continuously observing and interviewing children and involving parents in the process of doing anti-bias work can help teachers to be more capable of planning, implementing, and evaluating anti-bias materials and activities. It is evident that when planning developmentally and contextually appropriate anti-bias curriculum, teachers’ beliefs and knowledge, children’s needs, experiences, interests, and feelings, and families’ beliefs and concerns, as well as societal events, messages, and expectations that permeate children’s environment are all to be taken into consideration.

**Teachers’ Beliefs and Practices**

The study of teachers’ beliefs has the potential to provide significant and profound insight into many aspects of the teacher’s professional world. Pajares (1992) argues that attention to teachers’ beliefs can inform educational practice in ways that prevailing research has not and is essential to improving their professional preparation and teaching practices. The study of beliefs is critical to educational practice (Kagan, 1992). Kagan proposes that beliefs may be "the clearest measure of a teacher’s professional growth" and that understanding them is "instrumental in determining the quality of interaction one finds among teachers in a given school" (p.85). Bandura (1986) and Dewey (1933) infer that beliefs can be the most significant predictors of the decisions that individuals make throughout their lives. According to these views, beliefs can be used to predict teachers’ decision making.
Beliefs influence how teachers may teach (Kagan, 1992). Kagan refers to beliefs as a "particularly provocative form of personal knowledge" (p. 65) and argues that most of a teacher’s professional knowledge can be regarded more accurately as belief. How beliefs become personal pedagogies or theories to guide teachers’ practices? Nespor (1987) explains, teachers’ beliefs play a major role in defining teaching tasks and organizing the knowledge and information relevant to those tasks. But why should this be so? Why wouldn’t research-based knowledge or academic theory serve this purpose just as well? The answer suggested here is that the contexts and environments within which teachers work, and many of the problems they encounter, are ill-defined and deeply entangled, and that beliefs are peculiarly suited for making sense of such contexts. (p. 324)

Consequently, teachers’ beliefs have great influence on the way they perceive, judge, and act in the classroom. Teachers’ beliefs often refer to attitudes about education, teaching, learning, and students. In this particular study, teachers’ beliefs are equivalent to educational beliefs since the majority of the beliefs that will be explored are educational beliefs, and that professional/educational beliefs are strongly and positively correlated with each other (Pohan & Aguilar, 2001).

The need to understand teachers’ beliefs and practices has been emphasized by many researchers (e.g., Charlesworth et al., 1993; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Fong & Sheets, 2004; Kagan, 1992; Lee-Thomas, Sumson, & Roberts, 2005; Tattoo, 1998; Tobin & McRobbie, 1997; Tobin, Tippins, & Gallard, 1994). In Kagan and Smith’s (1988) study, 51 kindergarten teachers completed questionnaires and were observed in their classrooms regarding their beliefs and practices. Their findings suggest that teachers’ self-reported beliefs and behaviors are strongly consistent with outside raters’ observations. They noted, “teachers were quite accurate in their own perceptions of the classroom environment they created” (p. 33). Charlesworth et al. (1991) argue that “the psychological context of teaching, that is the beliefs teachers have regarding what is important and not important and how these beliefs affect their students, is critical to understanding the genesis of teachers’ actions in planning, teaching, and assessing” (p. 19). Moreover, Pohan and Aguilar (2001) state that, “teachers’ beliefs serve as filters for their knowledge bases and will ultimately affect their actions” (p. 160). Teachers’ beliefs have a great
impact on their practices in classrooms; teachers’ beliefs affect various aspects of teaching and the way they interact with their children.

The relationship between attitudes and behaviors is complicated; several research studies have been done to determine whether behaviors can be predicted from attitudes and beliefs (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Rokeach, 1968). Pajares (1992) suggests that the relationship between beliefs and practice is nonetheless significant. Recent research reveals that teachers hold beliefs about students that lead to differential expectations and treatment based on ethnicity, social class, and gender differences (e.g., Aguado, Ballesteros & Malik, 2003; Curtin, 2005; Pohan & Aguilar, 2001; Terrill & Mark, 2000). It is suggested that cognitive and emotional factors can equally affect one’s beliefs and attitudes (Wasson & Jackson, 2002). Allen and Porter (2002) assert that the affective domain is too important to be missed when it comes to understand the benefits of diversity. In addition, Rios, Trent, and Castaneda (2003) argue that social factor is also influential. The need to identify these social and emotional factors and to what degree they affect teachers’ beliefs and attitudes toward anti-bias curriculum is therefore vital. Pohan and Aguilar argue that if a teacher lacks a corresponding set of accepting/affirming beliefs about diversity, it is not likely she will become a culturally competent educator even though she has knowledge about diversity.

Teachers’ Beliefs Regarding Culturally Diverse Children

Teachers across the country are faced with students from culturally diverse backgrounds. While the student population is rapidly becoming diverse, the teaching force remains predominately white, female, middle-class, and from a European heritage (Aaroe & Nelson, 2000; Allen & Porter, 2002; Sleeter, 2001). Many researchers believe that there is a connection between children’s failure in school and those who teach them (e.g., Au & Blake, 2003; Benson, 2003; Ukpokodu, 2004). Their research findings suggest that these teachers lack the requisite background knowledge, skills, and dispositions to effectively teach children from socio-linguistically diverse backgrounds due to their limited cultural knowledge and exposure to issues of diversity. In other words, teachers’ beliefs influence how they teach (Kagan, 1992; Nespor, 1987) and understand diversity (Sleeter, 1993). This can be explained because “we formulate our beliefs and values and how we interact with others based on what we experience
throughout our life. We assimilate, differentiate, and classify people into separate ‘groups’ because it is more cognitively efficient” (Allen & Porter, p. 128).

In 2000, 5,253 teachers in elementary and secondary schools across the country completed a survey regarding their feelings of preparedness for teaching. Among teachers who taught students with limited English proficiency and those with disabilities, 27 % of teachers felt very well prepared to address those students’ needs, 33 % felt moderately well prepared, 28 % felt somewhat well prepared, and 12 % indicated that they were not prepared at all to address those students’ needs. In 1998, national survey data revealed that while more than 54 percent of teachers taught students who were either culturally diverse or had limited English proficiency and 71 % taught students with disabilities, only 20 % of these teachers feel they were very well prepared to meet their needs (Parsad, Lewis & Farris, 2001). Eighty percent of teachers indicated that they were not well prepared for many of the challenges of the classroom.

The findings of national surveys are consistent with Karabenick and Noda’s (2003) research on teachers’ beliefs, attitudes, practices, and needs related to English language learners (ELLs). They surveyed 729 teachers in 26 schools and found although that the majority of teachers were very confident in their ability to teach, they were significantly less confident in teaching ELL students. In addition, teachers held positive attitudes toward ELLs and bilingual education in general; however, there was considerable variability, with sizeable proportions of teachers holding less supportive beliefs, attitudes, and practices. More than 61 percent of the teachers believed that ELLs take up more of their time than their counterparts and more than 62 percent of the teachers believed parents of ELLs were less involved in the schools than parents of regular students.

Four hundred and seventy six elementary school teachers in 24 urban and suburban school districts across the country were observed and completed questionnaires regarding their beliefs and practices. Solomon, Battistich and Hom (1996) found that teachers tend to put greater emphasis on teacher authority and control and were skeptical about their students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. It was found that teachers’ beliefs were consistent with their practices, even when school poverty level and students’ mean achievement levels were statistically controlled. Their findings are supported by Terrill and Mark (2000) who also
found that teachers held significantly different expectations for learners in different school settings and from different racial and linguistic backgrounds. These studies suggest that teachers tend to expect higher levels of child abuse and discipline problems, fewer gifted and talented students, and lower levels of motivation in the schools with children who were ethnically or culturally diverse.

Teachers’ attitudes toward culturally diverse children are similar to their perceptions of minority parents. Teachers feel frustrated and express discomfort when working with the parents of those students whose cultures differ from their own (Barry & Lechner, 1995). DeCastro-Amerbrosetti and Cho (2005) argue that many pre-service and in-service teachers have negative attitudes toward the value ethnic-minority parents place on education. Their research findings demonstrate that the majority of pre-service and in-service teachers blame the home environment and parents’ lack of value toward education for culturally diverse children’s low academic achievement.

The national surveys and empirical studies reveal a sad but true fact that diversity as an educational issue challenges teacher education program, school, and school district. “Obviously, much work remains to be done before communities can be confident that their schools have the capacity to help all students to perform at their highest levels” (Futrell, Gomez, & Bedden, 2003, p. 382). It is evident that both teacher education programs and school districts have the responsibility to develop strategies to provide professional development that prepares teachers to work with children from culturally diverse backgrounds.

While the teaching force might not truly reflect the diversity that defines the student population, that does not mean teachers cannot learn to work more effectively with culturally diverse students (Futrell et al., 2003). To prepare professionals to teach students of diverse racial, ethnic, social class, and language backgrounds is a pressing matter (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Across the country, many teacher education programs and school districts have recognized and addressed the needs to find ways to better prepare pre-service and in-service teachers to serve children whose backgrounds and abilities differ from their own (e.g., Brown, 2005; Causey, Thomas, & Armento, 2000; Clark & Medina, 2000; Jacobson, 2000; Martin & Van Gunten, 2002; McAllister & Irvine, 2000; Milner, 2005; Rios et al., 2003; Schniedewind, 2005; Schniedewind &
Cathers, 2003; Skattebol, 2003; Van Hook, 2002; Wasson & Jackson, 2002; Whittaker, McDonald, & Markowitz, 2005). Integrating field-based experiences, first-hand experience with culturally diverse children and families, reflection, multicultural education courses, discussions on diversity issues, and dialogues with teacher educators in teacher education programs and professional development are some of the effective strategies that are identified. Most importantly, teachers must confront their own racial prejudice and biases at the same time as they learn about their students’ cultures and needs (Banks, 1997; Derman-Sparks, 1992). It is imperative that teachers need to recognize and understand their own identities, worldviews, biases, and value system before they will be able to understand those of their students.

**Teachers’ Attitudes toward Anti-bias Curriculum**

Teachers’ beliefs about education are affected by substantial episodes in their lives such as influential teachers or teaching experiences (Nespor, 1987). Brand and Glasson (2004) examined three pre-service teachers of different racial and ethnic backgrounds in order to understand their beliefs about diversity. They concluded that early life experiences and the ethnic and racial identity of pre-service teachers influenced their beliefs on diversity and their teaching pedagogy and philosophy.

Lack of sensitivity and the misconceptions teachers have about their ethnic-minority students can have an adverse impact on children (Pang, 1988). An inappropriate comment a student makes can be detrimental to the child who is of a different ethnic or cultural background. Similarly, a teacher’s insensitive comments can have a great and long-lasting impact on her children. Brand and Glasson (2004) argue that teachers’ beliefs about diversity “have been influenced by information that reinforces stereotypes of minorities and students from subcultures that are not part of the mainstream culture” (p.121). This may explain why teachers tend to feel uncomfortable and express negative reactions to working with children who are different from them or if the working environment that does not resemble their own school experience. Joshi, Eberly, and Konzal (2005) believe that when teachers do not have deep understandings of either their own or their students’ family cultural backgrounds, they tend to have difficulties building bridges between school and home. It can be understood that when a teacher who has no knowledge of or experience with children and parents who are different
from him/her linguistically, culturally, and racially, he/she may feel overwhelmed while dealing with them.

It is critical for teachers to develop a self-awareness of culture, bias, and discriminatory practices and to examine the effects on their beliefs, attitudes, and expectations on their children as teachers tend to treat children as they have been treated (Katz, 1993). Specifically, teacher education programs should provide insight into how pre-service teachers view their role in a diverse classroom and instruct these novice teachers on how to become reflective practitioners (NCREL, 1998). The attitudes of a teacher educator have a great impact on the ways she interacts with pre-service teachers. This in turn influences the pre-service teachers’ interactions with their own children. The cyclic effect of teaching affects the quality of society at large (see Figure 3). If we want teachers to accept and understand children and treat them fairly, then they must be cared for and supported by their teacher educators who treat them fairly (Nodding, 1984; Nowak-Fabrykowski & Caldwell, 2002). However, simply caring for pre-service teachers is not enough. There also needs to be some support for self-reflection about bias and emotional awareness for a fundamental change of tolerance for diversity to occur (Jacobson, 2000).

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 3:** Cyclic Effect of Teaching

An increasing number of researchers are trying to examine the social attitudes and other factors that are related to race, gender, age, and ability among pre-service teachers (e.g., Garmon, 2004; Rios et al., 2003). Many researchers promote the idea that intellectual conflict
should be part of the university’s objectives, rather than fostering political correctness. In this way, pre-service teachers are actively engaged in exploring a diversity of ideas and worldviews (Goulet, 1998; Van Hook, 2002; Wasson & Jackson, 2002). Wasson and Jackson found that pre-service teachers’ core attitudes and beliefs underscore critical events related to their experience with multicultural bias. They suggest that critical issues of diversity and multiculturalism should be integrated into all aspects of students’ academic achievement, social skills development, and relationships with the community at large. The aim of such a study is to understand pre-service teachers’ awareness of and sensitivity to multiculturalism, so that appropriate curricula may be developed to empower their knowledge and awareness, as well as their cross-cultural communication skills. Pohan (1996) studied the personal and professional beliefs of 492 pre-service teachers to identify variables related to the development of multicultural awareness and sensitivity. Pohan’s findings suggest that pre-service teachers who bring strong biases and negative stereotypes about diverse groups will be less likely to develop the types of professional beliefs and behaviors most consistent with multicultural sensitivity and responsiveness.

**Challenges.** To reflect what is in the real world, it is important that early childhood teachers are provided with experiences to implement meaningful multicultural understandings into their curriculum (Saul & Saul, 2001). The diverse composition of early childhood classrooms brings many challenges as well as many chances for teachers to be more responsive to the diverse needs of all children. Many barriers have been considered in textbooks about diversity. However, no empirical studies have investigated teachers’ perceived barriers and the difficulties they face (Van Hook, 2002). When teachers are not able to accept and embrace diversity, confront issues themselves, and reflect upon their own experiences, they will be less likely to be able to help children to identify racial bias, defend themselves in the face of bias, or become critical thinkers.

After examining a group of teachers who participated in a long-term professional development program in diversity education, Schniedewind (2005) found the reinforced consciousness about race has the power to positively influence students and schools. Teachers in this group were found to teach students about stereotyping, to be supportive of students of
color, to challenge institutional racism, and to address white privilege. Similarly, results of a study that examined pre-service teachers who examined their own ethnic and socio-economic class identities in order to make sense of difference were also encouraging (Santoro & Allard, 2005). Pre-service teachers were found to take up the challenges of teaching for diversity after being asked to reflect on their own identities. It is believed that reflecting on one’s own identity is a powerful act and an important starting point for examining differences within educational contexts.

There are many challenges teachers face and needs to be met while they are implementing an anti-bias curriculum. While teachers explore the process of incorporating anti-bias activities with children and parents, they are also continuing their own personal growth on these issues. In order to better meet the needs of children from diverse backgrounds, it is vital for all teachers to look inward and be aware of their racial and ethnic identities. Both pre-service and in-service teachers need opportunities to engage in race-related or culture-related discussions. Derman-Sparks and Brunson-Phillips (1997) maintain that in order to develop deeper selfknowledge about one’s racial and cultural identity, a teacher is required to make the commitment to thinking, feeling, reflecting, and acting.

Gay and Kirkland (2003) argue that some teachers resist being self-reflective when it comes to racial/cultural issues. This may be attributed to different levels of readiness, differences in personal and intellectual development (Horton & Scott, 2004), or a lack of knowledge (Asimeng-Boahene & Klein, 2004). Horton and Scott believe that the process of transformation requires time and deep reflection. As Rokeach (1968) points out, the more central a belief, the more it will resist change. To reflect on one’s own value system and racial identity may not be an easy process. As Nespor (1987) explains, “belief systems often include affective feelings and evaluations, vivid memories of personal experiences, and assumptions about the existence of entities and alternative worlds, all of which are simply not open to outside evaluation or critical examination…” (p. 321). Similarly, McAllister and Irvine (2000) argue that “marginalized ethnic groups may have identity development journeys different from those characteristic of members of the dominant culture” (p. 13). Ongoing support for reflection remains crucial if teachers are to make fundamental changes to themselves as persons.
(Birmingham, 2003; Howard, 2003; Jacobson, 2000; Milner, 2003). It is critical to take all things into consideration in order to become aware of how teachers’ racial and ethnic identities may influence their teaching practices.

Teachers’ beliefs are greatly influenced by what is practiced at school (Horenczyk & Tatar, 2002). When schools embrace and support the implementation of anti-bias and multicultural education, teachers are likely to integrate an anti-bias and multicultural education in their curriculum. Despite of the fact that multiculturalism is viewed as a project rather than a process in some schools (Bracker et al., 2006), teachers need support from school administration if they are to integrate a curriculum that is meaningful and beneficial. This implies that schools need to be involved in finding solutions to the problem of transforming their institutions. A lack of materials and time to prepare can also be detrimental (Asimeng-Boahene & Klein, 2004). Teachers need books, materials, and training that can assist them in becoming competent in order to plan and integrate a curriculum that meets children’s needs.

In the creation of a sound anti-bias curriculum, colleagues, children, and parents can be great resources. Parents can be great tools in the process of changing the environment when they are involved in the implementation of an anti-bias curriculum (Barta & Winn, 1996). However, when parents are not on the same “team” with the teachers, it becomes a challenge to overcome. Asimeng-Boahene and Klein (2004) argue that parental disapproval can be an influential factor that discourages teachers to implement an anti-bias curriculum in their classrooms. Teachers need to find ways to communicate with parents who subscribe to a hegemonic view of European-American curriculum. Without parents’ support, it is difficult for teachers to promote equity and to help children see things from different perspectives.

Integrative and inclusive teaching of anti-bias curriculum is an important part of early childhood education (Derman-Sparks, 1989), yet little is known about how teachers’ beliefs regarding anti-bias curriculum are translated into practice. Garmon (2004) suggests that multicultural education and diversity courses as well as field experiences are great tools for developing pre-service teachers’ awareness of and sensitivity to diversity. However, these tools “by themselves, may be insufficient to counteract the power of students’ preexisting attitudes and beliefs” (p. 211). Garmon’s statement is consistent with Shultz, Neyhart, Reck, and Easter’s
(1996) notion that “simply adding education courses does not create better teachers for our nation’s urban schools. Better teachers evolve from a careful process that allow for the analysis of attitudes and perceptions of teacher education candidates” (p. 33). In order to strengthen standards of practice, it is critical for teachers to identify what they believe and perceive. When teachers’ beliefs are identified, then they can be assisted and supported in reflecting those beliefs in their practices (Bullock, 1996). It is evident that in order to better serve the needs of all students, teachers’ negative stereotypes, biases/prejudices, and misconceptions should be identified and reconstructed (Pohan & Aguilar, 2001; Van Hook, 2002).

The literature considered in this review reminds us of the importance of beliefs in understanding the behind-the-scenes realities of what happens in the classroom. More importantly, the review provides a preliminary perspective on how teachers respond to new ideas, knowledge, and theories as well as the needs and challenges they may face. A methodology that explores teachers’, parents’, and children’s perspectives about diversity, which appears to be lacking in the literature reviewed, will be discussed in the next chapter.
This chapter presents the methodology used in this study to answer the research questions, the theoretical framework for the methodology, and details of the research design. The following topics will be discussed: qualitative case study research design, quality concerns in qualitative research, the researcher’s role, participants, data construction methods and procedures, data analysis, and ethical concerns.

**Qualitative Case Study Research Design**

In this study, a qualitative research method was used. It is the approach that addresses the research questions the best (Ercikan & Roth, 2006). Within the qualitative research paradigm, the case study was used to focus attention on particular systems of interest (Stake, 1995). Yin (2003a) defines the case study as a research strategy, an empirical inquiry, which investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context. Merriam (1998) suggests that a case study is an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group. The bounded system, or case, might be selected because it is an instance of some concern, issue, or hypothesis. (p.10)

Merriam contends that qualitative case study is an ideal design for understanding and interpreting observations of educational phenomena.

Stake (1995) proposes that the goal of a case study is particularization, not generalization, and that “we take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does” (p. 8). Yin (2003a) adds that case study findings can be generalized to theoretical propositions but not to populations. Ercikan and Roth (2006) suggest that, “the approach of qualitative studies is to produce thick descriptions” (p.15), and that readers should be provided with materials from which they can generalize and
construct knowledge. In order to ease generalization, thick descriptions of places, events, and the interpretations should be provided.

Case studies have many advantages for the study of social phenomena. Yin (2003a) points to the unique strength of case studies to use a wide variety of evidence such as documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations. Another advantage of case studies is that they provide a great amount of description and detail. Merriam (1998) argues that since a case study is based on real-life situations, the result is a rich and complete account of a phenomenon.

In spite of these advantages, case studies are limited by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator. Merriam (1998) contends that the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, and that the investigator needs training in observation and interviewing. Other weaknesses are that case study advocates offer no specific guidelines in constructing the final report and that the researcher is often left to rely on her own instincts and abilities throughout most of this research effort. Thus, both the authors and readers need to be aware of biases that can affect the final results.

When several teachers are studied, rather than just one teacher, or when several schools are studied, a multiple-case study may be applied (Bogdan & Biklen, 2002; Yin, 2003b). Yin (2003b) argues that “multiple-case designs may be preferred over single-case design” (p. 135), because they are more likely to produce robust results than a single-case design. The rationale for multiple-case design follows the rationale of replication logic (Yin, 2003a) provided by multiple experiments. Yin emphasizes that “upon uncovering a significant finding from a single experiment, the immediate research goal would be to replicate this finding by conducting a second, third, and even more experiments” (2003a, p. 47). Yin argues that replication is necessary for a study to produce robust and creditable findings, and that the number of literal replications is a matter of discretionary, judgmental choice. This study focuses on three early childhood teachers of Pre-K to third grade levels in different schools. The goal of the three cases is to explore how teachers’ beliefs about anti-bias curriculum affect their practices at different age levels.

