CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

ECOCULTURAL CLASSROOM INTERVIEW:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MEASURE TO GATHER INFORMATION ON
PRESCHOOL TEACHERS’ DAILY PRACTICES

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts in Education
Educational Psychology

By

April Hoover Sproles

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The graduate project of April Hoover Sproles is approved:

Sloane Lefkowitz Burt, MA

Date

Lila Snow, MA

Date

Dr. Janet Fish, Chair

Date

California State University, Northridge
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ABSTRACT

ECOCULTURAL CLASSROOM INTERVIEW:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MEASURE TO GATHER INFORMATION ON
PRESCHOOL TEACHERS’ DAILY PRACTICES

By

April Hoover Sproles

Master of Arts in Education,
Educational Psychology

This project describes the development and piloting of the Ecocultural Classroom Interview (ECI). The goal of the ECI is to gather data on teachers’ daily classroom practices from their perspectives, to better understand what teachers do and why. An understanding of classroom practices from the teachers’ perspectives allows for two important outcomes to occur: 1) quality initiatives can consider individual centers’ and communities’ needs as explained from the perspective of the teacher; and 2) initiatives can be designed which complement teachers’ existing routines. Three main areas of research and practice in Early Childhood Education (ECE) were focused on during the interview design: 1) Cultural Discussions and Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP); 2) Quality Initiatives; and 3) Qualitative Interviewing. The existing Ecocultural Family Interview (Bernheimer & Weisner, 2007) was initially used as a guide for the first set of interview questions. From that foundation, a cyclical process of design, review, piloting, and revision was used to design the interview tool with input from an experienced team of ECE mentors.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Children’s activities, and teachers’ and children’s interactions around activities, are what a visitor to an ECE program sees… Practices are what program directors, teachers, and children do as they participate in the cultural community of their early childhood programs… In describing practices, it is important to retain the images of foreground and background. When we describe practices, we do so against the background of the larger cultural communities and against the uniformly high scores on program quality and children’s school success. (Rogoff, 2010, p.45)

A growing body of research in Early Childhood Education addresses questions regarding quality: What does “quality” look like? Why is “quality” care important? How can early childhood programs promote and raise the level of quality practices? As described by LaParo, Pianta and Stuhnman in their article discussing classroom quality guidelines (2004), “a wide-ranging debate concerns how to define and operationalize quality in early childhood classrooms…” (p. 410). Currently, there are many discussions and debates in the field of Early Childhood Education (ECE) regarding quality. The concept of quality can refer to any aspect of ECE care including the environment, teacher-child interactions, curriculum, administration and more. In efforts to address this issue, initiatives to improve quality practices have been developed and, in turn, questioned (Lubeck, 1998). Both private and public agencies have developed guidelines to define and support quality practices based on related research and policy initiatives (e.g., National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2009;
California Department of Education [CDE], 2011). Furthermore, many early childhood programs have their own definition and concept of quality, and many states are adopting or developing new quality standards. Discussions regarding quality cover many aspects of early childhood programs from adult:child ratios and teacher interactions to classroom materials and curriculum content (Burchinal et al., 2008).

While there seems to be a general consensus in the ECE field that quality is important and worthwhile, outcomes and pathways are quite varied. Regardless, programs and initiatives tend to emphasize both quality and developmental appropriateness. Indeed, even the term “developmentally appropriate” is used in many contexts, and the definition of “developmentally appropriate” can be very subjective, as described by Burchinal et al. (2008): “The role of instruction and what constitutes quality instruction for preschool-age child have been hotly debated” (p. 141).

One familiar example of quality improvement initiatives is the NAEYC’s position on Developmentally Appropriate Practice (2009). In addition to providing positive outcomes for children, the encouragement of quality improvement standards may increase the perceived professionalism of the ECE field. Improving quality standards is generally a supported concept, although individual centers, communities, government sectors and other groups may have distinct priorities and definitions of “quality.” One such debate is whether quality practices ought to be universally prescribed and mandated, or whether there ought to be some flexibility in order to accommodate individualized community needs and values (Lubeck, 1998; Sanders, Deihl & Kyler, 2007). Either way, discussions and development towards quality mandates continue.
However, such quality improvement attempts are often developed without background knowledge of the current state of early childhood classrooms (CDE, 2011). In addition, any knowledge that exists regarding current early childhood classrooms is typically the result of either classroom observation by a third party or research conducted in program settings chosen merely for their matching a given demographic. The available current research suggests that there is a lack of data regarding daily classroom activities, routines and practices – especially reported from the perspective of the teacher (e.g., Smith & Croom, 2000). The researchers believe that program quality initiatives could be better designed and possibly more effective if the current literature were to include data regarding current classroom practices from the perspective of early childhood teachers themselves.

**Statement of Need**

While discussions regarding classroom and program quality continue, there remains a significant lack of data regarding teachers’ practices from their perspectives. Classroom assessments used for determining quality typically rely solely on third-party observation. When observed by an outsider, descriptions of teacher behaviors are likely to omit potentially significant information regarding values and priorities which influence said behaviors and their interpretation. This type of observation also fails to acknowledge or seek input regarding how the needs of a given community influences teachers’ behavior. Howes’ (2010) research strongly demonstrates the importance of context when studying ECE programs. Researchers studying early childhood centers which have been identified as high-quality discovered that quality care was achieved
through the use of different pathways and practices at each center and in each community (e.g., Sanders et al., 2007; Howes, et al., 2008).

Additionally, in their discussion of the Ecocultural Interview approach, Bernheimer and Weisner (2007) suggest that quality improvement initiatives may prove more effective if they are designed to integrate with current teacher daily practices. Quality improvements such as teacher trainings, education and mentoring are typically designed with an intended outcome, without regard to baseline behaviors or existing routines. At the time that the author reviewed current research, no research was found which utilized teacher interviews as a primary method of data collection.

**Purpose of the Project**

Therefore, the purpose of this project is to design and pilot the Ecocultural Classroom Interview as a tool to gather data regarding early childhood teachers’ daily practices from their perspectives. The process of designing the interview for this study was influenced and inspired by many professional sources, including the Ecocultural Family Interview (Weisner, 1997), qualitative research strategies described by Howes (2010), and significant feedback and input from a group of ECE mentors with extensive academic and practical experience. It is intended that an interview of this nature might 1) offer insight into current daily classroom practices, 2) further support existing research which suggests that standards of quality need to be adaptive in order to address the individual needs of each center, 3) effectively use a conversation style, open-ended interview in order to offer teachers an opportunity to express their classroom experience in their own words, and 4) contribute to the development of more effective quality
improvement initiatives through better understanding of teachers’ experiences and daily routines.

Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) work focusing on the role of ecology and environment has been influential in the field of behavioral and developmental research, and encourages researchers to consider context when gathering data, including context at multiple levels of systems. This is part of the backdrop of the ECI in that teacher perspective is seen as an important element of the ecology of the classroom. Concurrently, the greater community (or exosystem) which the classroom is part of is also influenced by culture. A research approach which considers this interaction is described as ecocultural. The ECI assumes an ecocultural approach to classrooms in a similar manner to Bernheimer and Weisner’s (2007) approach to families:

Our work is guided by an ecocultural (ecological + cultural) approach, reflecting the fact that families actively and proactively respond to the circumstances in which they live, and that they build and organize environments that give meaning and direction to their lives. (p. 193)

Furthermore, the purpose of this interview is to gain better insight into early childhood teachers’ daily classroom practices and the factors which may influence such practices. Data regarding classroom practices, activities, and routines is typically gathered through observation, which does not accommodate to the individual context of the classroom, center, or community. It is hopeful that an ecocultural teacher interview will allow for a deeper understanding of the unique, complex factors which influence individual teachers’ daily practices and routines. In addition, the researcher hopes that the creation of a standardized interview tool might encourage other ECE researchers to
incorporate teachers’ perspectives – not just third-party observations of the environment or descriptions of teacher-child interaction – into future related research.

