

TITLE: The Role of Teacher's Characteristics and Ethnicity Match with Toddlers in Their Relationships

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Introduction: The importance of the relationship between teachers and children in child development has been consistently examined by many researchers. This relationship is influenced by many factors such as the ethnicity match between children and teachers and teachers' characteristics (Graves, & Howes, 2011). Ethnicity is one that has a significant impact on relationships between teachers and children due to growing diversity in child care settings (Ewing, & Taylor, 2009). However, ethnicity has not received much attention in the literature. The little research that has already been conducted has mainly focused on preschoolers or older students rather than toddlers. Therefore, this study explored the influences of teacher-child ethnicity match and teacher's characteristics on teacher-child relationships as perceived by teachers.

Method: Forty-three toddlers and their parents and teachers in child care participated in research in a Southern metropolitan city and a lap school in a college. Teachers completed a questionnaire about their background information (e.g., educational level, working experience, ethnicity) and relationships with toddlers, and parents provided their demographic information. There were 11 non-ethnically matched pairs, 15 Caucasian teacher-child pairs, and 17 African American pairs in the sample. The Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS; Pianta, 1991; self-report measure) was used to assess teachers' relationships with toddlers. We calculated three subscale scores (i.e., conflict, closeness, & dependency) and the total score for STRS.

Results: We ran a one-way ANOVA, Post-Hoc analysis, and Pearson-Moment Correlations to examine the associations among teacher-child ethnicity match, teacher characteristics, and teacher-child relationships. The results of preliminary analysis indicated that African American matched teacher-child pairs showed significantly higher scores on dependency than non-match pairs and Caucasian pairs ($F=4.74, p < .01$). In addition, teachers' educational levels were negatively correlated with dependency, and their working experiences were negatively associated with closeness ($r=-.36, p < .05$; $r=-.47, p < .01$, respectively).

Conclusion: Our findings show that teachers in African American matched pairs are more likely to report that children are dependent on the teachers than teachers in Caucasian matched pairs or

non-ethnically matched pairs. This could be explained by different cultural values among different ethnic groups (Akerso, Buzzelli, & Eastwood, 2012). It also highlights the importance of considering teachers' characteristics for teacher-child relationships.

References

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