This study investigated the effect of teachers’ beliefs on their practice of anti-bias curriculum in early childhood settings. Horenczyk and Tatar (2002) argue that teachers’ beliefs
can be influenced by the context in which they teach. For those teachers who believe all children are the same, integrating diversity education with the regular curriculum may not be regarded highly or it may be an alien term to them (Causey et al., 2000), and that context sensitivity is another characteristic of case study research that applies to this study. According to these views, teachers’ practices related to anti-bias curriculum or diversity education are related to what they think and believe. In order to make interpretations about the teachers’ attitudes about teaching diversity, it is essential to consider the context in which teaching occurs. Rokeach (1968) suggests that this context enables the researcher to make inferences about the participants’ behaviors.

The objective of this study was to explore the phenomenon of early childhood teachers’ beliefs on their practices of anti-bias curriculum. This study was selected for its intrinsic interest as the changing demographics of the study body has an impact on education. For that reason, a qualitative case study research design was employed.

Quality Concerns in Qualitative Research

If the goal of research is to contribute knowledge through a process of revision and enrichment of understanding of the experience, then there is a need to make the interpretations trustworthy (Glesne, 1999). The notion of trustworthiness, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), can be understood as, “how can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?” (p. 301). The following concerns of qualitative research will be addressed: credibility, transferability, subjectivity, and dependability.

Credibility

Credibility, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), refers to the extent to which findings are accurate representations of the phenomena under study. This concept is an extension of the traditional category of internal validity that deals with the question of how a researcher’s findings match reality (Merriam, 1998). Lincoln and Guba suggest that spending sufficient time at the research site and observing the elements that are relevant to the study are critical to the
credibility of findings. To ensure credibility, sufficient amounts of data from different sources must be collected and thick descriptions must be recorded (Glesne, 1999). Credibility of the interpretations must also be established. Lincoln and Guba recommend a variety of strategies for improving the likelihood that findings and interpretations produced through naturalistic inquiry methods will be credible. For example, triangulation and member checking were strategies that used in this study.

Triangulation means use of multiple data-collection methods, multiple sources, multiple investigators, or multiple theoretical perspectives (Glesne, 1999). In this study, methodological triangulation combined interviews, observations, and documents in order to provide support for the meaning of phenomena (Bodgan & Biklen, 2002; Silverman, 2001). Data of this study were triangulated through interviews, observations, surveys, and documents. Specifically, teachers were interviewed and observed, principals and the director were interviewed, children were observed, parents completed a survey, and physical evidence such as lesson plans was analyzed. The rationale for this strategy was that by combining methods, the researcher could overcome deficiencies of each method and develop a fuller understanding of the effect of teachers’ belief on and practices of anti-bias curriculum in early childhood settings.

This study also used member checking to review the interpretations of the interviews and observations. Member checking is a process by which respondents verify data and the interpretations thereof (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Specifically, the researcher sent emails to each teacher to check the accuracy and meaningfulness of interpretations. This helped maintain reflexivity and to facilitate self-correction on the part of the researcher. Bowen (2005) argues that this process provides participant validation of the findings. Kvale (1996) believes that validity comes when a researcher is constantly checking, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the findings.

**Dependability**

Dependability is equivalent to reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It addresses the consistency issue of a study. To ensure dependability, this study examined the data for similarities, inconsistencies, and contradictions. All interviews were audio taped and recordings then were carefully transcribed. Verbatim quotes were recorded immediately after
or during events to provide detailed accounts. To avoid undue inference by the researcher, observations were recorded as concretely as possible. Brief notes were made at the sites, and expanded notes and field work journals were made after leaving the sites to record problems and ideas. The researcher’s personal views and perspectives were not documented.

To maintain evidence in an organized fashion and to facilitate dependability, the researcher kept a reflective journal in addition to a fieldwork journal. Silverman (2001) argues that there is a need to distinguish between analysis based on the researcher’s concepts and analysis deriving from the conceptual framework of those being studied. Thus, it is important to keep a record of all procedures which provides a rich and detailed description of the process. Specifically, the reflective journal was a place where the researcher jotted down her thoughts about the conversations, events, activities, and people that she contacted in the field. This was a diary where the researcher’s documented her personal perspectives, opinions, and ideas. On the other hand, a field journal was a diary, where the researcher kept all the information gathered in the field. The fieldwork journal was a place to store all the information observed and heard in the field without adding personal opinions.

Keeping a fieldwork journal and a reflective journal available helped the reader understand the perspectives of informants. The fieldwork journal provides the reader with a thick description of the events and people whereas the reflective journal helps the reader understand the researcher’s thought process. The researcher recorded all personal and professional information that may affect data collection, analysis, and interpretation either positively or negatively (Patton, 1990). To help readers understand the researcher’s biases and the lens through which the data of the study were interpreted, notes from this journal were part of the analysis and conclusions.

Subjectivity

Subjectivity is also an issue to consider and address in a qualitative research study. The manner in which people make sense of their experiences is referred to as subjectivity (Morgan & Drury, 2003). Morgan and Drury postulate that qualitative research appears to offer a sound methodological framework for developing an understanding of the implicit subjectivity. Specifically, the process of documenting and interpreting information provides a foundation for
describing and interpreting the contextual variability of phenomena that surrounds the lives of participants and the researcher.

This study addressed pre-conceived opinions by providing rich and detailed descriptions of the researcher’s thought processes. In addition, the researcher clarified her assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation at the onset of the study. A researcher must be aware of any personal biases and how they might affect the research process (Merriam, 1998). To lessen the concern of subjectivity, the researcher constantly confronted her opinions and prejudices with the data collected. Further, detailed field notes recorded reflections on the effect of the researcher’s subjectivity. To avoid the imposition of subjectivity, the researcher explicited her past experiences as a preschool teacher/director and as an instructor who promoted social justice at the college level, her background as an outsider to the mainstream culture, who was from a country with a different culture, language, etc., and the effect these experiences may have on the study, particularly the interpretation of data.

**Transferability**

Transferability is defined as the degree to which the findings can be generalized across different settings (Patton, 1990). “Representativeness” as Silverman (2001) suggests, is not a major concern or issue in qualitative research. However, the transferability of this study can be increased with purposive sampling. Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) refer to this concept as representative sampling. Obtaining a representative sample is, therefore, critical. The schools selected for this study helped the researcher “develop a generalizable, universally applicable theory” (Auberbach & Silverstein, p. 80).

The selected classrooms had some features that helped deepen educators’ understanding or explained issues and phenomena that teachers may encounter while implementing an anti-bias curriculum. For example, the preschool program selected for this study was accredited by NAEYC, and teachers in the K and 2-3 classes also had training in anti-bias curriculum or multicultural education. Additionally, to increase the transferability of findings, this study presented findings with rich descriptions of the phenomenon that was being studied. Providing detailed descriptions of the data, time, settings, subjects, context, and
culture would help the readers assess transferability based on their experiences in familiar settings.

In this section, how to enhance the trustworthiness of the research was addressed through transferability (generalizability), credibility (internal validity), subjectivity, and dependability (reliability). To ensure the quality of the data collected in this study, the researcher accurately documented what she heard, observed, and felt at every stage of the process.

The Role of the Researcher

The role the researcher takes in relationship to children affects not only the kind of information gathered but also the nature of rapport needed (Glesne, 1999). Fine and Sandstrom (1988) suggest that by assuming the role of a friend with children, participants can help gain access to intimate information. They claim that, “the key to the role of friend is explicit expression of positive affect combined with both a relative lack of authority and a lack of sanctioning of the behavior of those being studied” (p.17). This implies that the researcher should treat children who are participants with the same respect as one would adult participants. Moreover, building trust with children is vital as it helps the researcher gain access and become a friend of the children. It is necessary for a researcher to understand the values of the children in order to promote their acceptance.

Assuming the role of a friend with children can increase access (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988). However, Glesne (1999) cautions that it may be hazardous by assuming the role of a friend with adult participants because of bias. Instead, Glesne suggests that rapport should be established between the researcher and her participants. She explains that rapport is characterized by confidence and trust, and “rapport describes the character of effective field relationships” (p. 95). In this study, the researcher explained her roles (e.g., a researcher, an aid, etc.) to participants to gain their trust. Her role as a researcher involved gathering, organizing, analyzing, and interpreting the data collected to develop understanding about teachers’ beliefs and practices of anti-bias curriculum in early childhood settings. The researcher’s role was also that of a learner
in this study. As a learner, her task was to listen, and that enabled her to reflect on all aspects of research procedures and findings.

As a researcher becomes more involved in fieldwork, she may find herself functioning in a variety of roles such as an aide or a friend, and these roles should be performed ethically and honestly (Stake, 1995). Kvale (1996) argues that “the integrity of the researcher – his or her honesty and fairness, knowledge, and experience – are the decisive factors” (p. 117). The researcher did not impose her values or thoughts on them while in their classrooms as a researcher despite participants who had different beliefs and practices. Rather, the researcher acted just like a typical volunteer who may play with children, read to children, or take charge of a center in their classes. Although the roles she assumed when studying children may be different from those when studying adults, the researcher remained respectful for both adult participants and children participants in the roles she played.

In the next section, participants of the study will be presented. The three teachers who participated in the study were from a stated-funded preschool, a public elementary school, and a public charter school respectively.

**Participants**

Data for this study were collected from three public early childhood classrooms in the southeastern United States. The first class was a state-funded preschool class that served children aged four and five. The second class served a group of kindergarteners in a public elementary school. The third class served the second and third graders in a public charter school. These proposed classes were either accredited by NAEYC or the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The following sections describe these classes in greater detail.

**Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) Classroom**

This state-funded preschool served 37 children age three to five. There were 18 children in the four and five year-old class. There were four White children, 12 children from various parts of Asia, and two Black children. The mission of the program was “to provide excellent service to the academic community by cooperating, collaborating and communicating with all
who interact with us and at the same time, approach our work with a sense of humility, humanity and with enough humor to lighten our way” (Preschool, n.d.). The preschool was located in a community where all of the residents were pursuing their higher degrees at a local university and the majority of them were from around the globe.

**Kindergarten (K) Classroom**

There were approximately 650 students attending this public elementary school. Nearly 50% of the student population was white. About 40% and 10% of the student population was Black and other minorities respectively. The vision of the school was to “learn to see through the eyes, hearts, and minds of others and enjoy life long learning”, and the mission of the school is “provide all students with a safe, positive and challenging learning environment that enables all learners to become prepared, productive and contributing citizens in the 21st century” (Elementary School, 2007). This school was one of the 24 elementary schools that served children K-5 in the district. There were 10 White and nine Black children in the participating kindergarten class.

**Second and Third Grade (2-3) Classroom**

This public charter school served approximately 230 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. 20% of the student population was Black, 62% of White, and more than 17% of other minorities. The school’s mission was "to facilitate individual educational ownership and responsible lifelong learning through interdisciplinary approaches to arts and sciences in a safe and nurturing environment" (Charter School, n.d.). In this school, children were encouraged to present their work through arts, music, science projects, or other creative ways. There were 24 children in the participating 2-3 classroom. Among these children, there were 16 White, seven Black, and one Asian.

A purposive sample is a sample selected in a deliberative and non-random fashion to achieve a certain goal. Merriam (1998) contends that purposive sampling is used in order “to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most” (p. 48). This study used purposive sampling because participating schools had to meet the following criteria. First, the preschool program has to be accredited by NAEYC to ensure anti-bias curriculum is (or should be) integrated with the regular curriculum. Promoting
diversity is part of the Florida ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Standards and Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (see Appendix C). Teachers who work in Florida are expected to have the knowledge and training in working with ESOL children in addition to following the standards set by the state of Florida. Therefore, teachers in the K and 2-3 classrooms were held accountable for addressing multicultural and diversity issues, and modifying their instruction to meet children’s different needs. Second, participants’ demographic information was considered because they may affect teachers’ beliefs and practices. Three head teachers and two school principals were female, middle-class, and of White background. The preschool director was a White male. All of these principals/director held masters’ degrees in Education and the teachers also had degrees in Elementary Education.

Children participants were from various cultural and socio-economical backgrounds in these three classrooms. The two main factors that contributed to this phenomenon were location and type of the school. First, the location of school could determine whether children are from diverse backgrounds or not. For example, the K classroom was located in a residential area including people of different cultures in the city. Second, the type of school could also be a factor. In charter schools, students shared demographic and socioeconomic characteristics with students in the state’s district schools (Riley, 2000). Also, charter schools provide more effective programs and choice to diverse groups of students (Florida Department of Education, n.d.).

Data Construction Methods and Procedures

This study used a variety of methods for data construction, including document analysis, interviews, videotapes analysis, observations, and surveys. As Yin (2003a, p.85) suggests, “there is no single source has a complete advantage over all the others,” so using multiple sources of evidence for data construction helps the researcher to address a broader range of issues. Yin further claims that several different sources of information can make the findings or conclusions in a case study more convincing and accurate.
Methods

In order to better understand the phenomenon in question and contribute different perspectives on the issues, this study employed interviews, document analysis, surveys, and observation methods to obtain information about the educators’ beliefs and practices in early childhood settings. Furthermore, parents completed a multicultural attitude survey. The data of this case study then were supported by multiple sources of methods (see Figure 4).

![Diagram of data construction methods]

**Figure 4:** Multiple Data Construction Methods

**Interviews.** When researching opinions, perceptions, and attitudes, it is suggested researchers use the technique of interviewing (Gleson, 1999). Interviews acquire data in a relatively short period of time. During interviewing, there was significant interaction between the participant and the researcher (Kvale, 1996), and this study employed semi-structured interviews to get comparable data and encourage the participant to discuss. A semi-structured interview is the combination of the individual in-depth interview and the standardized, structured questionnaire. This type of interview involves the implementation of both rigid and flexible questions (Merriam, 1998). Kvale contends that the advantage of the semi-structured interview is that it has a sequence of themes and suggested questions to be covered and provides flexibility for changes of sequence and question forms in order to accommodate the participant’s needs.

To facilitate a participant’s comfort and to develop an authentic understanding of the participant’s experiences, open-ended questions were utilized (Bogdan & Biklen, 2002;
Silverman, 2001). The essence of open-ended questions is to allow the participant to answer in his/her own words (Bogdan & Biklen). This technique allows participants to feel as if they are partially in control of the interview. Open-ended questions provide the possibility that the participant will introduce relevant information, ideas, and concepts that the interviewer may not have thought of during the question selection. Kvale (1996) argues that, “interviewing is a uniquely sensitive and powerful method for capturing the experiences and lived meaning of the subjects’ everyday world. Interviews allow the subjects to convey to others their situation from their own perspective and in their own words to another” (p. 70). According to this view, it was critical for the researcher to remain nonjudgmental, sensitive, sympathetic, and attentive in order to be a good interviewer.

Observations. According to Silverman (2001), to obtain firsthand information about teachers’ practices in classrooms, observations were considered to be the best method as they actually revealed what teachers did rather than what they thought about what they did. Through observation, paradoxes, problems, and interactions among the group members could be perceived. In order to find something that may interest the researcher or may be related to the research questions at sites, both structured and unstructured observations were utilized in this study. Structured observations required the researcher to observe all activities defined as of interest to the research. Unstructured observations, on the other hand, allowed the researcher to observe the unplanned and informal behaviors as they occur.

This study used participant-observation to learn firsthand how the actions of participants correspond to their words and to observe the interactions between the teachers and children. As Merriam (1998) emphasizes, being a participant-observer can enhance the relationship between the researcher and the participant; this relationship may enable the researcher to hear, see, and perceive things that may be overlooked or never be revealed. The participant-observer approach did not mean the researcher directly influenced the curriculum by teaching or planning a lesson. Rather, it denoted participation in classroom activities only to a partial extent. The main focus for the researcher still was to observe the interactions between the teachers and children and those between children and children.
The role of participant-observer required the researcher to accurately document the data both onsite and after leaving the site. For example, since wearing aprons is quite common among early grade teachers, the researcher wore an apron when visiting the sites. She was able to keep pencils and notes in order to write short memos whenever time permitted and keep them in her pockets. Acting as an aide in the class, she brought a notebook with her so that upon leaving the site, she would be able to record the interactions observed between teachers and their children and those between children.

Additionally, videotaping was employed to enhance the observations as it supplemented the field notes and allowed for further analysis. Videotaping has a great capability of recording events, people, and objects in the setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 2002) and it has the benefit of permanence (Glesne, 1999). Stake (1995) explains that videotapes are valuable tools because they can be analyzed to add and clarify interpretations.

The researcher also took field notes that included descriptions of the setting, people, activities, direct quotations of what people said, and observers’ comments. The researcher drew a map of each site which helped her better recall events and people mentally and visually.

**Documentation.** Documents refer to a wide range of written and physical materials (Merriam, 1998). The advantages of using documents in case studies are to corroborate and supplement evidence from other sources (Yin, 2003a), corroborate observations and interviews (Glesne, 1999), verify the correct spellings and names of organizations that have been mentioned in interviews, offer historical understanding, and advance new categories and hypotheses (Merriam, 1998).

Merriam (1998) recommends that gathering a variety of documents can help the researcher discover insights relevant to the research problem. This study looked at lesson plans, homework assignments, essays, children’s drawings, music, journals, notes that were sent home to parents, memos, policy statements, school philosophy statements, and newsletters as revealing sources of information about students, teachers, parents, and administrators. These documents offered valuable insights and deepened the researcher’s understanding of the effect of teachers’ beliefs on their actual practices regarding multicultural and anti-bias education in early childhood settings.
Documents analysis is a systematic procedure of describing the content of communication, and involves “the simultaneous coding of raw data and constructing categories that capture relevant characteristics of the document’s content” (Merriam, 1998, p. 117). Questions such as, “What materials have been used to promote social justice?”, “What kinds of activities have been done to teach diversity?”, “Who supported the activities?”, and “How were the activities carried out?” were included in document analysis.

**Instruments.** The study used two instruments. There were the Munroe Multicultural Attitude Scale Questionnaire (MASQE) (2003) and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Extension (ECERS-E) diversity subscale (Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2006). The first instrument was used to assess parents’ attitudes toward diversity, whereas the ECERS-E diversity subscale was used to determine whether or not diversity was addressed in each participating class. In order to address a broader range of historical, attitudinal, and behavioral issues (Yin, 2003a), data from these two instruments were triangulated with the data from interviews, document analysis, and observations.

MASQE is a newly developed survey that assesses respondent’s attitudes toward cultural diversity. Unlike other multicultural surveys such as Stanley’s “Attitudes toward Cultural Diversity and Pluralism Scale” (1996) that are used to assess pre-service and in-service teachers’ multicultural attitudes, Munroe’s scale is targeted to the general public rather than teachers (Munroe & Pearson, 2006). In order to understand what parents think about cultural diversity, families that agreed to participate in this study completed this survey.

Content validity of MASQE was established via a panel of experts in areas such as sociology, educational research, communication, language acquisition, and multicultural studies. To assess the reliability of the instrument, a field test of the items was performed and a Cronbach’s alpha (internal consistency reliability) coefficient of .72 was yielded (Munroe & Pearson, 2006). It is believed that the reliability of the total MASQUE scale is adequate for general research purposes.

MASQUE is a six-item Likert inventory. This Likert inventory is designed to get a preliminary idea about the nature of parents’ attitudes regarding cultural diversity. The refined version (see Appendix D) has 18 items that range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree
(6). Information gathered through this survey will be incorporated when analyzing the observation narratives in order to clarify interpretations on teachers’ practices of anti-bias work.

The ECERS-E has been piloted extensively in a variety of settings. The ECERS-E is suggested for use as a self-assessment tool or a research instrument (Sylva et al., 2006). The percentages of inter-rater agreement range from 88.4 to 97.6 and the Kappas range from 0.83 to 0.97. This indicates that the agreement levels between raters are high. Factor analysis conducted on the ECERS-E in 141 centers also indicated that gender equity and race equality in the Diversity subscale have the highest loading. Sylva and colleagues also comment that construct and predictive validity of the ECERS-E scale has been successfully demonstrated by the correlation coefficient of .78 between ECERS-E and ECERS-R as well as the strong relationship between ECERS-E and another scale that assesses the relationships between setting staff and children.

The ECERS-E diversity subscale (Sylva et al., 2006) was used to verify whether diversity is addressed in the learning environments in this study. The diversity subscale consists of 35 items that address issues such as individual needs, gender equality and awareness, and race equality and awareness (see Appendix E). This scale measures from 1 to 7 with 1 equal to inadequate, 3 equal to minimal, 5 equal to good, and 7 equal to excellent.

**Procedures**

The human subjects permission from the university was obtained before the school district’s permission was granted (see Appendix A). A letter explaining the nature and duration of the study was sent to the directors of the NAEYC-accredited preschool programs and the principals of the elementary schools in the same school district, asking if they and their staff would be willing to participate. An NAEYC-accredited preschool agreed to participate with the first attempt. However, the attempt to find multi-age classrooms was not very successful; only one out of three multi-age schools agreed to participate in the study. After thoughtful evaluation, the researcher decided to collect data from three different public school settings: preschool, elementary school, and charter school. The researcher then sent out letters to invite public elementary schools in the same school district to participate. A kindergarten class in a
public school finally agreed to participate in this study after many phone calls and emails exchanged with at least five school principals in the period of three months.

