

TEACHING TO PROMOTE PROSOCIAL  
BEHAVIOR IN TAIWANESE AND  
AMERICAN KINDERGARTEN  
CHILDREN

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### **Background**

The purpose of this study was to do a comparison of kindergarten teaching to promote prosocial behavior. This research topic came from my first year teaching experience in Taiwan. We usually call the teacher's first year of teaching as "the survival year." In this year the teacher is evaluated to test if she can overcome all the difficulties of her teaching in order to be able to go on to the second year. My first year teaching experience was so hard that I never thought I would survive. I remembered the passion and the beautiful dreams I had for teaching when I was hired by a famous kindergarten school in the Taichung city in Taiwan. In my eyes, all young children in front of me were so cute and pure. However, when days went by, my beautiful dream of teaching faded day by day. The conflicts between the young children and their less caring behavior occupied most of my teaching time. Most seriously, my confidence in teaching suffered. I started to wonder if there is anything that could be done to make my students behave appropriately, and also address the issue of classroom conflicts. I wondered how the students could help each other in order to minimize the conflicts in my classroom and start to care for each other. The other teacher in my classroom, and I, along with the principal, tried to think of different ways to

address the situation to make our classroom atmosphere friendlier, caring, and conducive to learning. From that time, it became my objective to promote children's prosocial behavior and thereby to promote a classroom community where learning could take place.

Since I started this phenomenological research, I became more and more curious about the phenomenon that I was investigating. I was also interested in discussing this issue with other teachers about their individual experiences. Fortunately, my father has been an elementary teacher for thirty-three years. I tried to address this issue with him and asked his opinion. According to him, one of the dominant problems that he faced when he started teaching was conflict among children. He realized that an effective teacher has to resolve conflicts among children and their social behavior. I think that promoting prosocial behavior is one of the ways for teachers to control these conflicts. Discussing this issue with my father made me realize that this problem is not only important, but also has existed for a long time.

During this research, I also got an opportunity to discuss this problem with my former classmates in teachers college. All of us went through the same teacher-training program; therefore, I felt that their opinions were important. However, I was sad to learn that many of them had quit teaching kindergarten during their survival years. As we discussed, I realized that a very important reason that they quit teaching was because they had difficulties dealing with during the classroom conflicts and the antisocial behavior among their students. This made me aware how much the problem has a negative effect on teachers. My

meeting with these teachers was interesting because I got various perspectives from people who have had different interactions and experiences with children. In addition, I also realized that the problem of classroom conflicts is so important and extensive.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Rutherford (2000) proposes that aggressive and violent behaviors are increasing among today's students. Research also indicates that aggressive behavior and classroom conflicts are common in American schools (Hoffman, 1996; Wanatt, 1996). Violence and conflicts in the classroom are also inevitable in schools in Taiwan. Duhon-Haynes (1996) stated that school violence and the lack of a sense of peace and caring are major issues influencing teaching and learning in schools. Students in most cultures are exposed to increasing violent situations through the media, family and society. In addition, students are from diverse backgrounds, and conflict is very easy to occur among them because of lack of common understanding of each other's culture and background.

Aggressive behavior and conflicts in the classroom not only frustrate the teacher but may also negatively influence the quality and quantity of teaching and learning. This becomes a great problem for teachers. The importance of solving this problem cannot be over emphasized.

The problem of this study is that: classroom conflicts are universal, these conflicts are the result of asocial behavior among children, and thereby have negative effects on both the teaching by teachers and the learning by students. In

summary, the main problem of this study becomes how to promote prosocial behavior among kindergarten students.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to compare two American kindergarten teachers' practices for promoting prosocial behavior to a Taiwanese teacher's perspective as a former kindergarten teacher in Taiwan. This comparison of experiences and practices will lead to a better understanding of the nature and importance of teaching prosocial behavior among kindergarten children. An additional purpose of this study is to deepen the understanding of ways of reducing aggressive behavior and classroom conflicts by promoting prosocial behavior among young children in kindergarten classrooms.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study has two main objectives:

1. To compare different teacher stories as lived experience in the classroom by kindergarten teachers in America and Taiwan. The comparison will deepen our understanding of similarities and differences in promoting prosocial behavior among kindergarten students in both countries.
2. To analyze kindergarten teachers' lived experiences in order to identify ways to promote prosocial behavior among young children.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study will be to increase understanding of how to create a classroom community by minimizing aggressive behavior and classroom conflicts in kindergarten with the purpose of promoting young children's prosocial behavior. This increased understanding may help us to be more effective in creating an atmosphere free from conflicts. It may also help us to identify ways and means of implementing techniques of kindergarten teaching.

### **Research Questions**

1. What does it mean to teach to promote prosocial behavior in young children?
2. What similarities/differences can be found in the lived experiences of promoting prosocial behavior between two American kindergarten teachers and a Taiwanese kindergarten teacher?

### **Assumptions**

It is assumed that lived experiences reflected upon, result in a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990). In addition, comparisons of opinion and experiences give a better understanding of the nature of teaching prosocial behavior. Finally, it is assumed that the participants in this research will communicate without any inhibition and bias.

## Definitions of Terms

Prosocial behavior: Prosocial behavior is voluntary behavior that an individual does himself/herself to help or benefit others without outside reward or punishment. These include terms such as empathy, helping, sharing, kindness, conformity, friendliness, cooperation, taking turns, and self-control. (Bar-Tal, 1976).

Kindergarten: Kindergarten is a level of school for young children aged 4 to 6. Kindergarten could be a place to satisfy and encourage children's aptitude for play, observation, imitation, learning, and construction of knowledge (Branscombe, Castle, Dorsey, Surbeck, & Taylor, 2000).

Phenomenological study: Phenomenological study is a study that seeks the individual's perceptions and meaning of a phenomenon or experience. Typically, phenomenological study asks, "What is the participants' experience like?" The intent is to understand and describe an event from the point of view of the participant. The feature that distinguishes phenomenological study from other qualitative research approaches is that the subjective experience is at the center of the inquiry. (van Manen, 1990).

Teachers' lived experience: Teachers' individual experiences as lived daily. This includes their reflections on teaching experiences.

Theme analysis: "Theme analysis refers to the process of recovering the theme or themes that are embodied and dramatized in the evolving meaning and imagery of the work." (van Manen, 1990, p.78).

Teacher story/narrative: Teacher story/narrative refers to told or written autobiographical information about individual teaching experiences by teachers. These personal experiences are used as tools for reflection (Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995).

Anecdote: Anecdote is a short narrative of a specific incident of an interesting and amusing nature. According to van Manen (1990), an anecdote is a certain kind of narrative with a point.



## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

Since this thesis focuses on how to promote prosocial behavior among kindergarten children, it is important to understand relevant research in this area. The purpose of this chapter is to take the reader through the relevant literature of studies on children's prosocial behavior. For this topic, both theory and practice of the research are important. For theory, I would like to discuss prosocial behavior teaching and learning in existing developmental theories. Under practice, I will talk about issues like antisocial and prosocial behavior.

#### **Relevant Theories of Prosocial Behavior**

When talking about prosocial behavior, the first question that comes to one's mind is "Is prosocial behavior inborn, natural, or learned from the environment?" We can investigate prosocial behavior through four relevant theories. These theories are: biological theory, psychoanalytic theory, social learning theory, and cognitive developmental theory. By conducting this investigation we can have a more integrated understanding about prosocial behavior, especially when it relates to young children, as suggested by Chen (1992) in her altruistic behavior developmental theory.

### Biological Theory

The biological theory is based on studying animal behavior. This theory is explained in two perspectives about prosocial behavior. Hamilton (1964) used the kinship selection to explain prosocial behavior and indicated that the older generation passes on the prosocial gene to the next generation. Campbell (1965), explains the relationship and maintenance of friendship and development in the social group. This means that survival depends on belonging to and maintenance of the groups. The group membership serves as a protection of the members and a supply of basic needs of the members.

### Psychoanalytic Theory

The psychoanalytic theory is focused on the personality and social area. All human concepts or behaviors result from our struggling between “id” and “superego”. Freud (1964) used “id” to explain the initiation of aggressive behavior, and used “superego” to explain the prosocial behavior. Until the child is five or six years old, he/she will have this prosocial behavior when the environment provides positive identification and modeling. For example, mothers who provide a model of caring and trust will help their children to structure personalities and behavior in prosocial ways.

### Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory emphasizes learning through observation and continued reinforcement. The structure and the process of the behavior is from observation, continued reinforcement, and the rewards of the behavior (Bandura,

1977). Shaffer (1994) proposed that friendship is the agent of socialization, because children reinforce, imitate, and influence each other, so they can maintain their interactive relationship. Aggressive and prosocial behavior is generated from imitation and reinforcement of behavior. We can say that this theory already recognizes that young children have the ability to observe and learn behavior, also they have the capability of reinforcing friendship and reinforcing relationships within the group.

### Cognitive Developmental Theory

Cognitive developmental theory focuses on the importance of children's interpersonal development. This theory states that children's prosocial behavior develops with the growth of the child and prosocial behavior is positively related to moral judgment ability and cognitive skills, such as perspective taking. The theory admits that when children have the perspective-taking ability, it is the beginning of their prosocial behavior. Even though Piaget (1965) proposed that young children are still egocentric, Eisenberg (1982) indicated that young children can make many empathic references to others' needs when reasoning about their prosocial behavior. We can thus infer that young children are not totally egocentric and they are capable of prosocial behavior.

All four theories are helpful for us to understand prosocial behavioral development from different perspectives. Biological theory analyzes prosocial behavior from human group behavior and emphasizes that humans have prosocial behavior naturally. Psychoanalytic theory focuses on how the early years of

parenting, caring relationships and caring social experiences influence young children's value systems and their behavior in the future. Social learning theory emphasizes that external influence and behavior reinforcement are useful for the development of children's prosocial behavior. Through observing others they learn new behavior and increase prosocial behavior or reduce negative behavior. Cognitive developmental theory emphasizes that children engage in prosocial behavior when they become able to take another's perspective and use this ability to maintain relationships. Affect or care for the other leads to an interest in maintaining positive interactions with others (DeVries & Zan, 1994).

### **Practical Aspects of Prosocial Behavior**

Many studies about children's social behavior have been done. We can classify the research that discusses the practical aspect of prosocial behavior into two groups. The first group deals with research related to antisocial behavior, while the second group deals with research on how to overcome antisocial behavior and promote prosocial behavior.

#### **Antisocial behavior**

Antisocial behavior is defined as "recurrent violations of socially prescribed patterns of behavior" (Simcha-Fagen, Langner, Gersten, & Eisenberg, 1975, p.7) (as cited in Mayer, 2001, p.2). Antisocial behavior is also shown in aggressive behavior among children. Haskins (1985) has done some research on

children through their first two or three years of schooling, and found several aspects like, aggression, and assertiveness. In his research schoolteachers rated aggressiveness of several types and in several situations and supplied information about managing the children, their use of conflicts avoiding strategies, and other associated skills and behaviors. A similar study was done by Kellam (1999) who studied the influence of the first-grade classroom on the development of aggressive behavior. He found that the first-grade classroom environment and poverty appear to influence the cause of the development of aggressive behavior, especially that of aggressive boys. Kellam's study suggests that the origins of variations in classroom aggressive levels came from the classroom teacher or the mix of students and the teacher. Therefore, it can be concluded from this study that it is important to understand the cause of aggressive behavior and control it at the early stage like the first grade or even before. A similar finding by the Canadian Youth Foundation (2000) states that aggressive behavior, in psychological and criminological literature, is mainly depicted as an outcome of children's and adolescents' inability to establish positive interactions with their surroundings. Also the nature of the child's family plays a significant role in the potential development of early aggressive behavior. This study also listed factors outside the family like the school environment and peer influence which affected aggressive behavior. The article ends up with the need to focus on the family, school, and community to prevent violence among children.

In summary, we can say that most research has found that violence among students are related to their first schooling experience. Therefore, it is very

important to know that violence and aggression which reflect antisocial behavior can be controlled at the beginning of school.

### Prosocial Behavior

When we review research that focuses on promoting prosocial behavior, we can see three main types of research. The first kind of research deals with preventing violence among students, the second type deals with the experience of socialization, and the last type of research deals with the role of school and the teacher in dealing with violence and promoting prosocial behavior.

#### **Preventing violence among children**

If we consider the research that talks about preventing violence among school students, first we need to understand the nature and extent of violence among school students (Guetzloe, 1995). There are several strategies to prevent school violence. Schwartz (1996) states that prevention strategies include student monitoring, and other security measures. Walker (1995) feels that violent student behavior can be alleviated through the development of a caring, inclusive school culture; programs that teach prosocial behavior, and foster self- esteem; and collaboration with community social- service agencies. Similarly, Duhon- Haynes (1996) shows how the educational system provides an excellent opportunity for adults and children to explore and practice mutuality and reciprocity of respect and caring. Research done on controlling violence is also extensive. Rutherford (2000) suggests two types of intervention to help teachers and school staff

manage aggressive behavior. Schwartz (1999) also provides strategies beyond the curricula to control violence and aggression. She recommends a comprehensive multidisciplinary approach nurturing children at home, at school, and in the community.