This project documents the process of creating and refining the Ecocultural Classroom Interview. Once refined, this interview can offer researchers and students a promising tool to gather data regarding classroom practices from the teacher’s perspective. The refined interview may be useful to researchers studying daily classroom practices. It may offer unique insight regarding the ways in which varying practices offer differing pathways to quality. Additionally, the process of cyclical review and refining of a classroom interview protocol, in and of itself, may provide a model for program quality initiative procedures as well. In this sense, data gathered with this interview may help future researchers to develop a more comprehensive concept of quality in the unique context of each early childhood program. In addition, the refined interview holds promise as a tool to better understand classroom practices and thus design targeted staff development resources or training initiatives.

**Terminology**

For the purpose of this project, the following terms and definitions will be used:

- **Eco-cultural**: “subsistence patterns and ecology, social supports and institutions, forms of family [or other social grouping] organization, demographic patterns, health, mortality concerns” (Weisner, 1997, p. 182).

- **Practices**: “daily habits or routines, guided by scripts that are organized to accomplish specific goals, values, or needs” (Wishard, Shivers, Howes, & Ritchie, 2003, p. 68).

- **Teacher**: NAEYC (2009) describes the term “teacher”:
the word teacher is always intended to refer to any adult responsible for the direct care and education of a group of children in any early childhood setting. Included are not only classroom teachers but also infant/toddler caregivers, family child care providers, and specialists in other disciplines who fulfill the role of teacher. (p. 1)

- **Partnerships for Excellence: Early Childhood Education Consulting Services**  
  *(PfE: ECECS)*: A collaborative project between the CSUN MA in ECE program, graduate students, the Child Care Resource Center, and early childhood education centers in the San Fernando Valley community. Graduate students work as teams with seasoned industry mentors to provide strengths-based consulting services to ECE programs which have requested these services (Lieber, 2008).

- **Quality**: The combination of many aspects of an early childhood program, which support positive outcomes for children. These efforts may be related to practices, interactions, curriculum, environment, etc., often perceived as deliberate steps taken to improve upon children’s classroom experiences and developmental and learning outcomes - with children’s best interests in mind. Support for quality may focus on specific needs of a community or of an individual teacher, family or child; related efforts may also emphasize the importance of addressing all of children’s developmental domains (NAEYC, 2009; CDE, 2011).

**Organization of the Project**

The following chapters will discuss the process of creating and piloting the Ecocultural Classroom Interview. Literature regarding qualitative research design will be reviewed and incorporated. Chapter Two, the Literature Review, will review relevant
research supporting the need for the Ecocultural Classroom Interview. Literature regarding qualitative research design will also be discussed in relation to how it influenced the design of the interview. Next, Chapter Three, Methods, will discuss the creation of the final interview tool as well as methodology: the plan to develop and pilot an effective, quality teacher interview. Finally, Chapter Four, Results, will describe in depth the comprehensive cyclical process of interview design, piloting, evaluation and revision employed in this study. In addition, Chapter Four will include a conclusion and discussion regarding the project outcomes as well as implications for future research and practice.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RESEARCH

This chapter will examine relevant research which was used in development of the ECI as well as literature which supports the need for the interview. This literature falls into three categories: 1) Cultural Discussions and Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP); 2) Quality Initiatives; and 3) Qualitative Interviewing. Literature regarding the influence of culture and Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) are part of the motivation behind the Ecocultural Classroom Interview (ECI), and offer one perspective of the history and current state which warrant the need for the interview. Rogoff (2003) points out the many ways in which culture and context shape individuals, especially interactions between adults and children. A review of quality initiatives adds to the justification for the interview and insight into why the interview will be useful. A sample of literature regarding quality initiatives will be discussed to show that data from the interview may be useful when designing tailored quality improvement resources, such as training opportunities. Lastly, literature on qualitative interviewing offers explanations as to why an interview is an effective tool, and how the interview was designed.

The ECI will be one way to learn what influences teachers’ daily classroom practices. An understanding of classroom practices from the teachers’ perspectives allows for two important outcomes to occur: 1) it allows quality initiatives to consider individual centers’ and communities’ needs as explained from the perspective of the teacher and 2) it allows initiatives to be designed which complement teachers’ existing routines. Patton (1980) effectively describes the value of interviewing as a research method:
The fact of the matter is that we cannot observe everything … We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions… We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world – we have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing is, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective. (p. 196)

Indeed, understanding and documenting the teacher’s perspective is the underlying goal of the ECI.

**Cultural Discussions and Developmentally Appropriate Practice**

The first statements on DAP were released in the 1980s, and were part of a movement to ensure quality in child care settings. Discussion regarding the cultural sensitivity and universal application of DAP began shortly following the release of NAEYC’s first position statement, and have continued ever since. Lubeck (1998) strongly argues that a set of standards governing interactions and practices does not allow for the nuances of cultural values and practices, and may hinder efforts to better understand child development centers on an individual basis. Her article describes that she has “… tried to imagine a way of doing things that might be more attentive to difference and more responsive to the immediate needs of teachers and communities” (Lubeck, 1998, p. 299).

The article “Is DAP for everyone?” (Lubeck, 1998), explains that more dialogue would be useful when learning about early childhood classrooms. Researchers are encouraged to *listen* to educators and families. Thus, Lubeck (1998) argues that quality improvements will be more effective and significant if listening to and learning from educators and communities is emphasized, rather than prescribing limited, specific
guidelines. A continuous discussion, where researchers and policy makers learn from teachers, may be more powerful than one-way communication from policy makers to practitioners.

Responses to DAP began in the 1980s and developed alongside a more comprehensive discussion regarding how cultural norms are viewed, as well demonstrated by Lubeck (1998) as well as Rogoff (2003). DAP is often presented and discussed as though it is universally applicable and transcends cultural variation (NAEYC, 2009; Lubeck, 1998). DAP guidelines are generally considered a strong positive resource, useful for centers and children, and greatly contributing to the standards and professionalism of the early childhood field (La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004, Kim & Buchanan, 2009). In their research studying teachers’ beliefs and children’s self-concepts, Smith and Croom (2000) note that there is a “…current debate in the early childhood literature about whether developmentally appropriate practices can or should be applied to all children…” (p. 319).

Further supporting the notion of cultural variation in “appropriate practices,” Rogoff’s (2003) book Cultural Pathways to Human Development details the development of culture as well as culture’s overarching effect on human development. This work describes fitting examples from communities across the globe with varying practices. An observation regarding the nature of practices addresses the root of the goal of the ECI:

What is done one way in one community may be done another way in another community, with the same effect, and a practice done the same way in both communities may serve different ends. An understanding of how cultural practices fit together is essential. (Rogoff, 2003, p. 12)
Thus, the meaning behind practices and the outcomes created by practices are defined and described by culture. Labeling practices as either good or bad may hinder a deeper understanding of whether they provide positive developmental outcomes for children with varying backgrounds. Data gathered with the ECI may be useful in understanding such variations.