Once principals and teachers consented, informed consent forms were sent to the schools. As soon as the informed consent forms were returned, arrangements were made with each principal to interview the staff and to observe in the classroom. In the meantime, parents were invited to participate in the study by receiving information from the teachers. After parental consent forms were returned, a multicultural attitude survey was sent home by the teachers for the parents to complete (see Appendix B).

A set of questions developed by using information from the Accreditation Standards (NAEYC, 1991) and Anti-Bias Curriculum (Derman-Sparks, 1989) was used as a guide for interviews (see Appendix F). A semi-structured format was employed but, if participants wished to reveal more issues and perspectives regarding their anti-bias work with children, an unstructured interview was then employed. Teacher and principal/director participants were interviewed individually and two were interviewed two times. It took one to two hours for each individual participant to answer the questions. Except for two interviews that took place on the playground, all the interviews took place in teachers’ classrooms or the principals’ offices. All interviews were audio taped and then transcribed. Participants’ responses were identified and pseudonyms of the schools and teachers were used. All information was kept confidential (Glesne, 1999).

Before observations began, a tour of the school sites was made. In order to have a thorough understanding of each school’s philosophy and practices, teachers’ lesson plans, handouts given to parents, and the school’s accreditation reports, policies, and philosophy statements were gathered. Touring the school sites also enabled the researcher to get a sense of the activities, materials, and toys used (Bullock, 1996), as well as observe what was happening at the sites (Glesne, 1999). The ECERS-E diversity subscale (Sylva et al., 2006) was used to determine whether diversity was addressed in the learning environment of the classes during the first visit.

Data in the form of interview transcripts, narratives of classroom observations, and assessments of curriculum and program materials were collected over a period of
approximately five months from January 2007 to May 2007. Specifically, each classroom was visited for four weeks consecutively. Each teacher was visited three times a week for about an hour per visit. The time spent observing and videotaping was sufficient to gather the necessary data in support of the purpose of the study, since the focus of the observations was to observe teacher-child interactions, child-child interactions, parental involvement, and the curriculum. The following specific areas guided the observation:

1. How is anti-bias curriculum integrated within the program?
2. What sorts of materials and experiences are provided?
3. How do teachers talk to children in support of the goals of anti-bias curriculum?
4. How are children and families represented in the classroom?
5. What kind of pictures or print materials are on the walls?
6. Do teachers actively intervene to support children?

To gather a true picture of the phenomenon of anti-bias work in early childhood settings, data construction methods were employed to capture the voices of human participants such as parents, children, and educators. Using multiple participants, settings, and methods enabled the researcher to gather different data sources with which she was able to validate and crosscheck findings and explore the effect of teachers’ beliefs on their practices in early childhood settings.

Data Analysis

As Glesne (1999) postulates, data analysis is a process of consistently reflecting on the data, organizing it, and finding out what it has to say. She proposes that data analysis done simultaneously with data collection enables a researcher to focus and shape the study as it proceeds. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that data analysis begins the same day data collection begins in order to facilitate the emergent design, theory, and subsequent data collection. This study involved multi-sites and multi-data and the analysis of data was guided by the constant comparative method (Bodgan & Biklen, 2002; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). According to Goetz and LeCompte (1981), constant comparative method "combines inductive category coding with a simultaneous comparison of all social incidents observed...as events are constantly compared
with previous events, new topological dimension, as well as new relationships, may be discovered” (p. 58). The constant comparative method used in this study involved the following steps drawn from Bullock (1996):

1) begin data collection
2) look for major issues, patterns or events guided by the interview questions and observations which become categories for focus;
3) continue to collect additional data through the repeated observations and membership checking;
4) begin to write about the categories being investigated; and
5) continue to examine incoming and exiting data.

To achieve ongoing analysis, field notes included comments about ideas generated as the data were collected (Bogdan & Biklen, 2002). These notes included insights, images, and speculations about meaning and later data analysis to help the researcher think more critically about issues.

The analysis of interview transcripts, memos, documents, videotapes, and field notes was based on an inductive approach geared to identify patterns in the data by means of thematic codes (Bowen, 2005). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), this inductive approach can be defined as “a process for ‘making sense’ of field data” (p. 202). “Inductive analysis means that the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis” (Patton, 1990, p. 306). What Patton proposes is that a researcher needs to pay attention to patterns of thoughts and actions in different situations and from different participants. The raw data gathered through documents, observations, field notes, and interviews were coded, and the codes then were categorized to provide descriptive and inferential information about the context from which the data were obtained. The following are the specific steps that the researcher took to analyze the data.

The data obtained from interviews were transcribed and analyzed. Transcripts were read and reread several times and memos were written while reading through the transcripts. Specifically, each individual participant’s transcript, phrases, words, thoughts, feelings, or
patterns that were common or repeated were circled and highlighted. Bogdan and Biklen (2002) suggest that writing memos can provide a time to reflect on issues related to theory, methodology, and setting. Therefore, memos about the researcher’s feelings and thoughts about participants’ perspectives were also documented.

Coding is a process of sorting and defining collected data; it is about creating an organizational framework (Glesne, 1999). The transcribed interviews and written narratives of the observations were reviewed, coded, and sorted according to the themes and ideas. Each code was constantly compared to all other codes to identify similarities, differences, and general patterns (Bowen, 2005). When similarities or differences of patterns or thoughts appeared, the researcher wrote her interpretations on the transcripts.

Through the process of member checking, participants were given the opportunity to verify the researcher’s interpretations. Namely, each teacher was given the opportunity to state his or her interpretation. Once participants’ suggested changes were made, interpretations were re-sent for verification until all of the interpretations were in agreement. Documenting the researcher’s thought process throughout the study was also a vital strategy. As a result, readers would be able to understand where the researcher was coming from and was going, where the conclusions came from, and how the researcher arrived at explanations. Furthermore, to avoid imposing the researcher’s beliefs and biases on the data, the researcher treated all transcripts and narratives with respect. For example, the researcher did not give more weight to data elicited from participants whose values were similar to her own than from other respondents who had different opinions.

Extracting derivative meaning from collected data is crucial; displaying data should also be a part of the inquiry process (Ryan & Bernard, 2002). This study presented all data in the form of matrices, graphs, and other kind of visual representations and, as far as possible, displays concepts and models through verbatim quotes, summary statements, or symbols.

This study observed processes and outcomes across the three cases to explore teachers’ beliefs and practices of anti-bias curriculum in early childhood settings. The nature of the interaction between researcher and participants, the triangulation of data, the interpretation of perceptions, and thick description were all considered in the process of data analysis.
Ethical Issues

The two issues dominate traditional guidelines of ethics in research involving human participants are informed consent and the protection of participants from harm (Bodgan & Biklen, 2002). Informed consent assured human participants in this research study voluntarily participate and that they understood the nature of the study and obligations involved. The protection of participants ensured the information obtained was kept confidentially to protect participants’ privacy and did not harm them in any way. In addition, all participants were treated with respect without deception. The protection of participants also involved one important aspect: accuracy; truthfully reporting the findings therefore was critical.

Building trust with participants was another consideration when conducting this research. In order to enable the participants to feel free to express their ideas and thoughts as well act as normal as possible, it was the researcher’s responsibility to make them feel comfortable when the she presented in their classrooms. Additionally, Stake (2000) argues that “it is important (but never sufficient) for targeted persons to receive drafts revealing how they are presented, quoted, and interpreted and for the researcher to listen well for signs of concerns” (p. 477). This implies that giving participants a chance to comment on interpretations can provide them a voice in a study about their beliefs and practices.

This chapter presents the methodology used to collect data for this study. The multiple methods used provide data to be triangulated to increase the validity and reliability of findings. The nature and justification for the use of a case study research in this study was discussed. This case study approach used interviews, surveys, observations, and document analysis. The features of each method were presented. Moreover, concerns of qualitative research, participants, data construction methods and procedures, along with data analysis, and ethical concerns were outlined.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

In this chapter, the findings of the study are presented. The chapter is organized in using the framework of the three research questions. First, data analysis procedure will be discussed. Second, an overview of teachers’ beliefs and practices of anti-bias curriculum in early childhood settings will be offered. Next, the barriers to and contributions of incorporating anti-bias curriculum in early childhood settings will be explained. Furthermore, the influence that parents have in the implementation of anti-bias curriculum will be presented.

Data Analysis Procedure

Research questions constructed in this study were:
1. How do teachers’ beliefs about anti-bias curriculum relate to their practices in early childhood settings?
2. What are the barriers or contributions to of incorporating anti-bias curriculum in early childhood settings?
3. How do parents’ beliefs relate to teachers’ practices of anti-bias curriculum?

Table 1 delineates the relation between the research questions and the methodology used to answer them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Document Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data obtained from interviews were transcribed and analyzed. Transcripts were read and reread several times and memos were written while reading through the transcripts. Specifically, each individual participant’s transcript, phrases, words, thoughts, feelings, or patterns that were common or repeated were circled and highlighted (Bowen, 2005). Because teacher participants and principal/direct participants were asked similar questions with some guided questions, there were codes that emerged into themes that were easily identified while reading through the transcripts.

While the researcher was at each site, she did not use a checklist to observe her participants. However, there were a few specific things that she was looking for. For example, the researcher was looking for, 1) print in the classroom, 2) how parents and children were presented, 3) the interaction between the teacher and her children, and 4) the interaction between children and children. Children’s conversations with the teacher and their conversations among each other were therefore vital to be documented. The written narratives of the observations and field notes were reviewed, coded, and sorted according to the themes and ideas. Codes were sorted based on the similarities or differences of patterns of thoughts that appeared (Bogdan & Biklen, 2002). For example, codes such as respect, care/empathy, and awareness/understanding were recognized initially. Later, codes were sorted into groups that shared the same theme. Many codes were created while the researcher was taking her field notes at the site when she noticed the repeated patterns of themes.

The scores of the three items of the ECERS-E diversity subscale (Sylvia et al., 2006) were added up and compared to see how diversity was addressed in each setting. This survey was carried out by the researcher and teacher participants. The second survey, parents’ multicultural attitude survey, was returned along with the consent form. Parental consent form return rate was roughly about 50% at each site: 10 out 18 preschoolers, 10 out of 19 kindergarteners, and 10 out of 24 2-3 graders respectively. Parents’ scores on each section of the multicultural survey were then calculated and broken down into ethnicity, site, and gender.

Documents collected in this study included children’s writing, lesson plans, music, handouts, handbook, and so forth. The researcher asked herself questions such as, “What materials have been used to promote social justice?”, “What kinds of activities have been done
to teach diversity?”, “Who supported the activities?”, and “How were the activities carried out?” while she analyzed the data.

The data sources of this study were from interviews, observations, surveys, and documents. The themes presented in this chapter were created based on the codes that appeared repeatedly.

**Teachers’ Beliefs and Practices of Anti-bias Curriculum in Early Childhood Settings**

To support research question one, the data collected from interview, observation, survey, and document analysis were triangulated. The three teachers who participated in this study were White. They all earned their first degree in Elementary Education in Florida. Both Sara and Ella were natives of New York and chose to teach because of their parents’ occupations. Sara’s father was a history teacher, and Ella’s parents were social workers. Sara has worked as a preschool teacher for five years (prior to that she was a first grade teacher for two years), whereas Ella has always worked as an elementary school teacher. Paula grew up in a rural area in Florida and was the first in her family to get a college degree. Paula has worked as a kindergarten teacher of all her life except for those years when she stayed home to raise her six children. Table 2 shows the demographic information of the teacher participants.

**Table 2: Teacher Participants’ Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Education Background</th>
<th>Years of Teaching</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M. S. in Reading</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paula</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>B. S. in Elementary Ed.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ella</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>B. S. in Elementary Ed.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Beliefs are psychological constructions that consist of understandings, assumptions, or propositions that are felt to be true (Kagan, 1992; Richardson, 2003) and guide a person’s actions and decision-making (Pajares, 1992). Through participant observation, environment assessment, and interview data obtained in this study, the researcher identified several codes which frequently appeared in the data source. These codes were factors that influenced the teachers’
implementation of anti-bias curriculum and supported by Derman-Sparks’ (1989) book, *Anti-bias Curriculum*. Table 3 is a checklist matrix that reveals the degree of each teacher participant’s overall beliefs and practices of anti-bias curriculum. The Likert scale consisted of 5 items. They were: very strong (5), strong (4), adequate (3), weak (2), and none (1).

**Table 3: Conditions Supporting Implementation of Anti-bias Curriculum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>Beliefs</th>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Care</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Cooperative learning</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Integrated curriculum</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paula</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Care</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Cooperative Learning</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Integrated curriculum</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ella</td>
<td>2-3 grade</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Care</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Cooperative learning</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Integrated curriculum</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Beliefs of Anti-bias Curriculum**

**Understanding.** For Sara, the goal of implementing an anti-bias curriculum was to teach children tolerance. Sara’s understanding of anti-bias curriculum was that a teacher should not let her own opinions influence the curriculum. Sara commented, “I think that as children grow into teens and adults they need to make choices for themselves and I think typically, traditionally, it’s middle-class, white, Christian culture that we will teach.”

Paula perceived anti-bias curriculum this way:

It means to make this a safe environment, an equal playing ground for everybody that walks in this room. I think my own feelings are just my personal things. It’s important not to be judgmental. Check yourself. And that’s what you want to teach your children, to be accepting, to look at different perspectives.
Paula believed that not being judgmental herself as a teacher and helping children keep their eyes and hearts open to the broader world and vision was the goal of anti-bias curriculum.

Ella described her view of anti-bias curriculum this way: “It means acceptance of all ideas, or cultures, viewpoints. And also to be able to look at students and see them as equal, like all equally deserving, not to be putting one above the other or putting down the other based on some kind of factors.” She connected the term “anti-bias curriculum” with multicultural education. However, Ella believed that when she was first introduced to this term, multicultural education, “it really talked a lot about making sure classrooms included every type of cultures…”

Additionally, Ella believed that children should be the masters of their own learning. She explained,
The idea of providing experiences, to help children learn things from themselves instead of me. I try very hard to let them guide their own education. They choose their own books and choose their own topics they want to explore and how they want to show their work…. I really want my students to be independent as possible. I like my class to run without my being there. I want them to understand how the classroom runs and where they fit in so I do not have to be there and tell them do this and do that. I believe, to make sure children master skills not really against, any type of methods, if they need to practice worksheets, or open-ended type of things, challenging them to do so because learning style is so different in the classroom.

Although these teachers’ beliefs might differ slightly, they generally viewed “differences are good” (Derman-Sparks, 1989). They believed children should learn to love themselves (self-identity) and others (accepting). To help children understand different perspectives and beliefs, Sara talked about sensitive issues such as religions that many teachers would not discuss with their children (Van Hook, 2002). She was the bravest among the three teachers in that she tried to introduce all religions to her children. Paula claimed that she did not see “color” in her children; her argument was that she cared for each one of them regardless of their skin color and ability. She taught children not to be judgmental, and she practiced not being judgmental.
She listened to children attentively instead of giving them advice. Ella believed that children should be critical thinkers, and her children were indeed in charge of their own learning. Among the three teachers, Ella’s practices most closely aligned with constructivist theory.

**Care.** The need for a caring perspective in early childhood education is based on the conception that “no society can long sustain itself unless its members have learned the sensivities, motivations, and skills involved in assisting and caring for other human beings” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 53). Sara argued, “Care is much more than awareness. You can be ‘aware’ all that you want but if you do not put genuine care into your work and do not possess a caring spirit for the children, your awareness almost equals nothing.” For Sara, it was important for a teacher to be aware of issues and help children understand there were issues and biases everywhere but she believed that care was the essence of implementing an anti-bias curriculum. She contended that awareness and care could complement each other well.

Sara was observed to be caring, respectful, and warm to her children both verbally and nonverbally. She was aware of children’s emotions and reinforced the concept of respect constantly. When students complained that they could not do certain things, Sara always told the children that they would be able to do it if they tried it again. Sara and her assistants modeled desirable behaviors and appropriate language to be used for children. For example, children were reminded to use phrases such as, “thank you,” “could you please,” and “excuse me” at all times.

To show her respect of the child’s culture one of the things Sara did was to learn the children’s various languages. This was especially true with those who did not speak English when they first came to the program.

I try to learn like 10 phrases that I would be able to use, like bathroom, eating, sleeping, just the basic messages that I need to communicate with them…Just some little phrases that way. I use a lot of pointing, I have a lot of pictures, wordbooks, so we go through the books and we point to the pictures… sometimes I even use little bits of sign languages so they can pick that up faster…and I try to work with the parents as much as they can and try to get them to understand that I am not ruining them, I will speak their languages so that their children will feel more comfortable.
Additionally, Sara made sure parents understood what was going on in school by inviting them into class to participate or/and keeping a close communication with each family.

Maintaining a caring relationship was essential in teaching, according to Paula. Paula had thought about leaving her post a few times in the past. However, every time she thought about how much she cared for those children and education, she stayed. Paula explained,

It’s just such a thrill to me to see some will always come in more talkative, and can do that. And there are those who are very quiet, you know there are deep things inside of them but, they are not able in their home environment, to express themselves. To hear them start to orally express what they are seeing so you can know who they are. That’s what I want. These children in this room, they are kept safe, loved, and happy, and they grow up to be somebody special and they have something to offer to their friends, and this little classroom. And hopefully that will continue in their lives.

For Ella, care in the affective sense was not ingrained in her beliefs when it came to implementing an anti-bias curriculum. However, she understood the importance of implementing an anti-bias curriculum and she was aware of issues related to diversity. Ella stated that she had worked in several schools in a rural area and had witnessed the difficulties children went through. Ella argued that being aware was critical. “To kind of just bring it to your awareness. Really, the way you question them, what you expect of them really guides what they are going to do for you. If you have a child that you only ask yes-no questions, then they are not going to try to get past that”.

Both Sara and Paula emphasized the importance of care in teaching and dealing with children and their parents. Paula was the best among the three teachers that stressed care in her teaching and dealing with people. She treated her children with attention and warmth both verbally and nonverbally. Her children were seen to be warm and eager to express their affection. Learning children’s languages was one way in which Sara expressed her care. In contrast, Ella’s interactions with children were not as warm as Paula’s or Sara’s. Ella’s voice exhibited no emotion and her facial expression was neutral which caused her children losing attentiveness. She had to regain children’s attention sometimes.
Practices of Anti-bias Curriculum

Cooperative learning. One of the practices that these three teachers had in common was cooperative learning. Cooperative Learning is an instructional strategy that provides students with a well-defined framework from which students work together to achieve shared goals that meet the five criteria: positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face interaction, appropriate use of collaborative skills, and regular self-assessment of team functioning (Johnson & Johnson, 1989).

Spencer Kagan (1994) argues that,

We need to include cooperative learning experiences in our classrooms... Students no longer come to school with an established caring and cooperative orientation . . . Additionally, we need cooperative learning if we are to preserve democracy. Exclusive use of autocratic, teacher-dominated classroom structures leaves students unprepared for participation in a democratic society. Democracy is not nurtured by a system which models autocratic decision-making, and expects passive obedience among pupils. (p. 2-10)

Previous research suggests the outcomes of cooperative learning include higher self-esteem, more positive peer relationships, lowered levels of prejudice, and equal or higher academic achievement (e.g., Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Slavin & Cooper, 1999).

Sara would assign children to a different group every day. There would be a good mix of girls and boys and abilities in each group. Children would be able to work independently, work with peers, or with the adult at the same table. Children were observed to happily extend their help. Children interacted constantly with each other at the same table; they talked, exchanged ideas, and helped clean up afterward. Children would politely use phrases like, “Thank you” and “May I borrow....” instead of taking the objects that their peers used. Children were frequently seen to encourage and cheer their peers.

Paula had children working independently on their journals, drawings, and workbooks as well as collectively on group projects on a daily basis. She also made sure children were mixed by gender and abilities. During group time, the room was never quiet. Paula’s children were very talkative; they were not shy to share their thoughts as to how to carry out their ideas.
with their group members. They shared materials with each other, tried each one’s ideas, helped each other, and complimented each other when the opportunity arose. This occurred in children’s free play as well. Paula allowed children to have free play daily and encouraged children to work with peers. For example, one day a group of children was building a “big city mall” that was not well constructed and fell. After the second attempt, one of the children expressed her idea and they tried again to build the mall. When it fell again, another child shared his idea and they tried to build the mall again. They tried and tried until they managed to achieve their goal.

In Ella’s class, independent stations (centers) were the highlight of the day when children were engaged in various activities such as science, arts, writing, and reading at different tables/stations. Normally there would be at least four different stations led by teachers or parents. During this time, children were assigned to groups to work independently as well as collectively to achieve their goals such as finishing an art project as a group or completing a matrix of information to be shared with the whole class. Every group would spend about 40 minutes then rotate from one table/station to the next. The next group of children would pick up what the first group had left and continue working on the art project or finding information to complete the matrix. Like the previous two groups of children, Ella’s children were frequently observed to extend their help and encourage their peers to complete tasks.

Big round tables or long rectangle tables and semi-circle tables were used in these three settings. Grouping was heterogeneous. Ella was the best among the three teachers who effectively utilized cooperative learning activities. While their children were working on academic tasks, they also learned the importance of maintaining group harmony and respecting individual views. Her activities met the criteria of cooperative learning; they helped children learn the content and enhance their social skills. Paula used some of the cooperative learning activities that helped children to work together toward their goals. Her activities did not focus on group processing but on individual accountability, positive interdependence, and face-to-face interaction. In contrast, Sara’s activities were less complex, and she used more group projects than cooperative learning activities. The interaction between children was not to achieve a common goal.
**Integrated curriculum.** The use of a thematic approach was seen in all three settings. Music, arts, science, social studies, and language arts were all integrated based on the theme of the month. Additionally, flexible student groupings and flexible schedules were observed in all settings.