The second kind of research related to preventing antisocial behavior deals with changing contextual factors. Mayer (1995) found causes of antisocial behavior related to contextual factors like students' involvement, unclear rules for students, lack of critical social skills, and deficits in discriminating between prosocial and antisocial behavior. He recommends that several strategies should be used which help address individual differences. According to him the most important solution is "the constructive discipline approach." This approach includes contextual factors like charity, support, and individual differences that have a positive rather than a punitive disciplinary approach. Appalachia Educational Laboratory (1995) has done a study about preventing antisocial behavior in at-risk students. In the policy brief, it examines the risk factors that contribute to the development of antisocial behavior, as well as protective factors that help children become resilient to risk, especially children with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and learning disabilities. The document lists risk factors like individual characteristics, academic failure, social failure, emotional impairment, and differential treatment, which lead to antisocial behavior. To prevent this, the Hawkins' model of bonding is suggested. Three conditions must be present for bonding to occur: an opportunity for bonding to take place,

cognitive and social skills to help children succeed in bonding opportunities, and a consistent system of recognition and reinforcement for accomplishment.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder needs some attention here. The prevalence of ADHD is estimated at 3 to 5% of school-age children in the U.S. Current research has shown that ADHD is not characterized by inability to sustain attention, but “rather by the inability to sustain attention to tasks that are not intrinsically rewarding and/or that require effort” (Kaufmann, Kalbfleisch, & Castellanos, 2000, p.11). This disorder may cause some problems for the students’ behavior in the classroom, especially because of poor attention, and may have an effect on their prosocial behavior.

Most experts feel that a comprehensive support system is needed to prevent antisocial behavior among children. Carter (1994) explains how violence in school is rising and still ignored. She suggests that schools have to take the responsibility for early intervention with strategies like childcare programs, classroom discipline, conflict mediation, and cooperative classrooms in early childhood, violence prevention, full service schools, gang prevention, home-school partnerships, mentoring programs, and peer helping peers programs. In conclusion, we can say that controlling violence and aggression in school is an important concern among school researchers.

### **Socialization**

The next type of research related to prosocial behavior deals with the idea of socialization. Socialization is defined as the process in which children and



adults learn from others. Eisenberg (1983) describes socialization as the development of empathy and prosocial behavior. In this report, she discusses methods like inductions, preaching, and modeling, direct instruction, punitive techniques of discipline, and reinforcement as techniques, which develop prosocial behavior. It would however be useless to compare if any of these methods are more effective than others. Eisenberg points out “the effectiveness of each practice is probably a function, in part, of both the total configuration of socialization techniques to which a child is exposed and the affective environment in which the socialization practices take place (p.7). She also suggests that socializes should nurture and provide emotional support for children. Schwartz (1999) continues this argument of cultivation of social competence in children by identifying causes of children’s violent and aggressive behavior, and ways to prevent it. According to him, to develop social competence, there should be a kind of formal and informal antiviolent curricula, and the use of several comprehensive, multidisciplinary approaches to nurturing children at home, school, and in the community.

One way of schooling for socialization would be of developing empathy in children. Empathy can be defined as that which “contains both a cognitive and affective dimension....then the term empathy [is] used in at least two ways; to mean a predominantly cognitive response, understanding how another feels, or to mean an affective communion with the other.” (Gallo, 1989, p.100) (as cited in Cotton, 1997, p.2) Cotton (1997) describes education and morality for developing empathy among children. She found that while mothers and elders have a positive

impact, physical punishment, inconsistent care and parental rejection, have negative effects on the development of empathy. Cotton suggests empathy training classroom programs which focus on cooperative learning, cross-age and peer tutoring, and humanistic approaches for the emotionally disturbed.

One aspect of socialization is personal and social adjustment especially with peers. A report on Evaluating the National Outcomes, entitled Children (2001), shows that for personal and social adjustment there should be care for each other, mutual respect, and appreciation of diversity, empathy, altruism, and prosocial behavior. It is not appropriate to measure this in children who have not yet developed the necessary capability for self-control and perspective taking. According to Piaget (1965), by age eight, most children begin to develop a sense of mutual respect, based in part on the more equal give-and take they experience in relationships with their peers. Therefore, the emotional foundations of prosocial behavior lie in early childhood and children should get opportunities to learn and practice caring, prosocial behavior through various community-based programs, and to experience mutual relationships outside of the family context. This social adjustment is found in peer relationship. Cassidy, Kirsh, Scoltu, and Parke (1996) conducted three studies to explore the connection between attachment and peer related representation. The first two studies found out a positive relationship in peer feeling in peer-related representations.

Certain things need to be avoided while developing prosocial behavior among children. Kohn (1986) feels that competition is never healthy and it creates

antisocial behavior. Instead of competition, he suggests intrinsic motivation, self-esteem, and the importance of feeling well or security which help children come together and establish good relationships. He also argues against the system of reward and punishments in schools. Kohn (1994) states that rewards do not help in developing good values or achievement. They create mutual hatred among children. Therefore, one should try to cultivate intersocialization of positive values in order to help socialization among children. However, some writers have questioned this argument. Fabes, Fuly, Eisenberg, and May (1989) show a positive relationship between reward and socialization. They suggest that children's responses to reward depend in part on their experiences with rewards.

In summary, it can be said that socialization and prosocial behavior are positively related to each other. Socialization leads to personal and social adjustment, and thereby prosocial behavior.

### **How school and teachers promote prosocial behavior among children**

The next main type of research on prosocial behavior is how the school and the teachers promote prosocial behavior among children. Kohn (1991) says that punishing and bribing through rewards, is not a good method for developing prosocial behavior. We need to encourage children to develop individual values and help them to create a personal and social commitment to those values. He found external standard and parental influence extremely important. Hence, he feels that schools should educate parents to educate their children. He focused on a model of induction, authoritative parenting, demandingness, modeling, and

democratic family process. To do this, he suggests a parents training program as a solution. Soloman, Schaps, Watson, and Battistich (1992) go a step further and deal with creating caring school and classroom communities for all students. They feel that belonging to a supportive social group is one of the basic needs of children. They suggest a child development project to help teachers to promote children's prosocial development and their internalized commitment to learning: their kindness and consideration, concern for others, interpersonal awareness and understanding, and ability and inclination to balance consideration of their own needs with consideration for the needs of others, as well as their intrinsic motivation and attainment of higher-level academic skills. They suggest a school-wide child development program in which there are assemblies, involving the whole school staff, promotion of interpersonal connection, community helping activities, and helping activities beyond the school. They also have outlined the administrators' role in such a project.

The classroom is itself a social experience. Therefore, school can help promote prosocial behavior by creating good social moral atmosphere that will influence children's development positively. Such a classroom can be called a constructivist classroom. DeVries and Zan (1995) explore group time, decision making, and conflict resolution as they occur in constructivist classrooms by respect between teacher and students. An example of this constructivist classroom and its effect on prosocial behavior is found in the aspect of rule creating. Castle & Rogers (1994) show how student participation in rule making encourages active involvement, reflection, meaningful connections, respect for rules, a sense

of community, problem solving through negotiation, cooperation, inductive thinking, and a sense of ownership.

If we look at the above literature, we can conclude that the main outcome of this research is how to support students and teachers in developing prosocial behavior among young children. This makes the teachers' role extremely important. The teachers' role in promoting prosocial behavior can be studied in issues like cultivating discipline, behavior management, and teaching social skills.

One of the principles of teaching prosocial behavior is to minimize misbehavior by positive discipline and child guidance. Barakat and Clark (2001) suggest several proactive strategies like setting clear, consistent rules, making certain the environment is safe and worry-free, and showing interest in the child's activities. They suggest a method of inculcating positive discipline by techniques such as natural consequences, logical consequences, fix-up, timeout, and redirection. Barakat and Clark feel it is important to know what to expect from a child at a particular age and feel that from two to six, children learn many social skills. Parents as first teachers should know about their children, grow with them, nurture them, and achieve self-discipline for the children. Another important area for teachers is in behavior management. Malm (1992) presents a system of proactive classroom management for use in elementary school. It includes planning for preventing rather than reacting to behavior problems and dealing with the entire class rather than with individual student behavior. Similarly, Satchel (1992) shows how one can increase prosocial behavior of elementary students in grades K-6 through a conflict resolution management program. The

program was implemented and the data used to evaluate the practical interventions indicated a positive effect on behavior modification. The behavior change touched areas like socialization, sharing, empathy, and caring. Similar studies were done by Porro (1996) and Prosis (1996). Prosis however found that a teacher's interpersonal skills help a lot in developing students' behavior. The teachers' role in helping children develop their own constructive strategies to control aggression and encourage cooperation were studied by Jewett (1992). On the other hand, Richardson (1996) found out that programs developed to teach social and emotional competence for special-needs-students could be applied to a regular classroom setting with the help of competent teachers.

Another kind of research deals with skills streaming in early childhood. McGinnis and Goldstein (1990) show how teaching prosocial behavior alternatives at an early age may enhance a child's personality and help prevent some serious difficulties in later childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood. They suggest that the skill-streaming method systematically teaches behavior necessary for effective social interactions.

There seems to be some research done on how teachers can evaluate their children's prosocial behavior. Beaty (1998) provides a teacher prosocial guidance checklist that allows teachers to evaluate themselves and their children to implement a prosocial guidance plan. The book promotes eight prosocial behaviors: self-esteem, empathy, friendliness, generosity, helpfulness, self-control, cooperation, and respect.

Thus, it can be said that the role of the teacher is very important. Schaps (1996) states that teachers should systematically develop relationships with students, involve them in planning and problem solving, help them learn classmates' strengths and interests, downplay competition, and involve all children in classroom chores.

### **Conclusion**

When we look at the literature on promoting prosocial behavior among young children, the following things can be observed: First, aggression and violence and antisocial behavior are related to each other. Second, children may have a little problem in perspective taking, and although young they may still have an individual perspective. However, it would be difficult for them to understand other persons' perspectives. Nevertheless, they do appreciate good social behavior. Third, prosocial behavior can be taught to children at an early age. Fourth, preventing violence and positive socialization can help in promoting prosocial behavior. And finally the school and the teacher can play a very constructive role in this area.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

#### **Introduction**

This was a qualitative study focused on the meaning of lived experiences. Qualitative research uses words as data, not numbers, to describe human experience or behavior. Qualitative research is also one kind of study that accepts the complex social world and describes and interprets situations. Therefore, it becomes a useful method to investigate more complicated human social behavior. Qualitative research is also important in studying children. Both Piaget and Kohlberg established their child developmental theories by observing and interviewing children's behaviors and phenomena.

#### **Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study**

Hermeneutic phenomenological study is the qualitative research approach used in this study. Hermeneutic phenomenological study is the study that can help us to have a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our daily-lived experiences in the life world (van Manen, 1990). van Manen feels that hermeneutic phenomenological research allows us to study the nature of a phenomenon and to investigate the meaning of the lived experience. When doing hermeneutic phenomenological research, language is a necessary tool to describe



and express the lived experience in a deeper and fuller way. van Manen also indicates that description is a powerful way to reawaken our basic experience of a phenomenon and through description we can experience the more foundational grounds of the experience.

Through this kind of study, teachers can reflect on their classroom experiences and develop deeper understanding of their own teaching experiences, and of what it means to be a teacher.

This study is a comparison of how two American and one Taiwanese kindergarten teacher view promoting young children's prosocial behavior. The main focus of this study is to interpret the lived experiences of teachers involved with the practice of promoting children's prosocial behavior both in the United States and Taiwan.

### **Methods**

Hermeneutic phenomenological method research was appropriate to explore the research question. The methods were:

1. Selection of participants
2. Data collection through protocol writing, observation, interviewing and self-narratives
3. Analysis of data to identify themes
4. Deriving conclusions based on these findings

### Selection of Participants

The selection of participants followed the method called purposive sampling. Gay (2000) states that purposive sampling is referred to as judgment sampling, in which the researcher selects a sample based on his or her experience or knowledge of the group to be sampled. Within the domain of purposive sampling are a number of specific approaches that are useful in qualitative research. Among these are: intensity sampling, homogeneous sampling, criterion sampling, snowball sampling, and random purposive sampling. For purposes of this study, I used snowball sampling: selecting a few people who can identify still other people who might be good participants. This approach is most useful when a study is carried on in a setting in which possible participants are scattered or not found in clusters.

Two American kindergarten teachers and a teacher from Taiwan were the participants in this study. I asked an expert to give me a reference of someone who knew kindergarten teachers and who knew about prosocial behavior among children. I got one reference. After she agreed to be interviewed, I also asked her to refer me to another kindergarten teacher whom she knew promoted prosocial behavior among children. I also interviewed her. Both these two American teachers teach in public school kindergartens in a midwestern rural community and teach students belonging to groups of different social status. Basically, I got three different kinds of participants in this study: one teaching students of higher socioeconomic level in the U.S., the other teaching students of lower

socioeconomic level in the U.S., and the third (myself), a former teacher from a different country-teaching students of a higher socioeconomic level in Taiwan. Here the socioeconomic level refers to the class to which the family of the students belongs based on teacher reports.

### Data Collection and Recording

#### **Protocol Writing**

van Manen (1990) states that to ask selected participants to write their experiences down will be the most straightforward way to go about research and to investigate the nature of a certain experience. So, as a part of the data collection plan, during the first individual meetings with the participants, I asked the participants to write a protocol about a time in which they were successful in promoting prosocial behavior. In the protocol writing they chose their own experiences, and hence provided a basis for discussion during the interview session. The protocol writing helped us to focus the interview or experiences on prosocial behavior. It also prepared both the participants as well as myself for the interview.

#### **Classroom Observations**

Although I had not planned to conduct observations of the classes, the teachers invited me to observe their classes. I got an opportunity to observe one class several times, and observed the other class one time. Both the observations were of two different kindergartens. I had a participant observation in a class

while I did non-participant observation in the other class. In the former, I participated and interacted with the students in the class. In the latter, I just sat in the class and took notes without interacting with the students. The observations gave me different perspectives. The whole direction of observation was students' classroom behavior and the teacher's attempts to prevent conflicts. As a result of the observations, I had a much better understanding of the protocol writings, which they gave me. It also made the interview more meaningful for us.