Moreover, Sanders, Deihl, and Kyler (2002) studied early childhood practices at one center with strong cultural influences which was experiencing a shift in community and children’s cultures. This work, “DAP in the ‘Hood,” consisted of classroom observations, director and teacher interviews. This qualitative research “discovered patterns that reflect a community-interpreted understanding of developmentally appropriate practice” (Sanders, Diehl & Kyler, 2002, p. 394), suggesting that the application of quality may have variations in meaning for differing groups. The ECI may be a pathway towards understanding such meanings.

Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) work on ecology and environment has been influential in the field of behavioral research, and encourages researchers to consider context when gathering data, including context at multiple levels of systems. This is part of the backdrop of the ECI in that teacher perspective is seen as an important element of the ecology of the classroom. Concurrently, the greater community (or exosystem) which the classroom is part of is also influenced by culture. A research approach which considers this interaction is described as ecocultural. The ECI assumes an ecocultural approach to classrooms in a similar manner to Bernheimer and Weisner’s (2007) approach to families:
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**Aspects of Quality: Measurements and Guidelines**

This section will present several works that address the measurement of quality practices and the development of guidelines that are focused on improving teacher knowledge, and therefore, practice. First, assessment tools used to measure aspects of quality practices are described. This includes Burchinal et al.’s (2008) discussion of ECERS and LaParo, Pianta and Stuhlman’s (2004) discussion of CLASS; these are primarily tools to assess quality in the classroom environment and teacher-child interactions, respectively. Second, guidelines developed to address and improve early childhood practices are examined. The CDE’s Educator Competencies (CDE, 2011) are recommended educator characteristics in terms of knowledge and practices, and DAP are guidelines for quality practices.

**Quality Assessment Tools**

The Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale, Revised (or ECERS-R) is an assessment tool consisting of 43 items which are rated at various levels of quality. As described by the FPG Child Development Institute (2012), this tool was designed to assess process quality in an early childhood or school age care group. Process quality consists of the various interactions that go on in a classroom between staff and children, staff, parents, and other adults, among the children themselves, and the interactions children have with the many materials and
activities in the environment, as well as those features, such as space, schedule and materials that support these interactions. (About Environment Rating Scales section, para. 5)

This rating system is widely used because it is a clear, straightforward approach to observing and documenting important features of different child care environments. Special attention is paid to children's interactions with teachers, materials in the classroom, and each other, and the revised edition was developed with consideration for greater cultural diversity. ECERS has been widely used in both research and practice, and it typically relies on a single period of observation. When done for research, or through larger agencies, this observation is typically done by an outside observer; however, this tool has also been used in-house, and teachers may observe and rate their own classrooms or other classrooms at the same center.

Another widely acclaimed assessment system is the Classroom Assessment and Scoring System, or CLASS (La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004). Similar to ECERS, this assessment tool is also completed through observation, and used for both research purposes as well as center assessments and in-house studies. Accordingly, "The CLASS provides an assessment of the classroom quality as indicated by information about the emotional climate, classroom management, and instructional methods" (Burchinal et al., 2008, p. 145). This tool offers less emphasis on materials, and stronger emphasis on teacher behavior and learning supports: "CLASS... focuses on classroom processes rather than classroom materials and environments. Unlike previous research instruments, the CLASS provides a mechanism by which classroom practices can be gauged and improved systematically" (La Paro, Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004, p.420). In this sense, some
advocates consider it more flexible when studying material goods, and more supportive of interactions because of the inclusive system of improvement.

**Guidelines for Quality**

Existing research on quality practices are useful tools for educators when they review their classroom approach and interactions. Position statements and publications regarding quality often describe ways of interacting, thinking, and behaving in the context of early childhood environments. This is often based on research. Guidelines may be most effectively used when teachers use them as a platform for intentionality and reflection on practices. In this sense, guidelines may not be seen as prescriptions but perspectives worth considering.

**California Early Childhood Educator Competencies.** The ECE educator competencies were developed jointly between the California Department of Education and First 5 California. They join the California Early Learning Foundations and the Curriculum Frameworks as a set of tools developed by the state of California, Child Development Department. The *California Early Childhood Educator Competencies* are over 300 pages of recommended requirements and approaches designed for 12 different competency areas, including professionals ranging from assistant teachers to administrators (CDE, 2011). The need for the Educator Competencies is described by CDE (2011) as:

Research confirms that the impact of early childhood experiences in general, and relationships in particular, is complemented by the efforts of countless, dedicated early childhood educators who have been building a profession without the support of a coherent system of preparation. Their work has led to a vision of best
practices. Effective early childhood educators have shown that meeting the developmental needs of young children and their families requires a comprehensive approach. (p. 1)

As part of the Preschool Learning Foundations, CDE's ECE Educator Competencies are a step towards creating uniformly high quality care in the state of California, especially at state funded programs. This is a set of guidelines outlining skills and knowledge that educators are supposed to demonstrate at multiple levels within an agency. This incorporates a wide range of such standards, including knowledge of child development theory, learning through play, developmental domains, and interactions with families. Expectations regarding classroom practices, planning, and policies are described (CDE, 2011).

The ECE Educator Competencies are organized into "competency areas" and each competency area includes in depth descriptions of key concepts, dispositions, and performance. This document is extensive and comprehensive, and includes cultural sensitivity. One such expectation is described as: "attends to and respects cultural and family beliefs, values, traditions, and practices; welcomes diverse perspectives of all children and families in the community" (CDE, 2011, p. 21). There are many noticeable strengths and well developed facets of these guidelines, and at the same time, they provide a very one-directional tool which is a vector for giving direction and boundaries without incorporating ongoing processes for listening or discussion with educators.

**Developmentally Appropriate Practice.** One of the leading guidelines regarding quality is the NAEYC’s publication Developmentally Appropriate Practice (or DAP) (2009). DAP provides guidelines for professionals’ interactions with children, including
environment, group size, ratios, curriculum and health and safety. These guidelines emphasize positive relationships between teachers and children, a curriculum which acknowledges children as active learners and covers multiple domains, regular assessments, and “informative and supportive feedback to children, and multiple instructional approaches to optimize children’s learning opportunities” (Burchinal, et al., 2008, p. 141). DAP has made an invaluable contribution to the professional field and also influenced a meaningful debate regarding the challenge of describing definitions of what is developmentally appropriate while considerations of individual community practices related to culture and community needs defy attempts at such standardization.