In Sara’s class, the curriculum was integrated across content areas. Sara believed that to understand Gardner’s multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983) was important for a teacher. She also believed that the approach to learning and teaching should be holistic and interactive. Sara commented, “I think all the areas are just as important, even like physical intelligence, you know, like sports, play games, gymnastics. I do not think that only smart is being cognitive.” Sara’s children had both morning and afternoon outdoor time and a lot of free-play time.

In Sara’s class the monthly lesson plans sent to parents indicated that children had the opportunity to engage in arts, music, social studies, science, PE, and language arts activities conducted on a regular basis to nurture children’s physical, social, emotional, linguistic, and cognitive development. The activities Sara taught were relevant and meaningful to her monthly theme. For example, Sara used the opportunity to talk about spring festivals during the month of February. Sara had children explore spring festivals such as Chinese New Year and Valentine’s Day that fall in the month of February. She would review what the children had learned in the previous week before she would introduce the new concepts or topics to be covered. The materials Sara provided for her children were age appropriate, and she engaged children in hands-on activities such as having children try to use chopsticks when she talked about Chinese foodstuffs. Children were encouraged to participate in all activities but not forced to join in if they did not wish.

Paula had to follow the district-mandated curriculum and use the required reading materials to teach language arts and math as a public school kindergarten teacher. However, Paula was seen to add a lot of materials and creative activities to supplement the mandatory curriculum. Even though all teachers were required to spend a lot of time reading the scripts to teach reading and had children work in the workbooks every morning in this school, Paula’s children were always seen to be enthusiastic about learning. Paula added a circle time where children would be able to listen to a story that interested them every morning. Very often Paula
would end the story with a song or a game that was related to the content of the story. Children did not seem to struggle in reading in this class. When the researcher led the circle, she was amazed to see how well children were able to read and understand the content of the story.

Paula used opportunities that came up to teach acceptance and respect in all subject areas. For example, when reading “Big Al” to the class, Paula would ask her children questions that provoked their thoughts, such as if they would be able to choose where to be born or their skin color. To end the story, Paula had children sing, “The World Is a Rainbow.” Paula explained, “I always have children sing the world is a rainbow, of different kind of people, and love…. It’s just a sweet children’s song.”

Ella’s school did not need to follow the district curriculum. She had more flexibility in terms of bringing together various aspects of the curriculum into meaningful association to focus upon broad areas of study than most second or third grade teachers in the same school district. Ella gave children lots of opportunities to explore topics of their choice and present their work through arts and crafts, drama, poems, plays, and music.

One feature that made Ella’s school different from most schools was that gardening was emphasized. The gardening teacher tried to tie in what they would plant that week with the theme of the week at school. The week when children explored the theme of Native Americans’ agricultural techniques, the inter-planting of corn, beans, and squash together, known as the “the three sisters,” was discussed during their group time and again in their gardening time. The gardening teacher reviewed what the three sisters were and explained how these three vegetables benefited one another before she had the children plant the seeds. As children were busy digging in the school’s front and back yard, they were also making predictions.

Nespor (1987) and Rokeach (1968) suggest that what a teacher actually does in the classroom is a reflection of her beliefs. These three teachers believed that a developmentally appropriate curriculum should be student-centered, and to achieve this goal was to have an integrated curriculum. Ella outperformed her counterparts in this regard. Her children were able to explore a variety of materials to present their work across disciplines. Not only did Ella integrate all curricula, her colleagues did so as well.
Beliefs and Practices of Anti-bias Curriculum

The first teacher, Sara, encouraged but did not force children to participate in all activities in her class; she encouraged children to choose things or activities they wanted to play with or engage in. Sara stated, “I don’t look at the gender necessarily; I look at what they are interested in.” Additionally, when children cried out, “I can’t do it,” Sara would assure the children that they could do it and demonstrate how to do it. Nevertheless, she actively intervened if children were excluded by others because of their gender and race.

Sara did not believe being smart was being cognitive. For her, mastering social skills was equally as important as mastering math and science skills. She stated,

I think traditionally we think if you are smart, it has to be math, science, or reading, and I think you can be just as smart with how to deal with people…. I think sometimes in education system, social skills and character education is left out. I think that’s an important thing. Traditionally that’s been taught in family and some children get that at home and some don’t. So I think that should be part of every teacher’s philosophy. Just to make sure that they are getting the skills, such as being able to like people, get along with people, and stuff like that, and being able to express themselves.

Sara was observed to spend more time reinforcing positive discipline than rushing to cover all the materials supposed to be covered. Furthermore, many activities observed were tied in to teaching respect and empathy. For example, Sara would have children discuss what is appropriate and what is not appropriate to say to a friend regularly.

Like Sara, Paula also used as many opportunities that came up to teach positive discipline. In Paula’s class, they also had similar rituals during circle time. Paula had children greet each other by singing a few songs and reviewing their “golden rule” which was, “Be responsible, be respectful, and be ready to learn.” Moreover, when Paula taught words that started with S, she intentionally used “shut up” to open up a can of worms. Paula had children discuss incidents when they were being told to shut up and how they felt. All of the children were very eager to share their experience and express their feelings.

Sharing was also an important characteristic that Paula continuously reinforced. One of the children brought a homemade cake to Paula as a Mother’s Day gift. Paula asked the boys
how the cake was made and then had each one in class get a piece of the cake. Once when a parent sent Paula some lotion, Paula had children smell the lotion and then had each one put some lotion on his or her hands. Apart from sharing and being respectful, Paula also taught children to be grateful. When Paula caught children doing something nice to their peers, she would use that opportunity to teach children how to return people’s kindness. For example, Paula would express her gratitude to the researcher whenever she left the class. As a result, on her last visit, children made a card for the researcher to express their gratitude and each one of them took a turn to state why he/she appreciated her presence.

As did Sara, Paula also encouraged boys and girls to engage in all activities and materials. The girls in her class were observed to play with dinosaurs and blocks and boys played in the housekeeping area frequently. She made sure every child’s voice was heard and welcomed children’s suggestions. Paula explained,

Because of some of the experiences I had as a white child in my family, I can check some of those things too. But it’s because of an uneducated mother and father who worked very hard to come up from farming background and who are now millionaires. You know they are not educated. That’s my folks. So don’t tell me you cannot change, open your ideas, I know that can come from nothing. Because each of us makes choices, and that’s why I work so hard in my classroom “what’s your decision?”, “how are you going to handle that?”, when they have their own little issues with each other. I don’t earn it; I give it back to them. Because they are going to face issues, whether it’s race, biases, or whatever, and they need to know how to resolve those for making a better world.

In the third setting, Ella also shared a very similar ritual during group time. During group time, children took turns expressing their thoughts and feelings and things that they would like to share with each other. Children also greeted each other, including Ella and her assistant teacher. Ella found sharing children’s thoughts and feelings to be a powerful tool for children to feel empowered. She explained,

I think that really helps kids be able to share what’s going on. And it helps others kids be more aware and accept what’s going on, you know. We have kids who really share what’s going on. We have kids that really share heavy stuff like parents are getting a
divorce or someone in the family is dying. We try to talk about understanding where they are coming from and where they are going to. What you can do as a friend to help. On the lighter side, I think kids tend to learn stuff about their friends or their classmates. “I do that too.” “I feel that way too.” And they would not necessary have that conversation without this environment.

The first thing that children did when they arrived in the morning was to write in their journals. Ella had the question of the day written on the board so that children could write about what they thought about the question. One of the questions was, “Do you like writing or drawing?” There was no right or wrong answer to the question and children could take either side and give an explanation. Journal writing did not end here. During group time, Ella would have children share what they wrote with the class.

Ella believed children should be in charge of their own learning, and the activities provided were mostly hands-on activities in her class. Children were often engaged in group projects to look for answers for their questions. Ella never gave children answers; she gave them some hints as to where they might be able to find solutions. During independent reading, children could pick any book they liked and sit anywhere they liked in the room. Some third graders were able to read “Indiana Jones” or “The Hundred Dresses.” One of the girls stated that she could read like a seventh grader! Ella and her assistant teacher would check on each one’s progress regularly and made sure the level was appropriate. Like Paula, Ella would ask children related questions when an idea popped up.

Active democracies require sustained dialogue and debate (Dewey, 1916). To accomplish this goal, in Dewey’s view, public schools should teach thinking processes rather than focus on memorization and acquisition of compartmentalized skills or facts. One time Ella brought in a Dakota Sioux quilt to show the class during the week when they had discussions on Native American art. Ella asked the children if they would like to make one just like that; she asked them the color and the pattern that they would like to have in their quilt. Children were excited and were keen to state what they wanted without raising their hands. “That’s not the way we make decisions,” Ella reminded them. This was one of the examples how Ella reinforced the concept of democracy with her children. Shor (1992) believes that democratic
education is characterized by active learning through cooperative interactions with others in a specific social context.

**Congruence between Teachers’ Beliefs and Practices**

There was a high degree of congruence between teachers’ beliefs and practices. Observation narratives revealed that these three teachers integrated a range of songs, stories, plays, and artwork that promote multicultural awareness and inclusion. The handouts and handbooks for parents addressed the value of cultural diversity and the books, pictures, and materials illustrated not only the mainstream culture but also many other cultures across the three settings. Children’s and parents’ pictures were on the walls and in photo books in the preschool and kindergarten classrooms.

Every morning, Sara’s and Paula’s children would sing a few songs that welcomed everyone in the room, including teachers and the researcher, whereas Ella had children get together at the circle to greet each other and share their stores and thoughts. All three teachers had children read a lot of books that address differences and had children discuss issues on respect and compassion. Paula also repeatedly used children’s names to teach rhyme; she made language arts fun and personal. These three teachers were seen to be fair to their children regardless of their skin color, language skills, abilities, and gender. Bullock (1996) argues that teachers who profess the importance of anti-bias curriculum are more likely to practice these beliefs in their class. These three teachers were seen to do more than they were required in order to integrate some aspects of anti-bias curriculum into their overall planning.

**Implementation of Anti-bias Curriculum in Early Childhood Settings**

In this section, how anti-bias curriculum is perceived and practiced in each site will be addressed. Table 4 shows the degree of anti-bias curriculum practiced in each site.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>ECERS-E</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 Grade</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These three sites supported the implementation of anti-bias curriculum, and diversity was addressed and embraced by staff and principals. The thematic units taught at the schools often had children investigate and study various cultural groups. Parents and guest speakers were frequently invited to share their cultures with the children.

**Principals/Director.** The principals/director of these three schools acknowledged, were involved with, and supported the principles of anti-bias curriculum in various ways. Table 5 illustrates the demographic information of the principals. Each one of them had worked as an educator for at least two decades and their understanding of anti-bias curriculum was clearly manifested in the way they trained staff and managed the school.

**Table 5: Principals’ Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Education Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dell</td>
<td>Pre-K</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M. S. in Early Childhood Ed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cher</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M. S. in Language Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dena</td>
<td>2-3 grade</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M. S. in Social Studies Ed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The principals/director supported the teachers’ decisions in relation to implementation of anti-bias curriculum. For example, Dell, Sara’s director, stated, “I think Ms. Sara has a good, intuitive way of thinking about and seeing about biases and addressing biases. So we have made progress.” Paula’s principal, Cher, also commented,

I think they [kindergarten teachers] have been wonderful. I think they try to really offer a non-biased curriculum. They offer children the opportunity to investigate, making decisions, learning what they need to do, without sitting down and writing down on the piece of paper out of the textbook or something like that. I think they have done a good job fashioning an unbiased curriculum.

Ella’s principal, Dena, had worked on promoting social justice for years at the state and national levels. Her first job as a history teacher in a predominately Black high school was an eye-opening experience that helped her understand the meaning of “practice of freedom”. Dena explained,
I thought the only thing I need to be teaching them is I need to be doing self-esteem activity and black history. That’s what I taught. I taught black history. Because I thought they needed to know to be inspired, they need to know who they are and they need to be inspired about what they can do, what they can achieve.

Dena had taught about the civil rights movement before she took the principal position eight years ago. She claimed that to be able to hire teachers who share the same vision and view about bringing diversity to the school was the best part of her position.

Horenczyk and Tatar (2002) claim that when schools embrace and support the implementation of anti-bias and multicultural education, teachers are more likely to integrate an anti-bias and multicultural education in their curriculum. Although principals/director stated that they were supportive of their staff and anti-bias curriculum, the researcher did not see any of the principals/director come to visit the classes while she was there, except Dena. However, the focus of her being in the class was while giving a tour to some visitors. Sara’s classroom was right next to Dell’s office and there were only two classrooms in that center. Paula’s school was a large elementary school (there were about 650 students enrolled in that school), kindergarten was not a testing grade, and Paula was a veteran kindergarten teacher. Ella was relatively new to her charter school, and there were only about 280 students enrolled in her school.

**Classroom environment assessment.** ECERS-E (Sylva et al., 2006) measured from 1 to 7 with 1 being inadequate, 3 being minimal, 5 being good, and 7 being excellent. The mean scores obtained by the researcher and the teacher participants of the ECERS-E diversity subscale for the participating classes were 5.6, 5.7, and 5.9 (preschool, kindergarten, and 2-3 grade) respectively. Specifically, the three sets of scores were 5.5/5.7, 5.6/5.7, and 5.9/5.9. These scores indicated that these three classes effectively planned for individual learning needs, promoted gender equality and awareness, and promoted racial equality and awareness.

In terms of planning for individual learning needs, item one on the scale, all three sites had about the same score. They were 94 in the preschool class, 95 in the kindergarten class, and 96 in the 2-3 grade class. These three teachers were seen to observe children regularly and keep records of students’ work and progress, and written plans. Except for Paula, who did not have
an assistant teacher, both Sara’s and Ella’s assistant teacher also kept track of children’s progress on a regular basis.

In regard to the second item on the scale, because some items did not apply to the 2-3 grade class and the preschool class, the score of gender equality and awareness of each site appeared to vary greatly (42, 62, 49). Generally speaking, all three teachers were observed to encourage both boys and girls to participate equally in all activities, and children were observed to engage in activities across gender stereotypes. For example, boys were cooking or caring for dolls in the home corner, and girls were playing with construction objects and cars in both Sara’s and Paula’s class. Additionally, both Paula’s and Ella’s classes had many books, pictures, and displays that included images which did not conform to gender stereotypes. Even though Sara did not have that many books that illustrated men and women in non-stereotypical roles as compared to her counterparts, she constantly challenged the girls in her class to participate in all activities. Sara tried to teach her children that both boys and girls could do anything if they tried hard. Gender issues were not easy to address especially when a teacher had to deal with parents who were of different cultures and beliefs. There were times when Sara’s beliefs and parents’ beliefs were not in agreement. Sara remarked,

When children state, “Boys cannot do this.” or “Girls cannot do that.” or things like “girls cannot be scientists or girls cannot play sports.” it sounds more like a home issue than just a gender-identity issue. So it’s a tricky issue because which culture do you teach?” But they are encouraged to choose something that they want to play that day.

In terms of race equality and awareness, item three on the scale, again all three sites scored similarly if the item that did not apply to the 2-3 grade class was not considered (62, 65, 59; Ella’s class did not have a dramatic play area). Books, pictures, displays, and artifacts of each classroom showed people from different ethnic groups. Furthermore, minority educators were employed in each site. Children were observed to play with toys or artifacts from cultures other than the ethnic majority and to interact/play with children of different backgrounds. Teachers were observed to interact with children of different backgrounds with respect. Dell believed that minority teachers broadened children’s horizons by bringing in different ideas and views. His point was supported by Dena who also tried to bring in teachers of diverse abilities and
racial backgrounds. Other than hiring ethnic-minority educators or inviting ethnic-minority people into the setting to work with children, intervention was also an important component of implementing anti-bias curriculum. In this case, Sara’s school did an excellent job by intervening appropriately and professionally when children or their parents showed prejudice. From teachers to principal, they worked closely with each family to ensure their voices as well as the school’s concerns were heard.

The materials in a classroom serve as a basis for teachers introducing activities and for children’s investigating (Jones & Derman-Sparks, 1992). “An environment that is rich in possibilities for exploring gender, race/ethnicity, and different-abledness sets the scene for practicing anti-bias curriculum” (Derman-Sparks, 1989, p. 11). The setup of a learning environment is therefore very critical. The reason why Sara had the lowest score was that she had limited resources in terms of multicultural books or/and materials that showed men and women in non-stereotypical roles. Paula had many books that showed non-stereotypical roles and children’s activities crossed gender stereotypes frequently. Ella had the highest overall score because the books, artifacts, and materials displayed in her class did not conform to gender stereotypes and were of/represented various cultures.

Children. The observation narratives did not indicate any racial or cultural conflicts among children in these classes. Children were seen to befriend children of different racial groups in all classes. Table 6 presents the geographic information of the children participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 grade</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among these children, there were 20 girls and 10 boys participated in this study. Specifically, there were two White and five Asian girls as well as two Asian and one Black boy.
participated in the preschool setting. In the kindergarten class, there were three Black and three White girl participants and two Black and two White boy participants. There were four White girls, two Black girls, one Asian girl, two White boys and one Black boy participated in the multi-age class. Table 7 illustrates the demographic information of the children participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Asian Girl</th>
<th>Asian Boy</th>
<th>Black Girl</th>
<th>Black Boy</th>
<th>White Girl</th>
<th>White Boy</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 grade</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30/30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 18 preschoolers in Sara’s class were from more than 10 different countries and many of them were learning to adjust themselves in this new place and new language. The level of children’s English proficiency was very impressive; they seemed to have no difficulty communicating with each other, and they could express their thoughts and ideas very clearly. Sara explained she had worked hard to make sure that all children had the opportunity to express themselves. Because of what Sara believed to be important, her children were not afraid to tell Sara what they thought.

In Sara’s class, girls were seen to play with girls only, and boys would hang out with boys only. Additionally, children were seen to befriend friends who were of different cultures, and they shared and played with each other well. When children were asked why they befriended certain peers, the answer was always centered on, “she plays with me nicely.” Children stated they just wanted to be with people who cared for them, played, and interacted with them regardless of their cultural backgrounds.

About 47% of Paula’s children were Black and about 53% of the children were White Americans. Children in her class were polite and well-mannered. They raised their hands if they had a question and waited for their turns to speak up. They were also very inquisitive and curious about many things and various people who were from different cultures. They asked questions all the time and were very friendly to the adults who came to their class. The White
and Black children played together during their free play time and worked diligently on their group projects together. They were helpful to each other and to Paula. They practiced what Paula taught them in various areas. For example, many children would state, “Stop it, I don’t like it and I mean it right now,” when they were bothered by their peers. Also, they were not shy to compliment others when they saw their peers did great work. Phrases such as “You are special” and “You’re nice” were often expressed by children to each other and the researcher.

Paula reinforced the rules and reminded children of the rules to respect for self and others constantly. She also had children think about their issues and how they could resolve their issues on their own. Whenever children had conflicts, they knew they would resolve the issues among themselves. Children would go to a quiet place and talk about the problems they had with each other. Only if they were not able to come up with a solution would they ask Paula for help.

Children knew the routine very well and always seemed to be on-task in Ella’s class. Children were constantly seen to offer their peers a hand when it was needed. They were not afraid to express their feelings toward each other and frequently hugged and cheered for each other. Children worked closely with each other throughout the day, although they also spent a lot of time reading something they were interested in every morning independently. Right after independent reading, each one of them would choose the story he/she would read to his/her partner. When children were asked to find partners, they looked for peers who were of different grades instead of based on their abilities or skin color. It was a shared understanding between Ella and children that older children worked with younger children in this classroom.

The children were kind and had compassion for friends and other living beings. One time the gardening teacher brought in two rabbits and one of them was injured. Children were saying how sorry they felt for that rabbit. They would say the same thing to their peers if one of them was ill or injured. Children were willing to share everything at the same table. “You can use my.....” could be heard again and again. They also praised each other for their work constantly. When asked why they befriended certain peers, like the kindergartener and preschooler participants, they stated that it was because they played with each other and they called each other. Derman-Sparks (1992) contends that seven and eight-year olds are:
Constructing or having constructed the cognitive ability of “class inclusion” that makes possible children’s understanding of how they can have many different aspects of identity and still be one person, and of how people who are not exactly the same as them can belong to the same ethnic group as they do. (p. 118)

In the next section, the barriers to and contributions of incorporating anti-bias curriculum will be discussed. Barriers to implementing an anti-bias curriculum found in this study were lack of resources, parental disapproval, and limited knowledge of anti-bias curriculum education. The benefits of implementing an anti-bias curriculum included inclusion of children of various abilities and teamwork between teachers.

**Barriers and Contributions of Incorporating Anti-bias Curriculum in Early Childhood Settings**

The data from interview, observation, survey, and document analysis were used to support research question two. Barriers and benefits of incorporating anti-bias curriculum are as follow:

**Barriers**

Barriers to implementing an anti-bias curriculum found in this study were lack of resources, parental disapproval, and limited knowledge. The benefits of implementing an anti-bias curriculum included inclusion and teamwork.

**Resources.** The biggest issue Sara faced was resources. Sara commented, You are limited to what the school has and you are limited to what’s available out there because I think things like anti-bias curriculum is not extremely new but some of the materials and resources have not gotten to a point where they encompass everybody so there are limitations there. So it is not that I don’t have as many resources as I’d like. I can imagine having a lot more but I’m thankful for what we do have to use. There are always more toys, books, and more teaching resources, more materials you can have but I am limited to what the school has and then to the big company that we order [things] from.
According to Sara, the multicultural materials were out there but items addressing different types of families and different types of religions were limited. For example, Sara had a hard time finding materials about Ramadan and Diwali.