### **Interviewing**

The interview was conducted over a period of three weeks. During the first week, each of the participants, in a one-hour session discussed the purpose of the research, and got information about protocol writing. During the second week, each participant was interviewed for about one hour. The following questions were asked of participants.

1. Why did you choose to teach kindergarten?
2. What were your goals for children?
3. In what ways did you maintain a positive classroom atmosphere?
4. Have you ever had an experience with young children's social interaction that made you frustrated in your teaching? For example?
5. What did you do?
6. In what ways do you promote young children's prosocial behavior?

Open-ended questions were used to generate diversity in the information given. Originally, I had planned to conduct the interviews at the participants'

houses. However, the actual interview took place in their kindergarten classroom. Both interviews were about one hour long. All the interviews were audio taped, and notes were also taken during the interview.

### **My Teaching Narratives**

As the Taiwanese teacher, I engaged in memory work in which I recalled my experience as a kindergarten teacher in Taiwan. I recalled incidents from my teaching and incidents in which children demonstrated or failed to demonstrate prosocial behavior and what I did as their teacher. Then, I wrote a narrative about my experiences promoting prosocial behavior in my kindergarten teaching. I told my own story of what it means to help young children develop prosocial behavior. I also wrote these memories in a teaching narrative.

Therefore, there were four methods of data collection in my research process: protocol writing of the individual teachers, observation notes of the classrooms, transcription of the interviews, and my own teaching narratives.

### Analysis of Data

For this study, I used Manen's definition of theme in qualitative research. He defines "theme" as the process of insightful inventions, discovery, and disclosure. The theme is a tool for getting at the meaning of the experience.

van Manen (2000) states that grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but an act of "seeing" meaning. This study is going to compare two American kindergarten teachers' lived experiences for promoting prosocial behavior to another teacher's perspective as a former

kindergarten teacher in Taiwan. In order to have a better understanding of the meaning of promoting prosocial behavior, I used theme analysis to identify emerging themes.

In order to arrive at a theme, there are several approaches: the wholistic or sententious approach, the selective or highlighting approach, and the detailed or line-by-line approach (van Manen, 1990). In the selective or highlighting approach, the researcher locates process phrases that stand out and help in exploring the theme. In the detailed or line-by-line approach, every line of the data is analyzed. In my study, of comparative teaching of prosocial behavior, most of the participants agree on most points. They tend to be repetitive. In this situation, the selective approach or the line-by-line approach would be exhaustive, but would not lead to any additional findings. Therefore, I decided to use the wholistic or sententious approach.

In the wholistic or sententious approach, the text is concerned as a single unit and analyzed as a whole. This approach does presuppose that the researcher has a kind of judgment call and reads the text with an ability to see the patterns developing.

For this study, while using the wholistic approach, all data was studied in its entirety, and then compared to arrive at the relevant themes as follows.

1. Every interview was transcribed.
2. The protocols were collected.
3. The classroom observations were recorded as classroom notes.

4. For each teacher, the interview was read by the researchers and the research marked those sections, which contained important ideas, like those dealing with methods of teaching prosocial behavior.
5. The protocol for each teacher was also is read in the same way.
6. After reading through all the interviews, protocol and classroom notes, the researcher identified common ideas and try to organize them into broader themes.
7. After the themes were identified, the interviews and protocol were read to identify the common elements and differences between the participants,
8. Finally, the numbers of themes were reduced to a minimum of four broad categories and all the others themes rearranged under the categories.

While going through the data, it was observed that one theme led to another, and I ended with about fifteen themes that I could analyze. Each theme was comparatively considered and individual interpretation was provided. The main categories for themes for this research could be the role of the teacher, the role of the environment, teaching methods, and additional methods. Sub themes were recorded under each of the four categories.

#### **Limitations of the Methodology**

This study is about two kindergarten teachers and one Taiwanese kindergarten teacher and their lived classroom experiences of promoting social behavior among young children. However, there are some limitations in this study.

1. The study compares only two cultures and the results may be different with different participants due to the small number of participants.
2. The phenomenological study results cannot be generalized beyond the participants.
3. Since this is an individual and subjective research, even though I tried to minimize the errors of judgment, individual bias cannot be avoided.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Findings of the Research

In this chapter, I will summarize the results. Data sources include teacher interview transcripts, field notes of observations, and teachers' protocol writing samples. Each teacher wrote a protocol about a time in which they were successful in promoting prosocial behavior among young children. Then, I had a face-to-face interview with teachers over their teaching to promote prosocial behavior. Finally, since the two American teachers invited me, I observed their students' behavior and also how the teachers promote children's prosocial behavior in their classes. The classroom observation notes helped me to understand the opinions of the teachers better. In this chapter, I will first discuss the background and the teaching philosophy of these three kindergarten teachers followed by other observations. The data are organized into four major themes: role of the teacher, role of the environment, teaching methods, and additional methods. Each category is further broken down into sub themes as follows:

1. The role of the teacher:
  - a. Awareness of the problem
  - b. Teacher anxiety and confidence
  - c. Learning by experience
  - d. Controlling emotions
2. The role of the environment:

- a. Factors inside the classroom
  - b. Factors outside the classroom
3. Teaching methods:
- a. Timing of teaching prosocial behavior
  - b. Rule making as a technique of teaching prosocial behavior
  - c. Creating awareness of prosocial behavior among children
  - d. Holding classroom meetings
  - e. Resolution of conflicts
  - f. Use of reward and punishment
4. Additional methods:
- a. Bonding and ownership
  - b. Unique methods

For simplicity, I will label the teachers as teacher A, teacher B, and teacher C. Teachers A and B is the American teachers, and I am teacher C.

### **Background and Teaching Philosophy of the Teachers**

#### **Background of the teachers**

It is important to first know about the background of these three teachers. These teachers have contributed their opinions and experiences for this study. Each teacher comes from a different background and has different experiences. The backgrounds of these three teachers are described below.

### Teacher A

Teacher A is a kindergarten teacher who teaches in an average sized urban elementary school consisting of five hundred and twenty students in a mid-western community. In that school there are about seventy students in kindergarten (Interview Teacher A). Most students in this school belong to families who have a comparatively higher socio-economic level in the society. She has been a kindergarten teacher for nineteen years. She got her bachelor's degree in home economics education. However, because of her passion for nurturing and teaching children, she decided to continue her master's study in early childhood development. She has taught in both private and public kindergartens. Finally, she decided to teach in a public school because she likes public school and public schools usually belong to a larger organization.

### Teacher B

Teacher B is now a kindergarten teacher also in a similar average sized urban elementary school located in a mid-western community. Most students in this school belong to families who have a comparatively lower socio-economic level in the society (Interview, Teacher B). She has taught in this school for eight years. She got her college degree in general education. She got frustrated during her early years teaching in the second grade because of the lack of support and resources from other teachers. After that she decided to be a kindergarten teacher because she likes this age of child. To teach young children is her passion, love, and profession. Before she began teaching in public school, she taught in a small

preschool. The teachers there worked together and supported each other and it was a very rewarding experience for her. This experience also made her feel ready and confident for her further teaching.

### Teacher C

I am a kindergarten teacher from Taiwan. I got my bachelor's degree in early childhood education. I have taught kindergarten for three years. Presently, I am not teaching and am studying full-time. I got into early childhood education by accident. When I was younger, I wanted to be a teacher for a higher level like the primary level. However, I couldn't qualify for the exam. So, I changed my line of education to be trained as a kindergarten teacher. My early experience with kindergarten teaching was not very happy. In fact, I almost quit my teaching job because of the problem of handling children. However, now my perspective has changed a lot after being exposed to the profession. Now I am very positive about kindergarten teaching.

### **Teaching Philosophy**

These three teachers all have three similar main goals for their kindergarten teaching. First all of them agree with the importance of social development of young children. Secondly, they agree that social skills can be seen as the most important part of children's development. Thirdly, they feel that social skills not only affect children's relationships with other people but also play a very important role in their learning.

### Teacher A

Teacher A has several goals for teaching kindergarten children. She takes care of the children holistically, provides a conducive learning environment for them, and also helps parents to get involved with her teaching.

This teacher feels that academics are only one part of children's development. She wants to help children be successful and to help them achieve their different areas of development. In addition, she thinks that the kindergarten classroom is students' space. They should do what they like to do. Therefore, she will try to make her classroom an organized place to support children's development. Finally, she would also like to invite the parents to get involved with children's learning and growth in the classroom (Teacher A, Interview, Sep. 25, 2001).

### Teacher B

This teacher has three main goals for her kindergarten teaching. She focuses her goals on the growth of the children, the school family, and parental involvement.

Teacher B feels that she will help every child grow, and at the end of the year she can see the change in each child. She will never care where they start. In addition, she will try to make a school family for children to operate, care, respect, and get along with each other. Her last goal for teaching is that she wants to make the school and her classroom a positive and welcome place for the parents. She wants the parents to feel that they are welcome in her classroom. She

also likes her students to use kind words or sign language that they learned in the classroom to positively influences their family (Teacher B, Interview, Aug. 21, 2001).

### Teacher C

When I started kindergarten teaching there were three main goals for my teaching: making learning an enjoyable experience, making learners active learners, and teaching kindergarten students the art of problem solving.

First, I felt that a teacher should be aware that kindergarten students are young and should not feel the pressure of learning. It is the teacher's responsibility to make learning an enjoyable experience for children. Secondly, I felt that right at the kindergarten level, students should be given opportunities to interact, participate, and contribute to the classroom activities, and thus become active learners. Lastly, I felt that it is more important to teach students how to learn rather than what to learn. This also involves teaching problem solving (Teacher C, Protocol, Aug. 2001).

### *Teaching Prosocial Behavior*

#### **1. Role of the teacher**

The role of the teacher in promoting prosocial behavior is important. First, teachers have to be aware of the importance of prosocial behavior in their classrooms, be confident about their teaching, and continuously learn by experiences. For this, each teacher has her individual opinion.

### **Theme: Awareness of the problem**

Every teacher acknowledged the importance of being aware of problems and conflicts in the classroom.

#### Teacher A

Teacher A felt that teachers have to notice any sign of conflicts in their classrooms. She felt that it takes time for conflicts to surface, because at the beginning, students are more concerned about knowing each other. When this novelty ends and students become more concerned about their individual likes and dislikes, we can see conflicts being developed. At this time, the teacher should take the cue to call for a classroom discussion for expanding new rules.

After a couple of weeks of getting to know each other and getting the routines down, I notice the children beginning to have conflicts. Examples are rough playing at recess, wanting to sit by certain children at group time, leaving some children out, putting hands on children during group time and when in line (bothering), etc. This is my cue to call a class meeting and expand the use of rules.

Teacher A (Protocol, Sep. 2001, p.3)

#### Teacher B

Teacher B also felt that a teacher has to be aware of the indication of problems among children. However, she also felt that the teacher should try to step in as early as possible to avoid any unwanted consequences.

I think what a teacher needs to do is be very aware ..and treat each situation as an individual situation.....Instead of letting things out of control, I try to avoid them before it starts. I try to be very observant. I may be sitting on the carpet with a very small group working with

children, but I am aware of how many were trying to get their names written, listening to see if they were frustrated by that. And at the same time, I was watching children at the block area. So you get to know your room, and the sound of your room.

Teacher B (Interview, August 2001, p.26)

### Teacher C

Teacher C feels that the classroom should be a learning community. In this sense, the teacher should feel the responsibility of making the classroom safe, encouraging and trusting. Therefore, the teacher has to be aware of the conflicts and problems in the classroom.

When a teacher becomes aware of the conflicts in the classroom, many problems can be avoided in advance or situations can be prevented from getting worse.

I noticed that several children started to disturb the other sleeping children. ....They started to make whispering noises and the whole atmosphere became not conducive for the sleeping children. In order to avoid the situation from getting worse, I .....

Teacher C (Protocol, August 2001, p.15)

### **Theme: Teacher anxiety and confidence**

Each teacher has some definite idea about teacher anxiety and confidence in dealing with prosocial behavior.

### Teacher A

Teacher A felt that teachers should be optimistic and not be scared of the problems among the students. Problems can be reanalyzed as opportunities to improve one as well as the students.

My husband said that I am optimistic.....That I can always see a silver lining in every cloud. When there is a problem, I can always say



something good comes from this problem. It's part of my personality. And at anytime, when I see there is a conflict, I immediately think how this can become a learning experience.....I am a problem solver.

Teacher A (Interview, September, 25, 2001, p.4)

### Teacher B

Teacher B feels that frustrations are a natural part of experiences.

However, every teacher has to encounter them, not ignore them.

I am very interested in prosocial behavior because I've seen a change in children. I got frustrated when so much of my time is spent with behavior problems. But we can't avoid it, we can't pretend it doesn't exist. So, I think it is a universal frustration, but again it's not going to go away, unless you deal with it. You are not going to make progress. So you may just get up yourself and say okay, I got to deal with it.

Teacher B (Interview, August, 21, 2001, p.1)

### Teacher C

Teacher C, in her experience narrated an event when she failed to handle students. She acknowledges that poor planning and lack of experience makes the teacher anxious. This anxiety may lead the teacher to frustration and the teacher may start estimating one's own capacity.

Once they got out the classroom, they lost control. They started to run around and yelling. I shouted at them to stop, but they refused to listen to me.....At that moment, I gave up on them. And I had a strong feeling that I am incompetent and inexperienced.

Teacher C (Protocol, August 2001, p.15)

### **Theme: Learning by experience**

Two among the three teachers whom I studied agree that one could learn more and more about prosocial behavior by experience.