Qualitative Interviewing

This section will review the research which was considered while developing the Ecocultural Classroom Interview. This includes the Ecocultural Family Interview (Bernheimer & Weisner, 2007; Weisner, Coots, Bernheimer & Arzubiaga, 1997), Patton’s (1980) Qualitative Evaluation Methods and Sanders, Deihl and Kyler’s (2007) “DAP in the ‘Hood.” Patton’s (1980) chapter titled “Qualitative Interviewing” proved especially useful in descriptions of how to best design an interview tool. This work describes the benefits of asking open-ended questions in order to encourage participants to answer descriptively. The use of open-ended questions can help prevent dichotomous responses, and gives the participant full control over his or her answer. Open ended questions can be less presumptuous. At the same time, open ended interview questions may be harder analyze, especially with large amounts of data. However, when the desired data is focused on an individual level, or even at the level of one center, open-ended interview questions may encourage more descriptive, insightful answers (Patton, 1980).
Effective use of open-ended questions and an “interview guide approach” (Patton, 1980) is seen in Sanders, Diehl, and Kyler (2007). Their research, “DAP in the ‘Hood” is an example of seeking information on quality practices from the perspective of a single school. This research relied on observations and interviews to understand how a center in a low-income area with a shifting population approaches the idea of quality. The researchers used a very conversational style of interviewing, and mention that they have existing relationships with participants. Center directors were the focus of the study rather than teachers. Open-ended questions were asked, allowing for a broad range of responses. Interviewing proved to be a useful method for understanding how quality is implemented, and what it means for this specific community – as well as teachers’ challenges as they strive to provide quality for both established and new community members: “We found that these community-embedded directors both accept DAP and change it to meet the perceived needs of the children of this community” (Sanders, Diehl & Kyler, 2007, p. 396).

The PfE: ECECS program emphasizes a strengths based approach, and utilizes open ended questionnaires. In addition, graduate student mentors are required to practice their interview skills with a mentor upon beginning the program. The researchers’ experience with this style helped to maintain focus and group consensus. For this project, the people who informed and evaluated the ECI have participated in the program as mentors for many years, and some were at one time graduate student consultants.

Quality initiatives which integrate into and support teachers’ existing routines may be most beneficial (Bernheimer & Weisner, 2007; Moes & Frea, 2002). Bernheimer and Weisner’s (2007) article, titled "Let me just tell you what I do all day" describes
challenges researchers face when interviewing families to determine strengths and potential areas for support. This work describes how the conversational style of the Ecocultural Family Interview focuses on daily routine and practices as a method to discovering how to best support families. The EFI was initially developed for use with families with children who have special needs, and it has been widely adapted for use with other family situations as well.

During initial discussions regarding the ECI, researchers studied and deconstructed the Ecocultural Family Interview (Weisner, Coots, Bernheimer, & Arzubiaga, 1997) with special attention paid to categories of questions. The categories along with the direct questions were used as a guide in the first step of designing the ECI. A summary of these categories as well as description of the development of questions will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

Once it was determined that the development of a teacher interview would be a promising undertaking, subsequent discussion and research indicated that that such a tool would benefit from being both open ended and a conversational interview style. This is described by Patton’s (1980) chapter Qualitative Interviewing, which describes styles of interviews and questions. According to Patton’s (1980) chapter, the ECI most closely resembles an:

interview guide approach… topics and issues to be covered are specified in advance, in outline form; interviewer decides sequence and working of questions in the course of the interview … [this involves] outlining a set of issues that are to be explored w/ each respondent before interviewing begins. (p. 206)
Using this discussion, it was identified that the most helpful questions for the purpose of the ECI would be questions about experiences, behaviors, and values. Patton’s article also influenced the ECI in when designing probes, transitions and deciding which types of questions to ask.

At this point in the development of this present research, the Ecocutural Family Interview (Weisner et al., 1997) provided a useful guide. The Ecocultural Family Interview was developed for use with families with children who have special needs. It has proven effective in gathering data regarding daily practices, and has been adapted for use with many different types of families: “versions of the EFI have been developed a number of times already in a number of cultures” (Weisner, 2002, p. 278). In addition, it has influenced an interview to examine the role that teachers’ own family-of-origin experiences may relate to their teaching practices (Gegeyan, 2011).

The use of the term “ecocultural” is a reference to both ecology – understanding the various environments and systems that interact with an individual and community at multiple levels – and culture. Culture is comprised of our daily actions and routines, as well as the beliefs and values behind them. Ecology includes location, geography as well as systems (Weisner, 2002). Additionally, in Bernheimer and Weisner’s (2007) article “Let me just tell you what I do all day” the authors examine a relationship between ecocultural theory and daily practices: “ecocultural theory zeroes in on that pathway and its stepping-stones (activities and practices) as among the most important influences in a child's and family's life” (p. 193).

This intersection of culture and ecology is relevant to family practices as well as classroom practices. The Ecocultural Classroom Interview acknowledges the importance
of activities in accordance with Weisner’s (1997) writings on ethnography: “This ecocultural theory of development suggests that the focus of ethnographic work on children should be at each of these three levels [the most basic being] … a direct focus on the activity settings the child and others are engaged in – the agentic, interactional life of the child and family living out their everyday routines and activities” (p. 182).

**Influences on the ECI**

Thus, the main components which influenced the creation of the Ecocultural Classroom Interview include 1) The Partnerships for Excellence: ECE Consulting Services Program, a course and center consultation experience in the MA program in Early Childhood Education, Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling, 2) The Ecocultural Family Interview, developed at UCLA (Weisner, 2002), 3) *Culture and Child Development in Early Childhood Programs: Practices for Quality Education and Care* (Howes, 2010), and 4) related quality initiatives at the state and national levels, including California ECE Teacher Competencies and NAEYC’s *Developmentally Appropriate Practice*. The most critical issue that the Ecocultural Classroom Interview seeks to address is teachers’ lack of a voice within the ECE field, particularly as it pertains to quality initiatives, including informing policy development and targeted teacher training.

When deciding to create an interview, an important element was the idea that quality early care and education can manifest through many different practices and routines. Howes’ work (2010) elegantly demonstrates that external culture often influences the needs of the children in a particular center and the manner of meeting these needs, and thus certain practices are more beneficial in some centers than in others.
Quality is better measured by outcomes than practices in that positive development outcomes are the end goal. Positive outcomes and healthy, optimum development may be brought about by various practices. Howes (2010) and her colleagues studied early childhood settings which had been acknowledged by professionals as “high quality.” Extensive fieldwork including observations, director interviews, and focus groups discovered that each center had very different daily practices. While all centers were aware and consistent with DAP, each center had its own methods of implementing quality, and these pathways looked different. These findings suggest that culturally relevant concepts of quality are ideal and will lead to stronger positive outcomes for young children. This correlates with Weisner’s ecocultural approach, which explains how culture and quality are complimentary:

What matters for children and parents in this theory is the achievement of cultural well-being. Well-being in children is usually thought of as an intrapsychic state or individual attribute or resources available to the child. But well-being also is the ability of a child to actively and innovatively participate in the activities deemed important and valued by a cultural community. The culture provides activities for the child that require assessment regarding the goals, stability, safety, coherence, and so forth of the activities. These cultural activities should be embedded in child developmental measures of well-being and not seen as exogenous to the child.

(Weisner, 1997, p. 182)

Thus, an interview is expected to be more informative than third party observation may capture because tapping the teacher’s perspective allows the researcher to be
informed by and accommodate to cultural and community context that undergird classroom practices and activities.
CHAPTER THREE

PROJECT AUDIENCE AND IMPLEMENTATION FACTORS

The Ecocultural Classroom Interview is designed to help researchers gain a more clear view of daily classroom practices and activities from early childhood teachers’ perspectives. This information may prove helpful when designing policies such as quality initiatives and teacher training. Thus, this chapter will describe the development of the Ecocultural Classroom Interview, beginning with the existing work and issues that inspired its creation. The main components which helped drive the creation of this interview are 1) The Partnerships for Excellence: ECE Consulting Services Program out of CSUN, 2) The Ecocultural Family Interview, developed to allow researchers to gather data on daily routines from the parents’ point of view (Weisner, 2002), 3) Culture and Child Development in Early Childhood Programs: Practices for Quality Education and Care, reflections on results of a national research project which describes variations in classroom practices across high quality programs (Howes, 2010), and 4) Quality initiatives at the state and national levels, including California Teacher Competencies and NAEYC’s Developmentally Appropriate Practice.