Dell agreed with Sara’s view that more resources would be helpful but believed how teachers used the resources and addressed issues to their children were more crucial. He explained,

The biggest resources are time and energy, and those are always short, but materials wise, yes. So many people think that anti-bias curriculum is having all the colored dolls, but really that is multi-cultural curriculum. It does contribute to anti-bias curriculum, because it provides expression, but most of it is just astute, aware teachers that have been trained to recognize bias and address it properly. So we do have the resources, but whether we maximize those resources is a totally different story.

As an “A” school (a blue-ribbon school), Paula’s school received a considerable amount of funding from the school district. However, Paula [also] thought that she did not have enough resources to implement an anti-bias curriculum. Paula’s school principal, Cher, mentioned that, “I do not think we will ever have enough resources. I think we can use a lot more. We have a lot; don’t get me wrong. But we can use a lot more for enrichment, things like that we do not get. I mean time, money, and everything.”

Like Dell, Paula believed that resources could be limited but that it was more critical to see every moment as a teachable moment. Paula explained, “When you have a conversation that comes up, children just come up with whatever may happen from a story or somebody says that happens to me at home. And that opens up a whole discussion.” Once when a child raised an issue on name calling, Paula used that opportunity to ask children how they would feel if they were being called names. Children were very eager to share what happened to them and how they felt.

Ella’s school was also an “A” school. However, charter schools in this particular county did not get as much funding as the same ranking public elementary schools did according to Dena, Ella’s principal. She explained,
Charter schools usually get less than the public schools. And we don’t get like the sales tax like the public schools get; we got left out of that. That’s too bad because we can use the money to build a new building, we can usually use that money for more things. But you know, we have less.

Ella complained,

It’s hard. We don’t have the literature. Only what I can afford, or get my hands on. I wish we had had a media center or specialist that was buying the books. And I have only a limited understanding of the culture, but we have other people who have more knowledge, but I feel that it is all on me, and that I am the only person. And I am the only one collecting the resources for my classroom on top of all the other things I am doing. Sometimes I think I don’t do as good a job as I could.

Ella’s class was not a typical second or third grade classroom where children might be expected to read the same textbook or work on the same project. Ella’s classroom was full of books and materials for the children to find answers and to engage in hands-on activities. None of her children read the same book, and they were always busy with different group projects. Her library had to expand constantly in order to meet students’ needs.

Derman-Sparks (1989) stresses that it is important for teachers to have books and materials that reflect children and adults who are of color, who are differently abled, and who are engaged in non-stereotypic gender activities. A fair amount and balance is therefore the key. All these three teachers knew where to get resources, and they were good at getting help from parents. Ella started with only 100 books the first year when she started teaching at this charter school. With her colleagues’ and parents’ help, she was able to have a good collection of books and materials within a couple of years. Paula also knew how and where to get resources she wanted. She worked closely with her colleagues and frequently shared materials with them. Even though Sara had no budget to purchase anti-bias materials, she had support from parents who came in as guest speakers and was able to get resources from them. Additionally, she acquired materials from the library and non-profit agents that provided free books and materials in the community.
**Parental disapproval.** The parents of children in Sara’s class were of various cultures and often did not share the same values. Sara commented,

Sometimes we have, you know, I try to teach them; boys and girls can do anything that they want. And some of the children say, “Boys cannot do this” or “girls cannot do this.” I know that comes from the parents also. So it’s hard because we have our own beliefs and you know that’s going to be different from parents’ beliefs because some of the cultures that I work with, they feel stronger with the male child than the female child and you could definitely feel that children are taught that at home. When they talk about jobs, girls cannot be scientists. A little bit of that I would understand, you know, they say, “dresses are for girls not for boys,” that might be something that they did not learn at home but they are learning about their own gender identity at this age, and they point out the differences. But things like, girls cannot be scientists or girls cannot play sports; to me, that sounds more like a home issue than just a gender identity issue. So it’s a tricky issue because which culture do you teach?

Sara expressed her respect of children’s cultures and their parents’ values. However, she believed that, as a teacher, she also had the responsibility to teach children to be accepting and work collaboratively as a group regardless of their religious beliefs at home. Her children were seen to play with each other at school but they might not play with each other even if they lived in the same neighborhood because of their parents’ disapproval.

Parents in Paula’s class strongly voiced their needs. Paula stated,

We had a community associated with a church a few years ago, very powerful in this area. They did not want anything to do with Halloween, anything with dragons, anything magical, and so forth. They’ve still got influence here. One of the girls in my class this year, her father and her mother are still active in that church. Because of that, Paula had to do double curriculum and activities to accommodate her children. Paula understood it was a fine line to walk, but she took the risk. Paula claimed, “I still think it’s parents’ responsibility to teach what they want. But I also have the responsibility to honor other beliefs as well.”

In Ella’s case, even though parents did not have objections to what she taught
their children, she had a few parents who did not feel comfortable about celebrating some holidays. Ella commented,

We give them a way to not be embarrassed and to help the child understand why they are not supposed to do it. A lot of times we just avoid big celebrations. Thanksgiving and Valentines Day we do together. But not Halloween. We dress in costumes, though. Those that don’t do Halloween just don’t come to school that day.

Parents in these three sites were supportive of the schools’ vision. However, some of them had strong opinions about what should be taught to their children. They supported the teachers’ addressing diversity, but some parents had issues with activities that conflicted with their religious beliefs.

**Limited funds of knowledge.** Sara was a teacher who was constantly acquiring new teaching techniques and knowledge. She believed she had learned a lot about other cultures and languages by working in a very multicultural setting like her preschool. However, she was not prepared to work with children with diverse backgrounds before. When she taught first grade, she had a boy from Russia who could not speak English. “I had no idea of what to do. I had no idea of how to communicate with him. He would run around the classroom, I did not know any strategies”, Sara recalled.

Sara explained, “I definitely think teachers need more preparation. If you are not a minority, and if you don’t take classes, I think that would make someone not very sensitive.” For her, obtaining knowledge about how to work with children of diverse backgrounds was vital.

Paula was the most seasoned teacher among these three teachers, and she believed that teachers needed to have knowledge about building trusting relationships with children and their parents. Paula remarked,

In education, everybody is so busy teaching the ideology, and yet, this is about people. This is a people business. And you can’t teach if you do not have that trust and faith in the relationship with each other, you can’t teach. Because when you have that relationship, your minds are open, and they are not closed and they are receptive to different things.
Paula explained that if a teacher looked hard, she would be able to find something about her students that she was going to love. “It’s such a true principle, regardless what these children come in with, what feelings they get at home, there’s nothing that works as magic, like teaching with your heart. If you want to reach them, you have to reach their hearts”, she argued. Children in her class were often seen to be hugging her and kissing her, and Paula would not mind that. Paula was observed to treat children fairly and provide children with the same opportunities regardless of skin color.

Ella knew the essence of implementing an anti-bias curriculum with the regular curriculum physically; she did an exceptional job creating an anti-bias classroom where children’s voices were heard. Children could voice what they would like to learn in Ella’s class; they were always engaged in hands-on activities that were developmentally appropriate and practical. Children were seen to work either independently or cooperatively with others at all times. However, Ella seemed to have a limited knowledge of the ethic of care (Noddings, 1984). She was the only teacher who did not mention caring as a part of implementing an anti-bias curriculum with the regular curriculum.

Inclusion and teamwork were found to be contributions to implementing an anti-bias curriculum. They will be discussed in the next section.

**Contributions**

**Inclusion.** Children in all three classes were seen to work cooperatively with each other. Teachers encouraged their children to try new ideas and helped them explore different alternatives. They prepared as many materials or invited as many guest speakers as they could in order for their children to have different learning experiences. Both boys and girls were given the same opportunities to answer questions and to engage in various activities. The minority children were not treated as inferior to their counterparts; they were given the same opportunity to participate in class activities.

Sara and her assistant teachers were encouraging and engaging while interacting with ELLs. Sara’s children were also very supportive of ELLs. For example, children who were more advanced in the English language would act as translators or explain to the children who had
limited English proficiency what their assignments were. Additionally, they would voluntarily offer to help those who needed assistance.

Helping each other was not only seen in the preschool setting, it was seen in the kindergarten class and the second and third grade class as well. Because teachers modeled how to interact with each other appropriately, their children learned how to act appropriately. Modeling desirable behaviors was seen frequently. Moreover, having children discuss the importance of respect was also observed. In each class, these three teachers had children talk about how to respect self and others often. These three would stop the children when they were not being respectful. Comments such as, “You are not being respectful because you are not listening to what Lily’s saying”, could be heard again and again in these three classes.

Parents were included in all three settings in various ways and they were presented as an asset and resource. In Sara’s case, one of her parents would come in to teach music on a regular basis as she (or he) had been a music teacher in the past. Sara explained that a few parents had come in to teach various subjects based on their talents or training. Children’s parents were also invited to come in as guest speakers frequently. Sara welcomed the idea of parents bringing in snacks representative of their cultures. In Paula class, parents could come in to read and share their ideas when opportunities came up. Children’s parents helped decorate the room and provided needed materials. Whenever a parent came to visit her class, Paula would make sure that children had the opportunity to ask questions and talk with him/her. Ella’s parents were welcome to come in to lead group projects, and bring in artifacts, snacks, and things to be shared with one another. Their “Friday Sing” was a successful school activity that a lot of parents would come to join.

Teamwork. Owen (1993) highlights the need for teachers to connect with other colleagues, encourage each other, and share ideas and resources with each other in creating an anti-bias classroom. Sara explained how important it was to have assistant teachers and a director who shared the same values. Sara was grateful that she had supportive assistant teachers and a director who allowed her to practice what she believed in. She stated, “I have a supportive director. He’s supportive of everything. There’s not been anything that I wanted to
do where he says, ‘No, you can’t do that.’” Sara related an incident which occurred two summers ago.

We do little art things every summer. And there’s an art book that has pictures of bodies. And some people find that offensive, and I wanted to know how to handle that. And he said it’s ok with him as long as it would be portrayed as an art and nothing else. Not long ago, I heard of a high school teacher that took her class to visit the museum of art, and there’s a naked statue and she’s fired. So I thought that was interesting because I can get fired too.”

Paula also worked closely with her colleagues. “A lot of us, we raise our children together, have gone through divorce together, whatever happens in our lives”, Paula commented. She maintained that keeping a healthy relationship with colleagues made things easier. They exchanged ideas, shared resources, and looked after each other’s children from time to time. On most days, Paula would stay late to prepare materials for the next day, and most of her team teachers would stay late to help each other.

Ella had a team of teachers and staff that shared a similar vision, and they worked together to make sure children were getting a good-quality education regardless of their abilities. Ella commented,

We have a great relationship as adults. Respectful. [We] Look at each other as equal. The boss gives us an opportunity to be professionals and leaders with responsibility. Although some want the hierarchy and want the position, 99% of us have the ability to look at each other without competition. The majority of teachers are older, and that calms it down a little. I like it. I don’t feel competitive like I have to prove anything. Like Ella and her assistant teacher, the art teacher, the music teacher, the gardening teacher, and the drama teacher were observed to reinforce positive discipline and respect and address diversity in their classes. The next section portrays parents’ influence on implementing anti-bias curriculum in early childhood settings.
Parents’ Influence on Implementing Anti-bias Curriculum

To support research question three, the data collected from interview, observation, survey, and document analysis were triangulated. Findings of parents’ attitudes and parental involvement will be presented in this section.

Parents’ Attitudes

There were 18, 19, and 24 children in preschool, kindergarten, and 2-3 class respectively. There were 13 Asian, 30 White, and 18 Black children together across the three settings. About 50% of the parents returned the survey (30 out of 61); eight out of 13 Asian, 15 out of 30 White, and seven out of 18 Black parents responded to the survey. Asian parents seemed to be more responsive in this study than White and Black parents. Asian parents had more than 60% responding rate as compared to White parents’ 50% and Black parents’ 38% responding rates. Among the three sites, preschool responding rate was the highest with more than 55% responding rate whereas 2-3 class had the lowest responding rate which was 41%. Table 8 illustrates the responding rate of parents across three settings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8: Parents’ Responding Rates across Ethnicity and Settings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 Grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the parent participants, three Asian, four White, and one Black fathers participated in the study. In contrast, five Asian, 11 White, and six Black mothers participated in the study across the three settings. Mothers were found to be more involved with children’s schoolwork than fathers (22 vs. 8). Among the mother participants, Black mothers were found to be more supportive of this study with a rate of 85%. There was only one Black father participated in this study. Table 9 displays the responding rate of parent participants by gender.
Table 9: The Breakdown of Parent Participants’ Responding Rates by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fathers</td>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>1/7</td>
<td>4/15</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
<td>5/8</td>
<td>6/7</td>
<td>11/15</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30/30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The eight Asian, seven Black, and fifteen White parents who participated in this study from the three settings were found to be involved in their children’s learning in general. The eight Asian parents were from different parts of Asia. Five parents were from China, one parent was from Korea, one parent was from Turkey, and one of Indian origin was from Malaysia. They participated in meetings and various academic activities. Parents were found to offer resources for cultural enhancement in the preschool classroom, particularly. For example, in addition to bringing dishes to share with other parents, Dell explained, “Parents also send in artifacts, clothing, stories, send in treats, anything they have that they would like other people to know about.”

The multicultural attitude survey completed by parents indicated that parents understood there were issues such as racial discrimination and gender discrimination. They scored higher in the section of understanding than the section of care. Additionally, the scores indicated that although parents were aware of issues, they might not take action when situations occurred. For example, all parents knew that people had different sexual preferences but not every one stated that they would take action when witnessing bias based on people’s preferred sexual orientation. The survey revealed that White, Asian, and Black parents had similar understandings of issues related to diversity. When parental attitudes were compared across the settings, parents in the 2-3 grade class were more aware of and sensitive to issues than those parents of the other two classes. Table 10 illustrates the breakdown of the multicultural attitude scale by ethnicity and setting. Furthermore, mothers were found to be slightly more aware of and sensitive to issues than fathers across the three settings. When parental attitudes were compared across ethnicity, White, and Black mothers were found to have similar awareness of issues. However, Black parents had the lowest score in the section of
act (15) and it could mean that Black parents were more likely to take action given that situations might have occurred.

Table 10: The Breakdown of the Multicultural Attitude Scale by Ethnicity and Setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>*Knowledge</th>
<th>*Care</th>
<th><em>Act</em>*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian Parents</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Parents</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Parents</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 grade</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* mean of the total scores
** the lower the score, the more likely the person is to act

Table 11 presents the breakdown of the multicultural attitude scale by gender.

Table 11: The Breakdown of the Multicultural Attitude Scale by Gender and Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>*Knowledge</th>
<th>*Care</th>
<th><em>Act</em>*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* mean of the total scores
** the lower the score, the more likely the person is to act
*** only 1 Black father participated in the study

As do young children, parents’ past experiences also profoundly influence the way they think and approach other people (Derman-Sparks, 1992). For example, Sara shared a story about one of her boys in the class.
They are a family that has dealt with racism before. Mom is African-American and dad is Cambodian. They have shared with me that their parents were not accepting of their interracial relationship. I think this has made them very sensitive about the issue and choose to raise their boy in an environment that is "blind" to racial differences.

Sara constantly reflected upon this issue. She commented, “As a teacher, I must respect the wishes of parents, even when I completely disagree with them. Parents may have different preferences and experiences and choose to believe or act in a way that teachers may not agree with.”

Paula also mentioned she would not allow her feelings toward certain parents to interfere with her teaching. "I may have feelings about that parent, wish they were different and could see what I am saying. But no, I never let that affect the children and my relationships with them. I would make sure if I have done anything anyway”.

There was a waitlist to attend Ella’s school so the school was able to select parents who agreed with the school’s teaching approaches. Yet, she found some parents had different point of views on certain issues. For example,

Sometimes we disagree on what is needed for their child, but overall I think that we have a mutual respect and understanding about what they want and what I want. And parents really want their child to have homework, but some of my parents are completely against homework. So parents want weekly spelling lists, but we don’t do that. Some parents want a more structured type of education where the children are told what to do, but on the other side they want less limits with just time to learn and experience, so I have parents that sit on both ends of that and others that are in the middle and are fine with whatever is going on. They are involved, and we want them to stay involved, so we try to reach an agreement.

Ella found it to be difficult to keep everyone happy when every parent had different views. She tried to listen and understand their different perspectives in spite of that. Ella explained,

I sometimes feel like I am in customer service. I have this product that I am
delivering and I need to make sure that everyone is happy in some way. So I really encourage them to talk to me, and when they call or come in and it is really hard to understand what they are saying, I think that it is important that when they are telling me something that they are not happy with to not take it personally. They are not saying that I am not a good teacher or that I am doing a bad job, they are saying that they need something different. I have learned that.

Parental involvement in the three settings will be presented in the next section. Although parental involvement differed in each setting, the teachers believed that any type of involvement should be encouraged and appreciated.

**Parental Involvement**

The students in Dell’s school came from various ethnic and religious groups; there were children from South Asia to the Middle East and others from the northeastern states of America. Because of this unique feature, the school organized three to four celebrations a year for the families to meet with each other. Dell commented,

We don’t go too deep into the religious aspect of any of our celebrations. It’s touched upon. It’s only touched upon. If there is a story, it’s told and then ‘this is what we do in our house.’ We have people who are of Christian faith and some people who are of different faith. So we don’t go too deep into people’s faith but we do talk a little bit about the story. If they want to investigate further, that’s ok. But we don’t really hide. It’s kind of like sex, with children if you tiptoe around too much, you create problems. So with other cultures, it is the same way, but it’s important to be honest. Now when they ask me things, ‘Mr. Dell, do you do thing like this in your house?’ I love to hear about it because I think that’s a great way to celebrate. We are constantly hearing about and supporting their cultures. And so bringing the parents in sometimes they are not comfortable about it, but if we can invite them into things like these, they are more likely to be respectful and to hear what other people have to say about it.

Among the three settings, parents were much more likely to support and help out in Dena’s charter school. This probably had something to do with the fact that parents were required to do two hours of volunteer work a month. Cher, Paula’s school
principal, pointed out that even though her school did not have as much parental involvement as she would like, she was glad that they were not as low on volunteers as some of the minority schools in the same school district. Cher explained, “I used to be in a minority school and I know it’s hard to get people to come in and work with the kids.” She continued, “The kindergarten seems to get more volunteers than the rest of the school because children are just beginning their education.” Of the three settings, parents of younger children appeared to be more involved than their counterparts.

Although teachers complained that the level of parental involvement had decreased yearly at schools, they did appreciate whatever parents did for their children or schools. Paula commented,

What we see is that it happens now in our school, more women are going back to work. This year, I did not have a lot that came in to the classroom. But anything that I needed, or I wished for on the little newsletter that I sent home, they all came in. We have been greatly blessed. So that way, it’s been great. This is something I will hold onto, not only the feelings of the children connecting me in here but those parents connecting to me as well. To know that when I come to them, we have a problem, that they trust me and believe me. This relationship we developed, we know that it’s not an issue, not a battle ground, major decisions that need to be made; detention, or a learning problem that might need to be investigated. They trust me. That’s a powerful thing to me.

Any type of parental involvement was encouraged and appreciated in Ella’s school and as Dena explained,

A lot of time parents help out on our field trips. We do a lot of field trips. Parents can play a really good role for the trips, transportation, ask people, ask adults, parents raise the money for the classroom, parents come in to volunteer and help out with tests that teachers have so that teachers can focus more on the lessons. So parents play a big part and they can also go to the website and keep up with what children are doing and support that from home. They keep coming to support and we encourage parents to come here and have that. The expectation is two hours a month per family. I am not saying that they all do it; I am saying
that’s the expectation. Some are here for more than 15 hours a month.

One of the parents in Ella’s school told the researcher that she was grateful for the opportunity to do something at her son’s school. Not only did she get to do something meaningful, but she also felt she was part of the big family. Many parents who were involved in their children’s education shared this same view and often times were observed to actively participate in school activities on the weekly basis. Even though parental involvement different at each site, teachers found parents to be supportive when they asked for any type of assistance.

The chapter presented participants’ voices, and teachers’ beliefs and practices related to anti-bias curriculum. Furthermore, benefits of and barriers to implementing anti-bias curriculum were summarized. How parents’ attitudes and involvement related to anti-bias curriculum were also addressed. Chapter V will present a discussion based on these results.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

This chapter will discuss the findings of the study. First of all, teachers’ lived experiences will be examined. Next, power and control between teachers and children will be discussed. Furthermore, material resources, training, collaboration among colleagues, support from administration, and parental involvement will also be addressed. The last section of this chapter will focus on the limitations of the study.

Lived Experiences

Nespor (1987) argues that teachers’ beliefs about education are affected by substantial episodes in their lives such as influential teachers or teaching experiences. Brand and Glasson (2004) also contend that teachers’ early life experiences can have a great impact on their beliefs on diversity, teaching pedagogy, and philosophy. All of these lived experiences factor into working effectively with diverse students. Moreover, in McAllister and Irvine’s (2002) study, they found empathy/care was an important factor in working effectively with diverse students. Most importantly, they argued that empathy/care was both an affective and cognitive concept.

Sara, in her first year of teaching, was not sure how to deal with a child who did not speak English. She believed that teaching at her preschool was an eye-opening experience and it helped her want to know more about other people and cultures. Sara was motivated to learn about new techniques and ideas; that was her approach to professional development. She started attending workshops and training sessions to learn additional information about child development and multicultural education (which she did not know much about when she was a pre-service teacher). Sara has worked in her current diverse setting for five years and has seen a lot of teachers come and go. She realized that those who did not stay long were less likely to have multicultural training and skills needed to deal with children and parents of diverse backgrounds.
It was interesting to note that Sara appeared to be more aware of multicultural issues than the other two teachers because of the makeup of the student body. Sara stated that the children she worked with had helped change the way she taught because of their diverse backgrounds. Additionally, Sara took graduate courses in areas such as religion, multicultural education, and teaching English as a second language in the evenings while she worked full time in the preschool. However, the environment assessment score at her site was actually the lowest of the three sites studied. Although her classroom was nicely decorated, Sara did not have many books, artifacts, and/or displays that illustrated men and women in non-stereotypical roles. According to Sara, her inability to get the resources she wanted was due to budget issues. Her school did not get as much as funding as the other two schools. Nevertheless, Sara often addressed gender equality and encouraged both boys and girls to participate equally in all activities when opportunities arose. Sara’s awareness of how females were perceived in society at large and her past experience of being discriminated against because of her gender could be the reason why she constantly addressed gender equality in her class.

