A CASE STUDY OF PRESCHOOL TEACHER EXPECTATIONS AND TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTIONS

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Public preschool in NJ is a targeted program aimed at ameliorating the effects of disadvantage by readying children for school. Recent research (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Chien, Howes, Pianta, Burchinal, Ritchie, Bryant, Clifford, Early, and Barbarin, 2010) suggests that teachers may vary their interactions with children in these programs based on their expectations of academic need and that these expectations may be mediated by race and class. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine teacher-student interactions in a local urban preschool program where the teacher and students racial, ethnic, and socio-economic status differ. The research questions that guided this study are: What do teacher-student interactions look like in the preschool classroom when teachers' and children's backgrounds differ? a) What are teachers' expectations of their preschool students? b) How do teachers convey their expectations to their students? c) What do the students perceive are the expectations that their teachers have of them?

Qualitative data was collected in two pubic preschool classrooms through interviews, observations and document analysis. Classroom teachers were interviewed three times using a semi structured protocol aimed at understanding each teacher's responses and expectations of students. Two interviews were also conducted with each of the four student participants to elicit their views of life in preschool. Classroom observations of whole group and small group instructional events captured descriptive information about teacher-student interactions. Documents, such as lesson plans, provided insight into teachers planning for students and were collected to triangulate data.

The results of this study show that both teachers had an academic agenda that focused on skills rather than substance. Overlooking what the children could do, both teachers taught

academic content to their Black students in the same way, almost as routine. The knowledge and competencies that children brought with them into the classroom were overlooked and as a consequence, neither teacher is really getting the children to the levels of literacy and numeracy that they need to be at to be successful in kindergarten. The children were aware of their teachers' expectations of them: that the wanted them to learn, not excel, but just get through the basics.

DEDICATION

To my husband,

Phillip,

Who stood by me and helped me realize my potential;

to my parents,

Ron and Barbara,

Who always believed I could accomplish anything I put my mind to;

And to my son,

Riley,

Who enriches my life everyday.

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CHAPTER 1: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Publically funded preschool programs have come to play an important role in shaping young children's lives in the United States. The enrollment in state funded preschool programs has drastically increased since 2002 to more than 1.3 million four year-olds as of 2012 (Barnett, Carolan, Fitzgerald, & Squires, 2012). Publically funded preschool continues to exist in forty of the fifty states and the District of Columbia despite budget cuts in the 2011-2012 school year (Barnett et. al, 2012).

State funded preschool programs vary in terms of the children they serve. In some states, such as Oklahoma and Georgia, preschool is universally available to all children aged 4 years (Barnett et. al, 2010). Universal programs allow learning opportunities for preschoolers of all backgrounds without the stigma of being labeled low income (Barnett, 2010). Alternatively, many states target their preschool programs to children from disadvantaged backgrounds with the aim of ameliorating the effects of poverty, similar to the aims of the Head Start program which began in the 1960's. While both targeted and universal preschools have been shown to improve academic outcomes for children (Camilli, Vargas, Ryan, & Barnett, 2010), the majority of state funded preschool programs are targeted at low income families as an attempt to ensure that all students are given the same opportunities, in spite of their socioeconomic, linguistic, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds..

Targeting preschool as a means to ameliorate the effects of disadvantage is supported by a number of longitudinal studies of model programs (Schweinhart, Montie, Xiang, Barnett, Belfield, & Nores, 2005 and Reynolds & Temple, 1998) and more recent state evaluations (Frede, Jung, Barnett, & Figueras, 2009). Longitudinal studies of model programs, such as the

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High/Scope Perry Preschool study (Schweinhart et. al., 2005), the Abecedarian Study (Campbell, Pungello, Miller-Johnson, Burchinal, & Ramey, 2001), and the Chicago Child Parent Program (Reynolds & Temple, 1998), have found that students who attended high quality preschool are more likely to graduate high school, score higher on standardized tests, perform better at math and reading in school, and be less likely to be retained in a grade. State evaluations of preschool programs in Alaska, Connecticut, Oregon, New Mexico and New Jersey show positive academic and language outcomes if children from low income families attend high quality preschools (Barnett et. al., 2010; Hustedt, Barnett, Jung, & Friedman, 2010; and Frede et. al., 2009) . For example, in New Jersey, students who attended the Abbott Preschool Program were assessed in kindergarten and first grade. It was found that "one year of the Abbott Preschool Program had an effect size of 0.18 (p<.05) for receptive vocabulary and the two year effect size was 0.38 (p < 01) (Frede et. al., 2009, p. 17-18). In New Mexico, positive impacts on children's language, mathematics, and literacy skills were found upon entry into kindergarten, with statistically significant impacts on phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, and concepts about print (Hunstedt et. al., 2010).

As targeted preschool programs aim to ameliorate the effects of poverty, there tends to be a higher concentration of minority students attending these programs. In 2009, 57.7% of African American three- and four-year-olds, and 41.9% of Hispanic three and four year olds were enrolled in a preschool program, compared to 51.1% of Caucasian three and four year olds (Bureau of the Census, 2011). While the evidence to date shows that publically funded preschool can help to address the achievement gap, there is also some evidence that not all children attending these programs receive the same kinds of experiences.

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Children's impressions of the education system are shaped by the teacher-student relationship that is forged with their earliest teachers (Valeski & Stipek, 2001) and several studies document how children adjust to school based on how they get along with their teachers and how the teachers view them (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001; and Buyse, Verschueren, Verachtert, & Van Damme, 2009). Early teacher-child interactions are predictors of academic and behavioral outcomes through eighth grade (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Young children develop trust in school when they have positive relationships with their teachers, and it is this trust that allows the children to view school as a safe environment, both for academic and emotional growth. "If children feel emotionally secure with the teacher, they can use her as a secure base and a resource for exploring the learning opportunities in the classroom" (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001, p. 50). However, some studies would suggest that teachers' expectations may differ for children based on their ethnic and racial identities, which may affect how secure a child feels in the classroom., The findings of these studies of teacher expectations are largely based on teachers' and parents' answers about students.

Two quantitative studies of publically funded prekindergartens in multiple states evaluated teacher-student interactions through the use of CLASS (the Classroom Assessment Scoring System), which measures the nature and form of the emotional and instructional climate of the classroom, the Emerging Academics Snapshot, and the Early Childhood Environmental Rating System-Revised (Pianta, Howes, Burchinal, Bryant, Clifford, Early, & Barbarin, 2005; Chien, Howes, Burchinal, Pianta, Ritchie, Bryant, Clifford, Early & Barbarin, 2010). In both studies, the teachers' ethnicity was considered as a variable during analysis, but Chien et. al. (2010) also took the students' ethnicity into account during their analysis. Chien et. al. (2010) and Pianta et. al. (2005) found that there are differences in pedagogy and activities based on the

socioeconomic class and the ethnicity of students. A general pattern in both studies is that students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds were given more free play and scaffolded instruction, whereas students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were given explicit instructions with a single correct answer (Pianta et. al., 2005; Chien et. al., 2010). Most of the students in these multistate studies were also children who were considered to be at risk with more than half of the students from minority populations.

Studies of teacher child interactions in a range of early childhood settings would lend support to this finding. The early work on teacher expectations by Rosenthal and Jacobsen (1968) and Rist (1970) in kindergarten settings, for example, found that children's academic potential was judged based on the biased results of IQ tests and on children's appearance and socioeconomic status. Using a cultural lens, Lubeck's (1985) comparative ethnography of a Head Start preschool in which both students and teachers were primarily black and a preschool in which students and teachers were primarily white and middle class, found that the teachers reinforced the values of their socioeconomic class through their expectations of the students. Students in the Head Start preschool were taught to value the group above the individual, which means that the Black children were not being under-stimulated but being taught with a different set of social norms. Although not focused on preschool aged children, a study of kindergarten students by Saft and Pianta (2001) found that when kindergarten students and teachers have a shared ethnic background, the teacher perceives the student-teacher relationship as more positive than the relationships with students of different ethnic backgrounds. In several studies about readiness and redshirting, Graue (2005) has argued that teachers have a prototype of the "successful" kindergarten child that is used to pass judgment on children. Together, these studies

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would suggest that preschool teacher expectations of their students are mediated by race, class, and culture.

Few studies to date have examined teacher-student interactions in depth in publically funded preschool programs. Most of the research on publicly funded preschool programs tends to be evaluative and outcomes based. This research tends to examine whether policies lead to improved quality of programs and improved academic achievement. However, the handful of studies conducted on children's experiences in preschool (Chien et. al., 2010; Pianta et. al. 2005; and Saft & Pianta, 2001) suggests that race, ethnicity and class may mediate children's experiences in preschool. These studies, however, are quantitative, and do not fully investigate the experience of students within their classrooms. Statistics give a clear picture of the amount of interactions, scaffolding, and free play, but they do not examine teaching interactions in depth and how race, class and ethnicity mediates these interactions. The stakes are high for students of historically marginalized groups, because if their teachers already perceive that they are less capable or deficient in some way then attending preschool will not necessarily provide them with the foundation they need to be seen as successful learners. Without further studies that look at the issues of race, class, ethnicity, and cultural norms in preschool in-depth and from the perspectives of teachers and children, it is not clear whether all students experience the curriculum equally and what the potential impacts are if they do not. By analyzing rich descriptions of the teacher-student interactions and teachers' expectations in state funded programs that serve students of lower socioeconomic status, it may be possible to analyze the complexities of these teacher-student relationships and tease out the factors that contribute to the understanding the students have of their teachers' expectations of them and their abilities.

The purpose of this qualitative, case study was to begin to address these gaps in the literature by providing descriptions of teacher-student interactions in a local urban preschool program where the teacher and students racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds differ. The major question guiding this study and the sub-questions are:

1. What do teacher-student interactions look like in the preschool classroom when teacher and children backgrounds differ?

   a) What are teachers' expectations of their preschool students?

   b) How do teachers convey their expectations to their students?

   c) What do the students perceive are the expectations that their teachers have of them?

My purpose in conducting this study was to identify what teacher-student interactions looked like in a classroom where the backgrounds of the teacher and the children differ. In order to accomplish this, I focused on the teachers' expectations of the students and the children's perceptions of these expectations. In what follows I review the literature and theory that frames the study in chapter 2. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used to gather and interpret the data on these teacher-student interactions in whole group and small group settings within two classrooms. In chapter 4 I provide a descriptive portrait of student and teacher interactions in the two classrooms. Chapter 5 explores the implications of this study's findings in relation to research and practice.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

As the purpose of this study was to examine the teacher-student interactions that occur between African American students of low socioeconomic status and their Caucasian preschool teachers, four bodies of literature are reviewed. First, I explain the concepts from Foucault's theory and Whiteness Theory that I used as the framework for this study. Next, I examine the research base on publically funded preschool programs to provide an understanding of the context in which this study takes place. I then outline research on teaching in preschool, providing a little history on teacher expectations before then examining research that has looked at the intersections between teacher expectations, race, class and gender.

Theoretical Framework

Power, discourse and knowledge provided the framework for this study of preschool teacher-study interactions. By focusing in on the discourse of the interactions and the overarching expectations that fuel those interactions, I was able to make observations about the teacher-student relationships and the distribution of power between the teacher and student. As I was particularly interested in the relationships between White teachers and their expectations of their African American students, I also used the work of theorists who study Whiteness. Each of these theories and how they inform this study is discussed next.

Foucault: Power, discourse, and Knowledge

Power is an ever present force in education. It pushes down on teachers from administrators and laws, leading teachers to push students to fulfill the requests placed upon them. Foucault, a French social theorist, defined a power relationship as one that utilizes actions to modify others (Bowers & Flinders, 1990). Foucault's definitions of power developed over the

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course of his work. In *Madness and civilization: A history of insanity in the age of reason* (1988), power is not rooted in the urges of a person but of a mechanism which has the potential to create paranoia about being powerless. However, in *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1995), he showed how the power related to disciplining others is individualized because there are large numbers of people being controlled by smaller numbers of people. For Foucault, "power is not a renunciation of freedom, a transference of rights, the power of each is delegated to a few" (Foucault, 1995, p. 220). The way power is exercised according to Foucault is through self-discipline. Foucault argues that power works through discourses and in relation to knowledge; for this reason, people subject themselves to discipline, or self discipline. In other words, power circulates through disciplinary knowledge which individuals take up and enact into being as a form of truth. As a consequence, individuals in order to be seen as acting correctly self correct. One example of how power circulates in and through knowledge and its relation to discourse can be seen in the way laws operate. The government creates the law to modify the actions of citizens without directly being involved in the changes individuals make (Faubion, 1994). Power comes from the discourses and knowledge that is shared, but demonstrating self discipline citizens modify their actions to be seen to be following the laws.

School is a form of institutionalization in which power is exercised in and through knowledge. For Foucault, the main objectives of institutions are to create hierarchies of power, but power is exercised in more subtle ways than simply from the top down. For Foucault, social institutions like schools regulate the actions of others through discourse but there is also the possibility of individuals resisting particular discourses and therefore challenging dominant power relations.

Discourse is "a body of writing that uses shared language for talking about a topic, shared concepts for understanding it and shared methods for examining it" (MacNaughton, 2005, p.p. 20). For example, Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) (Copple & Bredekamp, 1997) is a discourse which consists of ideas for understanding the development of young children and the activities that are appropriate for them as they develop. As a discourse, DAP requires teachers to use knowledge of children's learning and development to enact curriculum in particular ways. To not enact DAP is seen as a failure on the part of the practitioner to realize the importance of intentionally teaching children to use knowledge to inform goals and making sure those goals are challenging and achievable (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2012). DAP is a discourse that has been institutionalized through the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the largest early childhood practitioner organization in the world and is known as the Field's consensus definition of best practice. As such the DAP guidelines become like a set of laws that when spoken into action by early childhood practitioners enacts a certain kind of politics that requires teachers and children to act in certain ways. A DAP teacher is one who is child centered, allows children to play and acts as a facilitator. Young children are supposed to be allowed to choose their own areas and make their own decisions.

Lubeck has brought three problems with DAP to light in terms of its regulation of the child. "First, they (the DAP guidelines) presume that all children develop in the same way" (Lubeck, 1994, p. 32). Second, they claim to represent a "consensus" view of early childhood education but do not take into account cultural values, and lastly, these guidelines devalue the knowledge about child rearing of those unfamiliar with the guidelines (Lubeck, 1994, p. 32). According to New (1994) the universality of DAP has not been called into question as, "The field of child development was built upon a predominance of studies conducted on white,

middle-class American children" (p. 68). By relying on data from white, middle-class American children, the developmentally appropriate practices that form the foundation for many early childhood programs immediately creates a discourse that has a bias against children of other races and socio-economic backgrounds.

Thus, Foucault's view of power, knowledge and discourse assume that all knowledge is imbued with values therefore, all knowledge is culturally prejudiced (MacNaughton, 2005). When certain discourses, like DAP, become dominant within a field they enact a set of power relations that favors certain ways and being over others. With this concept in mind, Foucault's ideas of power and knowledge become essential for analyzing the relationships between a teacher and her students. Schools may promote White, middle class ways of being and by creating docile citizens (Foucault, 1995). In preschool and elsewhere, children learn to fit to the norm if they are to be seen to be a "good student" and hence children self-discipline themselves and each other.

Students are often seen only as being subject to education, but even preschool students need to be looked at as more than just recipients of knowledge because they come into the classroom with their own knowledge and own set of cultural norms. Teachers are likewise influenced by their own culture, upbringing and education. Therefore, knowledge becomes more than just the information being transmitted through a curriculum; it becomes a means of expressing and exercising power. Fortunately, there are multiple discourses that operate and compete within a classroom. Understanding the discourses, children and teachers speak and act into being offers insights into the power relations operating in a classroom and therefore offer a lens for considering how White teachers understand and interact with their students as well as how students of color interact and respond to their teachers.

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Whiteness Theory

Whiteness theory provides a lens for analyzing how power, knowledge and discourse operate in relation to the ethnicity and race of teachers and individuals. In Whiteness Theory power is associated with the privilege and the benefits that come from being White in American society (Shannon, 2006). Whiteness theory acknowledges the unspoken norms of American society and forces researchers to "rethink objectivity" (Fine, 2006, p. 88) by realizing that every researcher, especially Caucasian researchers, such as myself, has a bias based on their racialized upbringing. In addition to power, whiteness must also be looked at as racial privilege, a standpoint from which to view self, others and society, and "a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed" (Frankenberg, 1997, p. 1). Whiteness then must be seen as an independent culture or race, not as the norm that it has often become in American society.

"White privilege operates as unseen, invisible, even seemingly nonexistent" ways (Sullivan, 2006, p. 1). The advantages of whiteness have become so pervasive in American society that it has become difficult to separate whiteness from societal norms. Privilege needs to be recognized as privilege and not just the natural order of things (Sullivan, 2006). In a country where white privilege is considered normal, those of other races tend to feel alienated from the societal norms, and the fight against the norms becomes akin to a battle. When discussing the decolonization of whiteness, Strobel states that one writer said "loving one's blackness is an act of political resistance, an antiracist commitment against structures of domination" (2006, p. 33).

This resistance, as suggested by Foucault, is not meant to incite unrest but to create a shift in the power dynamic. Whiteness theory looks at this attempt to shift the power dynamic and shows how Whiteness has changed over the years in America to include ethnicities which had

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been seen as "other" at one point, such as the Italian and Eastern European immigrants, but this change maintains power in Whiteness by including only those ethnicities that typically have similar skin tones (Roediger, 2005). Skin tone, then, becomes an obvious sign of privilege, making it easier to find the other, or as Frankenberg explained, "Race was made into a difference and simultaneously into a rationale for racial inequality" (1997, p. 139).

One way to examine whiteness is by studying discourse. "In making decisions about who is white and who is not, language, accent, cultural performances, and other signals of social location regularly come into play" (Lewis, 2009, p. 132). Language is the key to power because it is through language that individuals communicate values. For example, in the 1920s, it was common practice for teachers to humiliate students who had names that were difficult for the white teachers to pronounce (Roediger, 2005). This practice is not one that ended in the 1920s because it is still seen in schools today, although not as blatantly. Teachers, especially white teachers, can be overheard discussing the names that they find odd in their class, which are often names from other races. Racial identities are formed from more than just skin tone; culture, names, accent, and proficiency in Standard English are all part of racial identification.

Looking at what goes into racialized identities is especially important when looking at early childhood education as the first years of schooling provides the foundation on which children will learn, during which many of the students are still learning how to use language and are often trying out words and accents that they hear at home. This can immediately put the children at a power deficit in the classroom if they have White teachers, since the teachers have a working understanding of Standard English and language acquisition and are teaching it to the students based on their own learning of English and their teacher training. When a Caucasian teacher is teaching African-American students in an early childhood classroom, there is even

more of an unbalanced power relationship because the Caucasian teachers are often not taught that white is a race of privilege, not the cultural norm, so they teach the children to speak, read, and write through a white discourse, marginalizing other forms of communication. While the white norms insist on students raising hands and speaking one at a time, "African American students; style is most closely aligned with 'involvement' style" (Hallam, 2006). By insisting that students conform to the white norms during their first years of schooling, teachers are modifying the children's behavior and discourse to fit into the white norms of institutionalized education.

Whiteness theory does not seek to essentialize race but rather, offers me a lens for considering how white teachers respond to, and interact with young children who are Black. For this study, Whiteness Theory will be used in conjunction with Foucault's theories on power, knowledge, and discourse to enable me to understand how race mediates teacher-child interactions in 2 preschool classrooms and the power relations that circulate in these interactions. Observing classroom interactions and analyzing conversations will provide away to unearth the hidden messages that are imbedded in teacher-student interactions between white teachers and black students in two early childhood classrooms.