Teacher A

Teacher A felt that experience makes a teacher more confident in dealing with new and challenging situations as and when they arise in the classroom.

So much of what I do in my classrooms is based on me trying different methods and techniques and finding out what works best for different children and situations. The more experiences I have, the better equipped I am to respond appropriately to new children and situations. It is more than a bag of tricks. It is the experience of trying something, reflecting on the outcome and determining what worked were or what might work better in future situations.

(Teacher A, November 27, Interview).

Teacher B

Teacher B felt that more and more new situations help teachers in solving conflicts. New situations lead to new techniques in teaching prosocial behavior.

As you teach, every year you teach, you should gain more and more techniques.... And I know I have lots of different ways of doing things. After years and years, you learn how to deal with it in a very gentle way or respectful way. And I think if you are more confident, you can do it in a more relaxed manner with the child.

Teacher B (Interview, August 21, 2001, p.29)

Teacher C

Teacher C, being inexperienced initially learned that experience can make a better teacher. Therefore, hands on experience is very helpful for teachers who are standing out in a new profession.

One week later, I gave the students their prizes. However, two weeks later, I could feel the students were no longer excited about this anymore. I also got tired of following them up. I discovered that I was putting more than everything into this. Then, I started to wonder, was there any thing I could do to make the students behave appropriately spontaneously without me bribing them.

**Theme: Controlling emotions**

It is important for teachers to control their emotions. In both the interviews, the teachers focus on the importance for kindergarten teachers to control their emotions, especially during problems of bad behavior among students.

Teacher A

Teacher A feels that teachers need to control their anger. For this, one should create a sense of trust and responsibility. Trust and responsibility make the child more committed towards behaving properly in the classroom.

Teachers need to always know that you are in control. If you are angry, then you lose control. And if you are out of control and it will no longer a safe place for them. You are the support system. You are the support system for them, and you are going to remain calm. And you know, when David broke my clip, and he say it's broke. I say "it's okay and it's just plastic." And that could become a real comfortable situation for them. And I didn't make it an issue, because it wasn't really an issue.....I think there is no place for anger, no place for putting down. You just don't do that because what they learn about respect is what they see you do. And I respect the kids so much.

Teacher A (Interview, September, 25) 2001, p. 16-17

Teacher B

Teacher B is also against shouting at students. The teacher should have firm but gentle voice. If the teacher cannot control her emotions, children get distracted and turn their attention to the teachers' emotions rather than listen to her.

Well, if you get caught with the emotions, children see emotion; they don't care about your words. So if you can be almost indifferent or calm, then they are not going to plug your emotions, they are going to plug into what you are going to tell them about their behavior. ....If the teacher is doing all the yelling anyway, it may stop it real quickly, but they are scared. And it doesn't have a long-term effect.

Teacher B (Interview, August 21, p.30)

### Teacher C

Teacher C had a bad experience in which she was helpless. Therefore, she feels that shouting and anger does not work. Even if the teacher feels helpless, she should not make the students feel that the teacher is weak. Hence, the teacher has to control her emotions not only of anger, but also of helplessness.

I got very angry and I shouted at them to stop, but they refused to listen to me.....I started to wonder why the children like to listen to the other teacher even though she never shows her anger to the children.

Teacher C (Protocol, August 2001, p.15)

## **2. Role of the Environment**

These teachers discussed the role of the school environment, both in the classroom and outside the classroom. Thus, when dealing with this theme, we have to discuss factors affecting prosocial behavior both inside and outside the classroom.

### **Theme: Factors in the classroom**

The classroom is the most important place for students to interact with each other. Also. Students spend a lot of time inside the classroom. Therefore, factors present within the classroom are extremely important. Two main factors

were identified from the interviews and protocols: the sense of safety and security within the classroom, and the number of students in a class.

*A. The sense of safety and security within the classroom*

Teacher A

Teacher A felt that the classroom is a learning environment. Therefore, it should have a positive atmosphere. One has to create a sense of safety and security in the school. A student must feel comfortable in the classroom. Interestingly, this teacher pointed out that each class has some diversity. Diversity may not be cultural, it could be individual differences.

I want to create a community in which children display mutual respect, have the ability to resolve conflicts, and develop social skills that enable them to function in a group.

Teacher A (Protocol, September, 25, 2001, p.1)

Familiar installs a feeling of safety so the children can get to know each other, their new teacher, their new room, and focus on understanding our routines for each day within a safe environment.

Teacher A (Protocol, September 2001, p.2)

I do believe my first responsibility is to make school a safe place for all, so I help children understand the differences between someone bothering them and hurting them. We talk about that. When we talk about sometimes people can bother you and make you a little bit uncomfortable, or make you what personal don't like, and you can say "I don't like that." And I say you can try to work it out yourself. But if someone is hurting you, or you feel afraid, you need to come to me immediately. Because my job is to make sure this is a safe place for you, and I will do whatever I can to make it safe.

Teacher A (Interview, September 25, 2001, p.9)

I also want to build appreciation of the diversity represented in my classroom and school community. I think it's very important for them to

realize we are not going to always agree. And right now we are doing a unit on how we are alike and how we are different. And we talk about diversity because we are all people. When we look around the room, we are not all similar. We all have hair,, but we don't all have black hair, or we don't all have brown hair.....

Teacher A (Interview, September 25, 2001, p.7)

#### Teacher B

Teacher B agrees with the impression of safety. She feels that each student must be able to trust the teacher. The child should know that in the classroom people don't hurt each other, and he/she should not do so. This impression of safety gives the child a sense of self-confidence to behave properly, and solve its own problems.

I needed Sara to know our school was a school she could trust and that I would be there for her. I need to work with her and all my children so they have the confidence to handle many of their own problems.

Teacher B (Protocol, August 2001, p.10)

#### Teacher C

For teacher C, the nature of students was an extremely important factor for teaching prosocial behavior. If you have some students who are violent by nature or behave badly, they create problems both for themselves and others, including the teachers.

I noticed that some children were more antisocial than others....I believe that the nature of children is different, and this also refers to their prosocial behavior.

### *B. Number of students in the classroom*

#### Teacher A

Teacher A had a definite idea about the size of the classroom. She felt that for teaching good behavior, it was important that the teacher gets enough time and space to attend to each student on a one on one basis. If there are too many students in the class, the teacher cannot offer individual attention, and this may create new problems.

When you work with young children. I think that it takes time one on one or one on two. And so you always say that how do I manage the rest of the class? You don't want to leave them unsupervised or just sitting or just waiting. Because you are going to have other issues come out.

Teacher A

(Interview, September 25, 2001, p.6)

#### Teacher B

Teacher B had the opinion that a teacher's success is inversely related to the size of the classroom. She teaches a small class (around fifteen) and does not have a problem to give students individual attention. However, the effectiveness of a teacher certainly depends on the number of children the teacher has to handle.

But, you know thirty-three; when they gave you so many children, they set up you for failure. It's hard for you to be successful with thirty-three. Because you are human, and how can you get to know thirty-three families.

Teacher B (Interview, August 21, 2001, p.24)

#### Teacher C

Teacher C had thirty-three students in her class. She found it really difficult to manage them. Therefore, even for her, the number of students in the classroom was important.

I feel that it's difficult for a teacher to take care of children well if she gets too many students in the classroom. It takes time for teachers to take care of students' individual need and development. In my experience, since I had thirty-three students in my class, it's really for me to take care of each child.

**Theme: Factors outside the classroom**

The classroom is the core of activity, however, factors outside the classroom also affect the teaching /learning of prosocial behavior. In the interviews and protocols, the teachers identify outside factors like the role of school administrators, other teachers, parents, and the educational system as having an effect on teaching prosocial behavior.

Teacher A

Teacher A thinks that it is necessary to get parents involved if the child behaves badly. This is especially important when a particular student continues behaving in a wrong manner.

I again give the child a chance to make good choices, but will involve parents fairly quickly if hurting other children continues.  
Teacher A (Protocol, September) 2001, p.7

Teacher B

Teacher B felt that the administrators and other teachers are important. Only when the administrators and other teachers understand the importance of prosocial behavior, will they support each other in this effort.

We were a team. I had eight other people, and they were my friends. And we didn't judge each other. We wouldn't compete with each other. We also modeled for each other. We spent a lot of time working on the social skills. If you had a bad day or you didn't do something right, you had other teachers to help you.....When you feel real threatened all the



time, you don't feel that you have the support. So, some of that need to do with the director. Our director was very very positive. And she was good at modeling. She herself was a good teacher. So I could be with her and learned from her.

Teacher B (Interview, August 21, 2001, p.21)

### Teacher C

For teacher C, the educational system was important. She comes from a country where education is more controlled and teachers have less freedom to have their own teaching styles. Therefore, that system which values good behavior can influence prosocial behavior in the classroom.

In my country, children are usually told "don't ask too many questions, just listen" or "don't have too many different opinions." For them, a teacher can be a symbol of power. Therefore, many students do not just respect but also are scared of teachers. The school becomes a terrifying place for the students. In the relationship between students and students, teachers do not provide them enough time to cooperate and help each other. Therefore, the relationship is competition. Rather, teachers encourage students to compete in the classroom than to work cooperatively. Finally, learning and school became initiation of pressure for the students. Because of this situation, my school experience, I agree that the educational system plays an important part of promoting students' prosocial behavior. And I would provide a learning environment that there will be no competition among students, but they will start to help each other, share, and solve problems together.

Teacher C (Protocol, August 2001, p.13)

### 3. Teaching Methods

All the teachers discussed at length this issue of teaching prosocial behavior. This topic could be discussed and divided into timing of teaching prosocial behavior, rule making as a technique of teaching, creating awareness of prosocial behavior among children, holding classroom meeting, resolution of conflicts, the use of reward and punishment, and additional methods.

#### **Theme: Timing of teaching prosocial behavior**

Two things are seen here. Each teacher felt that teaching prosocial behavior should start on the first day of school. And, throughout the semester, the teacher has to continuously reinforce prosocial behavior. In addition, each teacher gives students time to think and review their problems.

#### Teacher A

Teacher A introduces a new routine on the first day.

The first day of school, I tell the children.....If they leave the room to go to the bathroom or to get a drink, they must either wear the bathroom/drink pass or have permission from me.” I explain my need to always know where they are. Each day I introduce a new routine...signals for getting their attention, procedures for dismissal or walking through our building, etc.

Teacher A (Protocol, September 2001, p.2)

However, the process continues. This teacher felt that when we distinguish between hurting and bothering, each problem needs different attention.

If a child is hurting someone, then they are instantly removed from our

group. And what I always do first is to take care of child that is hurt. And I leave that other child thinking.

Teacher A (Interview, September 25, 2001, p.9)

She also gives time for students to think about their problem and make decisions again.

I use Jim Fay's model of giving children time to figure out what they did and why it was a problem, to think about other choices they have, and to come up with a plan that might work better next time.

Teacher A (Protocol, September 2001, p.5)

### Teacher B

Teacher B also agrees about the importance of creating rules right on the first day. She also gives students time to consider their social behavior.

When my kids came to school at the very beginning of the year, we talked about our school as a place we don't hurt each other. I made that statement. In our school we listen to kind words. I am going to give them right the very very beginning a statement.

Teacher B (Interview, August 21, 2001, p.9)

Teacher B also gives students some time to review their problem. During this time, students have to sit in a chair and watch other students play and work without hurting each other.

I asked Mary to sit in a chair and watch other children playing together without hurting each other. As I watched with children in small group, I occasionally gave Mary eye contact and reminded her to keep watching and I would be over shortly to visit.

Teacher B (Protocol, August 2001, p.9)

### Teacher C

Teacher C thinks that the beginning of each semester is the important time to start to teach prosocial behavior among children.

From the first day children come to school, we can start to teach them or model them some classroom routine, such as greeting each other, where to put their coats, how to do clean up..... It helps students to conduct an organized classroom and prevent conflicts for their further learning.

Teacher C also gives students enough time to make their choices.

If you decide to come back and listen to the story quietly, come back and tell me.

### **Theme: Rule making as a technique of teaching prosocial behavior**

Though kindergarten students are very young, each teacher felt that these students can participate in rule making. This implies sharing of power by the teacher and the students and indirectly teaching the idea of responsibility.

#### Teacher A

Teacher A felt that rule making as a technique is a procedure, not an event. For her, on the first day, only one rule applied: To ask for permission while leaving the classroom. After a few weeks, when conflicts start, then rule making becomes a serious issue. However, rules are not negative but positive. The teacher tries to make a distinction between rules like "Do not" and "Getting along with others". For this purpose, the teacher may start giving the language for the rules, and gradually lead the students to create their rules. Later on, the rules are reviewed and changed. They are combined, written down in color codes and finally each student signs their names as their promise to follow the rules.

Because I want our classroom to be a happy place as well as a safe place for everyone, I ask the kindergartners to help make some rules for our class that will make it a happy and a safe place for all. The process of rule

making is long and may take a week or more to accomplish. As children suggest rules, I write them down so we won't forget. They are often stated as "do not" and I might ask them if their rule is a safety rule or a "getting-alone-with-others rule". Then we review our rules and decide how we can write them so they tell us what to do instead of what not to do. Sometimes I have to model by saying, "Is it nice to hit, or push somebody or call names?" They always respond no. We discuss why it isn't nice to do those things and I ask them what our rule could say so we will remember not to hit, or push, or call names. Someone will usually say "Be nice". So we go through our list of "do nots" and decide if we need to make other rules or if the "be nice" rule covers some of our other "do nots". We do this in several sittings until all their suggestions are addressed and restated positively. This process is as important for me as for the children as it enables me to hear their ideas and their rationale and better understand their social development.