This chapter will describe the process of creating the interview protocol, the intended application, and the environment and equipment needed to implement the interview.

**Development of the Product**

Based on the intended purpose of this project, the development of the Ecocultural Classroom Interview placed much emphasis on the *process* of developing the interview, not necessarily the *product* itself. Therefore, an extensive process of cyclical, periodic
review of the instrument as it was developed and piloted by the current researcher in collaboration with a team of mentors/experts was followed to ensure a quality, useful tool resulted. The description of this process includes the initial inspiration, the decision to create the project, mentor meetings which established the need for and the direction of the project, the initial draft of interview questions, review by the mentors, revision, implementation, transcription of recorded interviews, mentors’ feedback on transcribed interviews, then a second round of interview question revision, implementation, transcription, and mentor feedback.

**Overview of the Process**

This project was conducted through two rounds of drafting the questions, piloting the questions through teacher interviews and revising the protocol based on the nature of interviewees’ responses. There were seven general phases of this project, conducted over two cycles:

**First Cycle:**

1) Interview design

2) Meeting with mentors, reviewing protocol questions

3) Revising interview questions

4) Pilot testing

5) Initial analysis, including transcribing the interviews

6) More in-depth analysis: meeting with mentors, presenting transcriptions, discussion, email collaboration

**Second Cycle:**

7) Repeat steps 3-6
Each of these steps will be further explained in the sections to follow.

**Initial Concept of Ecocultural Classroom Interview**

This project was initially conceptualized by Dr. Jan Fish. Dr. Fish, professor emerita at California State University, Northridge in the Department of Educational Psychology, Master’s program in Early Childhood Education. As an adjunct faculty member, she continues to coordinate the Partnerships for Excellence: Early Childhood Consulting Services Program, also known as the PfE: ECECS. This program utilizes graduate student consultants, who work under the direction of seasoned ECE mentors to provide consulting services to area child development programs who have requested mentor/student team involvement.

As described by Fish (2012), the PfE program began 14 years ago, in 1998, and from its inception, PfE: ECECS was based on assumptions of the power of formative evaluation processes and relationship-based and strengths-based strategies. Over time, the program embraced inquiry-based methods, utilizing open-ended questions and questionnaires with center director and staff members, emphasizing gathering perspectives from participating center staff and directors regarding their strengths and areas for growth, as well as the strengths and areas in which the program could benefit from growth, too. This process of each consulting team’s establishing relationships, and asking staff and director to reflect on center dynamics has also been influenced by the Ecocultural Family Interview (Weisner et al., 1997). The PfE program has also been influenced by research which acknowledged the effectiveness of identifying community strengths to guide subsequent community development and improvement, also related to current quality initiatives in ECE.
With these values as the backdrop, Fish was further inspired by Howes’ research regarding quality programs utilizing individualized pathways to quality. An additional element was Fish’s involvement with Research Infrastructure in Minority Institutions (RIMI), a grant program from the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD). In the vein of community improvement and strengthening, the combination of these themes and values inspired Fish’s development of the concept of an interview – much like the EFI – which would study centers as units of measurement rather than families. Fish presented this idea to the PfE class, and the current researcher expressed further interest in development of this protocol, at which point Fish and the researcher began collaboration and discussion regarding the process of creating the interview protocol.

Therefore, the project began with careful review of the Ecocultural Family Interview, and brainstorming about how questions might translate to use at an early education center with early childhood teachers. There was also discussion regarding whether the interview should use the classroom, thus teacher, as the unit of measurement, or the whole center. The researchers initially thought that the interview should address the whole center; however, it became clear that such a large scope would be difficult and likely yield little useful information. An entire center represents many voices, and teachers are much more likely to be in touch with how they and their individual classrooms interact with all parties: families, teachers, administration, and children.

**Development of Questions**

The interview protocol was designed over a period of more than a year, influenced greatly from the EFI, and input from seasoned mentors. Initially, the EFI was
studied carefully, and each question was rewritten to apply to classrooms and teachers rather than families (Appendix C). A comparison was presented at a meeting in December 2010, and from there, the group brainstormed more questions which would be useful in learning about classroom practices and their influences. This comparison chart and brainstorm eventually grew and was developed into each further version and draft of the interview.

At this same initial meeting, participants discussed the possibility of graduate student mentors using this interview tool in the PfE program, possibly as soon as that spring (2011). It was decided at a later meeting to conduct a pilot interview separate from the PfE program, and non-participating centers were recruited using convenience sampling. In addition, mentors at this initial meeting identified the entire center as the unit of measurement, with emphasis on the centers’ daily practices and routines. It was decided later that the scope of the center may be too complex, and not specific enough. Thus, the unit of measurement was refocused on the classroom, with teachers being the principal informants. The group brainstormed the possibilities of using either an interview, focus group, questionnaire method or some combination.

This set of potential interview questions was presented and discussed at a larger mentor meeting in February 2011 (with seven mentors present). During the overview and discussion of questions, suggestions were made for developing follow-up prompts to some questions, and some additional questions were suggested and incorporated into further drafts. This input led to the next version of the interview protocol, which was the first version to be pilot tested (see Appendix C).
Piloting the Interview

The pilot portion of the project included testing the interview protocol on six teachers from three different centers. All the teachers worked with children between the ages of 2.5 and 5 years old, and all teachers had been employed at their current schools for at least one year. Two of the programs were privately funded, and one was publicly funded. Of the privately funded programs, one was employer-supported, with some funding from the employer, and only open to family members of employees. The other private center was open to families in the community.

**Purpose of pilot interviews.** Interviews were conducted in order to pilot the interview protocol (ECI) and assess the effectiveness of the questions. Thus, the participants’ answers were not gathered as data. The sole purpose of the pilot interviews was to test the effectiveness of the interview questions in order to allow the researcher to analyze interviewees’ responses that the questions and format of the interview yielded. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher, and shared with the group of experts to determine whether individual questions effectively gathered the desired data. In turn, the transcribed interviews, together with feedback from the interviewer, guided the subsequent revision of the interview protocol. This process will be described further in Chapter 4.

**Recruiting participants.** The conduct of the first two sets of interviews were arranged by the interviewer and each center’s administration. Two of the center directors were alumni of the same graduate program in which the present the researcher was currently enrolled. One of these directors was also a mentor in the PfE: ECECS program, and was acquainted with the researcher as well as with the panel of experts. The other
director, while not currently a PfE program mentor, has continued to maintain an active professional relationship with one of the experts from the panel for this project. At that center, the project expert received permission from the director to contact the teachers directly, and the expert arranged the teachers’ interviews via email on behalf of the researcher. The director of the third participating center is currently a student in the same graduate program. The researcher submitted protocol to Human Subjects and received approval to conduct pilot interviews before piloting the ECI (see Appendix A).