Studies of Public Preschool

The research base on publically funded preschool includes quantitative studies of model programs and their long term impacts, and more recently multi-state (e.g. SWEEP) and single state studies of programs (e.g. New Jersey).

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Longitudinal and Experimental Studies of Preschool

There have been a number of longitudinal and experimental studies of model programs, and in general, these studies show high quality preschool has positive impacts on the lives of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. By model programs, I mean that the preschools studied had certain components considered to be high quality. These components included qualified teachers, small class sizes, the use of a particular curriculum model, and higher teacher to student ratios (Wiltz & Klein, 2001). Three of these model preschool studies were the Perry Preschool Study, which took place in Ypsilanti, MI, the Abecedarian Project, which took place in Chapel Hill, NC, and the Chicago Child-Parent Centers, which took place in Chicago, IL.

The Perry Preschool Project was a study that took place in the 1960s, and the participants, mostly African American children living in poverty, were randomly assigned to a High/Scope classroom, Direct Instruction, or traditional Nursery School program. The participants from this study have been periodically interviewed, up to age 40 and researchers have found ongoing positive outcomes for High/Scope preschool students. In comparison to students in the direct instruction and traditional nursery school programs, Students who attended the Perry preschool program were more likely to have graduated high school, earn higher incomes, and be less likely to have been arrested (Schweinhart, Montie, Xiang, Barnett, Belfield, & Nores, 2005).

 "The Child-Parent Center (CPC) program provides comprehensive educational and family support services to economically disadvantaged children from pre-school through early elementary school" (Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, Mann, 2001, p.2339). In a longitudinal study of the Chicago Child-Parent Center, Reynolds and colleagues found that by age thirteen students from the program had higher scores on standardized math and reading tests than the national

average and fewer students were retained a grade than those who had not attended the program

(Reynolds & Temple, 1998). In the 2001 follow-up to the longitudinal study of the Chicago

Child-Parent Center, Reynolds and colleagues found that students who attended the Chicago

Child-Parent Center, relative to students in a matched comparison group, experienced higher

rates of high school graduation, more completed years of education, lower high school dropout

rates, lower quantity of juvenile arrests, and lower rates of violent arrests (Reynolds et. al.,

2001).

> Another preschool study that shows longitudinal effects of early childhood education is

the Abecedarian Project. The Abecedarian project was a scientific study of the potential benefits

of early childhood education for poor children. The study randomly placed infants into either an

educational intervention group or a control group (Campbell, Ramey, Burchinal, Pungello,

Wasik, Sparling, & Lewis, 2012). This program for low-income families provided full-time care

for children from infancy through age five. Each child had a prescription of educational

activities, which were games that were planned to develop social, emotional, and cognitive skills

(Campbell et. al., 2012). In this longitudinal study, researchers observed 57, mostly African

American children in high quality toddler and preschool settings; and compared their

development to 54 children the control group (Campbell, Pungello, Miller-Johnson, Burchinal, &

Ramey, 2001). "Through ten years of school, the Abecedarian project showed positive results on

cognitive tests and academic performance" (Clarke & Campbell, 1998, p. 323).

> Together, these studies show that high quality preschool programs have positive

cognitive and academic outcomes; these studies did not, however, account for racial differences

in these outcomes. Moreover, these studies were of model programs with characteristics such as

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qualified teachers and small class size that may not be replicated on a large scale as in state preschool programs.

Studies of the Effects of Public Preschools

Recent longitudinal state evaluations of public preschool programs are beginning to show similar trends in terms of positive effects on students' academic success as those found in model programs. For example, the New Jersey Abbott Preschool Program has been shown to have positive effects on literacy and mathematics through grade two (Frede, Jung, Barnett, & Figueras, 2009). The New Jersey Abbott Preschool Program is one remedy that emerged from the New Jersey Supreme Court case, *Abbott v. Burke*, in which high-quality full-day preschools that serve both three and four-year-olds were mandated in urban, low-income districts throughout the state (Frede et. al., 2009). In a longitudinal study of preschool in New Mexico, the fourth year evaluation showed "that participation in New Mexico PreK is associated with a number of benefits for 4-year-old children. Specifically, the PreK initiative produced positive impacts on young children's language, mathematics, and early literacy skills as measured at kindergarten entry" (Hunstedt, Barnett, Jung, & Friedman, 2010). In Oklahoma, preschool is universal for 4-year-olds and has been available since 1998 (Hill, Gormley, Adelstein, & Willemin, 2012). The Oklahoma pre-kindergarten program shows more effect on reading and math scores in third grade for the analysis of the students who attended the program from 2006-2007 than those who attended the program in 2001-2002. There was a statistically significant positive effect for third grade math for all students (Hill et. al., 2012).

In a multi-state study of children's engagement in publically funded preschool programs, classrooms were observed and evaluated based on quality, children were evaluated on their school readiness, and poverty and ethnicity were used as variables (Chien, Howes, Pianta,

Burchinal, Ritchie, Bryant, Clifford, Early, and Barbarin, 2010). This study used data from the National Center for Early Development and Learning Multi-State Study of Pre-kindergarten (NCEDL) and the Stat-Wide Early Educations Programs study (SWEEP). "The Multi-State included six states (California, Illinois, Georgia, Kentucky, New York, and Ohio), with 40 programs selected from each state…; the SWEEP included five states (Massachusetts, New Jersey, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin), with 100 programs selected from each state" (Chien et. al., 2010, p. 1536-1537). This study used the Emerging Academics Snapshot, ECERS-R, and CLASS to measure for classroom engagement and classroom quality, and direct child assessments were used to measure the children's literacy, language and mathematics skills (Chien et. al., 2010). The "results suggest that free play, when accompanied by high-quality scaffolding interactions with teachers, remains a model of classroom engagement that may be conducive to children's learning" (Chien et. al., 2010, p.1545). While this study did not focus on teaching, it did focus on how classroom quality and classroom engagement shape children's experiences.

Studies of publically funded preschool to date for the most part are quantitative in design and show general positive trends. The state specific studies showed that high quality preschool programs resulted in positive student outcomes in literacy and mathematics. The multi-state study looked more at engagement and interactions, finding that higher quality interactions in the classroom may be more conducive to children's learning. Although the multi-state study does show some differences in children's experiences, this research base does not look at teaching interactions up close and therefore offers little insight into the daily teacher-child interactions that shape academic outcomes.

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Studies of Teaching in Preschool

Teaching young children is a complex undertaking. Teachers must engage each child individually while managing challenging behavior and adapting lessons as children's interests change. A number of aspects of teaching have been examined in preschool settings. These studies tend to fall into two categories: teacher expectations and teacher-student relationships and how class and race mediate these relationships.

Studies of Teacher Expectations

Teacher expectations are the anticipated achievements or behaviors of students based on preconceptions of the students, past performances, or testing. Teacher expectations and how they might influence student achievement became a focus of study in the 1960's. In one of the first studies of teacher expectations, Rosenthal and Jacobsen (1968), pointed out that the initial judgments made by teachers about students could quickly be proven incorrect in a classroom. Rosenthal and Jacobson's study took place at a city school where a sixth of the students were Mexican, and the school practiced ability grouping that was based on the teachers' perceptions of the students as well as achievement test scores. They studied 678 students, 370 Mexican students and 308 non-Mexican students, all of them from grades kindergarten through grade six who were expected to enroll in the Fall. Using a standardized test, about 20% of the students were designated as "spurters;" these students were chosen based on the results of the "Harvard Test of Inflected Acquisition." "Spurters" were designated as those who are on the cusp of making great academic strides. The results of this experiment indicated that when teachers place higher expectations on students, students tend to "show greater intellectual development" (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968, p. 83). For the "spurters" in this study, the teachers' perception of the students'

race was less of a factor that it had been in their initial judgments of the students. Rosenthal and

Jacobson's book changed the way many researchers looked at teaching because if a teacher could

influence a child's intellectual development simply by expecting him or her to do better, then it

should be easy for all teachers to raise their students' IQs simply by having higher expectations.

Most of the subsequent research on expectations regarding early childhood teaching has

been done in kindergarten through grade three classrooms. In a microethnography, Rist (1970)

observed a kindergarten class in a school located in an urban area in which 98% of the

population was black. In the kindergarten class, the thirty students were being judged by their

appearance and socioeconomic status. During his observations, Rist found that the teacher used

"degree and type of verbalization, dress, mannerisms, physical appearance, and performance on

early tasks assigned during class" (1970, p. 259) to assign permanent seats in the classroom. The

students who most closely resembled the teacher's ideal child were seated up front, where they

received maximum attention from the teacher. Rist found that the table assignments in

kindergarten seemed to help create a caste system within the school because there was little to no

upward mobility from the tables that the students sat at in kindergarten to the ability groupings of

first and second grade (Rist, 1970). For example, in first grade, "those students who she placed

at 'Table A' had all been Table 1 in kindergarten. No student who was at Table 2 or 3 in

kindergarten was placed at Table A in first grade" (Rist, 1970, p. 260). Rist's study showed how

teachers marginalize students based on race and social class. The teachers who participated in

that study did not look at the individual students' abilities or assume that students who appeared

different than themselves would be capable.

Similar to the teachers in Rist's study, who had an image of the ideal child, Graue (2005)

more recently has argued that there is a typical kindergartener, who teachers have in mind when

designing lessons. In a study of redshirting, the practice of delaying kindergarten entry, Graue and DiPerna (2000) examined students in third grade in Wisconsin in 1995-1996 and showed that the expectations for the failure of African American students and students from low socioeconomic background may not only influence the interactions between the teacher and those students, but may also contribute to those students being retained. Ladson-Billings (2009) has explained how teachers' perceptions of African American students affect their ability to be successful teachers. She references Winfield's cross-classification system that categorizes teacher's beliefs about inner city children into four categories: "seeking improvement versus doing maintenance and assuming responsibility versus shifting responsibility" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 23). According to Ladson Billings, some teachers believe that they can actually help students improve, while others just try to maintain the low levels already achieved by students. Some teachers feel that they cannot help the students, but they look for other personnel who can provide assistance. Still others feel that not much can be done to help their students, but they shift the blame onto others. Having these preconceived notions of what children should be able to do and blaming the students or other people for the students' performance does little to teach students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

This work in kindergarten has influenced the way researchers look at teacher expectations in preschool. Preschool teachers, like kindergarten teachers, tend to have a prototypical student that they are teaching to (Graue, 2005). These preexisting ideals may influence what teachers expect of their preschool students. Teaching is then not only about relaying knowledge to students but also about which knowledge is seen as important, how the knowledge is shared, and whose knowledge is deemed worthy. While there have been many studies that look at how students are educated in preschool and kindergarten through quantitative research, there are far

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fewer qualitative studies that focus on teacher-student interactions in preschool (Kontos, 1999 and Lobman, 2006). These qualitative studies provide insight into the practice of teaching and how the learning process takes place through interviews with the teachers and observations in the classroom.

Race, Ethnicity and Teacher-Student Relationships in Preschool

While teacher expectations are the anticipated achievements and behaviors of students, teacher-student interactions are the actual formal and informal conversations and behaviors that occur in the classroom between teachers and students. Interactions in early childhood programs have similar results to those in other grade levels. In studies of preschool, children of color have been found to receive differential access to teacher interactions. These expectations and prototypes used by the teachers influence the teacher-student relationship (Rist, 1970; Graue, 2005). By studying the relationships, researchers can understand the effects of teachers' perceptions of the students.

Quay and Jarrett (1986) conducted a meta-analysis of the research that exists about teacher behavior during the first half of the school year in Head Start programs, in which the children were predominantly black, and middle-SES preschools in which the children were predominately white. They found "teachers of lower SES children had fewer interactions with the children, providing them with less social interchange and verbal communication than middle-SES children were able to obtain from their teachers" (Quay & Jarrett, 1986, p. 496-497).

Lubeck (1985) in her ethnographic study, *Sandbox Society*, found different cultural patterns of teaching behavior and expectations for different communities of color. She studied two preschool classrooms, one in a middle class and white community and the other in a Head

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Start center serving low income predominantly African American children. Lubeck found that in the middle class, White preschool, more emphasis was placed on individual learning and communication skills, while the Head Start preschool, which had Black teachers and students, promoted reciprocal relations among peers and functioning together to ensure group growth (Lubeck, 1985).   While this study does not argue that one preschool was more effective than the other, it does show that different communities have different values and that these values shape teacher expectations. The teachers in the middle class preschool placed a higher value on individuality, which led them to have more individualized expectations for their students; while the teachers in the Head Start center placed a higher value on obedience and group membership, which led them to have more authoritative expectations for children (Lubeck, 1985). These values may explain why Caucasian teachers in other studies (Rist, 1970; Saft & Pianta, 2001) hold lower expectations of African American children because they tend to look for students to act in the same "proper" ways, not taking into account individual and cultural differences in ways of learning and understanding.

Saft and Pianta found that race played a role in the expectations that teachers had of their students in their quantitative study of 197 teachers and preschool students. They conducted this study using the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale, "a 28-item, self-report questionnaire assessing a teacher's perceptions of her relationship with an individual student" (Saft & Pianta, 2001, p.130). After analyzing the teachers' answers and the demographic data, Saft and Pianta found, "when students and teachers shared ethnic backgrounds, the teachers were more likely to perceive their relationships with students as positive" (2001, p. 135).

While the majority of state evaluations show successful outcomes for low income students many of whom are from African American and Latino backgrounds, several studies

suggest that children of color in publically funded preschool may not be receiving the same

quality of education as their white and middle class peers. In a multi-state study of children's

engagement in publically funded preschool programs, classrooms were observed and evaluated

based on quality, children were evaluated on their school readiness, and poverty and ethnicity

were used as variables (Chien, Howes, Pianta, Burchinal, Ritchie, Bryant, Clifford, Early, and

Barbarin, 2010). This study used data from the National Center for Early Development and

Learning Multi-State Study of Pre-kindergarten (NCEDL) and the State-Wide Early Educations

Programs study (SWEEP). "The Multi-State included six states (California, Illinois, Georgia,

Kentucky, New York, and Ohio), with 40 programs selected from each state; the SWEEP

included five states (Massachusetts, New Jersey, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin), with 100

programs selected from each state" (Chien et. al., 2010, p. 1536-1537). This study used the

Emerging Academics Snapshot, ECERS-R, and CLASS to measure for classroom engagement

and classroom quality, and direct child assessments were used to measure the children's literacy,

language and mathematics skills (Chien et. al., 2010). The "results suggest that free play, when

accompanied by high-quality scaffolding interactions with teachers, remains a model of

classroom engagement that may be conducive to children's learning" (Chien et. al., 2010,

p.1545). However, it was also found that children's engagement in the classroom varied by race

and economic background. The European American children from more privileged social

classes tended to be the children who experienced the more high-quality scaffolding interactions

with teachers; while the Latino and African American children from lower social classes tended

to experience more individual and group instruction (Chien et. al., 2010). While all these

students may have been enrolled in what was seen to be high-quality preschools, they did not all

have the same experiences. Chien et. al. (2010) also found that children of color only had large

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gains in literacy and math when there was individualized instruction, although it seems they were less likely to get access to the teacher for this form of instruction.

The handful of studies that have foregrounded issues of race, culture and class in their analyses of teacher-student interactions would suggest that teacher expectations and relationships with students differ depending on whether teachers are of the same racial and class background as their students (Chien et. al. 2010; Lubeck, 1985).

Summary of the Research

In summary, the research on model preschool programs and state preschool programs suggests that children who attend a high quality program will have more school success than those who do not. However, studies of teachers' expectations show that teachers are influenced by their first impressions of students, and prototypes they hold of ideal students and that often students of color do not meet these prototypes. A handful of studies in early childhood settings show that teachers judge students based on race, providing more negative feedback to African American students (Cooper & Allen, 1998; Casteel, 2001). Teachers also tend to have lower expectations of African American students and students of lower socioeconomic status. To date, most of the research has been quantitative, there has not been much, if any, qualitative research investigating teachers' perceptions of race, and socioeconomic class on their relationships with students. Moreover, little is known about how children interpret teachers' expectations of them because the preschool student has not been given a voice in research. More research is needed that focuses on how teacher's perceptions of student race influence teacher-student relationships in preschool and what the students understand from those perceptions.

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   Power and knowledge play significant roles in these interactions, and it is through the discourse of interactions within the preschool classroom that I was able to understand the teachers' expectations and students' perceptions of these interactions. The next chapter will discuss the methodology that I used to conduct this study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLGY

The purpose of this study was to provide a rich description of the expectations and teacher-student interactions in two preschool classrooms in Hampton Center. In particular, this study sought to examine how race and class mediate teacher-student interactions, paying close attention to the children's perspective about these interactions. As I intended to create descriptive portraits of teaching interactions, a qualitative case study design was employed. According to Creswell (2007), a case study is a qualitative research approach in which a researcher investigates an issue in one or more cases within a bounded system. This is a multiple case study (Creswell, 2007) comprised of two cases, with each case examining one white preschool teacher's expectations and interactions with students from low income and African American backgrounds.

In keeping with Yin's recommendations for a case study design (2009), I utilized multiple methods to create a portrait of teaching in two publically funded preschool classrooms within one program located in a low income, urban city. Over the course of twelve weeks, I utilized a variety of interviews, classroom observations, and documents to create a description of the expectations and teacher-student interactions in these classrooms. I also looked into the relationship between teachers' expectations and interactions and the students' perceptions about their abilities to perform in school. I conducted classroom observations during whole group and small group times, and I looked through pertinent documents, such as lesson plans and teacher observation notes of the students to highlight the teachers' expectations of the students. These data sources were examined together to answer the following research question and sub questions:

1. What do teacher-student interactions look like in the preschool classroom when teacher and children backgrounds differ?

   a) What are teachers' expectations of their preschool students?

   b) How do teachers convey their expectations to their students?

   c) What do the students perceive are the expectations that their teachers have of them?

Pilot Study

This study was informed by a pilot study I conducted over a four-week period at Hampton Center during the 2010-2011 school year. The purpose of the pilot study was to describe the teacher-student interactions in a single preschool classroom. I observed in one classroom, four times for approximately forty minutes each time. During these observations, I took on the role of a participant observer, interacting with the children when appropriate in order to gain an understanding of the teacher-student interactions within that classroom. To record my observations, I wrote field notes in a spiral bound notebook. I also interviewed the teacher and teacher assistant twice about their roles in the classroom and their expectations of students in order to deepen my observations in the classroom. In addition, I interviewed four students three times each to elicit their perceptions of their teacher's expectations of themselves as learners. Interviews utilized a semi-structured protocol and were audio recorded (Yin, 2009) with a digital recorder. Transcripts of the interviews were brought to the participants to verify their words and/or actions as a member check.

Conducting this pilot study taught me several methodological lessons that informed this current study. First, I found that attempting to observe four students in a single classroom during

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a short period of time, such as whole group, did not allow me to focus on the teacher-student

interactions in as much depth as I had hoped. Therefore, in this study, I observed only two

students in each classroom, focusing more closely on their interactions and making notes to

follow up with during interviews. Second, the interviews that I conducted with the students in the

pilot study were difficult as the children were not able to focus for a long period of time.