Teacher A (Protocol, September 2001, p.4-5)

### Teacher B

Teacher B also involves the students in rule making. However, she prefers terms like standard and expectation. She used the technique of tell, show, and follow the rule as they are still very young. She believes that it is important to remind students again and again of these rules. However, for her, students should be positive about the rules, not as something preventive, but something contributive.

I see hurting hands in the block area, that's a problem....., so I have to reestablish what's the standard. What is the standard for our classroom. What is the expectation. So I have to reestablish that.....and how can we do things different....

Teacher B (Interview, August 21, 2001, p.27)

### Teacher C

Teacher C has realized that children can solve their conflicts and problems by creating their own rules. Children can generate their rules on

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restrictions like “don’t run in the classroom”. Rules should be written or drawn down and hung on the walls to remind the students.

During the classroom meeting, I told the children I saw someone run in our classroom, and asked them if that is safe to run in the classroom. They responded “NO” So I asked them how could we avoid this situation again. They said to make a rule like “don’t run in the classroom”. One day, when I saw another child ran in our classroom again, I asked the child why he broke our classroom rule. He said he forgot the rule easily. Therefore, I held a classroom meeting again. I asked the children what could we do to remind all of us of the rules. They suggested to draw them and hang them up on the walls in our classroom.

Teacher C (Protocol, August 2001, p.17)

### **Theme: Creating awareness of prosocial behavior among children**

If a teacher has to make students aware of prosocial behavior, the teacher should create in the students a necessity for some helpful classroom rules.

#### Teacher A

Teacher A who emphasizes the importance of the rules, felt that students should be made aware of the need for the rules. This need is not external, but internal. Rules help not only to feel safe, but also help each other and work together.

I ask the children is this a rule help us to be safe or help us to get along better. Because I want them to remember how rules are helping us. They are helping us to be safe. They are helping us to get along. Either one is important. ....And then , I want them to see how important it was for every person to abide by them and enjoy rules.

Teacher A (Interview, September 25, p.13)

### Teacher B

Teacher B felt that students should know what kind of behavior is unacceptable in the classroom. Also, the students should be made aware of the positive effects of good prosocial behavior.

I asked Sara to sit in a chair and watch other children playing together without hurting each other. . . . . After a few minutes, I asked Deanna to show me several examples of children playing and working without hurting.

Teacher B (Protocol, August 2001, p.9)

### Teacher C

Teacher C, as a new teacher, realized that the teacher herself should be aware of the importance of prosocial behavior. In her experience, she tried to teach children good behavior in order to handle the class properly. She did not try to make the students aware of the use of prosocial behavior for themselves.

### **Theme: Holding classroom meeting**

Communication is an important part in teaching prosocial behavior. During the meetings, teacher and students assume equality as participants. Classroom meetings are the time and place for creating rules, discussing problems, and resolving conflicts.

### Teacher A

Teacher A holds meetings during extra time like at recess. During the meeting she acts like a communicator not the mediator.

200 I call them together....I tell them I noticed that on the playground the playing has got a little rough and someone got hurt.....How would that feel? And they would start telling me that .....

Teacher A (Interview, September 25, 2001, p.11)

### Teacher B

Teacher B recalls a classroom meeting when there is a problem. During this meeting, they define the problem and seek solutions. Meetings are helpful to make students understand the importance of prosocial behavior. Therefore, during meeting, students discuss without making each other uncomfortable.

If I see it's not being positive, we start to have a classroom meeting. I like those classroom meetings. I can start the classroom meeting.....boys and girls gather on the carpet, boys and girls, in our block area, I saw people grabbing blocks out of each other's hands, .....I wonder what we are going to do? How can we do things different?

Teacher B (Interview, August 21, 2001, p.26)

### Teacher C

Teacher C calls a meeting to discuss problems in her classroom. During the meeting, she told the students what she saw or heard in the classroom, and encouraged her students to identify the problems or conflicts, discuss them, and generate solutions. The teacher generally helped students to solve the problems. In this way, the teacher plays a very important role to help her students in most of the classroom meetings.

Classroom meeting is important for our class to solve the problems in our classroom. When I saw any conflict or problem in our class, I used the classroom meeting to help students to identify the problem, to discuss the problem, and to think of different ways to solve the problem.

Teacher C (Protocol, August 2001, p.17)



## **Theme: Resolution of conflicts**

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When there are conflicts between students, things need to be solved. The teachers whom I interviewed felt that since the conflicts belonged to the students, they have to be solved by the students.

### Teacher A

Teacher A tries to distinguish between two kinds of conflicts: hurting and bothering. If a child is hurting someone, then the conflicts have to be resolved immediately, with the interference of the teacher. If the conflicts involve bothering, the students can resolve them according to the predetermined procedure. They may take the help of the teacher during a conflict resolution. The teacher should talk only to the students involved. Parents may also be involved if the child continues with the inappropriate behavior.

Their different views and realizing that people come from those views based on their experiences they had and communicate, just talking with each other.....So when they try to act out they realize that it was okay, that they weren't really mad at each other. That was not a problem that could not be solved.....And they came out with their solution, and what they do also give them confidence to try next time.

Teacher A (Interview, September 25, p.4)

### Teacher B

Teacher B feels that it is possible to solve a problem if each one understands the other's point of view. In this teacher's class, the conflict resolution is done by the students. In the presence of the teacher, both the students and the teacher have to take the initiative. They have to follow some

predetermined rules and procedures. Nevertheless, conflicts will become resolved by the students themselves.

I called Kathy over and found a private place in the classroom where the three of us could visit. Kathy acknowledged that she had used her feet to hurt Lucy. .... Lucy was still crying and I asked Kathy to use gentle touches and comfort Lucy. She rubbed her back. The tears stopped. I then turned to Lucy and asked Lucy what she did to stop the behavior..... nothing. I reminded her that when someone is doing something we don't like we put our hand up and say "STOP! I don't like..." I encouraged Kathy to do it with Lucy at that point.

Teacher B (Protocol, August 2001, p.9)

### Teacher C

For resolving a conflict, teacher C believes that negotiations were very useful. When there were conflicts, she called the students together and encouraged them to explain their own perspectives to each other and try to understand each other's perspectives.

I used to call the children involved together and asked them to explain their perspectives to each other. I also encouraged them to negotiate and come out with their own solutions.

Teacher C (Protocol, August 2001, p.17)

### **Theme: The use of reward and punishment**

Reward and punishment are generally used to prevent bad behavior, and motivate students toward good behavior. However, the teachers in this study did not have positive opinions about using these techniques for teaching prosocial behavior.

Teacher A

Teacher A had a simple consequence: "If you don't follow rules, you will be out of our group." This teacher wanted to make the students aware of the individual responsibility of following rules. Students have to know that even if one person breaks a rule, this will create a problem for the whole class, and waste time. The only reward and punishment the child can experience is of a good and safe or bad and unsafe classroom. They are responsible for the consequences.

I make it very clear that if they choose to hurt someone in our class, then they cannot stay with our class, they cannot do the fun things that the rest of our class gets to do.

Teacher A (Protocol, September 2001, p.7)

Teacher B

Teacher B is against punishment because that would create fear in the students. She felt that students should behave properly because they want to and not because someone is watching them. Similarly, she does not want a reward to be announced before hand. She does not feel it's proper that students behave well because of rewards. For this teacher, the only consequence of bad behavior is being out of the group. When your behavior changes, you can come back to the group.

I use discipline, I did not really punish...I use reward after the good behavior. I don't say if you come to the carpet, then I give you the stickers. So they get the reward after their positive behavior not as an corrective measure .....I don't do it very often because I don't want children to do things in order to get something.

Teacher B (Interview, August 21, 2001, p.34).

Though this consequence looks like punishment, but it cannot be classified as punishment. This is because Piaget made a clear distinction between punishment and sanctions by reciprocity (Kamii, 1991). The consequence of being left out of the classroom group thus, may fall into the latter category i.e., sanctions by reciprocity.

### Teacher C

Teacher C had a first time experience of using rewards. She used a reward to motivate discipline behavior among students. However, several weeks later, students didn't feel excited about the motivation any more, and they behaved in the same way as earlier. Thus, the use of rewards was not successful for the teacher. Teacher C feels that the only consequence that the child should be made aware is being a part of the classroom activities. Rewards may help at the beginning to start the process of good behavior. But for long-term development, this system cannot be considered healthy. The best motivation is self-regulation. The main consequences for this teacher, is the students' own responsibility for their own action-good or bad.

Since I realized that using rewards to motivate children's behavior do not work well, I, therefore decided to use "consequence" to promote children's behavior. I told them only when they follow our classroom rules that they can be part of our classroom activities. And finally, I think it is really useful.

Teacher C (Protocol, August 2001, p.18)

#### **4. Additional methods**

Several other miscellaneous methods can be listed like bonding and ownership, and anecdotal method.

#### **Theme: Bonding and ownership**

All the teachers feel that students should feel that they are a part of the classroom. When students get involved in rule making, they own the rule.

#### Teacher A

Teacher A feels that when children solve their problem, they decide to follow the solution because the solutions are their own.

Since the children make the rules, they have ownership of them.  
Teacher A (Protocol, September 2001, p.5)

#### Teacher B

Teacher B feels that students should consider the class as their family. She even suggests common ownership of objects like classroom materials.

This is their classroom. I want them to know this is their classroom. So we all pick up together, we all can come to group time together, we all solve problems together. This is not mine and yours. We keep our supplies. The children don't have their own little pencil boxes, every thing is out. If they need crayons, you have crayons, and then you put crayons away. Very much a family environment. And it's my job to define what school family is.

Teacher B (Interview, August 21, 2001, p.24)

#### Teacher C

According to teacher C, students should have a sense of belonging in the classroom. This means that students should consider the classroom as their own,

a place where they can contribute. In that sense, any behavior, which has an effect on the classroom, should be owned by the students. When students feel that they belong to the class, they readily follow rules and regulations.

For my goal, I would like to make my classroom a place that belongs to children themselves. They can make decisions, discuss, and express their opinions. I also encourage them to cooperate, to share, and to solve problems together. They would feel they are the owner of their classroom.

Teacher C (Protocol, August 2001, p.13)

*Theme: Unique method*

Teacher A

Some other methods that could be used by a teacher are the use of stories from literature by Teacher A (Example, book Swimmy by Leo Lionni).

I read a book by Leo Lionni, Swimmy. Every child makes a fish and together we build a giant class fish on the floor. I ask the children what will happen if one of the fish swims away and decided not to stay in his place. .... I help the children to make a correlation between the book and our classroom rules.

Teacher A (Protocol, September 2001, p.5)

Teacher B

Teacher B feels that method of modeling, observing by children can also help.

I need to reestablish them because five years old need to be repeated it over and over. You don't just tell them one time. You may tell them, then you have to show them, and then they have to do it.

Teacher B (Interview, August 21, 2001, p.27)

### Teacher C

Among other methods of teaching, teacher C feels that learning experience is the most effective method for teaching good behavior. This is similar to modeling. But teacher C was more concerned consistency of behavior by the teacher. The best example a teacher can give is the teacher herself. If the teacher sets a rule for a good behavior, she herself can't break it. For example, if it's decided that students cannot participate in some activities because of a particular misbehavior, the teacher cannot allow the students any concessions. Therefore, consistency is the most important method in teaching prosocial behavior.

When I see the children who had behaved badly could not join their peers in the playground, I start to empathize with them. But I cannot allow them to go to play. I think that it will bring negative effects on teaching children prosocial behavior, because it confuses them towards the idea of rules or discipline.

Teacher C (Protocol, August 2001, p.18).

### Comparative Analysis

Each of the four major themes and their sub-themes will be described followed by implications resulting from analysis of the data sources.

#### **Role of the teacher**

For the first major theme, i.e., the role of the teacher, there are four sub-themes: awareness of the conflicts in the classroom, controlling emotions, teachers' anxiety, confidence, and personality, and learning by experience.

### Awareness of the conflicts

First of all, these teachers pointed out that teachers should be very much aware of any conflict in their classrooms. This begins by realizing the importance of a safe classroom atmosphere. Teacher A feels that the teacher should put their students in a safe learning environment, so teachers should try their best to make the classroom a safe place. She also helps her students learn how to protect themselves in the classroom. She teaches students how to distinguish between “bothering” and “hurting”. Teacher B also agrees that teachers should be very observant in their classroom. To keep conflicts from getting worse, she prefers to prevent them. Teacher C thinks that the classroom should be a stress free place for learning. If there are some conflicts or problems, it may influence not only learning but also teaching. Therefore, it is evident that the role of the teacher is very important.

### Controlling Emotions

Secondly, all three teachers think that teachers should control their emotions. Teacher A feels that when teachers show their anger to students, the classroom is no longer a safe place for children. Teacher B feels that showing teachers’ anger will bring fear to students, and children will not think about their own behavior. Teacher C also has a strong feeling that shouting or showing anger to children doesn’t work to promote good behavior among children. In her own experience,



she found that the children listen to you because they respect you and not because they are afraid of you.

### Teacher Expectations of Confidence and Personality

Thirdly, teachers' confidence in teaching and her personality also play an important role in teaching children's prosocial behavior. Both teacher A and Teacher B encountered difficulties while dealing with children's social problems during their early teaching years. However, teacher A says that she is someone who likes to solve problems. Teacher B learns to prepare and adjust herself before her teaching. She feels that frustrations are a natural part of teaching and they have confidence to overcome them. Teacher C also had difficulties during her early years of teaching because of children's conflicts, and she almost quit teaching during her first year. However, she feels that now she is no longer frustrated after some experience. Therefore, we can say that frustration of dealing with students' social behavior is common for every new teacher, and it can be improved after they have more and more experiences.