Sara showed her care through learning children’s languages, updating her knowledge, and planning child-centered activities. She also showed her care through her interaction with children; she was had a warm, soothing voice and pleasant facial expression. Her physical attribute made children feel comfortable to share their feelings with her. Her understanding of care was soundly ingrained at both cognitive and affective levels.

Paula was the first teacher who helped set up the kindergarten program for a school district in a rural area in North Florida at age 21. Paula’s first position was in a school district where 90% of the children were Black. Paula was the first child to go to college in her family so she believed that home education was crucial. As soon as Paula had her first child, she quit teaching and raised her children at home. She went back to teaching when she was 40 years old and when her youngest child started school.

Paula participated in the book study group at her school regularly and was glad that on one occasion the group chose to read Ruby Payne’s book on poverty. Paula noted being upset about the comments and attitudes that her colleagues had toward children of color. Thinking of her past, Paula stated,
The experience you have, I had too. And they [teachers] automatically take it to themselves and assume that everything about poverty is all about them. It’s their race. And it’s not. Because some of the experiences I had as a white child in my family, I can check some of those things too. But it’s because of uneducated mother and father who worked very hard to come from farming background who are now millionaires. You know they are not educated. That’s my folks. So don’t tell me you cannot change, open your ideas, I know that, come from nothing.

Paula wanted to be a teacher because she believed that everyone could change and make a difference. She encouraged her children to try and to excel regardless of their skin color, abilities, gender, and race.

Like many teachers, Paula has had obstacles throughout her teaching career but she has remained faithful to her beliefs that “teaching was a calling”. Paula was the “Teacher of the Year” in her school district a few years ago. As a first-year art teacher, Paula’s daughter was also a “Teacher of the Year” at the elementary school she worked for last year. Paula stated that it may have been one of the best moments of her life to learn that her daughter has developed the same passion. Paula’s daughter would come to her class every day after school and had learned the “magic” from her when she was young. To Paula, there is no magic in teaching beyond passion. Paula’s passion for life and teaching have kept her in the same position for two decades. Paula gave an example of how she taught children who did not speak English. Paula had a female student from Iraq when the situation started to turn for the worse in that country. Paula recalled,

I thought to myself... all I knew how to do, I had no training, and ESOL wasn’t even ESOL then. There’s no such thing. All I did was just loved her, and I just taught her the way I taught. Somehow she learned. By the end of the school year, that’s so sweet (crying in tears)….to me. I always have children sing ”the world is a rainbow, of different kind of people, and love,” to end our little play. It’s just a sweet children’s song. And we gave her the line that said, “It does not matter where you live, or who you are, what matter is we love one another.” She stood there and said that in English. That’s a
sweet moment for me. I knew I have done something right and good. It’s a treasured moment for me, in teaching, and that’s why I am still here. But I will never forget that. And the parents who were in there that night, they knew that she had not been able to speak [English]. You know, they have been parents in the classroom, they knew. When that happened that night, there were many sweet tears in those parents. It’s wonderful. I felt like I have accomplished something.

Goldstein (1998) argues that caring is more than hugging and smiling. Paula’s understanding of care manifested affectively and cognitively. Paula believed a teacher’s first task was to love and care for his/her children regardless of their backgrounds. She modeled to children how to care for each other and physically and emotionally. Furthermore, Paula taught children how to be responsible for their behaviors and learning. She prepared student-centered activities and materials as well as gave children the opportunity to resolve their own issues.

Ella did her internship in a progressive education program in London. She had a profound memory of that experience. However, Ella thought that her beliefs had changed because of the years of working in rural areas of Georgia where schools were more “skill-based.”

My internship was not like that. So I really needed to kind of, I was far behind. I really had to learn a lot; I had to use the textbook and made it fun. I really had to learn a lot. And I think I did. The first couple of years as a teacher, it’s just, like taking what you learned and trying to figure out what actually did not work, what was goanna work. It’s hard. And you started to change, your beliefs changed. My first classroom I has was a majority white school in Georgia, but it’s still very poor and a lot of my students lived in the trailers that were over capacity, then they bused in the minority students from the inner city into our school. It’s already, it’s like a mixed…The whole group, the whole culture of the school was very limited in their outside experience. They have not really done a lot. Their lives were already way to…, and on top of that, we had migrant children and they were Spanish speaking. The culture is very like, is poor, very poor. Ella was the teacher among the three who greatly understood the essence of anti-bias curriculum at a cognitive level. Ella was very aware of issues related to diversity, poverty, and
race. She had worked in a few schools in rural areas where children had given up on themselves or had been rejected by the system at an early age because of their socio-economic class and ethnicity. Ella’s past teaching experience in rural areas could explain why she did not seem to be as caring as Sara or Paula. Additionally, she had a monotone voice and wore only one facial expression most of the time. However, Ella did not give up teaching because of her discouraging experiences in Georgia. Ella’s parents were social workers, and they had taught her to “give” to the community. Ella moved on and took a position with a charter school that shared similar views with the school where she had interned.

Ella was very strong in cognitive empathy/care but weak in affective empathy/care because of her interaction with children was not observed to be warm as compared to Sara’s and Paula’s. However, her classroom practice indicated the fact that she knew who her children were and what they wanted. She taught her children to be the master of their own learning. Having a concerned interest in children’s cognitive understanding is also a vital part of care (Cooper, 2002) although affective care is frequently addressed.

Even though Ella’s past experiences prevented her from looking beyond the affective part of teaching anti-bias curriculum, Ella’s internship experience and present work environment helped her to promote autonomy and democracy in her classroom. The impact a teacher’s lived experience has on his or her working with children of diverse backgrounds cannot be ignored (Nespor, 1987). Future studies need to observe teachers’ lived experiences when they examine the effectiveness of implementing an anti-bias curriculum with the regular curriculum.

In this section, teachers’ lived experiences were discussed. Teachers’ past learning and teaching experiences influenced the way they perceived and planned their lessons. Most importantly, their practices and beliefs were consistent in regard to implementing anti-bias curriculum. In the next section, power and control will be discussed.

**Power and Control**
In chapter two, a diagram, based on Freire’s (1972) argument that stressed how power could be shared among teachers, students, and materials was presented. The rationale behind this model was that students and teachers were actively involved in the teaching and learning, and, in order for teachers to empower children, children’s voices need to be heard. Namely, students’ abilities, interests, and backgrounds were to be taken into consideration when teachers plan curriculum. In this study, how teachers shifted their power and control to children can be placed in three categories: 1) positive discipline, 2) student-centered curriculum, and 3) cooperative learning/cooperative structure.

Sara’s Practices

There was a safe place in Sara’s class. There were books, pictures of children and their parents, pillows, and a few chairs in that area. Children could decide when they needed to be alone in the safe place. Sara did not use any reward or punishment system to discipline her children. She and the children set up the rules together and reviewed the rules together on a regular basis. Sara’s discipline practice was consistent with the handbook that was sent home to parents; she modeled, redirected, and focused on children’s positive behaviors. It was impressive to see how these children, whose first language was not English, were able to understand her and their peers and to use language to communicate with each other and resolve their issues. Except for one boy who occasionally whined, the rest of the children did not whine or cry when they did not get the things they wanted. Instead, these children used words to express their concerns and thoughts. It was evident that Sara was using language to help children use words to solve conflict or problems. Sara taught her children how powerful language could be by modeling, and she helped children understand how their decisions empowered them.

Of the three teachers, Sara appeared to be the weakest in using cooperative learning activities. She used more cooperative structure and group work, in a large part due to her children’s age. However, she was able to help children gain control over their learning through centers where children picked the learning activities they enjoyed. Additionally, through cooperative structures, her children learned to interact with each other and listened to other perspectives. In sum, the way Sara interacted with her children, the way she planned her
activities, and her non-controlling discipline practice created a supportive classroom climate in which children and teachers both shared power.

According to Freire (1998), a teacher is expected to be loving and prepared physically, emotionally, and affectively. Sara would be regarded as a great teacher by Freire because she wanted to excel intellectually and emotionally and she did so with her children as well. She would challenge them to see things from different perspectives. Additionally, Sara empowered children by teaching them to use language to achieve their goals. This small step would help her children building their confidence and skills to work cooperatively with others.

**Paula’s Practices**

Paula’s school had a school-wide punishment system that constructivist teachers might not agree with. For example, a child was sent to Paula’s class to spend a half-day there because he did not “behave well” in his home class. However, Paula was never observed to practice “timeout” or send any of her children to other teachers. None of the children were punished with colored tapes on their shirts or had their names written on the board. She intervened and redirected the children’s attention before they made choices that might lead to negative consequence. She never yelled at the children or raised her voice; Paula gave children hints through her facial expressions. Based on the information sent home to parents, it indicated that Paula used the school-wide discipline practice to gain control. Nonetheless, Paula was never seen to use such an approach while the researcher was there. It was apparent that once control was established, power started shifting and Paula stopped using the controlling discipline approach.

Paula’s children knew daily routines and rules very well and they noticed immediately if their routine changed. The children would say to her, “Ms. Paula, that’s not the way we do thing here.” Paula welcomed children’s comments, especially comments like that. She was happy that children were paying attention to details and were responsible for their learning. Like Sara, Paula also taught her children to use language when they faced injustices or conflicts, and they usually resolved their issues on their own without Paula’s help.

In Paula’s class, children engaged in a lot of project learning. Paula used many cooperative structure activities and some cooperative learning activities to help children learn to
work with each other toward the same goal. Children also had the opportunity to choose the center they wanted to go to on a daily basis. Through centers, cooperative structures and learning, and positive discipline children learned that they were in charge of their learning. The warm and respectful climate was the result of Paula’s willingness to shift the power from her to the children and their understanding of how each one was responsible for his or her own learning.

In Freire (1972)’s view, Paula would be considered a great change agent. Paula had learned that change was possible for the oppressed to transform their situations based on her own childhood experience. She constantly taught children to stand up in the face of injustice by using their language and pro-social skills. Although Derman-Sparks (1989) might not consider Paula as a great model in anti-bias teaching because of Paula being “colorblind”, Paula’s classroom practice suggest that she was a teacher who empowered youngsters to make sense of the world they live.

**Ella’s Practices**

Ella’s school used Bailey’s Conscious Discipline (Bailey, 2001). Children in Ella’s class were well disciplined; they listened attentively when others talked during their group time. The children were quiet and on task when they worked independently. While working in groups, they talked a lot and shared a lot of ideas with each other, especially the girls. Apparently children knew the rules very well; they knew when to work quietly and when to interact with their peers. Ella did not need to discipline children. Rather, she gave them a prompt or a look and children understood what to do. Children knew how to discipline themselves, and they helped to create a calm and respectful learning climate.

Ella called herself a constructivist, and her teaching practices reflected the spirit of constructivism. She had children choose the topics they wanted to investigate and children were free to choose various mediums to present their work. This suggests that the knowledge children brought to school and their personal and cultural experiences were central to their learning. In 2002, Villegas and Lucas proposed a vision of culturally responsive teaching in constructivist views of learning (Villegas & Lucas, 2002), and Ella’s practice supported their
notion. Ella’s children continuously engaged in questioning, interpreting, making predictions, and analyzing information in the context of issues that were meaningful to them.

To maintain the cleanliness of the class, every child in Ella’s class chose a specific task to be responsible for. Additionally, her children were seen to be excited to work with peers to find out more information about the topics that interested them. Their independent stations were more than just centers. Instead of letting the child choose the activity s/he would like to explore, s/he had to be engaged in all stations with his/her groups. The groups move from one station to the next. They worked on the same project and exchanged ideas using their interpersonal skills. Through stations, the five elements of cooperative learning – interdependence, interaction, accountability, interpersonal skills, and group processing – were addressed (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). The cooperative learning activities helped children understand the impact of cooperation as well as everyone’s position and impact on his/her group. Children gained a lot of control and power in Ella’s class in their own learning; they chose the topics and Ella prepared the activities and materials accordingly. All things considered, it was a well-balanced and sound anti-bias classroom.

Freire (1972) believed that education should be the practice of freedom as opposed to education as the practice of domination. Ella’s classroom practice was in line with Freire’s notion that knowledge is a process of inquiry. She believed children should take charge of their learning and the activities and materials she provided for helped her children to become critical thinkers. Through cooperative learning activities, Ella’s children acquired a lot of freedom and control over their learning. Helping the oppressed transform is critical; however, for Freire (1998), helping children learn to become a loving and caring person is also significant. A teachers’ emotional and affective preparation is indeed an imperative part of teaching.

How power was shifted in the three classes was discussed in this section. Shor (1992) argues that through cooperative interactions with others in a specific social context, children develop the sense of commitment, a desire to participate in politics, and respect for various point of view. The teachers empowered their children through positive discipline, student-centered curriculum, and cooperative learning/structures in this study. In the next section,
resources such as material resources, collaboration among colleagues, support from administration, training, and parental involvement will be addressed.

Resources

The three teachers who participated in this study were trying their best to introduce children to diverse materials and ideas. They all invited guest speakers and parents to come to their classes to share their talents and cultures. Books that depicted various cultures and non-traditional gender roles were found in all sites. However, despite their efforts to make an anti-bias learning environment for children, these teachers indicated that finding resources to teach anti-bias education was challenging. This notion is consistent with previous research that suggests lack of time and materials can be detrimental to teaching diversity education (Asimeng-Boahene & Klein, 2004). While material resources were very much needed, collegial support was found to be an important factor that hindered teaching children responsibility and promoting social justice.

Material Resources

These three teachers understood that having dolls of different colors did not represent sufficient material resources. Sara was constantly looking for good-quality picture books that spoke to the subject of different cultures in the public library because her school did not have a good collection of books. Paula stayed at work many hours every day after school to prepare the materials that she was not able to get and then had to compile and prepare them for her students herself. Ella asked other teachers who had more knowledge in certain areas to help her prepare materials and activities that were “hands-on” and “minds-on”. Fortunately, all three of them had administrators who were supportive and willing to help find extra money and materials. It was clear that finding resources was not easy if a teacher did it alone; it was much easier to get things done with help from parents, colleagues, and the community.

Collaboration among Colleagues

Results of this study suggest that when teachers worked closely with their colleagues, they were likely to share resources and exchange ideas as well as create a learning environment
that was caring and respectful. Thus, collaboration among colleagues was a major component in implementing an anti-bias curriculum. These teachers worked closely with their colleagues in many capacities in order to achieve their goal: to provide good-quality education and care to meet their children’s needs. However, there was some competition among colleagues in Paula’s school because she was the teacher of the year. Although jealousy was there, collaboration among colleagues was more prevalent. All of the kindergarten teachers would walk into each other’s room to borrow materials or talk to each other whenever there was a need. Take Ella’s situation for example. She may have been the youngest among the faculty (at the time of this study) and may have been inexperienced with the kind of teaching style the charter school employed, but her colleagues respected her and offered support when she needed it. This explained why Ella did not feel that she needed to prove herself. Instead, she felt that her colleagues constantly helped her both personally and professionally. Sara could be fired if her director and colleagues did not agree with the way she addressed diversity, such as teaching all religions. Sara understood that she walked a fine line but she was willing to do it so that her children would be able to learn more about other people’s beliefs and perspectives. This collegial support was required and critical in an anti-bias class as teachers were modeling to children how to handle situations appropriately. Additionally, it indicated the trusting relationship among colleagues. Jones and Derman-Sparks (1992) suggest that teachers need to make a commitment to be both caring and direct with their colleagues in order to help each other work together.

Collaboration among colleagues involves responsibility. These teachers would not be able to achieve their goals without negotiating each team player’s responsibility. The results of this study indicate that everyone who was involved in this process shared a certain amount of responsibility. To achieve this goal, it requires teachers to respect and learn from their priorities while advocating for their own (Jones & Derman-Sparks, 1992). From the school principal/director, classroom teacher, guidance counselor, the art teacher, and the music teacher, to the school bus driver, each team player had a certain amount of responsibility to ensure both children and adults were treated with care and respect.
Support from Administration

Despite the fact that multiculturalism is often viewed as a project rather than a process in some schools (Bracker et al., 2006), teachers need support from school administration if they are to integrate a curriculum that is meaningful and beneficial. Horenczyk and Tatar (2002) claim that when schools embrace and support the implementation of anti-bias and multicultural education, teachers are more likely to integrate an anti-bias and multicultural education in their curriculum.

Principals/director of this study stated that they supported their teachers implementing anti-bias curriculum and met with their teachers on a regular basis. However, there is no evidence of the principals/director visiting the classrooms to try and understand what was going on in each classroom or to learn the difficulties the teachers were facing in implementing an anti-bias curriculum with a regular curriculum. In Sara’s case, it would be an issue if Dell was not aware of what was going in Sara’s room since his office was right next to Sara’s. It was understandable if Cher did not know what was going on in Paula’s class because it was a large elementary school, Paula was a veteran teacher, and kindergarten was not a testing grade. It was unexpected to learn that Dena did not visit Ella’s class since Ella was relatively new to her school. This suggests that the school administration needed to do more than acknowledge their understanding and support for multicultural and diversity education. They needed to assist their teachers in obtaining resources and extending mental and emotional support as well. Further investigation on the dynamic between a school principal and his/her teachers may help us understand more about how responsibility is viewed and shared in a school setting.

Training

The results of this study reveal that knowledge and skills were needed to implement an anti-bias curriculum. These teachers had children with challenging behaviors, children who came from various countries, and children who had different religious beliefs and practices in their classes. In order to be aware of cultural diversity and children’s developmental stages, these teachers believed training were important to them apart from material resources. The results of this study were similar to those of Bullock (1996) who found teachers expressed their desires to attain more knowledge and skills to integrate an anti-bias curriculum.
**Teacher Education Programs.** Teachers who participated in this study all took a stand-alone multicultural education course when they were at school. However, they believed that a single course did not prepare them to become culturally responsive teachers. They actually learned more from their own experience than what was taught at school. They learned to interact with children who did not speak English, children who were physically, mentally, or emotionally challenged, and children of various cultural backgrounds through experience. These teachers’ practices would be referred to as “knowledge-of-practice” according to Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999). Cochran-Smith and Lytle believe that “teachers across the professional life span play a central and critical role in generating knowledge of practice by making their classrooms and schools sites for inquiry, connecting their work in schools to larger issues.” (p. 273).

These teachers came to understand what worked best for their children and developed their knowledge through inquiry. They reflected on their own experience to find out what worked and what did not work with their children constantly. For example, Sara stated that reflection helped her to critically examine her practices. This was supported by Freire’s (1972) argument that teachers are agents and their inquiry as a path to empowerment. These teachers perceived themselves as learners; the knowledge they developed varied and was based on their own experiences and beliefs. None of these teachers portrayed herself as an expert; they all believed there was room for improvement. This perhaps explains why these teachers’ understanding of anti-bias curriculum and how it should be implemented varied slightly.

Interestingly, Paula added that the pre-service teachers also needed to be taught the intricacy of human relationship and its role in working with parents and children. She commented,

You have to have that relationship, that connection of trust and believe that you want the best for them and their child. It’s very important. You cannot teach without that. And the same thing goes with the relationship with the children. If they know you love them and care about them individually and that you are interested in their lives, they will do anything for you… You can move, you can finish this job, but how do you want to be remembered. I tell my interns when they are decorating the room and developing
their units, I tell them this is not about me anymore... I just put it back on them like I do to the children. “What do you want for yourself?” “What are you your expectations?”

Being a veteran kindergarten teacher, Paula’s had many great ideas to share with her colleagues and the pre-service teachers who interned in her class. Relationships are at the heart of NAEYC accreditation standards (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). The caring ethic of maintaining and promoting positive relationships with children and their families is fundamental to the teaching-learning process. Paula’s insight confirms Nodding’s (1984) notion that caring is an essential quality of meaningful teaching. Caring is a process that requires continued experiences with caring as well as reflections on the meaning of these experiences (Nodding, 1992). A caring curriculum within a teacher education program is, therefore, a critical lens to be investigated further.

**In-service Training.** The results of this study indicate that teachers felt the need to update their knowledge and learn new techniques. They attended various workshops offered at their schools, district, and state level as much as they could. Sara’s director organized various types of workshops to train his faculty and staff. They covered topics such as working with students of diverse populations, classroom management, and the parent-child relationship. Moreover, Sara attended various workshops offered by the district and the state that covered a broad range of themes. Paula not only attended workshops but was also a facilitator for a summer workshop to train teachers. Additionally, Paula joined a book study group that addressed a wide range of topics from poverty to time management on a monthly basis at her school. Similar to Paula, Ella joined a study group organized by the county that she went to on a weekly basis. She had also attended various workshops and study groups in the past. The results of this study suggest that the study groups were a great strategy that could be employed in many schools and centers.

One important aspect regarding training to be mindful of is affordability of workshops. Paula and Ella mentioned that they had some money from the county for them to attend workshops at the local or/and state levels. “Many [study] groups are free or paid for, it is like 10 dollars an hour, and it is a nice thing,” explained Ella. Take Sara’s case for example, she worked
at a stated-funded university campus and as such she was able to use that opportunity to get her graduate degree paid for. She knew the resources were there and benefited from them.