A few days before the interviews were scheduled, the directors received a copy of the interview protocol as well as the Informed Consent form (see Appendix B), which offered a detailed description of the project and its goals. The interviewer visited each center once, typically in the early afternoon, and conducted two interviews each time. The researcher and mentors thought the data would be most useful if the interview conditions were similar to what a researcher might experience when conducting interviews without a prior established relationship.

**Intended Audience**

This interview protocol is intended to be used by Early Childhood Education researchers when interviewing teachers who work with children ages 0-5. The target population of people administering this project is qualitative researchers and research assistants in the field of Early Childhood Educations – specifically researchers or practitioners striving to develop and implement classroom quality improvement initiatives. One possible use for this interview tool is to gather information for both practitioners and researchers who intend to collaborate with teachers and centers. This
The interview could potentially be used as a baseline measure for teacher beliefs regarding their classroom practices.

This interview may also prove to be a conversation-starter regarding teachers’ perspectives of their classroom. The open-ended and neutral format of questions is intended to encourage participants to respond openly and comfortably. Indeed, all six participants in the pilot interviews offered answers to all questions they were asked, and some participants offered more detail than others. Furthermore, the experience of engaging in the conversational style which the interview strives for may encourage initial relationship-building between interviewer and participant.

Additionally, when this project was first proposed and discussed, it was noted that such a tool would likely be useful in the Partnerships for Excellence: Early Childhood Education Consulting Services program. The PfE Program is a strengths-based consulting service in which selected ECE graduate students serve as consultants with team mentor(s) to ECE program directors who have applied to participate in the program. The PfE program emphasizes collaboration between center staff, director, graduate student consultants, and seasoned mentors with extensive experience in the field. The first semester of consulting focuses on building relationships and gathering information regarding center and teacher strengths and perspectives. The second semester of the program, the graduate student consultants collaborate with the center, center director, and mentors to design and implement resources to address the needs identified and further strengthen the center. Thus, this interview may prove useful near the beginning of the consultation process, as the consulting team is building relationships and gathering information regarding each center’s unique strengths, perspectives, and potential needs.
Professional Qualifications

It is suggested that an interviewer using the ECI would have some experience conducting interviews. In the PfE program, this is accomplished at the beginning of Fall semester, when graduate student consultants and their assigned mentors are required to interview each other in a conversational style, with the graduate students summarizing the interviews in writing as well as verbally with other graduate students on their team. It would also be ideal for interviewers to have an existing positive relationship with interview participants, although it is notable that this was not the case during the piloting phase of this project. The interviewer and participants did not meet until the hour or so preceding the interview, and the interview yielded rich information, nonetheless. However, the researcher speculates that a prior established relationship would put the interviewee more at ease and assist in obtaining uninhibited responses.

Environment and Equipment

Interviews were conducted as a way to pilot the interview, and analyze the effectiveness of the questions. These interviews were conducted at the school or center where the teachers worked. The researchers scheduled the interviews around the teachers’ schedules, and found that teachers were typically most available during their “prep time,” which was often in the early afternoon.

In order to pilot the interview, subjects were gathered using convenience methods; however, the programs and participants were not familiar with the interviewer prior to beginning interview (with one exception, when the interviewer was briefly introduced to the teachers at one center the day before conducting the interviews). The researcher found that the interviews were most successful when conducted in a space in which the
participants were comfortable and familiar. While all interviews were conducted in a private space, some were conducted in the director’s private office (without the director present), while others were conducted in the teachers’ empty classrooms. One participant mentioned that it felt “weird” to be in the director’s office without the director there, and the same participant later commented that the experience felt like an “interview,” implying more like a job interview.

At minimum, this research experience indicated that interviewers will need a quiet, private space in which to conduct interviews uninterrupted, and a portable tape recorder of some type. For the pilot phases, the researcher used the voice recorder on a smartphone, with the phone switched to “airplane mode” to prevent interruptions from and incoming calls or messages. This was effective in creating a high quality, clear digital recording. For the first two interviews, the researcher simultaneously used an analog tape recorder in order to ensure the functionality and quality of the smartphone. Analog tape recorders continue to be a reliable, popular option. It may be helpful to provide each participant a copy of the interview questions so they may follow along while the interview is conducted. This proved useful during one of the pilot interviews when a participant was confused by one of the questions and asked to see which question it was on their copy.

The interviews were transcribed by the researcher, and the resulting data was presented to available mentors for the purpose of review and revision. The results of this evaluation and conclusions will be described further in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this project was to describe and document the process of creating an Ecocultural Classroom Interview through collaboration with experts as well as participation from local child development centers. This process included two cycles of interview development, review, pilot testing, and further review – with input from experts during review phases. This chapter will discuss the evaluation process, conclusions, and future work and research.

Evaluation

Evaluation by experts as well as CSUN faculty was incorporated at multiple points throughout the duration of this project. The researcher found that the feedback received at the initial creation of the interview turned out to be most helpful and constructive – which suggests that taking adequate time for collaboration at the beginning of the process may have prevented a need for significant revision further on.

The panel of experts met and reviewed the interview questions twice before any pilot interviews were conducted. They contributed many helpful brainstorms and discussions based on their experiences interacting with in-service teachers, child development centers, and research-based interviews. Topics covered in their suggestions included where and how to pilot test interviews, how to structure questions to be unbiased, and the ultimate goal of what information would be most important to discuss with interviewees. These experts have all held leadership positions in the field, including as ECE classroom teachers, directors, ECE director-mentors, teacher trainers, higher education professors, and community agency directors. At least two mentors have
experience as field researchers. Thus, discussion often included perspectives regarding what information might be useful when designing quality improvement supports, supporting the research discussion on varying cultural practices, and developing strengths-based support as part of the PfE: ECECS program.

Six pilot interviews were conducted at three different centers. Convenience sampling was used, and care was taken to make sure that teachers at three different types of centers were sampled. With the pilot sample of teachers, there was a wide range in teacher education and experience, although this data was not formally collected. All teachers had at minimum of one year of experience at their current centers. Their education levels ranged from some community college to Master’s degrees. Following the first two interviews, there was an initial meeting consisting of the researcher and two experts, during which time it was determined that it would be more useful for the researcher to conduct two more interviews (at a different center) before analyzing the data and revising the questions. Using data from more than one center was considered an important part of evaluating the effectiveness of the interview questions, as teachers at the same center may have more similar reactions than teachers at other centers.

Once four interviews had been conducted (at two different centers), the researcher transcribed the entirety of the interviews and presented it to a meeting of four experts. Each expert was given a copy of the interview tool, the transcribed interviews, and a synopsis which sampled seven different interview questions and subsequently listed each participant’s answer. This was to give the team of experts the data set in its entirety, as well as the option to read all four answers grouped together (for select questions).
During this first round of review, with data from four completed interviews, the researcher suggested eliminating some questions which had been misunderstood by the participants, or did not gather significant data. Two of the interviews had lasted over an hour. This group of experts discussed clustering the questions into categories, based on theme. One of the experts recommended categories and leading, transitional summaries for each category, which improved the organization of the interview questions. This format was tested on the final two interviews, during which the interviewer ran short on time, and the organization and ordering of questions was adjusted in order to prioritize interview questions. Ultimately, between versions one and two, few changes were made, and such changes were primarily related to the organization and structure of the questions.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

It is important to note that the focus of this project was the design and piloting of an effective teacher interview. Thus, the data were analyzed related to the effectiveness of the interview questions, rather than analyzing the teachers’ responses themselves. While the data from the pilot interviews was not formally analyzed, the researchers did notice some interesting themes regarding the participants’ answers as they reviewed them for the purpose of assessing the effectiveness of the interview. The Ecocultural Classroom Interview Project has offered the researchers some surprising insights. The researchers were surprised to find that participants seemed to offer more information regarding their childhood experiences as opposed to their experiences in ECE coursework or in-service training.
Furthermore, the researcher and experts discovered some misinterpretation of the word “culture” when used as part of the interview. Because of this, an interview question asking about culture was omitted from the second draft in favor of an existing question which asked about the teachers’ upbringing and childhood experiences. In addition, some questions seemed too broad, and were eliminated when participants seemed uncomfortable identifying exactly what the interviewer was asking.