### Learning by Experience

All three teachers agree that teachers learn by experience. New situations and experiences help teachers to get more and more confidence and techniques in their teaching. Experiences also help teachers to teach in a more relaxed way. Regardless of their age and experience, teachers are learning everyday from situations. In comparison, although Teacher C is from a different country and

comparatively young and has less teaching experience, still, there are many more similarities than differences among her experiences compared to the American teachers' experiences.

When we analyze this data, according to past research, we realize that this research confirms earlier findings. The study supports Freud's Psychoanalytic theory, which talks about the role of adults in creating and molding a child's personality and behavior. Since teachers act as parents, their role of creating prosocial behavior among children is very important.

Similarly, Kellam (1999), helps us to understand that aggressive behavior of the students can be influenced by the teacher. Understanding this behavior and controlling it at the early stage is extremely important. Our research agrees with this concept because all the teachers acknowledged that they should try to teach prosocial behavior as early as possible, and that prosocial behavior has significant and long-term effect on the child's behavior outside the classroom.

Therefore, this study supports this idea that the teachers' role is central for teaching prosocial behavior. The teacher has to be aware, provide opportunities for good behavior, and function as a supportive factor for prosocial behavior.

### **The Role of the environment**

Under the role of the environment, we can divide the themes into two groups: factors in the classroom and factors beyond the classroom. Themes under the first group are learning environment and numbers in a class. Themes

belonging to second group are the administrators, staff, parents, and the educational system.

#### Factors inside the classroom

The first factor in the classroom that influences teaching prosocial behavior is the learning environment. All three teachers pointed out that it is significant to provide children a positive and safe learning environment to support their learning. Teachers A and B provide children with learning materials, activities, and space that allow the children to make choices, to cooperate, and match their diversity, and to learn the consequences. However, teacher C found another interesting point that some children are more prosocial than others. Therefore, the question is, is the prosocial behavior innate or learned from the environment?

Another factor in the classroom is the number of students in the class. Both Teacher A and Teacher C failed to promote children's prosocial behavior because of large classes. Teacher A says a lot of time is required to give personal attention to each student in a class. When there are too many children in a class, and the teacher tries to deal with some children, there may be another issue happening at the same time. On the contrary, when Teacher C discussed the issue with Teacher B that she had thirty-three children in her class, teacher B was shocked. She said that when a teacher got so many students in a class, it is hard for her to be successful. She feels that it is difficult get to know all children's families if a teacher have too many children in her class. Teacher B has on an

average about sixteen children in her class, and she finds the size is appropriate for teaching prosocial behavior.

We can understand this finding, if we try to relate it to the research by Kellam (1999). Kellam felt that the origins of variations in classroom aggressive levels come from the classroom teacher or the mix of students and the teacher. However, our research also identified that the perception of safety and security within the classroom created appropriate behavior among students. This would take us back to Campbell (1965) whose Biological theory maintained that survival depends on maintenance and belonging to the groups. The group membership serves as a protection of the members and a supply of basic needs of the members.

One finding critical in this research was the relationship between the number of students in the classroom and the effectiveness of the teachers in teaching prosocial behavior. Thus, it can be concluded that factors inside the classroom are important among participants in creating a positive atmosphere in teaching prosocial behavior.

#### Factors outside the classroom

Parents also play an extremely important role in promoting prosocial behavior among children. Usually prompting prosocial behavior needs time and consistency. Therefore, parents can help teachers to reinforce their prosocial behavior at home to support teachers' teaching. These three teachers all have close relationships with children's parents. They use parental education, parents'

meeting, and parents' involvement when their children have behavior problems (Interviews, Teacher A, & Teacher B).

In addition, Teacher B has a very strong feeling of the importance of the support from the school administrators and staff. From her own experience, during her first teaching year in the second grade she was so frustrated when she could not find other teachers to help her. After she taught in a small preschool, teachers there realized the importance of children's social skills, and they spent a lot of time working on children's social behavior. They also helped each other, to model each other, and support each other. She said it was really a rewarding experience to her, and it was also a basis for her further teaching in public school. I also agree with this point.

The education system in Taiwan is different from the American system. In America, many preschools are developmentally appropriate. However, in Taiwan there are still many kindergartens using traditional teaching methods. This study supports the findings of the Canadian Youth Foundation. The teachers identified the child's family and the overall school environment as affecting prosocial behavior. More generally, aggressive behavior is an outcome of children's inability to establish positive interactions with the surroundings. However, this research also pointed out that school administrators have an effect on teaching prosocial behavior. I do agree that different teaching methods and educational systems influence children's social skills differently. When the system focuses more on academics, the students may start to compete and there will be less cooperative learning. In addition, if the educational system sees social

skills as the most important part of their lives, it will try to support teachers in this area. Therefore, the educational system needs to pay more attention to children's social development.

### **Teaching Methods**

The methods that the three teachers use to promote young children's prosocial behavior are: timing of teaching prosocial behavior, rule making, creating awareness of prosocial behavior, class meeting, conflict resolution, consequences, bonding and ownership.

#### Timing of teaching prosocial behavior

All three teachers think that to teach children prosocial behavior on the very beginning day is very important. From the first day a teacher needs to start to introduce a routine and model their prosocial behavior in school. In addition, they try to treat each situation as an individual situation and use different techniques toward different students. Also, they usually give students time to think and review their problem behavior, and to make choices again.

#### Rule making

Rule making is common in these three different classrooms. Teacher A puts a lot of effort and is very experienced about rule making in the classroom. I remember when I went to observe her classroom, she showed me all the paper work of the whole process of rules making in her classroom. On each paper, I saw

children's ideas and how the teacher helped them to finish the whole process. Teacher B didn't show me any paper work of rule making in her classroom. However, she told me that she used class meeting to discuss the problems and tell the children the standards and expectations in the classroom and school. She reminded and modeled for the children very often because she thinks young children need repetition. In Teacher C's opinion, writing down the rules for small children was difficult because obviously some of them cannot write. However, she encouraged children to draw the rules on paper. From all these examples, whether written or not, the process of rule making helps children have the opportunity to develop their own rules, and the children will be more willing to follow their own rules.

All these findings agree with Castle and Rogers (1994) who show how students' participation in rule making encourages active involvement, inductive thinking, and a sense of ownership. Rule making is critical in the teaching of prosocial behavior, as this can create a constructive classroom as suggested by DeVries and Zan (1995), when there is mutual respect between the teacher and the students.

#### Creating importance of prosocial behavior among children

Teacher A prefers students to know that the rules are important and they are part of their lives. In this matter, she feels that students should realize that rules are beneficial to them and therefore should be inculcated. Similarly, Teacher B sees that when there is a behavior problem with a student, he/she should be

isolated and allowed to observe the other students playing or working together without any negative behavior. Through this, he/she should understand the significance of positive behavior that brings out awareness in the student.

Although teacher C is inexperienced, she also strongly felt that creating awareness of prosocial behavior among young children is important.

This aspect again agrees with Hamilton's (1964) Biological theory, which shows that belonging to a group, is important to the maintenance and protecting of its members. For children, prosocial behavior is not only a psychological necessity but also a physical need.

#### Holding classroom meeting

From the data collected, it becomes very clear that all the three teachers think the classroom meeting is very important for solving problems among children. In the class meeting, each teacher helps students identify the problems, and think of different ways to solve these problems. Therefore, students feel very responsible, autonomous, and self-governing.

#### Conflict resolution

All three teachers felt that conflicts should be resolved by students themselves under the guidance of the teachers. In the data collected, each teacher provided opportunities for children to solve their problems through negotiation and sharing their different perspectives. The teachers step in when conflicts cannot be solved by the children. Since young children are very egocentric, conflict resolution gives them opportunities to overcome their ego-centricism and



to become problem solvers. The idea of a constructivist classroom as suggested by DeVries and Zan (1995) can be also supported here.

#### The use of rewards/punishment

All the three teachers would like to teach students the concept of “consequence” rather than using rewards and punishment to mold children’s behavior. Accordingly, Teachers A, B and C feel that if children can learn how to be responsible for their own action or choices, it would be much better for them instead of using rewards and punishment. The main idea here is to inculcate the concept of consequence among children.

This study especially in the teachers’ opinions and experiences in the use of rewards and punishments shows that in recent times, for many teachers, there is a pedagogical shift from the behaviorist model to the constructivist model. This is because most recent researchers have opposed the idea of rewards and punishments. As Kohn (1994; 1997) says, competition is never healthy, and it creates antisocial behavior. Rewards create hatred, and do not develop any good values. The teacher’s opinions show that rewards and punishments are just short-term measures. As Kohn (1994) suggests the focus has to be to cultivate inter-socialization of positive values in order to help socialization among children.

#### **Additional methods**

These additional methods include bonding/ownership and methods unique to each teachers.

### Bonding and ownership

Young children are egocentric, and the idea of “I” and “me” is paramount among them. In order to help them de-center and realize a sense of belongingness to a group, the teachers A, B, & C promote community learning in the classroom. This will lead young children to interact and socialize with other children more positively.

This research does support Hawkin’s model of bonding (as cited in Gregg, 1995). According to Hawkin’s model three conditions must be present for bonding to occur: an opportunity for bonding to take place, cognitive and social skills to help children succeed in bonding opportunities, and a consistent system of recognition and reinforcement for accomplishment.

### Unique methods

Although these teachers used many identical methods to promote prosocial behavior among young children, each teacher used some unique methods to reinforce the prosocial behavior in children. Teacher A uses the stories from literature, and the rationale for using this method is to connect the story (Swimmy) to the classroom rules. Similarly, Teacher B uses her own method of modeling sign language to set a good example to her students because “Seeing is learning”. And by sharing, she maintains that we can have students imitate the positive behavior.

Teacher C on the other hand, made her own rules based on her own experiences. According to her, if a teacher sets a rule, she should not break it

because if she does this, she will be confusing students. Therefore, teachers should be consistent, and that will help students to follow the rules without breaking them.

The interviews and opinions suggest that parents and teachers should grow and nurture self-discipline within children. It supports Barakat and Clark's (2001) research which has suggested a method of inculcating positive discipline by techniques much as natural consequences, fix-up, timeout, and redirection.

Therefore, it becomes very clear that each teacher has a unique method to teach prosocial behavior and to deal with unexpected situations or problems among young children.

#### **Summary of the findings and comparative analysis**

When we look at all the opinions and experiences of the teachers in this research, we will realize how important teaching of prosocial behavior is for the kindergarten students. Each teacher had her own suggestions and opinions. However, if we combined their opinions, we can identify some common points. First, the background of the teachers and their teaching philosophies consider prosocial behavior as an important part of curriculum.

The second major point would be teaching of prosocial behavior, and in this theme we can identify two major groups, that is, the role of the teacher and the role of the environment. The teacher has to be very aware of the problems and be confident that she can teach prosocial behavior. She has to control her emotions and always learn by experiences. When we discuss the role of the

environment, a sense of safety and security and the manageable number of students are important internal factors. Outside the classroom, the administrators, the parents, and the educational system are important.

The third major point was the use of teaching method. The teachers had ideas about when to teach prosocial behavior, how to use rule-making techniques for instruction, how to create awareness for prosocial behavior among children, how to resolve conflicts, and why not to use reward and punishment.

The last point identified here covered areas like bonding and ownership, methods like anecdotal method, modeling, and teaching by setting a consistent example to students.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Educational Implications

This research is a study about teaching to promote prosocial behavior in Taiwanese and American kindergarten children. From the lived experience of the three participants, three important aspects of teaching prosocial behavior among young children emerge. They are the role of the teacher, the role of the environment, and the techniques of teaching prosocial behavior. For the role of the teacher, there are four themes: the teacher's awareness of the conflicts, teacher's anxiety, confidence, and personality, the controlling of emotion, and learning by experiences. The role of environment is divided into two main categories: factors inside the classroom and factors outside the classroom. The factors inside the classroom are the learning environment and the numbers of students in the class. Factors outside the classroom are school administrators, staff, parents, and the educational system. Furthermore, teaching methods are also important for promoting young children's prosocial behavior. The methods these three teachers used cover timing of teaching prosocial behavior, rule making, creating awareness of prosocial behavior among young children, class meeting, conflict resolution, the use of punishment and rewards, and the feeling of bonding and ownership. In addition, these teachers also have their own unique method for teaching prosocial behavior. This chapter will present the educational implications and directions for further research.

### Teaching Implications

When we discuss the implications of this study, we need to go back to the objectives of this study as stated in chapter one. The main objectives of this study were to compare the lived experiences of three kindergarten teachers, two from America and one from Taiwan and to get a deeper understanding of the differences in teaching prosocial behavior to kindergarten children. The second objective was to identify ways and techniques to promote prosocial behavior among young children. The underlying purpose of the study was to find out whether prosocial behavior could be taught effectively at the kindergarten level.

In this study, it became evident that prosocial behavior can be taught to kindergarten students, and that the approaches and the strategies used by the teachers were much more similar than different. In this section, there will be an evaluation of the implications this research has on teaching at the kindergarten level. According to the findings, we can evaluate the implications under three main categories: the role of the teacher, the role of the environment, and the techniques of teaching prosocial behavior.

#### Role of the teacher

A. A teacher has to have a good educational philosophy that helps in understanding the importance and necessity of teaching prosocial behavior. Especially when the educational system is not externally determined, the teacher has to understand and work to promote appropriate behavior among kindergarten

students. Psychoanalytic theory and cognitive theory and research support the idea of teaching positive social behavior in young children.