Therefore, I conducted two interviews with each student in this study. To make these interviews

more child friendly, I used a story book and some of my observational data as a visual cue for

students to talk about teacher expectations and interactions. In the pilot study, I also collected

documents that provided me with some background on what the class was studying and the

levels the teacher assessed the focal students to be operating on. These documents included

students' conference forms and individualizations on the teachers' lesson plans. As these

documents were helpful, I also collected a range of documents to inform the research questions

of this study

Context and Setting

The site for this study was an urban, early childhood center that has been serving low

income, mostly African-American families for over twenty years and is located in Trenton, NJ.

Currently, there are seven preschool classrooms in this center that serve children aged 3-5 years,

as well as one toddler classroom for children aged 2-3years, a behavioral health center, and other

programs for the youth of the area.

Hampton Center was purposefully selected as the setting for this study (Creswell, 2007)

because this is the school in which I was teaching at the time. Hampton is also well suited to the

study of teacher expectations and interactions with students that differ racially from themselves

because it has a diverse teacher population. Of the seven certified teachers at the school, there are

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five Caucasian teachers, two African American teachers, and one Hispanic teacher. The student population is much less diverse, primarily consisting of African-American children of lower socio-economic status, of the 105 preschool aged-children there are two Caucasian students, two Hispanic students, and two Middle-Eastern students. All the students qualify for subsidized lunch, which means that this student population is considered low income.

This preschool operates under the state funded mandates of the Abbott v. Burke, New Jersey Supreme Court case. The basic program standards for each preschool classroom in a former Abbott district is a maximum of fifteen children per classroom, with each classroom having a teacher and a teacher assistant (Frede et. al., 2009). Every teacher has a Bachelors and P-3 certification in the state of New Jersey, and the teacher assistants have or are working towards a Child Development Associate. This is a full day preschool program operating from 7:30 am-5:30 pm. Hampton uses the Creative Curriculum, one of the four curriculum models permitted for state funded preschools in New Jersey (Frede et. al., 2009).

I received permission from the district and the school to conduct this research after conducting the pilot study in this same location. This study took during the Spring semester because teachers had gotten to know the students by that point in the year, so their expectations will not be based on first impressions but on observed behaviors, and the students will be comfortable in their classrooms, creating a higher likelihood of the students willingness to participate in interviews and observations.

Sample

The cases for this study were two preschool teachers and their students in Hampton Center. I selected a purposeful sample (Creswell, 2007) by choosing teachers to study who

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fulfilled the group needed to answer my research questions. Upon receipt of IRB approval,

letters of introduction were given to the teachers along with the consent forms (see Appendix A).

As the purpose of this study was to examine teacher-student interactions between a Caucasian

teacher and African American students, the teachers were Caucasian. I selected two students,

with each teacher's assistance to interview and observe. I only chose students whose parents

signed the consent form (see Appendix B). Several criteria were used to guide my selections of

teachers and children.

For teachers, I chose to include those who have taught at Hampton Center for more than

five years, are Caucasian, have no advanced degrees or specialty training other than their

Preschool through grade 3 teaching certification. By choosing participants that have worked as

teachers for more than five years I hoped to be able to avoid the focus on classroom management

issues that comes from the inexperience of brand new teachers. Teachers were also chosen based

on their educational levels. I chose teachers who had their bachelor's degree in Early Childhood

Education, but had no further degrees; this was done in order to ensure that the teachers'

reactions to the children were based on their own experience, not the current educational trends.

Teacher A, Becky, is Caucasian and has been working at Hampton Center for 8 years. Teacher

B, Jane, is also Caucasian and has been working at Hampton Center for 7 years. These teachers

have been working in adjoining classrooms for the last three years. Table 1 contains the

descriptive data for the teachers.

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Table 1

Teacher Demographics

Teacher	Experience	Education Level	Classroom Location	Race
Ms. Becky	8 years at Hampton Center	BA and P-3 NJ teaching certification	2nd floor building A	Caucasian
Ms. Jane	7 years at Hampton Center	BA and P-3 NJ teaching certification	2nd floor building A	Caucasian

A total of four students were selected to participate in this study. Two African American students were purposefully chosen from each classroom using several criteria. First, both students had to be verbally articulate and able to actively participate in interviews. I included a male and a female student from each class in order to ensure that gender was accounted for as a variable. I also had the teachers assist me in the selection to ensure that the two students from each class represented different ends of the academic spectrum; one student from each class was designated as a high achiever by the teacher while the other is considered a lower achiever by the teacher. This difference in achievement allowed me to see the differentiation in expectations based on the teachers' conception of the students' academic abilities.

The two students from classroom B were Princess and Diego, four-year-old African American students. Princess was born in NJ, but her family emigrated from Africa six years ago. Ms. Becky considers Princess to be a smart, motivated student. This was Princess' second year at Hampton Center. Diego's family is from the area surrounding Hampton Center in NJ; his parents went to the local high school. Ms. Becky considered Diego to be one of the slower academic students in her class; this was Diego's second year at Hampton Center.

The two students from classroom B were Dora and Bink, four-year-old African American preschool students. Dora comes from a family who has lived in NJ near Hampton Center for the past ten years. Ms. Jane considered her to be an observant student. This was her second year at Hampton Center, and her old sister and half brother have both attended Hampton Center as well. Bink was born in Jamaica, but his family is to New Jersey when he was an infant. Ms. Jane said "Bink is loving, but not one of the quickest academic students." This was his first year at Hampton Center.

Data Collection Procedures

The purpose of this study was to provide a rich description of the expectations and teacher-student interactions in two preschool classrooms in Hampton Center. In keeping with a case study design, this purpose was accomplished by using multiple techniques of data collection, including interviews, classroom observations, and documents. Triangulation of data provided one source of validity within this study as I was able to use these multiple information sources to confirm commonalities in talk and action (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Each of these procedures is described below.

Interviews

Interviews are an essential data source for case study research (Yin, 2009). Researchers use interviews to shed light on a participant's understanding of a single issue (Yin, 2009), in this case teacher expectations and beliefs about teaching and learning. In the following sections, I explain how the teacher and student interviews were conducted and how they serve to answer the research question and subquestions.

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Teacher interviews. Each teacher was interviewed three times over the course of the study in order to aid in answering the question: What are teachers' expectations of their preschool students? For the teacher interviews, I wanted to make sure that the teachers felt that their privacy and participation were being valued, so I had them choose their own pseudonyms (MacNaughton, Smith, & Davis, 2007). The first interview was a semi structured interview aimed at understanding the teacher's background and philosophy of teaching young children (see Appendix C). This first interview was meant to gather information about each teacher's theories of early childhood and how she viewed about her students. I began the first teacher interview by asking about the teacher's reasons for getting into teaching and her background in education. Then, I asked about how she introduces herself to the students and what her philosophy of teaching is. The first interview took place immediately before the initial observation of each teacher and interview was conducted in their classrooms at the start of the day.

The second and third interviews were stimulus recall, semi-structured interviews aimed at understanding the teacher's response to conflicts in her classroom with the focal students. Conflicts in the classroom show how the teachers respond to the dichotomy between reason and emotion. Rage can be seen as a reasonable response to injustice, however, in school settings, rage is often seen as unacceptable. "It follows, then, that norms of classroom behavior that privilege 'rational' intellect and devalue ' irrational' emotion not only will continue to privilege members of dominant groups in the classroom but also will squelch the more revolutionary possibilities for liberation from emerging from such classrooms" (O'Brien, 2006). Therefore, the teachers' responses to conflict, even simple conflict such as disagreeing with the teachers' order of a lesson, can show how power and privilege exist within the classroom.

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In order to allow the teachers to have time to reflect on the conflicts and interactions they had with their students, I used stimulus recall interviewing. Stimulus recall interviewing, has been used with teachers and students to assist them in recalling their thoughts during a particular event that occurred in the classroom (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). I used observational data as a stimulus to get teachers to explain why they responded in the ways they did during a classroom interaction from the observation; these interviews worked to continue to answer subquestion 1a) What are teachers' expectations of their preschool students by asking about the teachers expectations directly in response to a transcript of one of the classroom observations (see Appendices D and E). To conduct the stimulus recall interviews, I handed the teacher a transcript from an observation of her classroom in which there had been a difference of opinion between her and one of the focal students. Then, I asked her questions about the event to elicit her feelings about that incident. The third interview also served as a member check (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The teachers were able to check for omissions or additions that they wanted to make to their first and second interview transcripts.

Each interview took place in the teacher's classroom sitting at a table in the back of the room while the students played in interest areas. The teacher assistants monitored the classroom during these interviews, freeing the teacher of distractions. All interviews were conducted in the teachers' classrooms when students were present as a way to stimulate the teachers to remember the typical behaviors of the focal students and the classroom climate. These interviews lasted about 10-15 minutes each. While conducting these interviews, I audio recorded the teachers' answers and took notes about their gestures. After the interviews, I thanked the teachers for their time and returned to my classroom. Transcription of the interviews was done at the end of the day.

Student interviews. Student voices have been missing from preschool research (Graue & Walsh, 1998), so the low key, informal interviews that I conducted provided a way to not only answer subquestion 1c) What do the students perceive are the expectations that their teachers have of them, but also to show that these students have valuable insights that can inform the knowledge base. I began the data collection by meeting with each class to explain my study to the students and introduce myself. During this initial visit, I had each participant, who was chosen by the teacher previous to this first encounter, choose his/her own pseudonym, in order to make the students feel that they were respected as part of the research process (Dockett & Perry, 2005 and MacNaughton, Smith, & Davis, 2007). All interviews with the students took place in their classroom immediately following an observation, so as to create a more child friendly interview (MacNaughton et. al., 2007). There were two semi-structured interviews with each student. Each of these interviews was audio recorded and transcribed.

The first interview included a storybook, *The Best Teacher Ever* by Mercer Mayer, which was used to help the students compare their teacher with a fictional one (Nigro & Wolpow, 2004). "Such books often promote conversation about the children's own experiences or expectations" (Dockett & Perry, 2005, p. 510). When meeting with the children for this interview, I first read each of them the story individually in the library area of their classrooms. Then, the students held the book and looked through the pictures. When they were finished exploring the book, I asked them some questions. This semi structured interview (see Appendix D) asked questions that assisted the student in thinking about how they view their teacher and how their teacher might view them. This comparison of the children's teachers to the fictional one assisted in answering subquestion: What do the students perceive are the expectations that their teachers have of them?

The second interview was a stimulus recall interview (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) during which I read a story that I constructed from a transcript from an observation. I read this story to the student and asked him/her to recall what happened in the incident that occurred during that story (see Appendix E) and why the student thought the characters acted in different ways. Since the story contained a conflict, the interview also asked questions about the student's feelings about the conflict. Questions were also asked about how he/she thought the teacher felt about the student during the conflict.

In addition to these formal interviews, during the course of the study, I wrote down notes about the informal conversations that I had with the teachers about the focus students. I also kept notes on any informal conversations that I had with the focus students. These conversations occurred at various times throughout the school day. In order to keep track of these conversations without intruding on the child's school day, I took notes but did not audio record these conversations.

Observations

Observations were used to aid in understanding the teacher-student relationships in each classroom. "Observational evidence is often useful in providing additional information about the topic being studied" (Yin, 2009, p. 110). I observed in each classroom during two specific times of the day, whole group and small group instruction. While free play may have shown a different dynamic of teacher-student interactions, there was no guarantee that the teachers were interacting with the students that were selected for this study during the free play instructional period. In order to answer question 1) What do teacher-student interactions look like in the preschool classroom when teacher and children backgrounds differ and subquestions, 1a) What are teachers' expectations of their preschool students, and 1b) How do teachers convey their

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expectations to their students, I closely focused on the interactions between the teacher and the

selected students. Observations took place from March to June 2012. Each observation lasted for

approximately 40 minutes. I observed in each classroom once a week, one week for whole group

and the next for small group. The schedule is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Data Collection Timetable

Date	Classroom	Event
April 16-20	A and B	Initial introduced to classes and pseudonym collection. First interviews with teachers followed by the initial observations of whole group.
April 23-27	A and B	First observations of small group in each classroom. One observation took place each day and was scheduled with the teachers based on their schedules.
April 30-May 4	A and B	Second observations of whole group in each classroom. One observation took place each day and was scheduled with the teachers based on their schedules.
May 7-May 11	A and B	Second observations of small group in each classroom. One observation took place each day and was scheduled with the teachers based on their schedules.
May 14-May 18	A and B	Third observations of whole group in each classroom. One observation took place each day and was scheduled with the teachers based on their schedules. Second interviews with teachers.
May 21-May 25	A and B	Third observations of small group in each classroom. One observation took place each day and was scheduled with the teachers based on their schedules. First interviews with students.
May 28-June 1	A and B	Fourth observations of whole group in each classroom. One observation took place each day and was scheduled with the teachers based on their schedules.
June 4-8	A and B	Fourth observations of small group in each classroom. One observation took place each day and was scheduled with the teachers based on their schedules.

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| June 11-15 | A and B | Fifth observations of whole group in each classroom. One observation took place each day and was scheduled with the teachers based on their schedules. Second interviews with students. |
| June 18-22 | A and B | Fifth observations of small group in each classroom. One observation took place each day and was scheduled with the teachers based on their schedules. Third interviews and member checks with teachers. |

Observations were recorded in two ways. First, each observation was audio recorded and transcribed. The interactions with students other than those selected for this study were edited out. This allowed me to focus on the discourse between the teacher and the two selected students, and the power dynamic that existed between them.

Second, as a participant observer, I wrote field note jottings in a spiral notebook. The fieldnotes contained within a single notebook, were organized by date, with a summary of instructional time. I kept track of my reflections about the interactions and questions that arose from these interactions on the right side of my notebook paper. The transcription from the audio recordings was typed and the reflections and questions were integrated into the transcription.

Documents

Documents are stable and reliable, providing facts about the topic being studied (Yin, 2009). For this study, I collected a range of documents that shed light on teacher expectations of their students. These documents included lesson plans in order to gain an understanding of the contexts of each whole group and small group. I also read the teacher observations of the student participants in order to gain an insight into the teachers' expectations of the students. I summarized each document I collected, using a document summary sheet (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Each document summary sheet included the date on the document, classroom, student,

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and short description of the objectives met by the student and the levels that the teacher

evaluated the student as being on at that time. The document summary form allowed me to pare

down each document into a single page in order for them to be used more effectively to answer

the research questions.

By employing these three methods of data collection (see Table 3), I was able to ensure

that my research question and subquestions were fully answered, as well as ensuring that more

than one data collection method were used to answer each of question and subquestion.

Table 3

Alignment of Data Collection Methods to Research Question and Subquestions

Research Question or Subquestion	Data Collection Method			
	Teacher Interviews	*Student Interviews*	*Observations*	*Documents*
What do teacher-student interactions look like in the preschool classroom when teacher and children backgrounds differ?	X	X	X	X
What are teachers' expectations of their preschool students?	X	X	X	X
How do teachers convey their expectations to their students?			X	X
What do the students perceive are the expectations that their teachers have of them?	X	X		

Role of researcher

Being a white researcher, I realized that I have to account for power in the teacher-student interactions and the analysis of those interactions, especially since my own whiteness provides a privileged lens through which I view the world (Sullivan, 2006). Whiteness theory acknowledges the unspoken norms of American society and forces researchers to "rethink objectivity" (Fine, 2006, p. 88) by realizing that every researcher, especially Caucasian researchers, has a bias based on their racialized upbringing. This means that while researchers cannot stay completely objective, they must acknowledge that which influence their perceptions. I have some preconceived notions of the interactions in the school, which inevitably influence the codes and patterns that I focus on. I took care of these preconceptions through my research journal in which I wrote down my feelings about the interviews and observations immediately afterwards. I also wrote down other questions that arose in this journal, so that I could include them in interviews with the teachers.

Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2007), data analysis happens in stages; I employed four major steps to my analysis. These steps included first organizing my data, second sorting the discourse for those that contained conflict, third coding the data with deductive codes from Foucault's theory of power combined with the notions of power and privilege of Whiteness theory and inductive codes that arose from the data before then creating a description of each case, and finally conducting a cross case analysis that looked for similar themes across the two classrooms.

To prepare the data for analysis, all the interviews and observations were transcribed, taking care to remove extraneous information. At this beginning stage, I organized the data by class, organizing all interviews, observations, and documents from the same classroom into a folder on my computer as well as placing the hard copies of these interviews, observations, and documents into a folder.

Once my data had been arranged by class, I used Foucault's concept of focusing data analysis on discourse, by deconstructing the discourse into segments that told about the individual's actions and interactions during conflicts (Foucault, 1972). Conflicts create a struggle for power; it is in the response to this struggle that the teachers' beliefs about power and privilege come to the surface. During reflections of these responses, the teachers' beliefs were able to be carefully examined. Discourse, in this analysis, included transcripts of classroom talk that were interpreted as texts. I pulled out the teacher-student interactions from the observations and read over the documents looking for specific references to the student participants. I then looked at the interview data to see how the teacher and students interpreted these interactions. I reread each transcript and noted who initiated each interaction and who maintained the most control over the interaction, such as choosing or changing the topic. According to Whiteness theory, it is the Caucasian who will control most of the interactions (McIntyre, 1997).

In the second stage of data analysis, I looked for information about the teachers' expectations of the focal students within the interview and observation data. During this stage, I focused on the research questions, looking for what expectations the teachers were utilizing, how those expectations were being portrayed to the students, and how the students seemed to perceive these expectations. By focusing on these subquestions, I was able to step back and see what the

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teacher-student interactions between the white teachers and Black students looked like in these classrooms.

During my third stage of data analysis, I developed codes by highlighting the individuals' voices in the transcripts from each interview and observation. Coding is marking segments of data with descriptive words or category names (Creswell, 2007). First, I used deductive codes that I elicited from Foucault's concept of power, which states that those in power use actions or discourse to modify others (Bowers & Flinders, 1990; Faubion, 1994), such as who is in power and who has privilege in each interaction: student exerting power, student knowledge, teacher exerting power, and teacher knowledge. These deductive codes were applied to all sources of data: interviews, observations, and documents. These deductive codes corresponded to the research questions. I reread the transcripts and interviews, looking through them highlighting to label where the students reacted to specifically stated expectations or expressed understanding of the teacher's expectations. Then, I sorted these mentions of expectations into positives and negatives, identifying whether the teacher or student was in power in each interaction. After that, I reread the data and created inductive codes that came from the data record. Some of these codes included feelings about school, feelings about teacher, ownership, teacher identity, and rules. This step allowed me to compare and contrast the teachers' and students' view of expectations.

Once data was coded for each teacher and student in classroom A and classroom B, I then carefully looked at the coded data for each teacher in relationship to each of her students. I interpreted the data, making sense of each case by looking for relationships and patterns across the codes. I compared the interactions that the teacher had with each student in her class, taking note of differences in treatment based on gender or perceived ability. I compared the power

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relations in each interaction with corresponding interactions in the classroom. I focused on which individual wielded the power in each interaction. I looked for the emergence of patterns pertaining to the distribution of power and the kinds of knowledge that was voiced. These patterns of the expression and acceptance of knowledge highlighted the power relations that occurred within the teacher-student interactions. This link between knowledge and power assert Foucault's theory that knowledge cannot exist without power and therefore those who control the knowledge are in power (Gordon, 1980). When employing Whiteness Theory, I looked for times when the teacher was focusing on their own ideas as correct or normal (Sullivan, 2006), such as when Ms. Becky ignored Diego's interruptions during a small group lesson, choosing to focus on the task that she had planned. This stage of analysis resulted in the production of a portrait of teaching interactions in each of the classrooms.