In-service training has proven to be an effective and beneficial strategy to assist teachers to work effectively with culturally diverse children (Jacobson, 2000; McAllister & Irvine, 2002). In McAllister and Irvine’s study, they found about 60% of in-service teachers attributed the changes in their interactions with their children to the fact that they were using more empathic behaviors after attending a seminar. Their participants reported that an empathetic disposition led to more positive interactions with their culturally diverse students and supportive classroom climates. Jacobson also found that it is essential for teachers to establish some form of support for self-reflection about bias and emotional awareness, in order for a fundamental change in tolerance towards diversity to occur. These practices would be considered as “caring” (Gay, 2000). Gay further argues that caring teachers usually have children who do well academically, morally, culturally, and socially.

The results of this study highlight the fact that teachers might have different beliefs about teaching children of diverse backgrounds, but their practices reflected their beliefs profoundly. These three teachers had different training and lived experiences that helped to shape their attitudes and beliefs toward diversity and how diversity should be addressed in their classes. It was not surprising to observe differences among the teachers in terms of their conceptualization and approach to implementing anti-bias curriculum (Fong & Sheets, 2004). It was evident that to better address the gap between theory and practice in diversity, it was crucial to understand how teachers’ knowledge and pedagogy developed.

**Parental involvement**

Parents’ attitudes and practices toward diversity influence and shape children’s attitudes toward people who are different from themselves (Derman-Sparks, Gutierrez, & Phillips, 1989). Pattnaik (2003) contends that, “because multicultural education encompasses emotional, knowledge, and skill components, it is appropriate to infer that parents’ involvement in schools’ multicultural education policies and practices will facilitate their children’s acceptance and understanding of diversity” (p. 19). Findings in this study are consistent with what previous research suggests: that the more parents are involved in school, the better their children behave
and achieve academically (Fan & Chen, 1999; Wright, Stegelin, & Hartle, 2007). For example, Ella’s third grade children performed better than many of their counterparts in reading (85% vs. 75%) and math (88% vs. 81%) on the standardized tests in the same school district (Leon County Schools, n.d.). Teachers expressed their gratitude for what parents did for their children or schools. The findings also reveal that the bond developed between the family and school could be enormously useful to teachers. Teachers felt motivated when they were partners with parents.

Parents of preschoolers. In Sara’s class, parents would send in treats and artifacts to be shared with the teachers and children. They would also come in to take part in the children’s learning. Sara learned children’s languages, actively intervened when certain groups of children did not play with the other groups, communicated with families, and invited parents to participate in the school’s activities. Even though many of these parents had different values, it was evident that they appreciated the way Sara was with their child and tried to accommodate and support school activities. One thing to note was that because of religious practices, some parents might not have engaged socially with each other each other outside of school settings. However, Sarah’s director, Dell, believed that they had made significant progress when they were able to get parents to come to school functions or meetings so they would be able to listen to other parents’ views. Sara and Dell did what Pattnaik (2003) recommends, parents’ experiences, ideas, and views on such issues need to be considered.

There were many Asian parents in Sara’s class, and these parents had the highest scores on care, but the lowest scores on action. Their culture might be one reason to explain why these parents did not take action when unjust and unfair situations occurred. In many of these parents’ home countries, women may not be regarded highly or equally and may not be allowed to behave in certain ways within their societies. Take the Chinese parents, for example, they would not intervene when a situation occurred because they were taught (the norm at school and in society at large) not to do so. This may be one important explanation as to why they had the lowest score in action.

Parents of kindergartners. Paula continuously maintained good relationships with the children’s parents despite the fact that some of the parents tried to voice their opinions
regarding what should be taught at school. Paula was convinced that collaboration with parents would be beneficial for the children. There were incidents when parents took their children away from Paula’s class because they did not think Paula knew how to teach their children for being White. Interestingly, some of these children actually returned to her class after a few months. There were two families that took their children to another school last year, and one of them returned to her class within two months. These parents realized that Paula really cared for young children and tried to accommodate their needs. Paula’s parents might not have shown up in class very often, but they helped with their child’s take-home assignments and escorted the class on their field trips. Paula was very pleased with the parental support because parents sent in whatever she asked for.

Paula’s parents had the lowest scores on knowledge and care on the multicultural survey, as compared to the other two groups but they had the highest scores on action. This implies that they were likely to take action or speak up when they witnessed discrimination situations occurring. While this group of parents may not agree with other people’s lifestyles, they noted that they would like to see people get along with each other and would not want to see other people being discriminated against because of their gender, skin color, abilities, race, or lifestyle.

Parents of 2-3 graders. In Ella’s case, the school chose the children to be enrolled, and the parents tended to share the same values as the school. For example, parents in Ella’s school agreed with the school’s policy on holidays and volunteer work. As a result, Ella’s parents scored higher in understanding and care on the multicultural survey than Paula’s parents. Ella’s parents were required to do service hours at the school and that made her parents the most active group among the three groups in terms of parental involvement.

Parents stated that they valued the positive relationships they had with teachers when they volunteered at school. It was evident that the partnership with teachers and parents was as important as collaboration among colleagues; parents extended their support from being there physically and providing materials to emotional encouragement. Springate and Stegelin (1999) argue that the continuity of learning between home and school is critical to children’s learning. This is true for all areas of learning, including learning about human diversity (Pattnaik, 2003).
Children therefore need the consistent and positive messages about diversity at school and home. These three teachers valued the positive relationships they had with parents but they also understood that parental involvement came in various forms. The positive effect of parental involvement was a fact that was hard to deny because of the partnership between school and home. However, parental involvement cannot be narrowly defined. The schools and parents have to be on the same page if parents are viewed as partners. It is therefore both parents’ and school’s responsibility to acknowledge the various kinds of involvement that parents take part in their children’s learning. In other words, schools can facilitate parents’ active participation in the school’s multicultural policies and practices by drawing on parents’ expertise, experiences, insights, and perspectives (Pattnaik).

The results of this study reaffirm the importance of encouraging teachers to identify and reflect on their beliefs in order to strengthen their anti-bias practices. Teachers’ lived experiences cannot be overlooked when examining teachers’ practices. Sharing power with children and collaboration among colleagues and parents, as well as training and sufficient material resources, can contribute to the success of anti-bias education in early childhood settings.

Limitations of the Study

Having problems with access to the sites was the biggest limitation associated with this study. Difficulties in getting teachers to participate in this study led to the researcher having to investigate how diversity education was addressed in both regular and multi-age classrooms instead of only multi-age classrooms. After several months of unsuccessful attempts, the researcher finally located three teachers that worked in a multi-age preschool, public school-kindergarten, and multi-age charter school. This limitation might be associated with the timing of the research proposal and when it was sent to the schools. Spring was explained as being the busiest time because children were required to take the state standardized tests and teachers were occupied with preparing children for the assessments.
One may argue that this study was limited to teachers who already work to embrace diversity and incorporate diversity education in their classrooms. It is true that these three teachers have worked hard to raise children’s cultural awareness and teach children to become more accepting of people of all races, skin color, abilities, languages, lifestyles, and so forth. However, since diversity was part of the public schools’ missions in this school district, all teachers were invited to participate and the school board was fully supportive of this study.

Another limitation of this study may be that participants knew that the researcher in this study valued diversity education and had a strong understanding of practices relating to teaching anti-bias education. This may have influenced some of their comments or actions when the researcher visited their classes. According to Merriam (1998), participants who know they are being observed tend to “behave in socially acceptable ways and present themselves in a favorable manner” (p. 104). As far as this issue is concerned, throughout the data collection process the researcher was looking for signs of the above. To diminish this concern, teachers were informed about the purpose of the study and were reminded that the researcher’s role was not to evaluate their teaching. As a participant-observer, the researcher had a great deal of interaction with the children and the teacher at each site; children regarded her as being “just another volunteer”. Additionally, volunteers visited these three sites frequently and the researcher did not notice any major difference whether volunteers were there or not.

The issue of not being in multiple sites at the same time (in the same classroom) was another concern. To counteract this problem, videotaping was employed. Being a participant-observer, however, it was not easy for the researcher to adjust the video camera occasionally. It was sometimes difficult to record every single interaction, conversation, or act.

Another limitation associated with the study involved the times when the researcher visited the sites. The researcher spent about a month at each site which meant she did not visit the other two schools in the same month. This might be an issue as these three sites employed thematic approaches. Because of the thematic approach, the materials and books differed in each classroom monthly and this affected the ECERS-E score. The other issue that related to timing was the principal’s presence in classes. The researcher has not seen any of the
principals/directors visit the class while she was there except Dena, Ella’s school principal, who showed up a few times when giving a tour.

The results of this study can be interpreted in innumerable ways and hopefully come to function as a thinking tool because they may initiate further reflections on the topic of anti-bias practice. This is what Stake and Trumbull (1982) consider to be “naturalistic generalization”. Additionally, by considering the shortcomings associated with this methodology, perhaps this study could serve as a basis for further research in the future.

This chapter discussed the results of the study. Teachers’ lived experiences and how power was shifted from teachers to children as well as resources from materials to colleagues and parents were presented. The following chapter presents conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future research.
In this chapter conclusions of the study on teachers’ beliefs and practices of anti-bias curriculum will be provided. Additionally, implications of the findings for knowledge-building will be discussed. Furthermore, recommendations for further research and personal reflections will be addressed.

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers’ beliefs and practices of anti-bias curriculum in order to better prepare early childhood teachers to meet the challenges presented by an increasingly diverse student body. This study was significant because it related to teachers’ beliefs and how they affected children’s academic achievement, social and emotional development, and children’s concept of self and others, as well as the changing demographics in American society. Furthermore, it gathered information not only on reported practice but also on observed actual practice and examined how teachers conceptualized their work.

This study used theories of beliefs system as its framework in understanding how early childhood teachers translated their thought processes into practice in their classrooms. Teachers’ beliefs and attitudes are believed to be major factors that determine teachers’ practice and pedagogy (Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992). Nespor suggests that belief systems are profoundly more influential than knowledge in discerning how teachers frame and organize tasks. Belief systems were found to be stronger predictors of behaviors in his study.

**Beliefs and Practices of Anti-bias Curriculum**

Given the importance of teachers’ beliefs in implementing an anti-bias curriculum, the following research questions guided this study: how do teachers’ beliefs about anti-bias curriculum relate to their practices in early childhood settings, what are the barriers and contributions of incorporating anti-bias curriculum in early childhood settings, and how do parents’ beliefs relate to teachers’ practices of anti-bias curriculum? These questions determined the qualitative methodology of the study in order to uncover beliefs and practices of anti-bias curriculum in early childhood settings.
Beliefs and Practices

To answer the first research question, how do teachers’ beliefs about anti-bias curriculum relate to their practices in early childhood settings, the results of the study indicate that the teachers’ beliefs and practices of anti-bias curriculum were congruent. To create an anti-bias learning environment, teachers must infuse their curriculum and teaching with anti-bias concepts and ways of thinking (Marulis, 2000). Derman-Sparks (1989) asserts that anti-bias teaching requires critical thinking and problem solving by both teachers and children and specific tasks vary from one setting to another. Her notion suggests that teachers’ classroom practices should be different. Interestingly, these teachers’ classroom practices were congruent: positive discipline, integrated curriculum, and cooperative structures/learning were observed in all three settings. These teachers practiced what they believed to be appropriate for children to learn to accept differences and embrace differences. Through sharing responsibility with teachers, children learned to understand they were in charge of their learning. Ella’s class best presented cooperative learning practice. Even though children in each class had a different level of freedom as each school had a set of curriculum to follow, the “practice of freedom” (Freire, 1972, p. 15), which is fundamental to anti-bias education, was evident in each classroom. These teachers’ practices reaffirmed Rokeach’s (1968) belief system theory that teachers’ beliefs strongly influenced their classroom practice.

Barriers and Benefits

Barriers to implementing an anti-bias curriculum found in this study were lack of resources, parental disapproval, and limited knowledge. The benefits of implementing an anti-bias curriculum included inclusion and team work. Teachers indicated that they wanted more time, budget, books, and training in order to be better serve their children. Teachers also expressed the desire to have more support from colleagues and administration.

In addition to parental support, teachers also wanted the administration to extend their assistance. The results of this study suggest that school principals/director were aware of the importance of multicultural education and were supportive of the implementation of an anti-bias curriculum. Their beliefs and teachers’ beliefs were generally consistent with program practices. The results were consistent with Bullock’s (1996) study indicating there was a high
degree of congruence between teachers’ and directors’ beliefs of anti-bias curriculum. Bracker et al., (2006) contend that in order to overcome the barriers and strengthen the benefit contributions of incorporating anti-bias curriculum in early childhood education, administration’s support is needed. Tatar (1998) argues that those who have leadership positions have strong influence as role models and as policy makers in school settings. The results of this study reaffirm the crucial role that school administrators play in anti-bias education. Congruent with Bullock’s findings, teachers wanted to have administrators who were knowledgeable about and comfortable with cultural diversity and could assist them in creating programs based on the goals of anti-bias education. Unfortunately, most teachers reported that they wanted more support and assistance from their principals.

**Friend or Foe**

In the creation of a sound anti-bias curriculum, parents were considered to be great resources (Barta & Winn, 1996). Parental involvement and parental approval were, therefore, very much needed in implementing anti-bias curriculum. Parents were the best resources, and they had great expectations for their children to academically excel no matter where they came from (Aguado et al., 2003). How to share the power and responsibility with parents of different values may have been the most complicated challenge that the teachers faced. Findings of this study suggest that teachers encouraged and respected parents’ ideas and involvement in their children’s learning, and that they accommodated their parents’ needs whenever they could. However, the teachers managed to teach concepts and standards that parents did not approve of via a different route. By grouping children into small groups, teachers were able to lessen this concern. These teachers were able to introduce certain sensitive topics to the majority of the children during small group time. For example, Paula was able to prepare different materials at each center or/and table and she would assign children into groups based on their parents’ request. The results of the study indicate that teachers understood how valuable parents were to their children’s learning process and were willing to compromise in order to work with parents, but would somehow find a way to teach what they believed was important. While parental attitudes did influence the teachers’ classroom practices, the teachers’ personal beliefs and attitudes had a much greater impact on the classroom practices.
Toward the Goals of Anti-bias Education

The foundation of anti-bias curriculum is based on Freire’s (1972), “practice of freedom”. Freire believed that freedom could only occur when the oppressed rejected the images and fears they had adopted from their oppressors and replaced them with autonomy and responsibility. Therefore, helping children develop cultural consciousness and an understanding that they had the power to transform reality must begin at the earliest stages of education (Lin, Lake, & Rice, in press). How to empower children then was a question to ponder?

Empowerment helps children make sense of the world in which they live. McLaren (1986) claims that empowerment is a process where children “learn to critically appropriate knowledge existing outside their immediate experience in order to broaden their understanding of themselves, the world, and the possibilities for transforming the taken-for-granted assumptions about the way we live” (p. 186). Empowering children through cooperative learning or/and cooperative structures was one example that these three teachers practiced. Through this collaborative learning experience, children learned that they had the power to express what they understood about the subject matter or to discuss what they did not understand. Many of them learned to use language to express and negotiate. This type of concrete learning experience helped young children better understand and appreciate various aspects of life. It also helped children understand that they were responsible for their own decisions and everyone had a say in decision-making (Johnson & Johnson, 1989).

A developmentally appropriate anti-bias curriculum is one that takes children’s perspectives into account. Ideally, children are encouraged to ask questions, raise issues to be discussed, engage themselves in problem solving, and make choices (Derman-Sparks, 1989; Pulido-Tobiassen & Gonzalez-Mena, 1999; Vandenbroeck, 2000). Cooperative learning theorists such as Kagan (1994) and Johnson and Johnson (1989) maintain that students do not learn to interact with each other, share information with each other, or help each other succeed in traditional competitive classrooms. They believe the practice of cooperative learning not only fosters children’s pro-social skills but also helps children learn nonviolent communication skills.
and appreciate diversity. This practice matched the principles of anti-bias curriculum and the results of such practice led to an anti-bias learning environment.

The results of the study indicate that the integration of anti-bias curriculum based on all of the standards and goals was an area where these teachers fell short (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 1993). Most of the teachers focused on helping children learn about themselves and others. These teachers indicated that anti-bias training was not a part of their pre-service university requirement and it would be unrealistic to expect these teachers to fully meet the NAEYC standards and criteria in the area of anti-bias curriculum. Encouragingly, they did not use the tourist approach when they addressed cultural diversity (Jones & Derman-Sparks, 1992). Rather, they knew the importance of bringing in children’s knowledge of self and others and integrating cultural diversity based on other ethnic groups in their immediate surrounding.

The results of this study suggest that these teachers had strong beliefs in terms of what their role was and what needed to be taught to their children. They were willing to do more than they were required because they cared about their children. They were willing to compromise when parents had different requests that were not in line with their beliefs. They sought out ideas and resources in various places: parents, colleagues, and community. With or without the budget, they were prepared to attend workshops in order to learn new knowledge and skills to work with students of diverse populations. These teachers felt their preparation in areas such as typical and atypical development of children, world cultures and religions, teaching English as a second language were insufficient in their pre-service training. Their practices supported Freire’s (1998) stance of a teacher:

It demands seriousness and scientific, physical, emotional, and affective preparation. It is a task that requires that those who commit themselves to teaching develop a certain love not only of others but also of the very process implied in teaching. It is impossible to teach without the courage to love, without the courage to try a thousand times before giving up (p. 3).

Freire (1998) might not agree with the way Ella interacted with her children because it does not fit the general definition of care (Goldstein, 1998). However, the nature of care is more complex than having a concerned interest in children’s cognitive understanding, though that
indeed is a vital part of care (Cooper, 2002). Ella had a well-balanced anti-bias class and that suggests she cared for her children’s growth affectively and intellectually. Although she did not mention the importance of care in teaching, her practices suggest she was a caring teacher. She listened to her children, helped them take charge of their learning, taught them to be responsible for their own decisions, and to become critical thinkers. All of the above illustrate traits of a caring teacher. Likewise, Ella scored the highest among the three on the ECERS-E (Sylva et al., 2006). The researcher would like to remind the readers that care is not just a noun but a verb. Without putting care into practice, care is nothing but a noun. From Noddings (1984) we learn that care is an engrossing developmental process, which encompasses affect as well as cognition.

**Implications**

This study has implications for teacher education programs in terms of curriculum planning for pre-service teachers. It also has implications for professional development for in-service teachers.

**Implications for Teacher Education Programs**

How to implement an anti-bias curriculum in the classroom has gained much attention because it has been found that pre-service teachers’ “attitudes and behaviors can be modified and changed with appropriate instructional methods” (Brown, 2004, p. 337). Both theory and practice are essential and should be integrated in order to prepare beginning teachers for diverse classroom settings as well as making the anti-bias theory-to-practice connection more apparent. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) propose a paradigm of teacher education programs based on what they call, “inquiry as stance” (p. 288). They claim that both teacher educators and pre-service teachers who take an inquiry stance “work within inquiry communities to generate local knowledge, envision, and theorize their practices, and interpret and interrogate the theory and research of others” (p. 289). Local knowledge is referred to as a way of knowing about teaching and what teachers and communities come to know when they build knowledge collaboratively.
As Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) suggest, the ideal teacher education programs offer pre-service teachers the opportunity to learn from teaching through inquiry across the professional life span and to form and reform frameworks for understanding practice. The practice that they refer to is not the practical practice normally perceived, rather, is an idea that teaching involves a dialectical relationship between critical theorizing and action (Freire, 1972). Specifically, it is an approach/curriculum that engages students in the practices of problem posing, problem solving, and decision making.

Field requirements with diverse learners will assist pre-service teachers to better understand cultures other than their own (Brown, 2005; Rios et al., 2003; Ryan & Callahan, 2002; Seidl & Friend, 2002; Terrill & Mark, 2000; Van Hook, 2002). These researchers argue that a critical component of teacher education is a focus on the process of teaching and learning and the field requirements provide the opportunity for pre-service teachers to inquire and examine the multiple contexts within which they work. Similarly, pre-service teachers need the opportunity to work with children with disabilities. These experiences are usually less emphasized but can be beneficial (Bouck, 2006).

Apart from direct field-based experiences, reflection should be required for pre-service teachers in any teacher education program (Lin et al., in press). Shultz, Neyhart, Reck, and Easter (1996) claim that “better teachers evolve from a careful process that allows for the analysis of attitudes and perceptions of teacher education candidates” (p. 33). Milner (2003) suggests that reflective thinking and reflective teaching involve processes that require pre-service teachers to seriously consider the nature of their work and to use logical and rational analyses of their own teaching. For example, pre-service teachers are normally asked to reflect on their lesson plans and observations regarding their teaching and learning. An equally important tactic would be to have pre-service teachers reflect upon and recognize aspects from their own race/culture (Howard, 2003; Milner). Lin (2006) contends that pre-service teachers should also be required to reflect upon what they perceive, fear, hear, gain, or confront after first-hand experiences with children and families of different backgrounds.
Implications for Professional Development and Training

In the creation of a sound anti-bias curriculum, teachers need to know that they are powerful change agents. Bartolome (2004) suggests that the school personnel’s ability to create and sustain a caring and just environment contributes substantially to the academic and social success of their students. She believes that teachers who see themselves as cultural brokers for their students are more likely to help students achieve an ever-deepening consciousness of sociopolitical and economic realities that shape their lives. Derman-Sparks (1989) proposes that teachers can learn more about the goals of anti-bias curriculum through reading materials, discussing ideas with colleagues, principals, and experts, attending conferences and workshops, and support groups. Thus, workshops on cultural diversity, typical and atypical development of children, as well as preparation for inclusive education should be provided for in-service teachers as the make up of the student body becomes increasingly more diverse.