B. It's normal for a teacher to have some negative experiences at the beginning. However, the teachers' anxiety can have a negative effect on both the teacher and the students. Since the teacher is a role model, the students should experience a teacher who is confident and has a more positive personality. Therefore a new teacher should start teaching with an experienced teacher first. Also experience should not necessarily be direct, it could be shared from another teacher.

C. Anxiety leads to emotional problems. However, the classroom is a place for performance for both the teacher and the students. Since a teacher is constantly watched by the students and losing control of emotions has negative effects on students, it is important for teachers to control their emotions.

D. Experience is the best teacher. Every classroom conflict is a unique situation. The more the teacher tries to analyze the situations, the more understanding and maturity she will have in overcoming problems among students. A teacher should not escape from experiences, but should learn from them. Failures by the teachers are not failures for life.

#### Role of the environment

Environment places an extremely important role in determining prosocial behavior. The factors both inside and outside the classroom have to be conducive for teaching positive social behavior.

### **Internal factors**

This consists of both humans and objects. The character and personality of the teachers, the character and the personality of the students, and the size of the classroom have an effect on teaching/learning experiences. Other non-human factors like space, accessories and classroom activities all have a positive or negative effect in classroom. The teachers and the students both can contribute to effective teaching/learning of prosocial behavior by having this interaction.

### **External factors**

External factors consist of school administrators, staff, parents, and the educational system. Each of this can indirectly affected the teaching of prosocial behavior in the classroom. Therefore, it is very important that even people outside the classroom believe that teaching prosocial behavior is needed inside the classroom.

### Teaching methods

There is not just one method to teach prosocial behavior. Teachers have to evolve their own methods to teach prosocial behavior. While teaching prosocial behavior among kindergarten children, the main methods are timing, awareness of the children, and a feeling of classroom community.



### **Timing of teaching prosocial behavior**

When we discuss the timing of teaching prosocial behavior, we need to distinguish the behavior between bothering and hurting. In the case of hurting, the teacher has to intervene as early as possible. In a bothering situation, the teacher can give students time to review and realize their own behavior. Nevertheless, the importance of prosocial behavior has to be kept in mind right from the beginning.

### **Awareness among young children**

It would be better to involve students in making their own rules for regulating classroom behavior. Students always accept rules generated by themselves. Moreover, since the students create the rule, they should be willing to abide by the rules voluntarily.

### **Classroom meeting**

Every conflict or problem in the classroom should be sorted out by a classroom meeting in which both the affectors and the affected get an opportunity to discuss and express their opinions freely. The teachers' role in the meeting should be a facilitator, not a dictator.

### **Conflict resolution**

Conflicts have to be resolved by the students themselves. Solutions to problems should be from the students, not by the teacher. Conflict resolution can

also be used to promote children's perspective-taking ability. Another point, the students should also realize that the same problem should not arise again.

### **The use of rewards and punishments**

Rewards and punishments being external factors do not have a positive effect on the students' prosocial behavior. The teacher should try to cultivate intrinsic rewards of consequences for the students. Students should have good social behavior not to please someone or to get something, but for their own personal satisfaction.

### **Feeling of bonding and ownership**

The classroom is like a micro community. The teacher should try to create a sense of bonding and belonging in the students for the classroom. When the classroom becomes an identifying factor for the students, it will result in their good social behavior.

### **Unique method**

This research found out some unique methods of teaching prosocial behavior.

1. Teaching diversity by making students realize the likes and dislikes of each individual.
2. Teaching the importance of individual responsibility by stories like Swimmy.
3. Giving the students the responsibility of helping each other out.

4. Consistency in following rules and regulations is important for the students.

### Conclusion

The main implication from the study is that the kindergarten teachers should look at the classroom as a community as suggested by DeVries and Zan (1995). In a classroom community, the teacher and the students don't share a hierarchical relationship, but are equal in status and contribution to the classroom activities. There has to be mutual respect between the teacher and the students, and between one student and another in order for prosocial behavior to exist. In such a classroom neither the teacher nor the students are uncomfortable, but work together for the betterment of the whole class.

### *Suggestions for further research*

It was observed that the number of students in the classroom had an effect on the teaching of prosocial behavior in the classroom. More research is required to find out the ideal size of the classroom and how it would affect teaching prosocial behavior inside the classroom.

Rewards and punishments have been considered not useful for teaching prosocial behavior. However, some teachers, teacher C for example, use them at least at the beginning in order to create desired behavior. More research on the effective use of extrinsic and intrinsic consequences of teaching prosocial behavior are needed.

Most teachers work with a suggested curriculum for teaching prosocial behavior. However, it is not clear what the curriculum should be to teach prosocial behavior. Some study in this area will help to set clear aims and objectives of teaching prosocial behavior.

It is important to notice that we still do not have a clear evaluation pattern for the teaching and learning of prosocial behavior. Questions such as who is an effective teacher of prosocial behavior, and what, and how much should the child learn in prosocial behavior are to be answered by new research. Therefore, this study certainly points out that more significant research is required in order to come to definite conclusions about prosocial behavior among kindergarten students.

This research was conducted with the teachers' perspective, and so the conclusions are what the teachers want and expect to do. However, there has to be some research based on what the students' need. Therefore, some more research on the students' perspective on what and how to teach prosocial behavior is required.

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APPENDIX: A

Consent form for Participants

Dear Participants:

I am a student at OSU, working on my masters thesis and degree in Curriculum and Instruction. For my thesis research, I am conducting a study which should deepen understanding of promoting prosocial behavior among kindergarten children by teachers. I will do a cross-cultural comparison. I would like to interview two American kindergarten teachers and compare their teaching practices to those I used as a former Taiwanese kindergarten teacher. The purpose of this study is to deepen understanding of ways of reducing the aggressive behavior and classroom conflicts by promoting prosocial behavior among young children in kindergarten classrooms. I am going to compare your kindergarten teaching experiences for promoting prosocial behavior to my perspective as a former kindergarten teacher in Taiwan.

In this study, I will ask you to write about a time in which you were successful or failed in promoting children's prosocial behavior in kindergarten. I will also do an audio taped interview with you. And then, I will share the interview transcripts with you. Your participation in the written part of the study will be about thirty minutes. The interview will take about one hour of your time.

In this study, participants' names will not be used to summarize the findings. Instead, fictitious names will be used to ensure confidentiality.

Should you have any questions in relation to the study or your rights, feel free to contact Ms. Mei-Fang Cho at 229 N. Husband #208, Stillwater, OK, 74075. phone: (405) 780-7261. E-mail: meifang2@hotmail.com ; or my advisor Dr. Kathryn Castle, phone: (405) 744-8019; or Sharon Bacher, IRB office, phone: (405) 744-5700.

.....

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the study in order to deepen understanding of promoting prosocial behavior among young children in kindergarten classrooms. I know I can withdraw anytime from the study. I also understand that all the information I will give will be treated as strictly confidential, and I will not be identified in the summary of findings.

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B: PROTOCOL

### TEACHER A

As the new school year begins, I reflect on goals to build community in my classroom. I want to create a community in which children display mutual respect, have the ability to resolve conflicts, and develop social skills that enable them to function in a group. I also want to build appreciation of the diversity represented in my classroom and school community. I set the stage to meet these goals as I arrange my classroom, organize space and materials for the children to use, and tentatively schedule the kindergarten day. I make these decisions based on my knowledge of child development and what has been successful with my other kindergarten classes.

I use self-selected learning centers to facilitate active learning, encourage independence, and provide daily opportunities for children to live, work, and play together. A variety of learning centers support children with different learning styles and interests. Tables are arranged to promote clear, easy movement from one center to another. Low open shelves near each learning center make supplies and materials easily accessible. This encourages the children to choose materials independently, share materials, and be responsible for their own clean. Population cards or chairs indicate how many children can work comfortably and safely in each area and provide a variety of grouping options for the children. Large tables

are arranged together and away from quieter areas. This allows different kinds of learning to occur simultaneously and helps children to develop respect for others as we work together in our community.

I select materials for my classroom based on my belief that every child can learn and keeping in mind the diversity and broad range of abilities of kindergartners entering school for the first time. Materials I select must connect with where my children are and accommodate their differences, therefore, I select a variety of materials and provide a range of activities so that every child is challenged yet no child is overwhelmed. Then the children come.....

As I get to know my new kindergarten, I make decisions about space and materials that support their range of learning styles, skill levels, and interests. I consider individual and group needs and I modify the use of space and materials as needed. I begin each year with familiar activities such as puzzles, crayons and markers, logos, pegboards and pegs, blocks, dress up, water play. Familiar instills a feeling of safety so the children can get to know each other, their new teacher, their new room, and focus on understanding our routines for each day within a safe environment. I prioritize what they need to know and gradually provide information and experiences so they can understand not only what but the way. The first day of school, I tell the children that rules help us to be safe and that I have one rule for them..... "If they leave the room to go to the bathroom or to get a drink, they must either wear the bathroom/drink pass or have permission from me". I explain my need to always know where they are. Each day I introduce a new routine....signals for getting their attention, procedures for

dismissal or walking through our building, etc.

Children also have many opportunities to make choices and decisions. Since learning centers are self-selected, children make decisions daily about where they will work, how long they will work at a center, and whether they will work individually or with groups that range from two to six children. When their first choice of centers is full, children learn to share and take turns or to solve problems by manipulating the space and materials to serve their needs. When one kindergartner was upset because he wanted another turn at the color-mixing center, he learned that other children wanted to do that center as much as he did. He learned that it would be unfair to the other children for him to have another turn before they all had their first turn. He also learned he could have fun working at his second choice center while he waited for his first choice to become available. Another child who wanted to play with the pattern blocks at the math center, chose to take pattern blocks from the manipulative shelves to an unoccupied area on the floor. He solved the problem without adversely affecting others in the classroom.

After a couple of weeks of getting to know each other and getting the routines down, I notice the children beginning to have conflicts. Examples are rough playing at recess, wanting to sit by certain children at group time, leaving some children out, putting hands on children during group time and when in line (bothering), etc. This is my cue to call a class meeting and expand the use of rules. I remind the children that originally I told them that rules were for helping

us to be safe. Rules can also help us to get along better. Without calling names, I describe some of the things I am noticing on the playground and in our classroom. I asked them how they think that makes someone feel. (Those who have experienced the injustice are quick to say how someone would feel). Because I want our classroom to be a happy place as well as a safe place for everyone, I ask the kindergartners to help make some rules for our class that will make it a happy and safe place for all.

The process of rule making is long and may take a week or more to accomplish. A 15-20 minutes class meeting is about all the children can handle this early in the year. As children suggest rules, I write them down so we won't forget. They are often stated as "do not's" and I might ask them if their rule is a safety rule or a "getting-along-with-others rule". I write down all suggestions. Then we review our rules and decide how we can write them so they tell us what to do instead of what not to do. Sometimes I have to model by saying, "Is it nice to hit, or push somebody or call names?" They always respond no. We discuss why it isn't nice to do those things and I ask them what our rule could say so we will remember not to hit, or push, or call names. Someone will usually say "be nice". So we go through our list of "do not's" and decide if we need to make other rules or if the "be nice" rule covers some of our other "do not's". We do this in several sittings until all their suggestions are addressed and restated positively. This process is as important for me as for the children as it enables me to hear their ideas and their rationale and better understand their social development.



After our rules are all stated positively, then I read a book by Leo Lionni, Swimmy. Every child makes a fish and together we build a giant class fish on the floor. I ask the children what will happen if one of the fish swims away and decides not to stay in his place. They quickly decide that it doesn't like a fish anymore and that the other fish can get eaten by the big tuna. I remove fish from different places and each time the response is the same. I help the children to make a correlation between the book and our class rules. If someone decides not to follow our class rules, what does that do to our class? For many children this is their first realization that their choices may affect others and they are affected by other's choices. We review each rule and vote as a class if the rule is important for our class. Then I ask them if they will do their part in following the rules. Children (and I) sign our rules and they are displayed eye level for the children. Rules can be added during the year as needed following the same procedure.

Since the children make the rules, they have ownership of them. When someone breaks the rules (and it will happen often for a few children and almost never for most children), I do not take it personally since they are not my rules. My role becomes one of support to help children follow the rules the class decided were important. I use Jim Fay's model of giving children time to figure out what they did and why it was a problem, to think about other choices they have, and to come up with a plan that might work better next time. I model respect for my children's ideas and concerns as I listen and help them work through issues. I give credibility to their input when I post their rules and help all

children follow the rules. While this is time consuming, it is time well spent as children learn to consider the consequences of their choices and to work more independently through conflicts with each other.

I always give children the time and opportunity to resolve conflicts at school as long as progress is being made and as long as it is not a safety issue for the other children. I do believe my first responsibility is making school a safe place for all so I help children understand the difference between someone bothering them and hurting them. If someone is bothering them, it is okay to tell the child to stop and it is important to tell them what you want them to stop doing. If a child continues to bother them, then they should tell me and I will help resolve the issue. During this resolution, I talk with only the children involved. I ask the children what the problem is. What is Sara doing that is bothering you? Did you tell her that you don't like it when she puts her feet on you? Tell Sara, "I don't like it when you put your feet on me, please stop." To Sara, I say...." How can you take care of this problem? If the answer is, "I can stop putting my feet on him", then my response will be to elicit a commitment that she will stop. "So what are you going to do?" If the response is "stop putting my feet on Tony?", then I ask Tony if that is okay with him. Then I tell them both, Good, I'm glad you were able to work this out". If the response to "how can you take care of this problem is?" is, "I don't know" then I ask, "Do you think that he likes it when you put your feet on him?" How can you tell? Would you like for him to put his feet on you? When someone tells you that you are bothering him, what class rule

are you breaking?" I give Sara time to think about the rules. I reinforce her answer "Be nice" by reminding her that when we made our rules, "we all agree, you agreed it isn't nice to bother our classmates. When he asked you to stop putting your feet on him, what should you have done? What you need to tell Tony?" Sometimes children respond with "I'm sorry" and sometimes they just say "I'll stop putting my feet on you". (Either answer is okay). I congratulate them for solving the problem. Now I just talk with Sara and ask her what she will do the next time. Someone asks her to stop bothering him or her? If answer is "I'll stop" then I tell her how glad I am that she has a plan to keep this from happening again. If not then I ask her to make a plan.