Finally, I conducted a cross case analysis, using the research questions to compare the data gained from both classrooms. I compared the interactions in PreK A to those in PreK B. I looked at how Ms. Becky's expectations of Princess and Diego informed her interactions with them and compared these interactions to those of Ms. Jane with Dora and Bink.

Validity

Validity in qualitative research means assessing the accuracy of the findings and representations (Creswell, 2007). In this study, validity was inferred through the use of triangulation, rich description, and member checks.

"Triangulation is a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in the study" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). I used three types of interviews as well as observations and documents. This helped me to verify the data and compare it against other samples of classroom

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talk and action from the same classroom. Each research question was addressed through at least two different kinds of data, which is one aspect of the triangulation that I created in this study to increase the validity.

Member checks consist "of taking data and interpretation back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). At the last interview of each of the teachers, I conducted member checks. I had the teachers read over the transcripts from our interviews and read through my typed field notes to verify any sections that I had questions about as well as make sure that I accurately portrayed their meanings. In addition, I went over some of the preliminary coding, which I had done right after typing the transcripts of the observations when I was sorting for conflicts, that the groupings made sense to the teachers. Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane agreed that the groupings made sense and that the preliminary coding seemed accurate.

Summary

This study was created to ensure that both the voices of teachers and students were represented. By using Foucault's theory of power and Whiteness theory as a basis for my analysis, I was able to focus these voices in a way that allows the reader to see how the teachers' expectations play out with their White students. In the following chapter, the findings of this study are explained in detail.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Publically funded preschool programs have come to play an important role in shaping the lives and education of low income, minority children in the United States. Most of the research to date focuses on the impacts of programs and policies on student outcomes, with little attention given to the experiences of children and teachers in these programs. While it is assumed that targeted preschool programs ensure an equitable education for all by leveling the playing field and readying children for school, few studies consider the politics of early childhood classroom life and how issues of power play out between teachers and their students.

In this chapter, I explore how two white teachers interacted with their African American students. Focusing on the inner workings of the classroom, I describe how these teachers-- Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane --asserted their authority in daily classroom interactions. These teachers viewed the purposes of preschool somewhat differently. As a result, their teaching interactions and how they exercise authority in the classroom differed, and their expectations of their African-American students varied.

Ms. Becky

Ms. Becky is a confident Caucasian teacher of eight years, who teaches a class of fifteen predominately African American children. Ms. Becky's confidence as a teacher was evident the moment we started talking about this research project. For example, when I mentioned that I was considering including her classroom in this study, Ms. Becky said, "No problem. This would be a great classroom for your project. You always know what you'll get in my class" (conversation, February 20, 2012). Not only does Ms. Becky have confidence in her teaching but so does the

community as evidenced by the many requests she receives from parents for their children to be

placed in this class. During the 2011-2012 school year, eight out of the fifteen children were

placed in PreK A as a result of parent requests.

Purpose of Preschool

Ms. Becky believes that the purpose of preschool is "To prepare them (children) for

kindergarten, basically learning letters, numbers, the basics" (interview, April 20, 2012). She told

me "my lesson plans provide exactly what children need to prepare for kindergarten" (interview,

April 20, 2012).

As Ms. Becky explained to me, "I set my classroom up in interest areas according to

Creative Curriculum" (interview, April 20, 2012). Ms. Becky's classroom consists of nine

interest areas: toys and games, library and writing, art, discovery, computers, sand and water,

blocks, dramatic play, and music and movement. To achieve her academic aims, each of the

areas of the classroom is labeled, and all the toys have picture and word labels on the containers

and shelves. This labeling provides the opportunity for matching, one-to-one correspondence and

prereading skills both when choosing toys and cleaning up. The materials in each area also

supplement the academic goals focused on by Ms. Becky. For example, Ms. Becky added

menus, books about cooking and families, and calculators to dramatic play to assist the children

with pre-reading skills and counting. The block area held toys that assist children with learning

letters and mathematical concepts such as alphabet blocks, books on building and architecture,

and tape measures. The discovery area held a number of toys for learning about comparisons,

such as scales, matching games, and books about different animals and habitats. In addition,

there were many items that encouraged learning mathematics such as number puzzles, patterning

blocks, parquetry, and nesting blocks. The sand and water tables featured items to help children learn about measurement, such as measuring cups and graduated cylinders. The writing area and library contained supplies that assisted children in learning about letters, writing, and phonetics, such as letter puzzles, letter tracers, rhyming games, and alliteration games. The art area even contained materials to assist the children with academic pursuits, such as books on color mixing, a variety of writing implements, and geometric tracers.

Ms. Becky's academic expectations are also evident in the posters adorning the walls of the classroom; these posters depict the alphabet, numerals 1-20, basic shapes, colors, and the classroom rules. There is a planning board in the whole group area, which also serves as the music area; this planning board not only allows the students to choose their own areas but also provides the spelling of each area and each child's name. There are also displays on the walls made of the children's work. Child-written names and stories graced the walls near the library and writing areas. Student drawings, paintings and collages were displayed at children's eye level near the art table. However, the bulletin boards in the hallway leading up to the classroom were comprised of more teacher-directed work, such as photographs of the children glued to coloring pages with the teacher's writing relaying the children's quote about the season. While Ms. Becky incorporated a lot of student work into the displays in her classroom, this work clearly shows her emphasis on academics. For example, a display in the toys and games area is comprised of children's depictions of counting bears with numerals written by the children under each bear signifying the total of bears on the page. There were a few pictures of the children utilizing the classroom equipment, but there were no other displays that reflected the culture or backgrounds of the children in the classroom.

While Ms. Becky's classroom, in many ways, represents what many early childhood classrooms look like with it center-focused layout, the fact remains that she is a white teacher teaching an entire class of African American children. In keeping with what is known about best practices in early childhood, one would expect cultural appropriateness, some reflection of who the children are within the surroundings in their classroom. However, Ms. Becky presented a fairly Euro-centric classroom. The pictures of children, other than those taken within the classroom, depicted mostly white, middle class students, playing with toys similar to those available in the classroom, sending a message that the students in the classroom are not part of mainstream society (Lubeck, 1994).

Ms. Becky feels that the way to prepare children for kindergarten is by imbuing them with academic knowledge. "Well I would like, not expect, the children to learn letters and numbers (preliteracy and numeracy)" (interview, April 20, 2012). While Ms. Becky does not expect all the children to learn these concepts, she does feel that these concepts are important enough that they form the focus of her lessons. The importance of academic readiness to Ms. Becky was evident throughout all three interviews I conducted with her. For example in interview one we discussed what Ms. Becky feels are the purposes of preschool, and she responded by saying, "To prepare them for kindergarten, basically leaning letters, numbers, the basics" (interview, April 20, 2012). During interview two, when Ms. Becky and I discussed the focal children, Diego and Princess; Ms. Becky compared them in terms of academic expectations stating that Princess is focused on academics, and Diego only wants to play. Ms. Becky and I discussed, during interview three, one of the small group observations in which she used a book to teach the children about patterns. When I asked her about this activity, Ms. Becky focused on

the literacy concepts children were learning, "They were able to identify parts of the book. We

discussed the difference between an illustrator and a photographer" (interview, June 21, 2012).

The importance that Ms. Becky places on academics over the other domains of

development and learning is not in keeping with developmentally appropriate practice.

According to the NAEYC position statement, "All the domains of development and learning -

physical, social, emotional, and cognitive - are important, and they are closely related" (Copple

& Bredekamp, 2009, p. 10). In order to negotiate this tension Ms Becky said that she taught

academic concepts through play. For example, Ms. Becky told me that she had set up her

classroom in various interest areas to "allow the children to learn through play" (interview, April

20, 2012). As much as Ms. Becky talked about approaching academics through play, during my

eight observations of whole group and small group, I did not see Ms. Becky playing with the

students. In my observations, I saw Ms. Becky having the children participate in teacher-directed

activities with no play really taking place. Instead of play, Ms. Becky used time in the

curriculum to focus on developing her students' cognitive skills.

Whole Group

Ms. Becky's academic goals permeated not only the classroom environment, but also the

activities that she planned. During the four whole group times that I observed, Ms. Becky

concentrated on preliteracy and mathematical skill development by asking "display questions to

which she already knew the answer" (Cazden, 2001, p. 46). In preschool, play is supposed to be

student driven and chosen, allowing each child to learn in their own manner (Copple &

Bredekamp, 2009). She maintained the pretense of playing with the students by providing

cheerful songs and colorful toys and books, but only gave playing with the students lip service as

all observed activities were teacher-directed and provided limited opportunities for children to express their interests or knowledge. As the following vignette shows, Ms. Becky limited her whole group time to scripted song choices, developmentally inappropriate repetitious recitations, and "inauthentic" (Cazden, 2001, p. 46) questions, those that do not allow students to elaborate or share their knowledge.

> Ms. Becky walks over to the carpet, sits on a chair: "Eyes on me."
>
> Each child sits on his/her individual previously assigned shape
>
> Ms. Becky sings (and signs): "Hello hello hello and how are you? I'm fine I'm fine and I hope that you are too.
>
> All the children sing and sign along.
>
> When the song is over, Ms. Becky: "Calendar helper please come up."
>
> The calendar helper goes to the board.
>
> Ms. Becky: "PreK A, what month is it?"
>
> Children: "April."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Let's count to see what day of the week we're on. Ready calendar helper?" The calendar helper, Bret, points to the numerals on the calendar with a pointer as Ms. Becky assists with the task by directing the child to the correct numerals. Ms. Becky watches as the children say the number that corresponds to the numeral pointed to by the calendar helper.
>
> As the children count, Ms. Becky: "I want to hear my friends counting." She counts with them. Then, Ms. Becky: "So today is the twentieth day of what month?"
>
> Children: "April."
>
> Ms. Becky: "What year is it?"
>
> Children: "2012."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Right, and what season are we in?"
>
> Children: "Spring."

Ms. Becky: "Show me the sign for spring."

The children sign Spring (observation, April 20, 2012).

Morning meetings or circle time have a long history in the early childhood curriculum. Scholars of early childhood education argue that the purpose of bringing children together is to create a community that values and respects the sharing of children's ideas (Kantor, 1988; Lown, 2002). Similarly, the Creative Curriculum calls for large group time to provide time for children to experience belonging to a group and practicing the rules of this group (Dodge, Heroman, Colker, and Bickart, 2010). Thus circle time or meeting time is supposed to help children learn academic concepts in a low stakes environment and enable children and teacher to effectively communicate with each other and share ideas. While the teacher controls the discourse to some extent, there is supposed to be opportunities for student input as well.

Activities. Whole group in Ms. Becky's class was very formulaic and focused, almost exclusively during my observations, on preliteracy and numeracy skills. The format in the opening vignette was followed every day I visited the classroom. For Ms. Becky consistency for these children was key because "children need consistency to learn. Consistency and order helps children understand time concepts, such as now, then, and later" (interview, April, 20, 2012). Given her beliefs, it is not surprising that every whole group I observed consisted of the same format and songs. Similarly, the content taught in small group also did not vary much over the four observations. In the following paragraphs, I will describe how Ms. Becky taught numeracy and preliteracy skills during whole group.

Numeracy was often taught through the use of calendar. According to Etheridge and King (2005), calendar is a common practice in early education that is developmentally appropriate for teaching counting and patterns as long as it is not taught through teacher-directed, whole group

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instruction. The calendar, in PreK A, consisted of a poster-sized calendar on the wall in the front

of the whole group area. The month was on the top of the calendar next to the year, with the day

of the week directly to the left of the calendar, Figure 1.

Figure 1. The calendar and weather for Classroom A.

The instructional event of calendar involved Ms. Becky using the particular month and

day of the year to teach number identification and sequencing. This can be seen in the following

observation:

> The calendar helper, Bret, (a student chosen by Ms. Becky) counts to 20
> with the class, pointing to each printed number on the calendar with a
> pointer as he counts.
>
> Ms. Becky: "I want to hear my friends counting."
>
> She counts with them.
>
> Ms. Becky: "So today is the twentieth day of what month?"
>
> Children: "April" (observation, April 20, 2012)

An almost identical pattern can be seen in the following observation. The second whole group

observation:

> The calendar helper, Cece, (a student chosen by Ms. Becky) stands and
> points to each numeral on the calendar with a pointer as she counted with
> the children to 30.

>All the children count in rote fashion together: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5,…to 30 without skipping numbers.
>
>Ms. Becky: "So today's the 30th day of what month?"
>
>Children: "April" (observation, April 30, 2012)

The use of calendar in these observations is almost identical. The only difference is the amount

of numbers counted. Every day, the children were expected to count to the day of the month as a

way to get them to connect the written numeral to the number that children orally counted.

Numeracy was also taught in large group by counting children's yes/no responses to the

question of the day. Ms. Becky also concluded each whole group with counting usually by

having the children compare the amounts of children who answered yes and no to the question of

the day; this comparison was based on the pictures of each child that Ms. Becky placed on the

question of the day board under the answer each child gave. This can be seen in the following

excerpt from an observation.

>Ms. Becky: "Let's count how many friends said that they have been to the zoo?"
>
>The children count with Ms. Becky as she points to each picture with her finger, "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight."
>
>Ms. Becky: "Let's count how many friends said that they have not been to the zoo?"
>
>The children count with Ms. Becky, "One, two, three, four, five, six."
>
>Ms. Becky: "Eight is bigger than six."
>
>Children: "Eight is bigger than six."
>
>Ms. Becky: "Six is smaller than eight."
>
>Children: "Six is smaller than eight."
>
>Ms. Becky and the children: "Our conclusion is more of us said that we have been to the zoo" (observation, May 17, 2012).

Similarly in the second observation, the children also counted and compared the results of the question of the day, in which thirteen children answered yes to the question "Did you have fun at home?" and zero children said no. Each child had placed a picture of himself or herself under the answer of either yes or no.

> Ms. Becky: "Count how many friends had fun at home."
>
> Children: "1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Thirteen of us said that we had fun at home. Let's count how many of us said that we did not have fun at home."
>
> Children: "Zero."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Right. Which number is bigger?"
>
> Children: "Thirteen" (observation, April 30, 2012)

By totaling up children's responses to a question in this way, Ms. Becky used counting to teach comparisons of quantities.

Preliteracy skills include letter identification, phonological awareness, print awareness, narrative skills, and vocabulary (Dodge et. al., 2012; Ding, 2012; Good & Kaminski, 2002). These preliteracy skills were taught primarily through the spelling of the month, day and season, a morning message, and a closed-ended question that were asked each day during whole group. Ms. Becky also wrote a morning message on the board and pointed out the punctuation and capitalization when introducing the message to the class as can be seen in the following observation.

> Ms. Becky: "PreK A, what month is it?"
>
> Children: "April."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Let's count to see what day of the week we're on. Ready calendar helper?"

Then, the calendar helper, Bret, uses a pointer to indicate each numeral as the class counts to 20.

Ms. Becky: "I want to hear my friends counting." She counts with them.

Ms. Becky: "So today is the twentieth day of what month?"

Children: "April."

Ms. Becky: "What year is it?"

Children: "2012."

Ms. Becky: "Right, and what season are we in?"

Children: "Spring."

Ms. Becky: "Show me the sign for spring."

The children sign Spring.

 Ms. Becky: "Good." Then she sings Days of the Week, with the children singing and clapping along. Next, they sing, "Do you know what day it is?"

Ms. Becky: "What letter does today start with?"

Children: "F."

Ms. Becky: "What sound does F make?"

Children: "Fffff" (The children make an F sound).

Ms. Becky: "Today is Friday."

Children: "Today is Friday."

Then, Ms. Becky: "Let's do our months."

Ms. Becky and the children sing the months of the year.

Ms. Becky and the children: "Today is Friday, April 20, 2012."

Ms. Becky: "Thank you."

Then, she and the children sing, "What's the weather?"
When the song is over, Ms. Becky: "Show me PreK A?"

The children make the sign for sunny.

The weather watcher then tells the class the weather report. He points to and reads a sentence that states: "Today's weather is hot and sunny."

> Children: "Today's weather is hot and sunny."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Now, it's time for the morning message. Ms. Becky will read it first, then I will ask you to read it."
>
> Ms. Becky had written the morning message on the whiteboard before the children sat for whole group. Then, she reads while pointing at the words with her finger, "Good morning boys and girls. Today is Friday, April 20, 2012. We are going to watch a movie today."
>
> Next, Ms. Becky asks the girls to say the message. All the girls stand up: "Good morning boys and girls. Today is Friday, April 20, 2012. We are going to watch a movie today."Then, they sit down.
>
> Then, she calls on the boys to say the message. All the boys stand up: "Good morning boys and girls. Today is Friday, April 20, 2012. We are going to watch a movie today." Then, they sit down.
>
> All: "Good morning boys and girls. Today is Friday, April 20, 2012. We are going to watch a movie today."
>
> Ms. Becky: "It's time for the question of the day. I want to know, Did you have fun at the soccer clinic?" she asks each child individually. They sign yes and spell yes; then Ms. Becky puts their picture under Yes on the question of the day board (observation, April, 20, 2012).

Looking across the four observations of whole group, the pattern did not vary. In terms of numeracy, there was always counting and comparison of quantities. In terms of preliteracy, there was spelling, in which the message was written on the board by Ms. Becky prior to the children attending whole group. According to DAP, adult-directed forced repetition exhausts and frustrates children (Gestwicki, 2011); however, Ms. Becky seemed to find this repetition to be an integral part of her class' whole group as it occurred during each of the four whole group observations that I observed. This practice suggests that Ms Becky does not have high expectations of her students. She seemed to assume that her students needed a lot of, repetition to be able to learn the concepts she taught during whole group.

Whole group talk. Oral language opportunities during whole group provide opportunities for children to share their ideas, thoughts and emotions creating a community in

the classroom (Kantor, 1988; Lown, 2002). Whole group in PreK A, however, provided little to

no chance for the children to express their own ideas. Ms. Becky tended to dominate talking time

during whole group and when choosing questions to ask during whole group, Ms. Becky tended

to choose "display" or "inauthentic" (Cazden, 2001) questions so that there was little opportunity

for children to elaborate on their answers, share their knowledge, or connect with others who had

similar answers. According to Cazden (2001), these types of questions simply test student

information retention or co-opt students into participation without any genuine interest in the

knowledge that the students have.

In the four observations of whole group, Ms. Becky asked twenty-two "display" (Cazden,

2001) questions and three "inauthentic" (Cazden, 2001) questions, which did not allow for

elaboration. A "display" question occurs when a teacher poses a question to the class in the guise

of eliciting participation, but the teacher knows the answer to the question before asking. An

example of a "display" question asked by Ms. Becky is "What month is it?" which Ms. Becky

asked everyday in large group. Whereas the questions of the day that Ms. Becky asked such as,

"Did you have fun at the soccer clinic?" (observation, April 20, 2012) or "Have you ever been to

the zoo?" (observation, May 17, 2012) are examples of the "inauthentic" questions. These kinds

of questions are "inauthentic" because Ms. Becky is simply co-opting students to participate in

order to break up what could be seen as a lecture. Her intent is to seem like she is giving the

children a chance to share their experiences without allowing for actual communication to take

place. Ms. Becky is reluctant to relinquish any control of whole group to her students;

suggesting that she does think that they have knowledge that is important enough to be shared.

This is, unfortunately, preparing Ms. Becky's students for the reality of many classrooms in

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which low-income, Black students are not seen as having any knowledge worth contributing to

classroom conversations.