Time was also a constraint during interviews– for the purpose of efficiency and future usefulness, the researcher aimed to have teacher interviews last about an hour. Since the interviews were conducted at the teachers’ workplaces, and without compensation, it was often challenging to find an hour long window when teachers were free to sit and talk without it hindering other responsibilities. After the first three interviews, the present researcher was more mindful of time limitations, and near the end of the hour would prioritize which remaining questions to ask before concluding the interview. In addition, the third interview lasted an hour and 45 minutes, which significantly cut into available time for interview number four, as they were both scheduled the same day at the same school.

Another limitation was that the six pilot interviews were all conducted by the same interviewer. It would be helpful for more interviewers to pilot the ECI to establish it as useful and effective by more than one person, and by a researcher who was not involved in creating the questions.

The EFI proved to be a valuable, useful starting point for developing the Ecocultural Classroom Interview. The researcher believes that this interview could prove quite useful when gathering data regarding ECE teachers – especially for designing
quality initiatives to incorporate into teachers’ routines and the influence of culture on their practice. In addition, requesting feedback from mentors proved to be worthwhile and useful, as did conducting pilot interviews.

**Future Work / Research**

As stated by Patton (1980), “Evaluators can use qualitative data to help decision makers and information users reality-test their own theories of action about the linkages between program processes and program outcomes” (p. 279). The intention of the ECI is to be used in the future to not only understand program processes, but also the causes and meaning behind those processes, and this priority should be forefront when designing other versions of the interview or a coding system. With this in mind, children’s needs from the context of the community can be better understood when “We consider teacher and program practices as the daily habits or routines, guided by scripts, that are organized to accomplish specific goals, values, or needs” (Wishard, Shrivers, Howes & Ritchie, 2003, p. 68).

This tool was designed with intentions for it to be used in the future. Throughout the cycle of review and revisions, researchers were mindful of creating a tool which might be useful to future researchers investigating a variety of questions. To this end, the interview tool may be used as a baseline tool either before or after establishing target areas for quality improvement. If used prior to establishing quality improvement goals, the interview would be helpful at identifying areas of focus as well as establishing an understanding of existing daily routines.

The original Ecocultural Family Interview includes a codebook, and the coding system is described by Weisner (2002):
The EFI also is used to create scored items describing the family routine and how it gets created and sustained … Each item in an EFI includes fieldworker scores for that family, as well as a ‘cue’ or reason for why that score was given. (p. 278)

In the future, if the ECI is to be used as a standardized tool, it will be helpful (and make it more assessable) to create a standardized codebook. This would summarize specific practices and routines, and the factors which influence them. It is intended that such a coding system, like the ECI itself, not be used toward critiquing or grading classrooms or teachers, but towards better understanding them and what influences their daily routines and practices.

If used with pre-established ideas regarding quality improvements, interview questions can be modified accordingly to target data specific to the researcher’s concerns; however, it would be useful to employ questions which harvest direct (straightforward) data regarding routines and practices, so that the existing daily structure in the center classroom can be kept in mind when designing classroom quality supports, such as workshops and related trainings. In this way, teacher support can be designed such that can easily be incorporated into existing classroom patterns. That type of support is tailor-made to the actual situation, as interpreted by its informant, the classroom teacher. Such targeted support for teachers holds great promise for yielding increased teacher awareness and optimal improvement in teacher practices.
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APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY NORTHridge

ECOCULTURAL CLASSROOM INTERVIEW:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MEASURE TO GATHER INFORMATION ON
PRESCHOOL TEACHERS’ DAILY PRACTICES

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Ecocultural Classroom Interview: The Development of a Measure to Gather Information on Preschool Teachers’ Daily Practices is a project being conducted by April Hoover as part of the requirements of the M.A. degree in Educational Psychology and Counseling with emphasis in Early Childhood Education. The purpose of this project is to design and pilot an interview to gain better insight into early childhood teacher’s daily classroom practices and the factors which influence such practices. Data regarding classroom practices, activities, and routines is typically gathered through observation, which does not accommodate the individual context of the classroom, center, or community. It is hopeful that a teacher interview will allow a more deep understanding of the unique, complex factors which influence daily practices and routines.

Once refined, this interview would offer researchers and students a tool to gather data regarding classroom practices from the teacher’s perspective. The refined interview would be useful to researchers studying daily classroom practices. It may offer unique insight regarding the ways in which varying practices offer differing pathways to quality. In this sense, data gathered with this interview may help future researchers to develop a more comprehensive concept of quality in early childhood programs. In addition, the refined interview holds promise as a tool to better understand classroom practices and thus design targeted staff development resources or interventions. Your participation in this project will be part of the pilot phase, meaning the interview is being tested as a tool for gathering data. The results from your interview will be used to determine whether the interview questions are effective and useful.

You will be asked to participate in an interview, which will last around one hour. The interview will be audio taped. Any information collected in this study that would allow you to be identified by name will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your written permission or if required by law. The cumulative results of this study will be published, but the names or identity of participants will not be made known. All data and documentation forms collected by the researcher will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

The risks from participating in this study may include emotional distress and fatigue during the interview process. You are free to skip any questions or request to take a break from the interview, and your participation remains voluntary at all times. You may discontinue your participation in this study at any time. You will not receive any monetary compensation for participating in this study. Interviews will be scheduled at a
mutually convenient time, and will be conducted between March 2011 and December 2011.

If you wish to voice concern about the research, you may direct your question(s) to Research and Sponsored Projects, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, or phone (818) 677-2901. If you have specific questions about this study you may contact Dr. Jan Fish, Ed. D., faculty advisor, 1811 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330-8265, or phone (818) 677-7821.

You should understand that the approval of your participation is completely voluntary, and you may decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Likewise, the researcher may cancel this study at any time.

During the course of the project participants will be audio taped. Your initials here _____ signify your consent to be audiotape. The researcher at the conclusion of the study will destroy all audiotapes collected.

I have read the above and understand the conditions outlined for participation in the described study. I have been provided with a copy of this consent form to keep and I give informed consent to participate in the study.