Most of these discussions are done during center time, recess time, or during our special for the day. If it happens at group time then, I ask the children involved to visit with me during recess, or centers, or library class. That comment alone typically stops the disturbance, gives them some time to think about what they are doing, and doesn't take away from our class time.

If a child is hurting someone, then they are instantly removed from our group. I console the child that is hurt, make sure he/she is all right then continue with class. When I have the rest of my class involved in centers, recess or a special class, then I address the child who has hurt someone. I make it very clear that if they choose to hurt someone in our class, then they cannot stay with our class, they cannot do the fun things that the rest of our class gets to do. I again give the child a chance to make good choices, but will involve parents fairly quickly if hurting other children continues.

After the first month of school, getting along and being safe are really not issues any more. There are some discussions but only occasionally and only with children who need more time to develop those social skills. My role is never one of anger toward a child who is having trouble following the rules, but rather one of support....."I am so sorry you chose to .....What would be a better plan?.....How can I help you make sure this doesn't happen again?"

## APPENDIX C: PROTOCOL

### TEACHER B

Sarah and Lucy were returning to the classroom along with their 21 peers. As Sarah reached the door the tears began to follow and when I approached her to see why she was able to get out that Lucy was hurting her in the library as they sat for a story. I called Lucy over and found a private place in the classroom where the three of us could visit. Lucy acknowledged that she had used her feet to hurt Sarah. I directed my comments straight into Lucy's eyes and with a firm yet gentle voice I reminded her that Highland Park is not a hurting school and repeated our class sign language for gentle touch and kind words. Sarah was still crying and I asked Lucy to use gentle touches and comfort Sarah. She rubbed her back. The tears stopped. I then turned to Sarah and asked what she did to stop the behavior.....nothing. I reminded her that when someone is doing something we don't like we put our hand up and say "STOP I don't like (your feet hurting me). I encouraged Sarah to do it with Lucy at that point and then sent Sarah on to play. Since this was not the first incident with Lucy, I asked her to sit in a chair and watch other children playing together without hurting each other. This was done with a calm voice void of anger. As I worked with children in small group, I occasionally gave Lucy eye contact and reminded her to keep watching and I would be over shortly to visit. After only a few minutes, I asked Lucy to show me several examples of children playing and working without hurting.....Lucy

pointed to and described several children and what they were doing. I then encouraged her to go to play.....knowing this would be a situation we would probably repeat more than once.

Incidents like the above happen often when you bring children together and it is a daily mental drain of what to do with whom and how. In this case I needed Sarah to know our school was a school she could trust and that I would be there for her. I need to work with her and all my children so they have the confidence to handle many of their own problems by speaking up for themselves in a direct.....firm.....polite way. For children like Lucy I need to work at getting to know her and maybe discover some inter turmoil that she has.....at the same time.....letting her know our class has an expectation and she will be held accountable for her actions.

## APPENDIX D: PROTOCOL

### TEACHER C

#### **Why I choose to teach kindergarten?**

Actually, I never planned to be a kindergarten teacher. I come from Taiwan. In Taiwan, teaching is a good career, especially for a woman because of its stability and paid vocation. I had planned to be an elementary teacher when I was young because the payment is good and it's a government job. In contrast, a kindergarten teacher is paid low, doesn't have much social respect, and people expect a lot of hard work from the teachers.

Therefore, after graduating from high school, I took the public exam to qualify to enter a university. Unfortunately, I didn't succeed. Therefore, I had a whole year for the next examination. It was during this time that my mother came across a note for teachers' training in early childhood education. Therefore, I went ahead and gave the test to qualify for training to be a kindergarten teacher.

During these five years, my whole concept of kindergarten teaching changed. I realized that being a kindergarten teacher is much more than just playing with children. It was full of hard work, theory based, and extremely significant. I started liking the whole experience. Since I like children, I felt kindergarten teaching could be both fun as well as satisfaction.

### **My goals for young children**

It will be difficult to identify a single goal for my teaching practice. I believe that the student is more important than the teacher and the subjects. However, in Taiwan, the education system is not focused on students, but more the teaching systems and the subject to be taught. In this context, I can identify three broad goals for my teaching practices as a kindergarten teacher.

Firstly, it should be borne in mind that kindergarten students are very young and can't be expected to behave like a grown-up children. It would be foolish to expect that kindergarten students can achieve extraordinary things after teaching them. The goal for the kindergarten students would be that he/she enjoys the learning experience without any tension of subject or achievement. Learning has to be natural without pressure. I would be happy if my students come to school with happy feeling, rather than just because their parents sent them to school.

Secondly, I feel the educational system makes students passive learners. In such a system, the teachers teach and students supposedly learn. However, I don't consider learning takes place unless the students actively participate in the learning process. My goal for the students would be: give enough opportunity for the students to interact, participate, contribute, and even disagree to what is happening in classroom. This will make them an active learner.

Finally, it's well-known that because of the explosion of knowledge, it's not possible to teach a student everything. Learning in modern time is not just



transfer of knowledge but it's the development of our ability in the students to gain knowledge on their own. I believe that this can be developed right from kindergarten level. A kindergarten student should be trained what he/she should know and how to get the knowledge. For example, a kindergarten student should feel the necessity to know the names of fruits, but should also know whom to ask for the problem. This finally trains them to be problem solvers.

Students will try to solve problems on their own even through outside the classroom. In the above example, the student may go home and ask his mother the names of other thing and thus become an active learner.

Therefore, my main goals for my kindergarten students are: to make them active learners, and provide them a happy and appropriate learning environment, to help them to become problem solvers.

### **How I maintain a positive classroom atmosphere?**

I tried to make the classroom a classroom community. Students in my classroom were feel safe, encouraged, and trusting. Students in my classroom could also help each other, share, and solve problems together.

In Chinese culture, children are usually told "Don't ask too many questions, just listen," or "Don't have too many different opinions." For them, a teacher can be a symbol of power; therefore, many students do not just respect but are also scared of the teacher. The school becomes a terrifying place for the students. In the relationship between students and students, teachers do not provide them with

enough time to cooperate and help each other. Therefore, the relationship is based on competition. Teachers encourage students to compete in the classroom rather than to work cooperatively. Finally, learning and school became initiation of pressure for the students. Because of this situation, my school experience, I preferred to make the school to be a more relaxed place for students, a place where they can learn and play happily.

In the learning environment, I anted to make students feel that they belong to this group, and try to make them identify with this community. Students will not be sacred of their teachers anymore; and the teacher will not be the power symbol for them. Otherwise, the teacher will turn to be helper and the supporter for the students. In addition, there would be no competition between students and students, but they will start to help each other, share, and solve problems together.

Since students are in this environment, they will have an opportunity to realize how important they are in the group. Teacher will allow students to make their own decisions, and through this, students will learn how to be responsible for their own choices and behavior, and also be responsible for their group (community). It is only when the students have the opportunity to make decision or to discuss their thinking that they can learn how to be responsible for themselves and the community. When there are some problems among this group, students will also be encouraged to discuss and came up with better solutions. Finally, students will realize that when their community becomes a better learning environment, they will also benefit from such a learning environment.

**My story to promote prosocial behavior among young children**

When I taught in kindergarten, I still needed to continue with my studies at Taichung Teachers College, taking evening classes. Therefore, to have some break during noon was very important for me. Usually, I could sleep after all the students fell asleep. Since I had thirty-three students in my class, it was not easy for them to fall asleep in such a short time. I remember one time, when most of the children had already fallen asleep, a few of them could not fall asleep, but they started to disturb the other sleeping children. I told them to stop, but they could not listen to me, they started to make whispering noises and the whole atmosphere became non conducive for the sleeping children. They ended up cutting their sleep short. In order to avoid the situation from getting worse, I asked another teacher to take care of the sleeping ones, and I took the ones that could not sleep, out of the classroom. Once they got out of the classroom, they lost control. They started to run around and yelling. Since I was scared that they might wake students in the other classes, I finally took them upstairs to an art classroom. Even in this classroom, they still run around and touching everything they wanted without listening to me anymore. After that moment, I gave up. I just felt they were not human, they were just evil creatures.

The next day, before they went to their sleeping place, in order to encourage them to have appropriate behavior, I told them that I was going to see who were the three best students in class. The three best students were to be rewarded with some small gifts for them. Students started to exhibit appropriate behavior. It was easy to see changes in them. One week later, I gave the students their prizes. However, two weeks later, the students were no longer excited about

this anymore. I also got tired of following them up. I discovered that I was putting more than everything into this. Then, I started to wonder, was there any thing I could do to make the students behave appropriately spontaneously without bribing them. Finally, I quit using gifts, I told them that if they did not behave well during the sleeping time, I was not going to take them with us to the playground in the afternoon.

So I then decided to help them be more socially involved by asking a few students to play. Those students, who did not cooperate, were left out. But later I felt bad about it, so I allowed them to play. However, I think that was a mistake. I believe that teachers should be consistent in their own discipline. If not, students might get confused and also not take the teachers seriously.

Finally, I decided to use the technique of consequences in which those students who not behavior appropriately are not punished, but should be left out of our class activities. This means the other students in the classroom don't involve them in their activities. I was surprised to see that this technique worked very well.

### **Techniques I used to promote children's prosocial behavior**

#### **A. Be aware of children's conflicts**

Teacher should be an observer and support of children. A teacher should be aware of children's conflicts and help them to solve their conflicts.

Awareness helps us to address the problems properly and not cause trouble to the innocent children.

#### B. Rule making

In my classroom, children could solve their conflicts or problems in classroom by creating their own rules. They used to discuss and to come up with their own rules. I remembered how my students made their own rules, like "Don't run in the classroom." Because they could not write it down, so they decided to draw it and put it on the wall of our classroom. Therefore, when they were in the classroom, they could see the drawing, and it also reminded them about their own rules in the classroom.

#### C. Conflict resolutions

When there were conflicts among the students, I called them together, and encouraged them to explain their own perspectives to each other and try to understand other children's perspectives. Then, I encouraged them to negotiate and resolve their own conflicts.

#### D. Classroom meeting

I used classroom meetings to discuss every problem in our classroom. I told the students what I saw in the classroom, and encouraged them to identify the problems or conflict, discuss the problems, and then encouraged them to come out with solutions. Whenever there was a problem during the classroom meeting time, I would help students to solve the problem.

#### E. Consequences

I told the children that if they wanted to join our class activities, they must behave appropriately, and be a cooperater in our classroom. If they decided not to cooperate in the class, they would not join our group and class activity. Using reward might be very useful at the beginning time. However, for long-term development, I think using reward is not a healthy technique for promoting young children's prosocial behavior. The best motivation is from children's inner self-regulation. When children have an opportunity to make their own decisions, they also get opportunity to learn how to be responsible for their own decisions and behavior.

#### F. Teachers' consistence

My experience on the playground taught me that teachers should insist their own discipline. If a teacher can't insist their discipline, the children may get confused and never learn to respect the discipline from the teachers. In fact later on students refused to listen to me and take me seriously.

#### G. Controlling emotions

Teacher doesn't need to shout at the children, but just insist their own discipline and make the children to be responsible for their own behavior. My shouting never made my students well behaved. It may only when I

made them realize the importance of discipline that they became more responsible.

#### H. Timing of teaching prosocial behavior

I think the beginning of each semester is the most important time to start teaching prosocial behavior among children. At the beginning of the semester, we introduce the children to the classroom routine one by one. Children can also learn how to make their classroom more organized.

When we can introduce children the classroom routine in advance (at the beginning time), we will spend less time to deal with their conflicts.

APPENDIX: E  
**Oklahoma State University**  
**Institutional Review Board**

Protocol Expires: 6/25/02

Date: Tuesday, June 26, 2001

IRB Application No ED01142

Proposal Title: **CROSS CULTURAL COMPARISON OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHING TO PROMOTE PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR**

Principal Investigator(s):

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235 Willard  
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Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

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Dear PI:

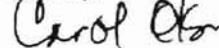
Your IRB application referenced above has been approved for one calendar year. Please make note of the expiration date indicated above. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Sharon Bacher, the Executive Secretary to the IRB, in 203 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, sbacher@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Carol Olson, Chair  
E: Institutional Review Board

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VITA

Mei-Fang Cho

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: TEACHING TO PROMOTE PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR IN  
TAIWANESE AND AMERICAN KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN

Major Field: Curriculum & Instruction

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Tainan City, Taiwan, on June 25, 1972, the daughter of Cho Kun-Yuan and Chang Feng-Sen.

Education: Graduated with an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education from National Tainan Teachers' College, Tainan, Taiwan; received Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education from National Taichung Teachers' College, Taichung City, Taiwan. Completed the requirements for the Masters of Science degree with a major in Curriculum and Instruction at Oklahoma State University in December 2001.

Experience: Have worked as a kindergarten teacher in Taiwan, and tutored students for grades I to IV.

Volunteer Experience: Assistant of Children's Music Groups, and visiting children from families below poverty level.