Over the four group observations, I only saw Ms Becky ask one potentially open-ended

question which could have elicited information about children's experiences and helped them to

make connections between out of and in-school experiences.

> Ms. Becky: "It's time for the question of the day. Today's question is, Did
> you have fun at home?" Ms. Becky takes a picture of each child out of a
> small box, choosing at random. When she says the child's name, she gives
> them time to answer what they did that was fun at home.
>
> A girl: "I ate some pretzels and I had some fun under the covers on my
> bed."
>
> A boy: "Uh, I play with my brother."
>
> After each child's response, Ms. Becky: "That sounds like fun. Thank you
> for sharing."
>
> When all the children have had a turn, Ms. Becky: "Count how many
> friends had fun at home."
>
> Children: "1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Thirteen of us said that we had fun at home. Let's count how
> many of us said that we did not have fun at home."
>
> Children: "Zero."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Right. Which number is bigger?"
>
> Children: "Thirteen."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Thirteen is a bigger number than 0 and 0 is a smaller number.
> What is our conclusion?"
>
> Children: "All of us said that we had fun at home" (observation, April 30,
> 2012).

While Ms. Becky seemed to ask about the children's experiences through the question:

Did you have fun at home?, Ms. Becky did not ask any follow up questions or point out anything

about the children's answers; she simply moved on to her planned math lesson. Another

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example of how a possibly open-ended question was closed by Ms. Becky occurred on May 17,

2012 when the question of the day was: Have you ever been to the zoo?.

> Ms. Becky: "It's time for the question of the day. Today's question is, have you ever been to the zoo?" Ms. Becky takes a picture of each child out of a small box, choosing at random. When she says the child's name, she did not give the children time to elaborate about their zoo experience.
>
> A boy: "Y E S, yes."
>
> A girl: "N O, no."
>
> When all the children have answered, Ms. Becky: "Let's count how many friends said that they have been to the zoo?"
>
> Children and Ms. Becky: "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Let's count how many friends said that they have not been to the zoo?"
>
> Children and Ms. Becky: "One, two, three, four, five, six."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Eight is bigger than six."
>
> Children: "Eight is bigger than six."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Six is smaller than eight."
>
> Children: "Six is smaller than eight."
>
> Children and Ms. Becky: "Our conclusion is more of us said that we have been to the zoo" (observation, May 17, 2012).

As can be seen in this observation, once again the opportunity for children to describe their

experiences at the zoo, if they have been to the zoo, or to share knowledge of animals is foregone

for Ms Becky's script. Ms. Becky uses "inauthentic" questions to feign interest in the children's

experiences, but only uses these questions to further her preliteracy goals.

Each occurrence of whole group time that I observed Pre-K A followed the same teacher-

directed pattern: This whole group routine supported Ms. Becky's academic goals through strict

adherence to the routine of call to the carpet, calendar, weather, morning message and question

of the day. The same songs were also used in whole group during the routines: hello song, days

of the week, months of the year, and what's the weather. During an informal conversation, Ms.

Becky said, "I always use the same songs. I like it better that way" (conversation, June 14, 2012).

The only change in routine occurred on June 13, 2012. While Ms. Becky followed the same

predictable pattern for whole group time: calendar, weather, morning message, this whole group

deviated from the others I observed because Ms. Becky substituted graduation songs for the

question of the day. Since this observation happened at the end of the school year, Ms. Becky

focused on the upcoming graduation, by rehearsing songs that she had chosen and had been

using for a number of years.

By controlling the interactions, song choices, and questions, Ms. Becky controlled the

whole group experience. She imposes her own truth on the students, forcing them to see her as

the authority (Faubion, 1994). This institutional power wielded by Ms. Becky elevates academic

success while negating the children: both who they are and the knowledge that they bring to the

classroom.

The strict adherence to her own whole group time script allowed Ms. Becky to maintain

control over interactions within the large group of children. By not allowing the children to give

explanations about their experiences, Ms. Becky stifled her students' opportunity for social-

emotional growth or individuality. Preschoolers need opportunities to express themselves and

their opinions; these opportunities allow preschoolers to engage in the process of identification,

finding out about their own identities and their place in the society. In order for children to

engage in this process, they need to be allowed time to work on their social interactions and

express their ideas as active listeners (Gestwicki, 2011). However by maintaining control over

the talk and content of large group, Ms Becky focused on her academic expectations of

preliteracy and numeracy to the detriment of possibly enhancing the children's social-emotional

growth.

From a developmental perspective, this use of whole group may be seen as inappropriate,

but utilizing large group in this way might also be seen as an attempt by Ms Becky to teach

children of color "content that other families from a different cultural orientation provide at

home" (Delpit, 2006, p. 30), which is to say that Ms. Becky is providing her students with the

knowledge of how to succeed in a white, middle-class society. She speaks in authoritative tones

and provides the academic knowledge that should assist the children in kindergarten preparation.

According to Delpit, child centered curricula reflects a set of middle-class values, she says that

African American students do not learn this way. This is not to say that Ms. Becky should be

only providing basic skills teaching in her class; however, some scholars would agree Ms. Becky

is teaching her students the behaviors and rhetoric that is expected of children to be successful in

school (Delpit, 2006).

Small Group

In Creative Curriculum, small group time is used by teachers to introduce new concepts,

teach skills, encourage conversation, and focus on observing specific children (Dodge et. al.,

2012). According to Ms. Becky the purpose of small group is readying children for school. In her

words, she uses small group time to "learn and practice skills for kindergarten" (interview, April

20, 2012).

Small group in PreK A, like whole group, is controlled by Ms. Becky. She chooses the

activity and the group. For example, during my observations, I did not see Ms. Becky consult the

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children for ideas to add to her lessons. Small groups ranged in size from one child to four

children in PreK A although Ms. Becky had the same two children in small group together each

time I observed.   As can be seen in Table 4 Ms. Becky centered her small group lessons on math

and literacy.

Table 4 – Small Group Observation Focuses for PreK A

Date	Theme	Focus	Activity
4/24/12	Butterflies	Shapes	Butterfly shape sorters
5/10/12	Butterflies	Counting backwards	Storybook read aloud *Ten Wriggly, Wiggly Caterpillars* by Debbie Tarbett
5/24/12	Zoo	Patterns	Storybook read aloud *Lots and Lots of Zebra Stripes* by Stephen R. Swinburne
6/6/12	Father's Day	Reading comprehension	Storybook read aloud *What Daddies Can't Do* By Douglas Wood

To enact small groups, Ms Becky chose one or two of the learning objectives from

Creative Curriculum linking the objective of the lesson to the theme being investigated by the

class and crafting an activity that would show her the children's knowledge as it pertained to

those objectives. Regardless of the theme, the small group activities chosen by Ms. Becky

always linked to math or literacy. When the children were studying butterflies, Ms. Becky used

the butterfly sorting game to teach about shapes and a counting book about caterpillars to

emphasize numeracy. When the theme was zoo, Ms. Becky used a book about animal prints to

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teach about patterns, and when the theme was Father's Day, she used a book about fathers to

assist the children in learning reading comprehension skills. The books that Ms. Becky chose for

these small group lessons were written by Caucasian authors, and while they related to the

themes of the week, these books were not necessarily relevant to the children's experiences,

especially the ones about fathers since many of the students did not have fathers who interacted

with them frequently.

At the beginning of each small group which occurred in the late morning following whole

group and before outdoor play, Ms. Becky introduced the lesson. Ms. Becky told the students in

her small group which objectives they would be focusing on and showed them the materials. She

then went into the activity as the following excerpt illustrates:

> Ms. Becky brings over the Shape Butterflies Game to the table in the toys
> and games area where a child is sitting alone. She opens the container: "I
> want you to look at the shapes and tell me what they are. What shape is
> that?"
>
> Child: "Circle."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Can you tell me about the circle?"
>
> Child: "The circle is kind of like a ball."
>
> Ms. Becky: "A circle is kind of like a ball." She repeated as she took
> notes. Then, she holds up a star. "What shape is this?"
>
> Child: "A star."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Can you tell me about a star?"
>
> Child: "A star be up the sky."
>
> She repeats the phrase as she takes notes. Ms. Becky: "Now you can use
> these shapes and match them to make butterflies." She puts all the pieces
> on the table in front of the child. "Find the matching wings. You can build
> your own butterflies" (observation, April 20, 2012).

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This small group stuck out when compared with the other three small group observations from Pre K A as it was the only small group activity that used a toy instead of books as the main teaching material. However, as the above vignette shows Ms. Becky's academic goals were present in her small group activities as they were in whole group. Ms. Becky's purpose for the above activity was shape recognition and description. During this small group activity, Ms. Becky asked "display" questions, focusing on repetitions of shape names, shape descriptions, and counting, similar to the information that she elicited with her questions during whole group.

In this more typical observation, Ms. Becky read a book, written by a white author, to the children, and asked them "display" questions that focused on their recall of previously taught knowledge about the structure of books:

> Two children sit at a table with Ms. Becky.
>
> Ms. Becky held up a book: "The title of this book is What Dad's Can't Do. We're going to read this story about dads." She read the author's name: "What does the author do?"
>
> First child: "Wrote the book."
>
> Ms. Becky reads the illustrator's name: "What does the illustrator do?"
>
> Second child: "Draw all the pictures."
>
> Ms. Becky turns to the title page: "What is this page called?"
>
> First child: "Title page."
>
> Ms. Becky: "On this page we have?"
>
> Both children: "The title, the author, the illustrator and the publisher" (observation, June 6, 2012).

Ms. Becky adopted the role of tester when she asked questions to assess the children's knowledge retention from previous lessons, as seen in the above vignette. This was also indicated on her lesson plan on May 24, 2012. Ms. Becky showed the children the title page of

the *Lots and Lots of Zebra Stripes* and asked, Do you remember what page this is? to follow up on the lesson she taught about parts of a book the previous day during story time.

During small groups Ms. Becky seemed to take on the role of observer, but her observations were merely tests of the children's knowledge. In each small group Ms. Becky took notes as the children used the materials or interacted with the story book; this note taking seemed to follow the developmentally appropriate role of teacher as observer (Gestwicki, 2011). However, Ms. Becky did not use these observations to adapt her lessons to the children's needs; she used her notes as a checklist to show what the children learned.

While Ms. Becky took observation notes during each small group, she did not seem to use her observations of individual children as a tool to plan for the next small group activity. During the second interview, Ms. Becky stated, "Diego likes the bikes and the balls. He really likes the balls outside" (interview, May 16, 2012), but during the eight weeks of observations in PreK A, Ms. Becky did not incorporate these interests into the studies/themes. Ms. Becky asserted her power by using the topics to study as a way of maintaining her privilege as teacher and exercising her authority as to what warrants attention (Faubion, 1994, p. 344). In addition to maintaining power and authority by choosing the topics for learning, Ms. Becky also chose to approach her academic lessons based on her understanding of what children should learn, not based on her observations of the children she teaches. This assertion of power by authority figures prepared Ms. Becky's students for future encounters with white authority figures, especially educators, who will feel that they have the expertise and therefore must have all the power over their low-income, Black students.

DAP and Ms. Becky

The academic discourse espoused by Ms. Becky is in contrast to the developmental discourse that frames best practices in early childhood. Developmentally Appropriate Practice, (DAP) is an approach to teaching using best practices, as agreed upon by a consensus of early childhood professionals and endorsed by NAEYC (National Association for Educators of Young Children). According to DAP, academics in preschool should be taught through play (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Gestwicki, 2011). Ms. Becky claims to teach through play, however her focus on academics over the children's other developmental needs skews how she allows play to occur within her classroom. Play in PreK A is not initiated by children's interests or allowed to progress according to the children's desire, instead play is used as a means to teach academic concepts through toys and activities chosen and controlled by Ms. Becky. According to DAP, academics integrated into teaching with play can be appropriate for preschool aged children, however, "when what you have is a narrowly defined set of specific facts and skills being taught apart from meaningful context and without attention to engaging children's interest, such a distorted form of academic leaning is clearly not appropriate for young children" (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. 329).

Ms. Becky's Interactions and Expectations of Focal Children

Ms. Becky's academic goals also translated into her interactions with the two focal children --Princess and Diego -- and her expectations of them. While both children had similar backgrounds and were of the same age group, they had different expectations placed on them. In this section, I will first discuss Princess and then will discuss Diego's experiences in the classroom.

Princess. Princess is a young four. There are a number of children in PreK A who were five by November and December, but Princess would not be five until the end of July. Princess

conformed to Ms. Becky's academic goals, and as a consequence Princess received a lot of

praise and was seen by Ms. Becky as a good student. In an informal conversation on April 22,

Ms. Becky said, "Princess is a wonderful student to have in class. She always listens."

As part of the Creative Curriculum, family conference forms are provided four times a

year. When looking at the parent conference forms for Princess, Ms. Becky's belief in Princess'

academic abilities is clear. Ms. Becky described Princess's cognitive strengths on the Spring

Family Conference Form as being able to identify all twenty-six upper case and lower case

letters, identifying numerals up to twenty, counting up to thirty-nine, identifying all colors and

shapes, as well as writing and identifying her full name. Also on the spring conference forms,

Ms. Becky set goals for each child for the last semester (April 17, 2012). For Princess, Ms.

Becky's goals were "Initiate, join in, and sustain positive interactions with a small group of two

to three children. Match beginning sounds of some words" (April 17, 2012). When asked to

describe Princess, Ms. Becky said,

> Princess has been really shy. She's been coming out of her shell a little bit. She
> voices her needs and opinions. She'll talk back to her friends now. Well, not
> really talk back but respond. If they do something that she doesn't like, she'll tell
> them. She's made new friendships now. She has a few friends that she likes to
> play with. She's very very bright, but she kind of lacks a little social (interview,
> May 16, 2012).

However, while she spoke of Princess' social needs during an interview and on her family

conference form, Ms. Becky did not include any social development goals on her lesson plans.

Ms. Becky did not state how she would help Princess develop social skills nor did I see any

indication of the teaching of social development during the eight observations.

Ms. Becky focused on Princess' academic adeptness and saw Princess as a student who

listens and follows directions. Therefore, Princess received much praise and little redirection in

the classroom. During the four whole group observations, Princess was praised three times and never redirected. Similarly, during the four small group times, Princess was praised fifteen times and never redirected. Princess also never seemed to be ignored during activities with Ms. Becky because Princess readily answered Ms. Becky's questions and in a way that validated Ms. Becky's academic goals. For example, during the small group on April 24, 2012, Ms. Becky encouraged Princess as she worked with the butterfly shapes:

> Ms. Becky held up a triangle: "What shape is this?"
>
> Princess: "A triangle. It has three points and three sides."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Good."

Ms. Becky also provided encouragement and an opportunity for Princess to express herself during the small group observation on May 24, 2012:

> Ms. Becky: "This book is a little different. Instead of an illustrator, there's a photographer. Do you know what a photographer does?"...
>
> Princess: "Take pictures."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Right, so all the pictures in this book are not drawings. They're pictures."

By answering questions in the way Ms. Becky expected, Princess conforms to Ms. Becky's view of the ideal student. This could also be seen during whole group.

Ms. Becky used Princess as a model of appropriate behavior during whole group. When Ms. Becky asked the children to gather for whole group on April 30, 2012, Princess was one of the first to sit on the carpet. Ms. Becky said, loudly enough for the entire class to hear, "I love how Princess is sitting." Ms. Becky also smiled at Princess during whole group when Princess was engaging in the expected appropriate behaviors, such as when Princess correctly pointed to each numeral on the calendar when counting during her role as the calendar helper on April 30,

2012. When Princess sat quietly while other children talked during the beginning of whole group on May 17, 2012, Ms. Becky smiled at Princess. These words of approval and smiles encouraged Princess to continue to meet Ms. Becky's expectations and validated Princess' actions.

Princess fit Ms. Becky's prototype of the ideal student. As Graue (2005) showed, the ideal student is the student that the teacher sees as typical and has in mind when designing lessons. For Ms. Becky, the ideal student is a rule follower with high level self regulation skills. This student is quiet, responding to questions with a raised hand and correct answer when called on. Ms. Becky's ideal student is excelling in developing literacy and numeracy. It is for this ideal student that Ms. Becky has planned her lessons.

Diego. Diego is a four-year-old, turning five in March. He enjoys physical activity and social interactions, especially playing outside with his friends. He typically shows up for school in jeans, sneakers, and a white T-shirt. In contrast to Princess, Diego, did not conform to Ms. Becky's academic goals or her prototype of a "good" student. Ms. Becky viewed Diego as a lower achiever, and tended to focus on his lack of attention. Ms. Becky described Diego in this way, "Diego becomes distracted easily. We need to redirect him often, especially in large group" (interview, May 16, 2012).

Ms. Becky's perception that Diego lacked self regulation skills was evident in the amount of redirection she engaged in with him. Across the four whole group observations, Diego was redirected five times, in comparison to his fourteen classmates, who were not redirected more than once across the four observations, while he only received praise from Ms. Becky two times during the four whole group observations. During whole group on April 20, 2012, Diego said the morning message while it was the girls' turn to repeat. Ms. Becky said, "Excuse me. While the

girls are saying the morning message, the boys need to be quiet. When the boys go, the girls will

be quiet." During the question of the day on April 30, 2012, Diego laughed when Princess

stuttered while answering the question. Ms. Becky said, "Please stop." By the end of that whole

group time (the thirty minutes they had been sitting), Diego began wiggling in his seat; Ms.

Becky shook her head and sighed at him. The only times that Diego received praise during whole

group was when he repeated what the other children were saying or sat, looking quietly at Ms.

Becky.

During the four small group observations, Diego was redirected five times, ignored nine

times, and praised five times. During the first small group observation, when the goal of the

lesson was to build butterflies by matching the shape on the body to the outline of the shape on

the wings. Ms. Becky only praised Diego when he accomplished the academic goal of matching

the shapes with the outlines on the butterfly wings. When Diego became confused or hesitated,

Ms. Becky redirected his attention back to the shapes instead of focusing on the connections that

Diego was making, invalidating his way of approaching the problem.

> Ms. Becky: "Find the matching wings. You can build your own butterflies."
>
> Diego holds the wings and puts the color that matched next to the body of the same color. The shapes do not fit together.
>
> Ms. Becky: "I like the way you are matching the colors. Look the bodies and the wings have the shapes on them. Can you see that? The bodies and the wings have the shape on them."
>
> Diego puts the heart body and the heart wing together.
>
> Ms. Becky: "Good, you matched the hearts."
>
> Diego tries another shape.
>
> Ms. Becky: "What shape are you matching now?"

> Diego: "Blue."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Blue, that's the color. What shape are you matching?"
>
> Diego: "Star."
>
> Ms. Becky: "You found the two stars and matched them together."
>
> Diego tries to make another match.
>
> Ms. Becky: "Ok, let's do that one and play some more later. Just finish your star" (April 24, 2012).

In the above vignette, Ms. Becky provided more praise when Diego was able to complete the match that Ms. Becky expected, and she did not focus on Diego's ability to match colors as a positive outcome because that was not the assigned task.

Similarly, during small group on May 24, 2012, Ms. Becky's goal for the lesson was for the children to display their knowledge about books and then look for patterns based on the photographs in the book. Diego attempted to make his own connections during this lesson.