Your
Name________________________________________  Last                 First

Signature______________________________________ Date __________________

Witness/P.I. Signature _________________________ Date __________________

Thank you for taking the time to read and sign this form. If you have signed this form, please return it in the envelope provided by mail to:

April Hoover
1020 Via Impresso
Newbury Park, CA 91320

Keep one copy of this consent form for your records understanding that your confidential background information will not have your name on it.
APPENDIX B: EXPERIMENTAL SUBJECTS BILL OF RIGHTS

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

EXPERIMENTAL SUBJECTS
BILL OF RIGHTS

The rights below are the rights of every person who is asked to be in a research study. As an experimental subject I have the following rights:

1) To be told what the study is trying to find out,

2) To be told what will happen to me and whether any of the procedures, drugs, or devices is different from what would be used in standard practice,

3) To be told about the frequent and/or important risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that will happen to me for research purposes,

4) To be told if I can expect any benefit from participating, and, if so, what the benefit might be,

5) To be told the other choices I have and how they may be better or worse than being in the study,

6) To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study,

7) To be told what sort of medical treatment (if needed) is available if any complications arise,

8) To refuse to participate at all or to change my mind about participation after the study is started. This decision will not affect my right to receive the care I would receive if I were not in the study.

9) To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.

10) To be free of pressure when considering whether I wish to agree to be in the study.

If I have other questions I should ask the researcher or the research assistant, or contact Research and Sponsored Projects, California State University, Northridge, 18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, or phone (818) 677-2901.
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Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. The purpose of this interview is to gain insight into your daily routine and daily classroom practices, to better understand what you do as a teacher and why. It is our hope that an interview will allow for teachers’ perspectives to be better heard and understood, as classroom assessments are often conducted through observation. This interview today is part of a pilot program to develop a more effective interview, thus, the effectiveness of the following interview questions will be assessed. Please feel free to answer openly and honestly, and ask questions at any time.

Walk me through your day. What typically happens once you arrive at school?

If children are already present when you arrive or when other teachers arrive, how do you share information with other adults (such as parents and teachers)?

What typically happens when a child arrives at school for the day?

When you arrive, where are the children or what are they doing?

Who else is usually in the classroom with you?

How does the rest of your day go?

Tell me about the classroom’s main daily transitions.

What are you typically doing during those times?

What kinds of challenges might you face on a typical day or week?

Tell me about some of the routines that occur in your classroom, either daily or less frequently.

What influences your daily routine?

What are your main goals (or hopes) for the children in your classroom?

What is your favorite part of your curriculum?
What are your favorite things about your classroom?

What is your favorite part of your day here?

Which part of your curriculum do you feel is most important for your children?

What are the most important needs of the children who you serve?

Tell me about your greatest concerns for the children in your class as they continue their education. (OR what do you believe will be your children’s greatest challenges as they continue their education)

What do you feel will be the greatest strengths of the children who you serve, as they continue their education?

How does your program differ from other centers?

In what ways are your classroom practices similar to
   a) your culture
   b) your own personal experience in early childhood programs as a child
   c) how you were raised

In what ways are your classroom practices similar to your:
   a) Prior teaching experiences
   b) ECE training
   c) Formal education

How do you choose what to do in your classroom?

How do you know that what you’re doing is effective? What strategies do you use?

What do you think makes up a quality program?

What do you see as quality in your program?

What challenges or obstacles do you face as you work in this center?

How about in your classroom?

What support you need, or what support do you currently have to overcome those?

What would you like for parents to know about your program?

What do you want other teachers in the field to know about your program?
If you were a child in your classroom, what would be the most meaningful element to you, or what aspect of your classroom would influence you the most?

How do you think you benefit from working here as opposed to another center?

What makes your experience here unique?

Why do you think parents choose this center as opposed to other centers?

How do you think your center is perceived by people in the ECE community?

How about the community at large?

What factors played a role in your choice to a job at this center?

How did you come to work at this center?

If you were given an empty classroom, and if everything you could possibly want were available, what would you bring into your classroom?

Who at the center supports you in your work, and in what ways?

Describe your planning and reflection time.

What opportunities do you have to: observe, document, reflect, and plan?

When you have a really great day at school, who do you share it with?

When you have a really challenging day at work, who do you share it with?

What is your favorite part of your job?

Thank you for your time – and for being a part of this project.
APPENDIX D: ECI, VERSION 2

ECOCULTURAL CLASSROOM INTERVIEW:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MEASURE TO GATHER INFORMATION ON
PRESCHOOL TEACHERS’ DAILY PRACTICES

April Hoover
CSUN
February 24, 2012

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. The purpose of this interview is to
gain insight into your daily routine and daily classroom practices, to better understand
what you do as a teacher and why. It is our hope that an interview will allow for
teachers’ perspectives to be better heard and understood, as classroom assessments are
often conducted through observations by a person from outside the classroom. This
interview today is part of a pilot program to develop a more effective interview, thus, the
effectiveness of the following interview questions will be assessed. Please feel free to
answer openly and honestly, and ask questions at any time.

This first set of questions address the daily operations of your classroom. They will help
me gain insight into what typically happens throughout your day.

1. Walk me through your day. What typically happens once you arrive at school?

2. When you arrive, where are the children and what are they doing?

3. What is it like when a child arrives at school for the day?
   a) If children are already present when you arrive or when other teachers
      arrive, how do you share information with other adults (such as parents
      and teachers)?

4. Tell me about the classroom’s main daily transitions.

5. What are you typically doing during those times?

6. How does the rest of your day go?

7. Who else is usually in the classroom with you?

8. What opportunities do you have to: observe, document, reflect, and plan?

9. Describe your planning and reflection time.

10. When you have a really great day at school, who do you share it with?
11. When you have a really challenging day at work, who do you share it with?

12. What is your favorite part of your job?

The next set of questions that I will address the curriculum and routines in the classroom, as well as identify the strengths and needs of the children your program serves.

13. Tell me about some of the routines that occur in your classroom, either daily or less frequently.

14. What influences your daily routine?

15. What are your main goals (or hopes) for the children in your classroom?

16. What is your favorite part of your curriculum?

17. What are your favorite things about your classroom?

18. What is your favorite part of your day here?

19. Which part of your curriculum do you feel is most important for your children?

20. What are the most important needs of the children who you serve?

21. What do you feel will be the greatest strengths of the children whom you serve, when they leave your classroom and as they continue their education?

22. What do you believe will be the children’s greatest challenges as they continue their education?

23. Imagine you are a child in your classroom. What aspect of the classroom would be the most meaningful for you?

This third set of questions helps me understand your experiences, education and values and how these relate to your program.

24. In what ways are your classroom practices similar to
   a) your own personal experiences as a young child
   b) how you were raised
   c) your experience in early childhood programs as a child

25. In what ways are your classroom practices similar to your
   a) prior teaching experiences
b) coursework and in-service education in ECE

26. How do you choose what to do in your classroom?

27. How do you know that what you’re doing is effective for the children? What strategies do you use to find out?

28. What do you think makes up a quality program?

29. What do you see as quality in your program?

30. What kinds of challenges might you face on a typical day or during a typical week?
   a) What challenges or obstacles do you face as you work in this center?
   b) How about in your classroom?

31. What support do you need, or what support do you currently have to overcome these obstacles?

32. Who at the center supports your work and in what ways?

This fourth set of questions tap into the uniqueness of your program and its impact on families and the community.

33. How does your program differ from other centers?

34. What would you like for families to know about your program?

35. Why do you think families choose this center, as opposed to other centers?

36. How do you think your center is perceived by people working in the ECE community?

37. What factors played a role in your choice of a job at this center?
   a) How did you come to work at this center?

38. How do you think you benefit from working here, as opposed to working at another center?

39. What makes your experience here unique?

Thank you very much for your time – and for being a part of this project.