In Bullock’s (1996) study, she found that in-service teachers were eager to continue their learning in spite of having limited amount of time. She proposed that the schools should allow time for teachers to visit other programs or have experts come in to observe their classes because of their limited training or knowledge in anti-bias education. Her notion is supported by the results of this study. These three teachers believed that they could do more to improve their practices and it was beneficial for them to have someone who was more knowledgeable in anti-bias education visit them. Nevertheless, reflection is also required. Reflection is a critical component for a teacher to have an inclusive educational practice (Moen, 2008). McCarthy (2003) claims that through this process teachers can put experience in context and it helps teachers make connections between what they do and know so that they can become active participants in their own learning.

In addition to reflection, attending workshops, reading more information about anti-bias education, home visits should be considered (Lin, 2007, Peralta-Nash, 2003). In her study of the impact of home visits on teachers’ teaching, Lin found a group of Head Start teachers’ perceptions about teaching youth who were culturally diverse changed after visiting their children’s home. The participants in her study expressed the desire to bring as much of their students’ cultures into the classroom as possible by working with the children’s parents and
inviting them to their classes. Home visits provide first-hand experiences for teachers to work with parents. Through such encounters, teachers will be better able to understand the importance of helping children feel being accepted by both cultures. However, Lin also claims that when teachers are prepared prior to their home visits, they will be better able to assist parents in finding appropriate resources and work as a team member with the family. To support this stand point, a recent study also suggests, “the quality and content of visits are more strongly related to outcomes than quantity per se” (Raikes et al., 2006, p. 20). Future research focusing on the connection of home visits and anti-bias education are needed.

Integrating and implementing an anti-bias curriculum is an ongoing process and requires teachers to adapt curriculum to the changing needs of children, consult with parents about issues of importance to them, and deepen their own awareness of anti-bias issues. It is not enough to teach multicultural and anti-bias curriculum in a theoretical format. The above implications help both pre-service and in-service teachers to constantly question themselves about whether they are modeling fairness and understanding through their verbal and nonverbal actions.

Further Research

This study explored the phenomenon of early childhood teachers' beliefs on their practices of anti-bias curriculum. The complexity of this phenomenon should be examined through multiple lenses. How these ecological factors interplay could be investigated. Below are recommendations for future study.

1. A comparable study is suggested with elementary, middle, and high school teachers. Similarly, this study could be carried out among other types of settings such as metropolitan and rural areas for comparing attitudes toward teaching anti-bias education.

2. One area that could be explored would be to compare beliefs and practices of anti-bias curriculum between White teachers and minority teachers.
3. An explanation of why parents responded in the manner in which they did could contribute to the strength of the study. Interviews with those parents who participated in the study would help us to better understand how diversity is perceived at the next level.

4. A longitudinal study that examines the impact of anti-bias education on children’s understanding of diversity is suggested.

5. A quantitative study that focuses on the effect of anti-bias education is advised. It would be interesting to compare children who were placed in an inclusive early childhood program and those who were in a regular early childhood program.

6. Finally, one area that could be investigated would be to compare the kind of activities among teacher education programs that offer multicultural education courses to understand how these courses affect pre-service teachers’ attitudes toward diversity.

Personal Reflections

“To make a difference in children’s lives” is the most common goal shared by my student teachers over the years. I have always pondered on how to achieve this goal as an educator as well. What Goldstein’s (1999) relational zone emphasizes keeps coming to my mind again and again since I started visiting my participants in their classes. What is the role of a teacher in young children’s lives? There has to be more than nurturing children’s cognitive development.

It is my personal desire that the results of this study be used to promote equity and social justice in every school. As Ladson-Billings (2005) claims, many teachers are not prepared for this important task. However, with some revisions in the teacher education programs, it is possible to reach this goal. I am hopeful that all children will be placed in true inclusive classes where children of different abilities, learning styles, cultures, languages, dispositions, religious practices, and skin color are valued as just the way they are and are able to express their ideas, share their dreams, and help each other to achieve their goals.
As I reflect upon the entire dissertation process, I realize how much I have learned from the children, parents, principals, and teachers who participated in this study. Each one of them had a great story to tell and was willing to open the door for me to think more about the kind of education and care that was needed for all children. As a non-white minority coming from the other side of the globe, I have to admit that it has been a great learning experience for me even though I have worked with children of diverse backgrounds in various countries. How could someone who was not from the mainstream culture understand the thought processes of these White teachers, especially the way they respond to children’s differences in so many aspects? It is true that there are certain practices that are universal. There are also differences between my way of handling situations and the teachers’ way because of our different lived experiences; politically, culturally, socially, and historically.

I am truly grateful to all who helped make this research possible. The Office of Graduate Studies at the university financially supported this study. Dr. Dean and Dr. Southard at Leon County Schools recognized the importance of and supported this research. And my advisor, Dr. Lake, who has been telling me “awesome” from the very beginning of the process although it has not always been awesome all the way in reality! What was “awesome” was the truly open and honest way respondents shared their thoughts and experience with me, for which I am very appreciative. Their candor allowed me a glimpse into the mature thought processes of achieving an unbiased mindset that translates into an effective and inclusive education for young children.
APPENDIX A

HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL AND SCHOOL DISTRICT APPROVAL

Florida State
University

Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8633 · FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 11/20/2006

To:
Yenlin Miranda Lin
MC 4459

Dept.: CHILDHOOD EDUCATION, READING AND DISABILITIES SERVICES

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research Beliefs and Practices of Anti-bias Curriculum in Early Childhood Settings

The forms that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Human Subjects Committee at its meeting on 8/8/2006. Your project was approved by the Committee.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals which may be required.

If the project has not been completed by 8/8/2007 you must request renewed approval for continuation of the project.

You are advised that any change in protocol in this project must be approved by resubmission of the project to the Committee for approval. The principal investigator must promptly report, in writing, any unexpected problems causing risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols of such investigations as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Protection from Research Risks. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

cc: Vickie Lake
HSC No. 2006.0680
October 25, 2006

Ms. Yenlin Miranda Lin
205 Stone Building
College of Education
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4459

RE: Beliefs and Practices of Anti-bias Curriculum

Dear Ms. Lin,

The Leon County Schools Research Review Board has determined that the findings of your proposed study could be pertinent to our efforts and so we are approving your request to conduct research. The additional information that you sent in your email of October 5, 2006, is an integral part of our approval.

Your research request is approved for the period of November 2006 through October 2007. Should you desire to extend your research efforts after this period of time, you must submit (a) a progress report, (b) preliminary results of your research, and (c) a request for renewed approval for continuation. Any significant changes or amendments to the procedures or design of this study must be approved by resubmitting the request for research to the Research Review Board.

Approval by the Research Review Board does not in itself constitute permission to carry out the research. You may now contact principals of the schools in your study. The principal has the final decision relative to research at each school. It is your responsibility to return the enclosed “Principal's Consent for Research Participation,” signed by the principal(s) of the school(s) to be involved, prior to the start of any research.

Receipt of this form by this office will complete the approval process.

Since your research study involves direct contact with students, the background check policy requires the research applicant(s) and any with direct student contact to be fingerprinted for clearance. It is the responsibility of the applicant(s) to complete all required documentation prior to the beginning of the study.

Leon County Schools is approving your research partly for the potential benefit of information to the district; therefore, it is important that you send this office one copy of your results and discussion when your study is complete. We will place information from your study in our research library and annotated listing of conducted research. We look forward to receiving your results.

Please feel free to phone me (850.488.7007) if I may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Margarda Souihard, Ph.D.
Program Monitoring and Evaluation
Chairperson, Research Review Board

C: Claire Frick, Buck Lake; Debo Powers, Arts and Sciences; D.J. Wright
APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORMS

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

Dear Parents,

I am Miranda Lin, a doctoral student in Early Childhood Education at the Florida State University. I am conducting a study of how teachers’ beliefs regarding anti-bias curriculum affect their practices in school. I would appreciate your child’s participation in this study, as it will assist me in making recommendations for improving the early childhood practitioners’ interactions with their students and ability to integrate an anti-bias curriculum with regular curriculum.

An anti-bias curriculum is one way to address diversity in education. It urges the valuing of diversity in many forms (i.e. gender, culture, race, language, lifestyle, disability) and the promotion of equity. The purpose of anti-bias curriculum is to nurture children’s development by addressing issues of diversity and equity in the classroom. It is also a powerful tool to promote children’s prosocial skills (Kolb & Weede, 2001).

In this study, the specific procedures are as follows:

1. Your child’s interactions with his/her peers and teachers will be observed by me for approximately 60 minutes a day and 3 times a week for 3 weeks in order to record the kind of language and non-verbal messages the teaching is using. Both the teacher and your child will be videotaped.

2. Your child will be asked to retell an event if that involves him/her in a situation where gender/racial/ability issues occurred to determine his/her understanding of diversity issues. This will take 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

3. The above procedures will not involve risks, discomfort or stress to your child. They will be blended in as part of his/her school activity. A potential benefit of participating in this project is that your child will have the chance to talk about his/her understanding of diversity. This will help the teacher to better address diversity issues and prepare appropriate materials for the class.

4. It is expected that a total of 60 children in 3 different classrooms will participate in this study.
Your child’s participation in this study will be strictly confidential. Information concerning the results will not be released in any identifiable form without your prior consent. All videotapes will be for my own use only. The videotapes will be destroyed in August 2016.

Your child’s participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You or your child may withdraw consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can be identified as your child’s, returned to you, removed from the records, or destroyed.

Once the study is completed, I will be happy to give the results to you. However, I will not be able to provide access to data concerning your child or any other individual who participates in this study. In the meantime, if you have any concerns, please contact:

Miranda Lin  Tel: (850) 644-8479
Department of Childhood Education, Reading, and Disability Services
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306

If you have any complaints about your treatment as a participant in this study, please call or write:

Vice President for Research, 109 Westcott Building, Florida State University,
Tallahassee, FL 32306-1330, Telephone: (850) 644-9694

Although Dr. Kemper will ask your name, all complaints are kept in confidence.

Please sign both copies of this form. Keep one and return the other to the school.

I have received an explanation of the study and agree that my child can participate. I understand that my child’s participation in this study is strictly voluntary.

_________________________________________  ______________________________
Signature of parent/guardian  Date

_________________________________________  ______________________________
Child’s name  Date
INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Beliefs and Practices about Anti-bias Curriculum

I freely and voluntarily and without element of force or coercion, consent to be a participant in the research project entitled, "Beliefs and Practices of Anti-bias Curriculum in Early Childhood Settings".

This research is being conducted by Miss Miranda Lin, who is a doctoral student in Early Childhood Education at Florida State University. I understand the purpose of her research project is to better understand teachers' beliefs about anti-bias curriculum and their practices in the classrooms. I understand that if I participate in the project, I will be asked questions about my beliefs and attitudes toward anti-bias curriculum and I will be observed my interactions with my students in the classroom.

I understand the total time commitment would be 90 minutes on my interview section which will be audio taped. I understand I will be observed and videotaped for about an hour a day and 3 times a week for a period of 3 weeks. I understand some of my lesson plans will be shared with the researcher. I understand that only the researcher will have access to the documents and audio/ videotapes and they will be destroyed by August 31, 2016.

I understand that my participation is totally voluntary. All my answers to her questions will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and identified by a subject code number. My name will not appear on any of the results. A pseudo name will be used in any article written from the study.

I understand there is no possibility of risk involved if I agree to participate in this study. However, if I experience anxiety while I am being video-taped while being observed, I may stop my participation at any time I wish.

I understand there are benefits for participating in this research project. First, my own awareness about my interactions with my students may be increased. Also, I will be providing information that may lead to identify factors that influence integrating an anti-bias curriculum in early childhood classroom. This knowledge can assist teachers to be better prepared to integrate an anti-bias curriculum with the regular curriculum and improve educational practice.

I understand that this consent may be withdrawn at any time without prejudice, penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I have been given the right to ask and have answered any inquiry concerning this study. Questions, if any, have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I may contact Miss Miranda Lin at Florida State University, (850) 644-8479, or her advisor, Dr. Vickie Lake, at the Department of Childhood Education, Reading, and Disability Services, (850) 644-1450, for answers to questions about this research or my rights. Results of this dissertation will be sent to me upon my request.

I have read and understand this consent form.

(Subject) ____________________________  (Date) ____________________________
APPENDIX C

FLORIDA EDUCATOR ACCOMPLISHED PRACTICES

ACCOMPLISHED PRACTICE #5 Diversity

Uses teaching and learning strategies that reflect each student's culture and linguistic background, learning styles, special needs, and socio-economic background

1. Accepts and values students from diverse cultures and linguistic backgrounds, and treats all students equitably.
2. Creates a learning environment in which all students are treated equitably.
3. Utilizes the cultural and linguistic diversity and experiences of individual students to enrich instruction for the whole group.
4. Provides a range of activities to meet the various students' learning styles and cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
5. Uses appropriate teaching techniques to effectively instruct all students.
6. Uses appropriate materials, technology, and resources to assist all students to learn.
7. Uses appropriate school, family, and community resources to help meet all students' learning needs.
8. Helps students develop shared values and expectations that create a climate of openness, mutual respect, support, and inquiry.
9. Selects and uses appropriate materials and resources that reflect contributors that are multicultural.
10. Recognizes the importance of family and family structure to the individual learner and uses knowledge of the student's family situation to support individual learning.
11. Fosters student responsibility, appropriate social behavior, integrity, valuing of diversity, and honesty by role modeling and through learning activities.
12. Provides learning situations which will enable the student to practice skills and knowledge needed for success as an adult.
13. Develops short and long term personal and professional goals relating to diversity.
APPENDIX D

MUNROE MULTICULTURAL ATTITUDE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE (MASQUE)
Refined Version

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Please respond to the following items honestly; there is no right or wrong answer to each statement and your responses will be kept strictly confidential. Please respond to each statement by using a six-point scale where:

1 = strongly disagree  
2 = disagree  
3 = slightly disagree  
4 = slightly agree  
5 = agree  
6 = strongly agree

Circle the response that best represents your level of agreement for that item.

1. I realize that racism exists.  
2. I know that social barriers exist.  
3. I understand religious beliefs differ.  
4. I understand sexual preferences may differ.  
5. I understand that gender based inequities exist.  
6. I accept the fact that languages other than English are spoken.  
7. I do not understand why people of other cultures act differently.  
8. I am sensitive to respecting religious differences.  
9. I am sensitive to differing expressions of ethnicity.  
10. I am emotionally concerned about racial inequality  
11. I am sensitive toward people of every financial status.  
12. I am not sensitive to language uses other than English.  
13. A person’s social status does not effect how I care about people.  
15. I actively challenge gender inequities.  
16. I do not actively respond to contest religious prejudice.  
17. I respectfully help others to offset language barriers that prevent communication.  
18. I do not take action when witnessing bias based on people’s preferred sexual orientation.

_______ Age

_____________ Ethnicity

_____________ Gender

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APPENDIX E

EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENT RATING SCALE (ECERS-E)
DIVERSITY SUBSCALE

1 = inadequate
3 = minimal
5 = good
7 = excellent

Diversity Item 1: Planning for individual learning needs. Ask to see the records kept on individual children.

1. All children in the setting are offered the same range of materials and activities, rather than having activities matched to different ages, capabilities or interests.

2. No writing planning, or planning which takes no account of specific groups or individuals.

3. No records kept, or the records describe only activities and not the children’s response or success in that activity, e.g. only ticked checklists or sampling of children’s work.

4. Some additional provision is made in terms of developmental stage, or for individuals or groups with specific needs such as learning support or English language support.

5. Some of the written planning shows differentiation for particular individuals or groups, e.g. simple pig puzzles up to complex jigsaws, fat paint brushes and watercolor brushes.

6. Written records indicate some awareness of how individuals have coped with activities, or of the appropriateness of activities, e.g. “needs bilingual support” “could only manage to count to 2”.

7. Staff show some awareness of the need to support and recognize children’s differences, praising children of all abilities publicly.

8. The range of activities provided enables children of all abilities and from all backgrounds to participate in a satisfying and cognitively demanding way, e.g. showing children the different tasks they can attempt with a toy or game.

9. Day-to-day plans are drawn up with the specific aim of developing activities that will satisfy the needs of each child either individually or as part of a group.

10. Children are observed regularly, and individual records are kept on their progress in different aspects of their development.

11. Staff consistently draw children’s attention to the difference in people in a positive way.
12. The range of activities provided, together with the organization of social interaction, enables children of all abilities and backgrounds to participate at an appropriate level in both individual and common tasks, e.g. pairing children of different ages and ability for a certain task.

13. Planning sheets identify the role of the adult when working with individuals/pairs/groups of children. Planning also shows a range of capability levels at which a task or activity may be experienced.

14. Children are observed regularly and their progress is recorded and used to inform planning.

15. Staff specifically plan activities which draw the attention of the whole group to difference and capability in a positive way, e.g., showing children who are disabled in a positive light, celebrating bilingualism.

Diversity Item 2: Gender equality and awareness

16. Where books, pictures, artifacts* and displays portray gender, most (90% or more) conform to gender stereotypes.

17. The staff ignore or encourage stereotyped gender behaviors, e.g. boys are rarely encouraged to work in the home corner, girls are praised for looking pretty or boys for being strong.

18. Some books, pictures, artifacts* and displays include images which do not conform to gender stereotypes (e.g. father looking after baby, female police officer).

19. Children’s activities and behavior sometimes cross gender stereotypes, e.g. boys cooking or caring for dolls in the home corner, girls playing outside on large mobile toys.

20. Many books, pictures, artifacts and displays show men and women in non-stereotypical roles (e.g. female doctors or plumbers).

21. Children are explicitly encouraged to participate in activities which cross gender boundaries, e.g. all children are expected (not forced) to join in construction and gross-motor play.

22. Dressing-up clothes encourage non-stereotyped cross-gender roles, girl and boy nurse or police outfits and non-gendered clothing e.g. cook hat/apron, dungarees.

23. The children’s attention is specifically drawn to books, pictures, artifacts* and displays that show males and females in non-stereotypical roles, and specific activities are developed to help the children discuss gender.

24. In encouraging both boys and girls to participate equally in all activities, staff are confident in discussing and challenging the stereotypical behaviors and assumptions of children. Are there specific times when certain things can be done only by girls or by boys?

25. Male educators are employed to work with children and/or men are sometimes invited to work in the center with the children.
Diversity Item 3: Race equality and awareness

26. Books, pictures, artifacts* and displays show no or little evidence of 
    ethnic diversity in society or the wider world.
27. The children sometimes play with toys and artifacts from cultures 
    other than the ethnic majority.
28. Books, pictures, artifacts* and displays show people from a variety 
    of ethnic groups, even if the images are insensitive or stereotyped.
29. Children play with artifacts* drawn from an extensive range of 
    culture e.g. range of dressing-up clothes, cooking and eating 
    utensils used in dramatic play***
30. Some books, pictures, artifacts* and displays show people from 
    different ethnic groups in non-stereotypical roles e.g. as scientists, 
    doctors, engineers.
31. Some images/activities show children that they have much in 
    common with people from other cultural groups e.g. images which 
    stress physical similarities, or similarities in rituals and day-to-day 
    activities.
32. Staff intervene appropriately when child or adult in the setting 
    shows prejudice.
33. Staff develop activities with the express purpose of promoting 
    cultural understanding e.g. attention is drawn to similarities and 
    differences in things and people, different cultures are routinely 
    brought into topic work, visitors and performers reflect a range of 
    cultures.
34. Specific activities are developed to promote understanding of 
    difference e.g. paints are mixed to match skin tones to visibly show 
    subtleties of difference.
35. In multi-ethnic areas ethnic minority educators are employed in the 
    center. Elsewhere, black and ethnic minority people are sometimes 
    invited into the setting to work with the children.

*The word “toys” was replaced by the word “artifacts” in this survey.
***This item may not apply to all classes.
APPENDIX F

GUIDED QUESTIONS

Guiding areas for director and teacher interviews:

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Age, degree, learning experiences, family backgrounds</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Training and teaching experiences in early childhood settings</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(years/locations)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Educational philosophy/personal beliefs</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Accreditation information (year)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Establishment of school (fund/year)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>School philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Professional development, training/workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>What bias means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>What anti-bias curriculum means</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Understanding of anti-bias goals and standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Anti-bias curriculum tasks</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Resources they can use</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Role of teacher</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Parental involvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Activities that are in support of the criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Holiday policies</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Beliefs on actively intervening on behalf of children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Struggles, questions, concerns</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>How they feel they are doing overall to implement an anti-bias</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Difficulties/what does not work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(personal, resources, implementation, support from school/parents)</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Success (what works)</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>In-service training</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Teacher education programs (what can be done for pre-service</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>teachers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Support system</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


* Pseudo names were used to protect the school sites.
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Miranda Lin is a special soul. She was born in Taipei, Taiwan (Formosa). Her pious mother taught her to pursue both material and spiritual knowledge since she was young. When she was in high school, Miranda was determined to study the English language because she wanted to read Jane Austen’s books. Later she traveled to the States and earned a B.S. degree in Child Development (Preschool Education) in Pennsylvania and a M.S. degree in Child Development in Florida. Miranda had worked with children in America, China, and Taiwan.

Miranda Lin is a fortunate soul. Her search for God ended when she went to India in 2002. Miranda began to take shelter of her spiritual master, Radhanath Swami, when she returned to America to pursue her Ph.D. studies in 2003. While Miranda was a doctoral student, she had worked as a teaching and research assistant as well as student teacher supervisor. Miranda had the privilege to present various papers in national and international conferences and also had several publications. She was granted with various scholarships and awards for her work throughout her studies.

Miranda Lin is a blissful soul. She is content and grateful for whatever she has. After completing her degree, Miranda continues to teach, travel, cook for her friends, and advocate for children’s well-being.