> Ms. Becky holds up a book: "The title of this book is *Lots and Lots of Zebra Stripes*. We're going to read this book about patterns. Then, we're going to look for patterns in the classroom." She reads the author's name and then turns to the title page. "Do you remember what this page is?"
>
> Diego: "Ms. Becky. I have this book."
>
> The other child: "Title page."
>
> Diego: "Ms. Becky. Ms. Becky."
>
> Ms. Becky does not respond. Ms. Becky: "On this page we have?"
>
> The other child and Diego: "The title, the author, the illustrator and the publisher."
>
> Ms. Becky: "This book is a little different. Instead of an illustrator, there's a photographer. Do you know what a photographer does?"
>
> Diego: "Can I tell you something?"
>
> Ms. Becky: "Do you know what a photographer does?"
>
> Diego: "Can I tell you something?"
>
> The other child: "Take pictures."

> Ms. Becky: "Right, so all the pictures in this book are not drawings. They're pictures. Yes, Diego, what would you like to say?"
>
> Diego: "I got…I got Elmo book."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Ok."
>
> Diego: "But my dog ripped it up."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Oh ok. I'm sorry to hear that." She continues to talk about the author and photographer. Then, she reads the book without interruption. She points out the patterns in the photographs (observation, May 24, 2012).

Ms. Becky's focus on her lesson during this small group causes her to miss an opportunity to engage Diego in the lesson. Diego found a connection to this book with the book he had at home, but Ms. Becky dismissed Diego's attempts to engage in conversation about his connection. Making this kind of text-to-text connection is important because connecting learning to children's experiences makes learning more meaningful to the children and aids in remembering concepts (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Because Ms. Becky positioned herself in the academic discourse, which defines success as correct answers, Diego was seen as less capable by Ms Becky because he was not able to answer her questions precisely.

Ms. Becky viewed Diego as a slow learner. In an informal conversation, Ms. Becky said, "Diego's just not very smart. He doesn't seem to get it, but it's like that sometimes with these children" (conversation, February 20, 2012); implying that African-American children from low-income families should not be expected to excel in school. While Ms. Becky only used the phrase "these children" twice while speaking to me, this phrase is a deficit model reference to "at risk" students or black students (Delpit, 2006; Swadener & Lubeck, 1995). By placing Diego with the group "these children," Ms. Becky did not expect Diego to succeed.

Not surprisingly, all of her documentation about Diego focused mostly on his academic deficits and not on his strengths. On Diego's conference form, Ms. Becky's goals were "Produce

the correct sounds for 10-20 letters. Begin to identify numerals to 10 by name and connect each to counted objects" (April 17, 2012). Similarly, Ms Becky's lesson plans for the week of April 23, 2012 included the following individualizations, "Diego needs to work on remembering the names of shapes; focus on those." Ms. Becky's lesson plans for the week of May 7 stated, "Diego needs help to stay on task, especially during read alouds." There were only two strengths written on Diego's conference form, "Diego places objects in two or more groups based on differences in a single characteristics. Diego fills in the missing rhyming word, generates rhyming words spontaneously."

This complete focus on academic development dismisses other areas in which Diego may have been succeeding, such as physical development due to his interest in riding bikes and playing ball. Ms. Becky did not modify her expectations to meet Diego's needs or to complement the areas in which he showed an interest (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). In this way, Ms. Becky ignored the "cultural capital," the social and cultural knowledge that Diego brought to the classroom because it does not match her expectations of what a child needs to learn (Delpit, 2006). As a consequence, Diego was seen as less capable of learning or succeeding.

Unfortunately, Diego is learning that authority figures may not have high opinions of low-income, Black males. Ms. Becky's expectations have not helped him gain confidence in his academic or social abilities in preschool

Similarities and Differences in Ms. Becky's Interactions with Princess and Diego

In PreK A, Princess and Diego seemed to understand the expectations placed on them by Ms. Becky. When asked, "Do you always agree with your teacher?," Diego said, "I always do everything she tells me to do." Princess said, "When we agree, that's very good. When I agree, I

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say okay. When I do not agree I say no." I asked, "What happens?" Princess said, "I start doing

what Ms. Becky do" (interviews, June 13, 2012). These answers show that both Princess and

Diego understand that Ms. Becky has the power in the classroom and that disagreeing with her is

not a valid choice.

When looking across the observations of Princess and Diego's interactions with Ms.

Becky, I noticed that Ms. Becky did have different interactions with Princess and Diego. When

Princess and Diego were behaving similarly, that is acting like Ms. Becky's ideal student, both

children received equal amounts of praise. In the four whole group times, when Princess and

Diego were responding with the same answers, the children both received smiles, such as when

they walked over and sat down when Ms. Becky asked on June 13 (observation, June 13, 2012).

The interactions Ms. Becky had with both children were similar when both children were

perceived to be on task and giving correct answers to her questions, as is shown in the small

group observation from May 10, 2012:

> Ms. Becky asks Princess and Diego to join her for small group. She has
> the book, 10 Wriggly, Wiggly Caterpillars and a box of toy caterpillars.
> Ms. Becky reads the book to Princess and Diego, showing them the
> pictures. "Ten wriggly, wiggly caterpillars by Debbie Tarbett. Ten
> crunching caterpillars in the bright sunshine. One fell asleep so then there
> was. How many were left?"

> Princess: "Nine."

> Ms. Becky: "Good, Princess."

> Ms. Becky: "Nine speedy caterpillars thought they might be late. One was
> too slow, so that left?"

> Princess: "Eight."

> Diego looks at the book.

> Ms. Becky: "Eight, good. Eight munching caterpillars all in crunching
> heaven. One got a tummy ache, so that left?"

> Princess: "Seven."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Seven, right there. Seven clever caterpillars creeping through some sticks. One got stuck, so that left?"
>
> Diego continues to look at the book.
>
> Princess: "Number six."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Good, Princess, that's the number six. Six singing caterpillars glad to be alive. One stayed to sing, so that left?"
>
> Diego and Princess: "Five."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Good, Diego, five. Five brave caterpillars going to explore. One got lost, so that left?"
>
> Diego and Princess: "Four."
>
> Ms. Becky; "Four daring caterpillars inching up a tree. One fell off, so that left?"
>
> Diego and Princess: "Three."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Right, that's the numeral three. Three cool caterpillars splashing in the dew. One got soaked, so that left?"
>
> Diego and Princess: "Two."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Two, right, that's the numeral two. Two happy caterpillars having so much fun. One got tired, so that left?"
>
> Diego and Princess: "One."

However, when Diego was unable to answer questions posed by Ms. Becky or provided an incorrect response, Ms. Becky was quick to give praise to Princess while either ignoring or directing Diego to pay attention as shown in the small group observation from May 24, 2012:

> Ms. Becky is sitting at the table in the discovery, science area with Diego on the left side of her and Princess on the right. Ms. Becky holds up a book: "The title of this book is *Lots and Lots of Zebra Stripes*. We're going to read this book about patterns. Then, we're going to look for patterns in the classroom." She reads the author's name and then turns to the title page. "Do you remember what this page is?"
>
> Diego: "Ms. Becky. I have this book."
>
> Princess: "Title page."

> Diego: "Ms. Becky. Ms. Becky."
>
> Ms. Becky does not respond.
>
> Ms. Becky: "On this page we have?"
>
> Princess and Diego: "The title, the author, the illustrator and the publisher."
>
> Ms. Becky: "This book is a little different. Instead of an illustrator, there's a photographer. Do you know what a photographer does?"
>
> Diego: "Can I tell you something?"
>
> Ms. Becky: "Do you know what a photographer does?"
>
> Princess: "Um."
>
> Diego: "Can I tell you something?"
>
> Princess: "Take pictures."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Right, so all the pictures in this book are not drawings. They're pictures. Yes, Diego, what would you like to say?"
>
> Diego: "I got…I got Elmo book."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Ok."
>
> Diego: "But my dog ripped it up."
>
> Ms. Becky: "Oh ok. I'm sorry to hear that." She continues to talk about the author and photographer. Then, she reads the book without interruption. She points out the patterns in the photographs.

During this interaction, Ms. Becky focused on the information that she was looking for. She ignored Diego's comments about the connection he felt to a book he had at home. Instead, Becky focused on what she saw as correct answers, which allowed for a comparison of Princess and Diego. Ms. Becky's actions positioned Princess as the superior student, while relegating Diego to the position of inferior student.

Both Princess and Diego understood Ms. Becky's perceptions of them. Princess stated, "Every time she sees me doing good stuff, she says that I'm participating" (interview, May 23, 2012). When asked what she thinks of her teacher, four-year-old Princess said, "Always tells us

to do something. I like her because she has long hair, and I wish I had long hair" (interview, May 23, 2012). However, Diego did not receive the same message from Ms. Becky, stating "She doesn't like me. Teachers don't like boys" (interview, May 23, 2012). While Diego may not realize the reason, he noticed that Ms. Becky treated him differently than Princess and the girls in the classroom.

Summary

> During whole group time children are expected to listen attentively and, when appropriate, to converge with 'correct' responses to the teacher's questions. The head teacher believes that group time is the time when children learn (Lubeck, 1985, p. 74).

This is a description of whole group written by Lubeck as she witnessed it in a Head Start classroom in 1985. For Lubeck, the teacher in the Head Start classroom, like Ms. Becky, was helping to prepare their students to attend school where the curriculum is based on white, middle-class norms. In this way, the expectations of increased self-regulation and correct answers to questions were intended to make the transition to public school easier for the students. PreK A could be seen as a reproduction of this type of whole group in which children attend school to learn the correct answers, provided by the teacher.

As a white woman, Ms. Becky placed a class bias on her students, treating them as though they must be taught in a group and can only be seen to be learning when they are able to repeat the information that was given to them. In this way, Ms. Becky promoted group growth and obedience. By asking mostly closed-ended questions, Ms. Becky did not allow these African American children to learn through 'involvement' style, in which people are able to fluidly build on the ideas of others without waiting turns (Hallum, 2006). Ms. Becky ignores the "cultural capital" that her students could be bringing to the class and eliminates the possibility

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for social and emotional growth by denying her students the chance to have input into the

curriculum (Delpit, 1995; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). In addition to controlling the discourse

in the classroom, Ms. Becky also asserts her power by denying the students representation within

the curriculum choosing mostly Euro-centric images as decoration. This is a form of

demonstrating institutional power by choosing what knowledge and culture is relevant despite

attempts from the students to bring in their own knowledge and personal connections (Copple &

Bredekamp, 2009). This type of deficit discourse, of only the teacher having knowledge and

being the dominant culture represented in the classroom, is not developmentally appropriate

(Copple & Bredekamp, 2009) and sends a message to Diego and Princess that white, middle-

class people are the norm, making them less than if they are unable to achieve Ms. Becky's high

academic and self-regulatory expectations.

Ms. Jane

The teacher of PreK B, Ms. Jane, is an exuberant Caucasian preschool teacher who has

worked at Hampton Center for the past seven years. Every time that I visited Ms. Jane's

classroom, she was dancing with the students and making positive comments like, "Good job" or

"I love the way you try." Ms. Jane grew up in a high needs, low income community, much like

the one in which she teaches. While the neighborhood has changed significantly since her

childhood becoming much less white and working class and more Black, Ms Jane does not see

herself as separate or distinct from the children she teaches. Instead she describes her children in

the classroom and the community as her family:

> Always I feel I'm one of them. We're a family. I think it's how I was raised. I was in an inner city, so most of my friends were black actually, so I don't see it now. I don't even know that I am different I guess (interview, April 17, 2012).

Purpose of Preschool

For Ms. Jane preschool must be about supporting the development of the whole child. In her words, she wants her students "to grow on their terms," yet, she also recognized that she had a responsibility to help ready her Black students for kindergarten as she explains:

> To get them (the children) acclimated to a school setting. To introduce them to literacy, reading. To teach them a love of books. And to socialize the children. Making friends. Preschool I think is huge because I want them to love school and to love to learn (interview, April 17, 2012).

Ms. Jane not only wants her children to engage with literacy but also wants her students to gain the self-regulation skills necessary to socialize effectively as well as the skills that will help them to become life-long learners.

To achieve these aims in practice, Ms. Jane, creates the classroom as a space full of literacy experiences to promote prereading and writing skills, a social emotional space that encourages them to express their feelings, and a multicultural space that shows pride in their cultural backgrounds.

Environmental literacy. One of Ms. Jane's goals as a preschool teacher is "to introduce them to literacy, reading. To teach them a love of books. It's my passion; I love to read" (interview, April 17, 2012). As a consequence, Ms. Jane creates a literacy rich environment by including books throughout the classroom as well as writing implements, picture/word labels, and children's name/vocabulary cards to assist the children in achieving her goals. Every material has a place on an open shelf at the children's eye level or lower with 3X5 labels on the boxes that have a picture of the material and the name of the material. This arrangement and

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labeling shows the children what is available in each area, and because everything is accessible

children are able to choose where and what they would like to play.

Ms. Jane provides a wide variety of books for her students. She has more than fifty books

in her library area on any given day, as well as over three hundred more to rotate to match

themes. These books consist of fiction, nonfiction, storybooks, as well as books that reflect the

children's gender, cultural, racial, and social diversity (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Because

Ms. Jane feels that literacy is so important, every area of the classroom includes a container of

books that relate to the toys in that area, such as *A House for Hermit Crab* in the Discovery Area

and *Peter's Chair* in Dramatic Play. Along with the books, there were pictures in each area,

labeled with words that the children could use to enhance their vocabulary, such as names of

different kinds of vehicles in blocks or new foods in dramatic play. Each area also had writing

materials, such as paper, pencils, crayons, markers, dry erase boards, dry erase markers, chalk

boards, and chalk, to encourage the children to create letters, books, and lists. There were also

laminated cards with the children's names written on them so children could copy the letters in

their name and therefore be able to label their own work (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). For Ms.

Jane, literacy is more than just having books present for her students to look at, but about

creating a space that, encourages children to try to express their own ideas, and to use writing

and reading in purposeful ways.

Social emotional space. The classroom, while small, has a lot of color and many

activities. As in all Creative Curriculum classrooms, there are nine interest areas set up within

the classroom: dramatic play, blocks, music and movement, computers, toys and games,

discovery, library, art, and sand and water. Each area is set up in a way that allows children to

make decisions without needing adult help. For example, each learning center is a designated by

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a clearly labeled sign with a picture of toys that are available in that area. The physical space set

up by Ms. Jane reflects her goal of acclimating children to a school setting. She chooses

materials and equipment with the children's developmental levels, interests and social

backgrounds in mind, as suggested by developmentally appropriate practices (Copple &

Bredekamp, 2009).

> Research indicates that educators who establish firm boundaries, foster
> warm personal relationships in the classroom, and enable students to have
> an impact on their environment strengthen students' attachment to school,
> their interest in learning, their ability to refrain from self-destructive
> behaviors, and their positive behaviors (Elias, Zins, Weissberg, Greenberg,
> Haynes, Kessler, Schwab-Stone, &Shriver, 1997, p. 44).

Preschool is a time in which teachers are expected to assist children in learning socially

appropriate behaviors. Positive decision making consists of many tasks for preschool age

children. They must learn to control their impulses, such as hitting when another child takes a toy

from them, and to adapt to new sets of rules, such as asking a teacher to take them to the

bathroom. In addition, by being in a space with other people aside from their families, children

have to learn how to resolve conflicts.

Ms. Jane tries to make this transition to a new set of rules smoother by having the

children assist in making decisions. "Student participation in classroom decisions and

responsibilities provides an excellent opportunity for them to experience the satisfaction and

responsibility of influencing their classroom environment" (Elias et. al., 1997, p. 44). One way of

accomplishing this is by having the children participate in creating the classroom rules. The rules

for PreK B (see Figure 2) were created by the class as a group during whole group time in

September and are displayed on the wall by the carpet. These rules are part of the special give

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and take of ideas and power that occurs in PreK B because they allow the children to take on a

leadership role that is usually reserved for teachers.

Figure 2. The rules for PreK B.
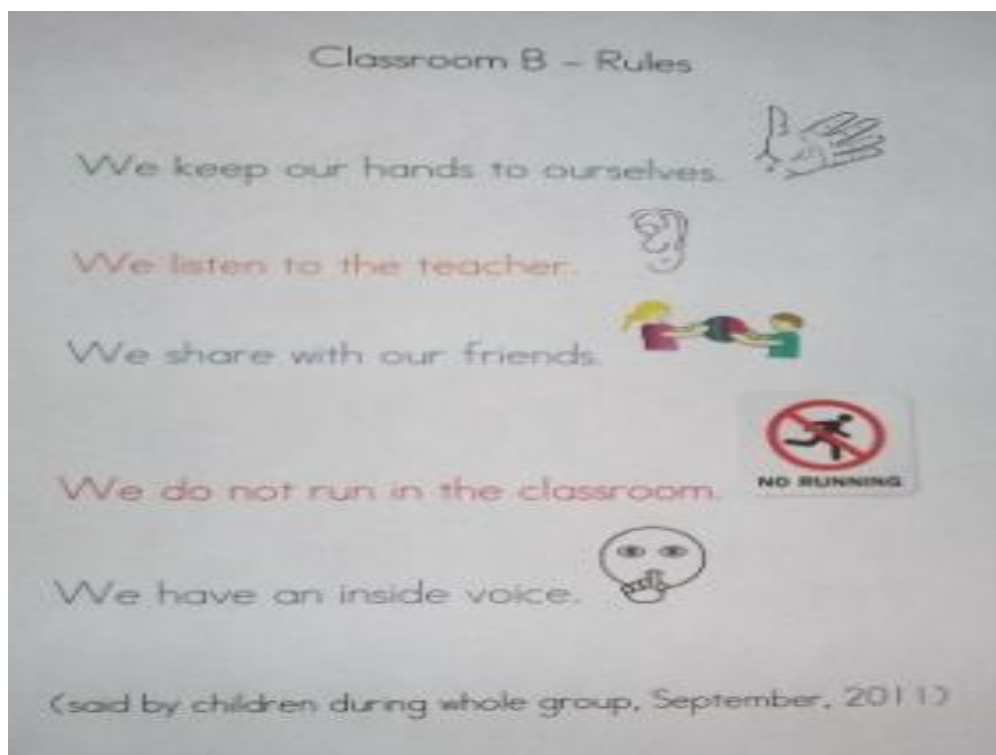
Another way this give and take occurs in PreK B is through the introduction of new

materials. Instead of telling the children how new materials will be used, Ms. Jane has an open

discussion with the children.   An example of this occurred at the beginning of the day May 16,

2012, when Ms. Jane took out a new toy during whole group.

> Ms. Jane: "Look what I have here for you. Grow a head butterfly bug. I
> will put it in science." She pointed to the wings and said, "It has…?"
>
> The children: "Wings."
>
> Ms. Jane: "How many legs?"

> Children: "Six."
>
> Ms. Jane writes six on the board. Ms. Jane: "We'll water it and it will be what?"
>
> The children: "Hair."
>
> Ms. Jane: "Grass." She puts the butterfly down on the discovery table (observation, May 16, 2012).

In this interaction, Ms. Jane does not negate the children's ideas that there will be hair on

the butterfly after they water it. Instead, Ms. Jane allows the students to make their

predictions before correcting them; by doing this she gives them a chance to try their ideas

without judgment, allowing the children to understand that their opinions are valued.

In addition to allowing her students to have some say in classroom issues, Ms. Jane is

also aware of the importance of children learning how to regulate their emotions.

As she told me during an interview on April 17, 2012:

> We have some anger management issues here sometimes. They (children) have hit me. They (children) have temper tantrums. One punched me in the back when I wasn't looking. Sometimes when another gets frustrated he has pushed and hit me. So those things do happen. But they're just little ones. They don't understand. They're still working out…they're frustrated, and it's my job to teach them how to express it in a different manner, so I work on that as well.

To assist her students to learn how to process their feelings, Ms. Jane has set up the classroom

space with areas for children to be able to reflect on their feelings and take time away from the

classroom community. In the library area, there is a bean bag chair in a corner with a label over it

that said "Cozy Corner." In this corner, there is a picture of a child resting next to the bean bag

chair and a poster on the other side of the bean bag chair that showed pictures of feelings (see

figure 3) suggesting to children that they can learn to understand and control their feelings, as

well as have a place to comfort themselves when they find that they are angry, sad, shy or tired.

Figure 3. Ms. Jane's feelings chart.

Ms. Jane encourages the children to use the cozy corner to relax when they become

overwhelmed or frustrated. In addition to this cozy corner, there is a "work it out table" set up

for children who are angry where Ms. Jane has set up a container of play dough and a soft chair

with a few pillows. These materials encourage children to work through their anger and

frustration. Ms. Jane told me on June 5, 2012, "I added special books about working through

anger when the children became frustrated and began fighting last month." Children's books,

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along with adding materials to work out frustration, modeling the appropriate use of these materials and teaching lessons on social/emotional issues, teachers are able to assist preschool students in learning prosocial behaviors such as sharing and empathy as well as respect and justice (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

 A multi-cultural space. "Culturally relevant teaching uses student culture in order to maintain it and to transcend the negative effects of dominant culture" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 17). Ms. Jane creates a classroom that supported not only the children's social and emotional growth but also recognized and validated their cultural identities. By presenting children with a space that is full of materials that reflect their cultures, they are more likely to feel comfortable and accepted, making it easier for them to achieve in the classroom. Every interest area in PreK B has some multicultural materials. In the dramatic play area, the toys include dolls from a variety of racial backgrounds, clothing from different ethnicities, pictures of various types of families, and play food from different cultures; there are also a number of books available in that area with such topics as making friends, families, foods, and children with different abilities. Students have brought in flags from their families countries of origin as well as native costumes. Some of these countries include Nigeria, Jamaica, Barbados, and the Bahamas. The flags of these countries are on display on the walls of dramatic play, and the costumes are available as dress up clothes.

 While the block area has the expected unit blocks, Ms. Jane also included plastic figures of people of varying ages, ethnicities, and abilities. There are also books in the block area that depict buildings from around the world such as Big Ben, the Taj Mahal, and the Eiffel Tower. The library includes puppets of varying skin tones and felt board pieces from stories such as *Peter's Chair* and *Anasai the Spider*, as well as books from different African countries and

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cultures (e.g., African American culture, African tribal cultures, and the Caribbean island

cultures). Since all the children in this class are Black, these books hold some meaning for them.

Peter, the main character in *Peter's Chair* by Ezra Jack Keats is a Black boy living in an urban

setting, similar to the one in which the children of PreK B live. *Anasai the Spider* depicts

traditional African motifs, which shows children from African backgrounds some ideas about the

rich culture of their ancestors.

Ms. Jane uses her classroom space to achieve her goals of facilitating children's

autonomy, and socio-emotional development and encouraging them to read and write and does

so in a way that attempts to recognize the cultures of her students.

Ms. Jane's teaching.

Child-centered education is an idea that dates back to the era of Progressive education

and that has been taken up in the psychological theories of Piaget and Vygotsky. Viewed by the

field as best practice and described in the concept of developmentally appropriate practices

(Copple & Bredekamp, 2009), child centered approaches were the cornerstone of Ms. Jane's

teaching.

According to Dewey there are two criteria for an educative experience, continuity and

interaction. Continuity describes how an experience if it is to be educative must build on and

extend what has come before, rather than simply be more of the same. Interaction describes the

aspects of the experience as they relate to the environment in which the experience occurred as

well as to the students' past experiences, making each interaction unique for each individual

(Dewey, 1997). Therefore, there is no lesson that has intrinsic value because value comes from

the experiences of the people participating in the lesson. This concept of experience encourages educators to take cues from the children, following their interests for lesson planning and discussions.

Like Dewey, Piaget argued that children construct knowledge by coming into contact with new information through their interaction with objects and experiences. "Piaget concluded that the essential nature of human beings was their power to construct knowledge through adaptation to the environment" (Williams, 1999, p. 13). To adapt and create more complex understandings, Piaget argued that children engage in the processes of assimilation and accommodation which are fueled by children's interactions. In assimilation, children try to match new objects and experiences to their existing schema, such as a child who has a dog might mistakenly call a cat, dog the first time s/he sees one. In accommodation, children create new categories for new objects and experiences.

The ideas of assimilation and accommodation are important to keep in mind when teaching children in whole group because some children may be focusing on the task of assimilation, still matching new experiences into their existing schema, while others are readily accommodating the new information into new categories; thus it can be confusing and overwhelming for some children if a teacher moves to quickly from one theme to another when they have not yet created a category for that concept. Likewise, children who are readily accommodating information may be bored if a single theme is presented in a single manner for too long of a period of time because they are ready for a new challenge.

One way children learn and build knowledge through interaction is in play. According to Vygotsky, playing leads to the development of abstract thinking (Casper & Theilheimer, 2010)

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as children in preschool, ages three to five begin to pretend one toy is something else, such as a block being used as a phone. Play also stimulates abstract thinking through role play; children take on roles in an effort to resolve problems, such as acting as a mother who is punishing a doll for dropping dinner dishes. According to Vygotsky, it is through this type of imaginative play that children are able to learn more about themselves and the world around them.

These theoretical ideas are brought together in the guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009), the fields' consensus definition of best practice. An effective education is one that builds on children's experiences, allows them opportunities to interact with their environment and uses play teach children to not only enjoy school but to learn preliteracy skills, math skills, and prosocial behavior. This child centered pedagogy requires that teachers pay attention to the individual development of each child, while balancing academics with the children's need to play (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Ms. Jane looked to the children's needs and experiences to dictate what she should teach. This included the studies and themes as well as the length of time that she focused on those lessons through large and small groups. While Ms. Jane enacted a developmentally appropriate approach, she was not always as culturally responsive in her teaching, overlooking teachable moments that existed for her Black students.

Whole Group

Whole group, or circle time as it is called in many curricula, "is a period of class activity, in which pupils and teacher sit together in a circle formation, to share ideas, feelings and games/activities about one or more social/emotional/curricular issues" (Lown, 2002, p. 93). Lown's very broad idea is typically seen in the guise of the morning meeting in which preschool

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teachers greet students, go through the calendar, look at the weather, sing songs, and read a

message or book. Whole group does not seem like a time when a teacher can be child-centered

because it is typically structured as an adult-led and created instructional event. However, the

way Ms. Jane structured her whole group, during each of the four whole groups I observed, was

very much about a give and take between her and the children.

Ms. Jane has several tasks that she tries to accomplish each day during whole group time,

as indicated on her lesson plans: morning song, counting the children, weather bunny/butterfly,

morning message (usually just the date), and a song. Whole group time in PreK B lasts between

five and ten minutes. The following vignette shows what a typical whole group time looks like in

PreK B. As this vignette begins, the children are playing with the dollhouse and table toys before

going to whole group.

> Ms. Jane: "One more minute until we start our day." "Alright. We'll put
> on our morning song." (She begins to dance to the music.)

> The children smile and walk to the carpet to dance with Ms. Jane.

> The song ends. Ms. Jane turns off the CD player and sits on the carpet for
> whole group.

> Ms. Jane: "Alright. Find your spots please. No squishy squashy please."
> When all the children sit down, Ms. Jane begins to count the children.
> Several children count with her: ""1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.
> Uno, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco, seis, seite, ocho, neuve, diez, once, doce,
> trece." Ms. Jane looks at the children: "Who's not here?"

> The children: "Gabby and Mark."

> Ms. Jane points to the 15 on her number chart with her pointer, moving the
> pointer as the children count each number: "15, 14, 13, 12, 11, 10, 9, 8, 7,
> 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, blast off!"

> Several children count aloud with Ms. Jane: "15, 14, 13, 12, 11, 10, 9, 8,
> 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, blast off!"

Then, Ms. Jane looks around the circle, points to a butterfly headband: "It's time for the weather butterfly."

Tara puts on the headband, walks to the window: "Sunny."

The children: "Thank you weather butterfly." Everyone claps.

Ms. Jane: "Close your eyes," as she erases the board. "What did we talk about yesterday?" The children open their eyes.

Then all the children: "Our butterflies."

Children begin to call out. No one raises hands.

Tara: "They hatch soon."

Jay: "I want to see."

Linda: "Mine will fly."

Ms. Jane", "Yes." Then, she begins to write on the dry erase board. "Left to right."

Ms. Jane writes, June 14, 2012. She spells: "J U N E."

The children repeat: "J U N E."

Ms. Jane: "June 14, 2012."

The children repeat: "June 14, 2012."

Then, everyone sings the color song as they get ready to go outside (observation, June 14, 2012).

While this was the typical whole group format, I did not observe two whole group times that were the same because Ms. Jane modified the instructional event to meet the needs of the children. Ms. Jane's child centered approach to large group instruction was evident in two ways: taking cues from children and engaging in conversation during whole group.

Taking cues from children. To be child-centered means to take cues from children, both the group of children one teaches and individuals who may need attention. Ms. Jane was always aware of the needs of her individual students and adapted her schedule to respond to the

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cues they sent. This flexibility was evident for example on April, 17, 2012 when Ty, who was feeling a little uncomfortable, walked into the classroom late when morning meeting had already begun. Although Ms. Jane was sitting on the carpet in a circle with the children, Ms. Jane got up, walked over and hugged Ty; then quickly walked back to her seat on the carpet. In response, Ty came and sat on the carpet (observation, April, 17, 2012).

Similarly, Ms. Jane changed her plans to accommodate the attention span of her young students:

> The children had been sitting on the carpet with Ms. Jane for about five minutes. The sun is shining into the windows. Eleven children are sitting on the rug.
>
> Ms. Jane: "What are we learning about?" She holds up a book with a picture of an ant.
>
> Ty: "Ant."
>
> Ms. Jane: "What does the queen ant do?"
>
> Bink: "Eggs."
>
> Ty, pointing to the picture of the ant in the book: "These are eggs and this has six legs."
>
> Ms. Jane repeats Ty's words for the class.
>
> Six of the children lie down and roll on the carpet, bumping into each other and into the children who are looking at the book.
>
> Ms. Jane: "Would you like to read the book later?'
>
> A few children nod their heads.
>
> Ms. Jane puts the book away: "Children it is now time for gross motor Exercise." (observation, May 2, 2012).

As Ms. Jane is getting ready to read a book, she noticed that some children were not engaged. Instead of reprimanding or redirecting them to sit up and pay attention, Ms. Jane takes this as a signal that the children have had enough of whole group for the moment and need more time outside. While this tactic is developmentally appropriate and meets the needs of young children's attention span, it may not help prepare the low-income, Black children in Ms. Jane's class for success in a society in which the norms tend to marginalize their needs, not strive to accommodate and anticipate them.

Looking across the four whole group times, there was always some continuity such as going through the calendar and counting backwards, but Ms. Jane made sure to include time for the children.

Encouraging conversation. Studies of teacher-child interaction in whole class instruction have found that the teacher controls the tone and focus of the conversation (Lown, 2002; Zaghlawan & Ostrosky, 2011) because the teacher is the one who chooses the topic, runs the classroom, and is sitting in the front of the whole group; Ms. Jane, on the other hand, shares control of whole group with the students, allowing their ideas to shift the focus of the conversation. Rather children are allowed to offer their contributions and to add on to each other's answers. For example in the following whole group on May 16 the children end up having an extended conversation about caterpillars and eggs.

> Ms. Jane and the children sit on the carpet in the whole group area. The children sit on the outer edge of the carpet. All children have a clear view of Ms. Jane as she holds up a book. Ms. Jane shows a books and points to the pictures. First, she shows the cover. Then, she shows the first page: "That's an egg. I will read it over again. *Butterfly Mariposa*. How do butterflies grow? From egg to caterpillar."
>
> Derek: "That's a caterpillar.

Tara: "I want to touch a caterpillar."

Linda: "It was egg."

Sara: "We gonna have caterpillars."

Ms. Jane: "Our caterpillar should be here any day. I'm waiting for them to come."

Derek: "I like caterpillars."

Tara: "How bout I can touch it?"

Ms. Jane: "I don't know if we'll touch them. Real gently maybe."

Sara: "I love the green ones."

Ms. Jane as she shows the second page: "From caterpillar to chrysalis."

Maria smiles as she looks at the book.

Dora: "Another caterpillar."

Bink: "Whoa!"

Derek: "What's inside?"

Ms. Jane shows the third: "And from chrysalis to…"

Jeff: "It's coming to a butterfly."

Ms. Jane shows the last page of the book.

Tara and Sara: "Butterfly" (observation, May 16, 2012).

As can be seen, Ms. Jane does not negate children's ideas and gives authority mostly over to the children without letting the conversations get out of hand. For example, when Tara says, "How bout I can touch it." Ms. Jane does not say no, she says, "I don't know if we'll touch them. Real gently maybe." She leaves the possibility open for Tara. At the same time, Ms. Jane adds information that helps keep the conversations moving in productive ways. When Derek asks, "What's inside?," Ms. Jane shows the next page of the book instead of answering his question outright, giving Derek a chance to discover the knowledge on his own; she simply reads the text, "And from chrysalis to…" Ms. Jane allows her students to take control of coming up with the

answers to the questions that they have by showing them how to find the answers; this leads the

children to stay on the topic that Ms. Jane has chosen to meet the needs of her lesson.

In most of the whole group times that I observed, Ms. Jane encouraged conversation,

even during routine tasks. When taking attendance on April 17, during whole group time, Ms.

Jane's students were eager to help:

> Ms. Jane walks to the children's home/school board that the children sign in on during free play and points to the board with her pointer: "Who is missing?"
>
> Jay: "Dora, Ben, Ty"
>
> Gabby: "Linda, Paje."
>
> Bink: "Maria" (observation, April 17, 2012).

In this brief vignette, the conversational tone of whole group time could be seen in a simple

question. Many teachers ask "Who is missing?," but they expect the children to wait to be called

on. Ms. Jane allowed her students to engage in the natural flow of conversation by answering her

question as they saw fit, and they, in turn, respected her and each other by taking turns speaking.

Ms. Jane's conversation technique is child-centered, but the conversation still remains on the

topic that she planned.

Similarly on June 14, when Ms. Jane asked the children to remember what they

were learning about, a conversation ensued:

> Ms. Jane: "Close your eyes," as she erases the board. "What did we talk about yesterday?" The children open their eyes."
>
> Then all the children: "Our butterflies."
>
> Children begin to call out. No one raises hands.
>
> Tara: "They hatch soon."

> Jay: "I want to see."
>
> Linda: "Mine will fly."
>
> Ms. Jane: "Yes." Then, she begins to write the date on the dry erase board (observation, June 14, 2012).

Again, though the children call out, they do not speak over each other. They listen to the person who is speaking before beginning to talk. The calling out is in fact a conversation in which the children add to each other's ideas. When Tara says, "They will hatch soon," Jay add, "I want to see." Taken in context these comments create a full conversation about the butterflies that they are remembering, but the conversation stays firmly on the topic of caterpillars and butterflies without wavering, which leaves the observer to wonder what is not being said by the students, especially those who do not speak up during whole group.

Another way Ms. Jane made sure children's voices were heard in large group was by deliberately planning for their input. For example, the plans for Ms. Jane's whole group time included "complimentary remarks said from classmates;" Ms. Jane said that this meant that children could contribute anything they thought was relevant to the topic (interview, June 14, 2012). Also on her lesson plans, Ms. Jane indicated that the children chose the books for afternoon read aloud. In the interview on June 24, 2012, she said, "This is another way that the children can contribute their opinions on what they want to learn about" (interview, June 14, 2012).

Allowing for these complimentary remarks could be seen on June 14, when the children discussed their butterflies.

> Ms. Jane: "Close your eyes," as she erases the board. "What did we talk about yesterday?" The children open their eyes."
>
> Then all the children: "Our butterflies."

> Children begin to call out. No one raises hands.
>
> Tara: "They hatch soon."
>
> Jay: "I want to see."
>
> Linda: "Mine will fly."
>
> Ms. Jane: "Yes." Then, she begins to write the date on the dry erase board (observation, June 14, 2012).

Ms. Jane starts the discussion, but does not interrupt the children, allowing their ideas to

flow into one another inspiring others to join the conversation.

Similarly, "complimentary remarks said from classmates" also occurred on May 16,

when the children were talking about caterpillars.

> Derek: "That's a caterpillar.
>
> Tara: "I want to touch a caterpillar."
>
> Linda: "It was egg."
>
> Sara: "We gonna have caterpillars."
>
> Ms. Jane: "Our caterpillar should be here any day. I'm waiting for them to come."
>
> Derek: "I like caterpillars."
>
> Tara: "How bout I can touch it?"
>
> Ms. Jane: "I don't know if we'll touch them. Real gently maybe."
>
> Sara: "I love the green ones" (observation, May 16, 2012).

Despite the caterpillars not having arrived in the classroom as yet, Ms. Jane welcomes the

children's interest, adding to the conversation. In doing so, the children know that their

views will be validated. By allowing for "complimentary remarks from classmates," Ms.

Jane adapts her teaching to match the interests of her students.

Ms. Jane's dialogic style with the children is reminiscent of the "involvement style" of communication that Hallum (2006) states is more aligned with African American students' style of communication in which they are free to add to another's statement or answer in order to enhance the conversation. By bouncing ideas off one another, Ms. Jane acts as a participant in the conversation, not a leader, which helps to build trusting relationships between the children and Ms. Jane because they learn that she values their opinions. However, Ms. Jane is still controlling the focus of the conversation, not allowing the children to fully express their interests, backgrounds, or cultures. So there is a give and take, but the content of the conversations is still Ms. Jane's, for the most part, which when I was observing was mostly about insects.

By allowing for the children to have some control over the interactions and questions, Ms. Jane shared the control of knowledge during whole group. By planning for these shared interactions in her lesson plans and in her talk and actions, Ms. Jane let the children know that she valued the knowledge that they brought into the classroom. This is the child-study that Dewey was envisioning in *The Child and the Curriculum*, where the child is taken at his or her own present level of consciousness and not just thought of in terms of what they have accomplished but in what they think about (Dewey, 2011).

Studies of the differences between schools serving mostly Black and poor students and those serving predominantly white populations tend to find a lot of teacher control of whole group conversation, such as in Ms. Becky's classroom, with this instructional event emphasizing drill and rote memorization of academic concepts. For example in Lubeck's (1985) study of a Black Head Start classroom, the Black teachers said they used whole group to have children gather for rote drills of calendar, story reading, and roll call. While Ms. Jane is teaching a

similar population of students, her whole group time is much more of a conversation between herself and her students.

At the same time, while there was a give and take, Ms. Jane always kept whole group focused on her agenda and the topics she raised, which did not extend to the backgrounds or cultures of the children in the classroom. Delpit (2006) would argue that this discourse style is a middle class approach that negates what young Black children need to be able to succeed in school.

Interactions with Focal Children

In PreK B, small group is a very individualized experience in that Ms. Jane typically works one-on-one with students to accomplish her learning goals rather than in a small group. Over my weeks in the classroom, I actually never saw Ms. Jane do small group any other way than as one on one with the two focal children. Therefore in this section, I begin by describing Ms. Jane's plans for small group and then examine how she taught these concepts and skills individually to each of the focal children Bink and Dora.

Small group curriculum. Small group is a time to work with children on the skills that they need to improve as working with fewer children enables the teacher to individualize instruction. As Ms. Jane explained during an interview, "I just want them to grow on their terms" (interview, April, 12, 2012), which can be accomplished during small group through differentiated instruction. Since Ms. Jane has chosen to differentiate instruction for every student, Ms. Jane creates one activity for small group each week and then she rotates each child through this activity while the other children are in choice time. Ms. Jane said that she uses her

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observations to let her know what academic focus each child needs to work on during small

group (interview, June 14, 2012).

Ms. Jane uses the theme to focus her conversation and interactions with each child during

these individual interactions. Ms. Jane stated in an interviewed conducted on June 14, 2012 that

she derived the themes from the children's interests as assessed from the anecdotes that she

writes down during class. However, she did not provide any examples of a theme that came from

the children nor did I find any examples of the themes based on what was recorded in the

anecdotal records. Ultimately, it was Ms. Jane who chose the themes for the lessons. Ms. Jane

planned each of her small groups to match the theme of the week, so the lessons were on plants

and insects when I was observing in her classroom. The goals for each small group are academic,

either literacy or math based. The focus for the small group observations can be found in Table

5.

Table 5 – Small Group Observation Focuses for PreK B

Date	Theme	Focus	Activity
4/24/12	Plants	How seeds grow – describing words	Looking at seedlings and describing them
5/10/12	Bugs	Patterns	Plastic bug toys
5/23/12	Caterpillars	Counting	Caterpillar face and circles
6/8/12	Caterpillars	Reading Comprehension	Storybook read aloud

The academic focus of the first activity, how seeds grow, was choosing adjectives and

descriptive phrases that enhance language to explain what was previously discussed, preparing

the children to learn about grammar. This activity was question based, and Ms. Jane focused on

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building on the children's experience of planting the seeds through leading questions. For

bugged out patterns, the second activity, the focus was continuing two color patterns. The

academic focus of the third activity, caterpillar circles, was counting. For *The Very Hungry*

Caterpillar, the fourth activity, the skill being addressed was story retelling,

Within each of these activities, Ms. Jane used her relationship with the individual

children to hone in on a particular academic goal for each child. To create the individualized

interactions, Ms. Jane looks over the anecdotal records she created during the week and uses

those to guide her choices of learning objectives from Creative Curriculum to teach to each child.

In her observation notes, Ms. Jane noted that on February 24, 2012, "Dora could not pattern," so

Ms. Jane set up the Bugged Out patterns lesson on May 10, 2012 to work on this skill with Dora.

This does not mean that Ms. Jane created a different small group experience for each child each

week since Bink also worked on the Bugged Out patterns lesson; but she used her anecdotes to

help her choose how to approach the lesson with each student and what the goal of the lesson

should be. Ms. Jane approached each of these lessons in a manner that would allow her to be

student focused, but when looking at the individual children involved in these lessons, it

becomes clear that Ms. Jane put her academic goals of these lessons above the needs of the

children for whom the lessons were intended.

Dora. Dora comes to school smiling almost every day. She was born in the low-income

housing project that she still lives in with her mother, grandmother, and two sisters. Her father is

from Liberia and visits two or three times a month. She is one of the taller children in PreK B

and usually wears her hair in many braids. Her favorite outfits to wear to school are jeans,

sneakers and pink t-shirts. However, I was never certain how I'd find Dora attired for the day as

when I came to visit on a day when it was eighty degrees, Dora was wearing corduroys and a

sweatshirt. Another day when I came it visit, it was only sixty degrees, and Dora was wearing

shorts, a tank top, and sandals.

Ms. Jane sees Dora as a bright child, who is eager to please. When asked to describe

Dora, she said, "Dora is another one, very affectionate, very happy too, follows me around.

Eager to learn. Dora is a happy child too" (interview, June 15, 2012). Sometimes, Dora gets very

shy and does not like to speak. According to the Family Conference form dated April 16, 2012,

Ms. Jane is working with Dora on her confidence and focus. Although she had noted this goal of

confidence building with Dora, Ms. Jane's focus with her in the small groups I observed seemed

to be about more academic goals, such as patterning and story retelling. While these interactions

could allow for more give and take between Ms. Jane and Dora, in her interactions with Dora the

focus was on ensuring that Dora gave the correct, expected answers with Ms. Jane leading

Dora's responses as in the following interaction.

> Ms. Jane calls Dora over to the library and shows her the book, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Ms. Jane: "Do you remember this book?"
>
> Dora nods.
>
> Ms. Jane: "Can you tell me about this book? Let's open up to the beginning of the book?" Ms. Jane holds the book open to the first page.
>
> Dora: "That one is the caterpillar. No, it the moon."
>
> Ms. Jane: "We don't see the caterpillar yet do we?"
>
> Dora turns the page: "Caterpillar."
>
> Ms. Jane: "And he popped out of the little?"
>
> Dora: "Egg. Let's find the strawberries." Dora flips through the pages. "He eat the strawberry. He eat the apples. He eat the oranges."
>
> Ms. Jane points to the picture of the apples on the page that Dora is looking at: "How many apples?"

Dora: "1."

Ms. Jane points to the picture of the pears: "How many pears?"

Dora: "1 2."

Ms. Jane points to the plums: "How many plums?"

Dora: "1."

Ms. Jane: "Would you like to count with me?"

Dora nods.

Ms. Jane points to each plum and counts with Dora: "1 2 3."

Ms. Jane: "Good job."

Then, they count the strawberries and oranges together.

Dora turns the page: "He eat sausage. He eat a cheese. He eat a ice cream. He eat a lollipop. He eat a cupcake. He eat a watermelon."

Ms. Jane: "What happened after he ate all that food?"

Dora: "He got a tummy ache."

Ms. Jane: "Why do you think he has a stomachache?"

Dora: "Cause he eat a lollipop."

Ms. Jane: "He ate a lot of food and a lollipop was one of the things."

Dora turns the page: "He eat a flowers."

Ms. Jane: "What did he eat?"

Dora: "He eat a flower."

Ms. Jane: "It's like a flower it's a leaf. After he ate the leaf, he felt?"

Dora: "Better."

Ms. Jane: "They he started to get?"

Dora: "Bigger."

Ms. Jane: "Then he built a little house called a…"

Dora: "Chrysalis."

> Ms. Jane: "We have chrysalis in discovery. They're turning into…"
>
> Dora: "Butterfly."
>
> Ms. Jane: "Thank you" (observation, June 8, 2012).

In this vignette, Dora does not seem to want to go through the story a page at a time. She rushes from the beginning to her favorite part with the strawberry as soon as she gets a hold of the book. Then, Ms. Jane slows her down, only allowing her to control the conversation twice, which does not match with the goal that Ms. Jane has set for Dora. The first time occurs when Dora is looking for the page with the strawberries "Let's find the strawberries." Dora flips through the pages. "He eat the strawberry. He eat the apples. He eat the oranges." In the second instance, Dora has just finished counting pictures with Ms. Jane and chooses to look through the next page on her own: Dora turns the page: "He eat sausage. He eat a cheese. He eat a ice cream. He eat a lollipop. He eat a cupcake. He eat a watermelon." Telling the story by memory and picture the way Dora is participating in is an important literacy skill, retelling her own version of the story. Story retelling is one way for young children to improve their reading comprehension and show their understanding of the story that has been read to them. Children use their own words, based in memories and the pictures in the book, to explain the story. However, Ms. Jane does not allow Dora to retell her own version of the story; Dora is persuaded by Ms. Jane to only retell Ms. Jane's version of the story.

Ms. Jane chooses to make the section of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* that contains different fruits into a counting lesson, while Dora wanted to look at her favorite page. For children who are developing emergent reading skills, having a favorite part of a book is important because that child is developing a love of reading, which Ms. Jane claims is one of her key teaching aims (interview, April 17, 2012). Ms. Jane does not seem to notice that she has

taken over the section that Dora was most excited about. Dora however gives in and relinquishes

ownership of the story to Ms. Jane for the rest of the book, simply answering what is asked of

her. Although Ms. Jane does meet some of the literacy standards, such as book handling skills

and having a child exhibit reading-like behavior, she missed out on three opportunities to

capitalize on Dora's enthusiasm about this book.

In the next example, Ms. Jane follows a similar pattern of leading Dora through the

answers to her questions about seedlings.

> Ms. Jane has two egg cartons of seedlings on the table; she asks Dora to come to the table to play.
>
> Ms Jane: "We were talking about our seeds today in whole group. Can you tell me more about our seeds? What did you say about them in whole group?"
>
> Dora: "Them grow."
>
> Ms. Jane: "They grow. How do they grow?"
>
> Dora: "With water."
>
> Ms. Jane: "Right. What do you see out of the seeds, sweetie?"
>
> Dora: "Them grow into jellybeans."
>
> Ms. Jane laughs: "They're shaped like jellybeans, aren't they. And out of the seeds, what is that?"
>
> Dora: "The roots."
>
> Ms. Jane: "That's right, the roots. What do the roots do?"
>
> Dora: "To keep the flowers so they grow."
>
> Ms. Jane: "Exactly. What does it drink up?"
>
> Dora: "Water."
>
> Ms. Jane: "Can you count how many seeds?"
>
> Dora: "1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25." She points to each seedling as she counted.

> Ms. Jane: "Good job. I love the way you count and recognize the numbers" (observation, April 24, 2013).

During this interaction Ms. Jane laughs at Dora when her response does not answer the question that she is asking. Instead of probing to see what it is that Dora is getting at when she says, "Them grow into jellybeans." Ms. Jane assumes that Dora means that the seeds look like jellybeans without giving her time to explain. By not encouraging Dora to explain herself, Ms. Jane is not meeting her own goal of getting Dora to speak more during class but more importantly, she seems to be only looking for the correct answer to her questions. For the most part Dora is able to answer these questions and performs well, but Ms Jane has also missed out on learning more about Dora.

The following lesson, a counting lesson, shows a similar pattern of interaction between Ms. Jane and Dora. Ms. Jane placed a circle with a face on the table in front of Dora and a pile of laminated circles with the intention of building a caterpillar. Together, they added circles after the face to create a caterpillar. Then, Ms. Jane and Dora counted the circles.

> Dora counts and Ms. Jane repeats the numbers she says. She puts her hand over hers and guides it to touch each circle as she counts. "1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8."
>
> Ms. Jane: "Good job. You wanna make him bigger?"
>
> Dora smiles and nods.
>
> Ms. Jane: "Go ahead."
>
> Dora adds several circles to the back of the caterpillar.
>
> As Dora adds circles, Ms. Jane: "He's been eating a lot. He's getting bigger. Okay. Wowee. Wow. Let's stop right there." Ms. Jane takes the caterpillar pieces apart and writes down notes in her notebook. Then, Dora chooses an area on the choice board (observation, May 23, 2012).

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For the most part Dora is a silent participant in this small group. During this interaction, Dora only counts aloud once, even though she showed that she was able to count to 25 without assistance on April 24, 2012. Dora continued to perform the task chosen by Ms. Jane, but would not answer any of her questions aloud. Ms. Jane however, was not dissuaded by Dora's silence; she continued the activity speaking for both of them when Dora does not verbally respond. However, one of Ms Jane's goals for Dora is for her to speak out more. This interaction does not achieve Ms. Jane's goals for Dora and looks to be just filling time during the school day to make sure that all children have done this activity.

Ms. Jane's focus on ensuring that Dora gave the correct, expected answers leads Ms. Jane to direct Dora through tasks even when the concept of the task is beyond Dora's comprehension. As can be seen in this lesson where the focus is on patterning with two colors:

> Ms. Jane places red, blue, and green rectangular bug toys on the table; she arranges the bug toys into a pattern of red blue red blue and invites Dora over to the table. Dora stands next to the table as Ms. Jane begins to speak to her.
>
> Ms. Jane: "Red, blue, red, blue. What do you think comes next?"
>
> Dora sits next to Ms. Jane in the toys and games area, staring at the pattern on the table without speaking.
>
> Ms. Jane: "Can you pick out which color comes next?"
>
> Dora looks at Ms. Jane without speaking.
>
> Ms. Jane: "Red, blue, red, blue. Is it red or is it blue?" She uses her finger to point to each color as she says its name.
>
> Dora: "That," and picks a blue bug.
>
> Ms. Jane: "Let me show you something. Red blue red blue next comes red. You see they're different colors and they're taking turns."
>
> Ms. Jane points to a red bug: "What color's this one?"

> Dora: "Yellow."
>
> Ms. Jane: "Red." Then she points to a blue bug: "What color's that one?"
>
> Dora looks, but does not speak.
>
> Ms. Jane: "Blue."
>
> Dora: "Blue" (observation, May 10, 2012).

Ms. Jane was clearly assuming that the children remembered learning the colors and was not looking to reteach this concept. However, Dora does not know either of the two colors that Ms. Jane used to create patterns for this lesson, but Ms. Jane does not stop the lesson to teach Dora about the colors. Ms. Jane did not take any observation notes about Dora's sorting and classifying from September 12, 2011 through May 3, 2012. Therefore, I am not sure how she would know if Dora was capable of classifying colors before working on this patterning lesson. What is also concerning is that Ms. Jane is not teaching this foundational skill to Dora but instead persists with the lesson when Dora clearly does not know her colors.

Ms. Jane's interactions with Dora show a teacher who chooses materials that her student has shown interest in, but who has a specific agenda that must be completed during each interaction. It is clear in the interaction with the colored bugs (May 10, 2012) that Dora does not know how to identify colors, but Ms. Jane had determined that the time needed to be used for patterning. Instead of focusing on the differences between the colors and changing the lesson, Ms. Jane simply gave Dora the answers to the lesson, having her repeat the names of the colors. When the focus of Ms. Jane's interaction with Dora is a discussion about how plants grow on April 24, 2012, she does not take the time to assist Dora with her grammar or explore the interesting idea that Dora has about plants looking like jellybeans because those are not on the agenda. Likewise, the reason for Dora's silence during the interaction on May 23, 2012 is not

brought into question because it does not have to do with building a caterpillar out of a pile of circles. In not addressing Dora's silence, or Dora's inability to identify colors in a pattern, Ms. Jane is not being child-centered and is also not achieving her agenda of academic learning.

Ms. Jane decided that Dora is a bright student and led her through lessons in such a way that her observations would show that she was capable of the intended goal of each lesson. Unfortunately, there is minimal concern as to whether Dora is actually learning the material because she is a quiet, low-income, Black female.

Bink. Bink was born in Jamaica and came to the United States when he was an infant. His parents are still learning American English, as is Bink. They all speak Patois at home, which leads to Bink having some difficulty with speech, according to Ms. Jane (interview, May 15, 2012). Currently, Bink lives with his mother and father in the low-income housing projects, but he rarely sees his father because he spends most of the day and night driving a taxi cab. Bink gravitates towards the music area when he comes into the classroom.

Ms. Jane sees him as struggling academically due to lack of focus, but a hard worker. In her words, "Bink loves music, always happy, and he's very affectionate. A joy to have. Bink is eager to learn too, but Bink has a harder time focusing. He gets distracted easily, so I spend a lot of time trying to get his attention" (interview, June 15, 2012). In the Spring Family Conference Form for Bink, Ms. Jane stated, "Bink may not always seem to pay attention, but he is at the developmental level for his age." He is very good at color identification and patterns, but has trouble with counting, number identification, and letter identification (April 16, 2012). Overall, Ms. Jane expects Bink to answer in incomplete sentences, get distracted, and need help completing a task, which is a concern because she does not take into account Bink's status as an

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English language learner or the knowledge that Bink might have, which may be due in part to the district not providing English as a second language support for preschool students. Instead in all of her interactions with Bink, in small group, Ms. Jane can be seen trying to focus his attention on her academic goals as in the following lesson on seeds.

> Ms. Jane has the two egg cartons of seedlings on the table. Ms. Jane: "We talked about seeds. What happened to the seeds?"
>
> Bink: "Growing."
>
> Ms. Jane: "They're growing. Why are they growing?"
>
> Bink: "Because."
>
> Ms. Jane: "Because why. Why are they growing?"
>
> Bink: "Because it needs sun and water."
>
> Ms. Jane: "It does need water and sun, excellent." Then, she points to the roots of the seedling: "What's this?"
>
> Bink: "I don't know."
>
> Ms. Jane: "Roots."
>
> Bink: "Roots."
>
> Ms. Jane: "What are the roots for?"
>
> Bink: "Because grow."
>
> Ms. Jane: "Because it makes it grow. Right, do you know how it makes it grow? It likes to drink what?"
>
> Bink: "Water."
>
> Ms. Jane: "Yes, sweetie" (observation, April 24, 2012).

As can be seen Ms. Jane led Bink through the conversation in the above vignette. When Bink became confused during the lessons, Ms. Jane would prompt him for an answer or give him a verbal cue that he could repeat. In an interview Ms. Jane said she used this method because, "If

you ask him a direct question, he just laughs. He doesn't answer" (interview, May 15, 2012). She

seems to be trying to work on the New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Standard

"Teachers will extend children's language by asking them to make connections between present

knowledge and new vocabulary" (2009). However, Ms. Jane places her words in Bink's mouth

so that he is unable to express what he knows in his own words. This foreshadows how Bink

may be treated by other teachers who do not understand his unique background as a low-income,

Black immigrant who is an English language learner. Ms. Jane's focus on the correct use of

sentences blinds her to Bink's understanding of the concept of how roots help plants. The

inability to construct proper English sentences should not immediately be seen by Ms. Jane as a

deficit because English is not Bink's first language, as Delpit (2006) states, "teachers need to

support the language that students bring to school, provide them input from an additional code,

and give them the opportunity to use the code in a nonthreatening, real communicative context."

The way Ms. Jane feeds Bink words, does not allow him to use the academic discourse that he

needs to learn to be successful in school.

Similarly, Ms. Jane's seeing Bink as a student who only lacks focus and is not struggling

with academics creates a problematic system in which she encourages him without correcting

him. Her over encouraging and under correcting of Bink could be seen on May 23, 2012 when

Bink struggled with counting:

> Ms. Jane uses laminated circles to allow the children to create their own
> caterpillars. She has a pile of circles sitting on the table when Bink sits
> down. Ms. Jane places a circle with a face on the table. Then, Ms. Jane
> and Bink add circles to the back of the caterpillar face.
>
> Ms. Jane: "Alright my friend, are you ready to count the caterpillar body?"
>
> Bink nods. He counts as Ms. Jane guides his finger to touch each circle:
> "1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8."

Ms. Jane: "Great. Let's make him bigger."

Bink and Ms. Jane add more circles.

When they stop, Ms. Jane: "Are you ready, love?"

Bink smiles. Bink touches the circles as he counts: "1, 3, 4."

Ms. Jane: "Let's start again." She puts her hand over his and guides him to point to each circle individually.

Bink: "1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 16."

Ms. Jane: "Wow. That's not easy to count like that. Could you show me the numerals?" She holds up the number line. "You counted to ten. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. You did that" She points to each numeral as she says its name: "Can you show me that you know what some of the numbers look like? Can you show me what number two looks like? Can you point to number two, sweetheart?"

Bink points to 3.

Ms. Jane: "That's number 3. Good try. Can you show me number 1?"

Bink points to 4.

Ms. Jane: "That's number 4. Good try. Can you show me number 2?"

Bink points to 6.

Ms. Jane: "That's number 6. Good try. Thank you so much" (observation, May 23, 2012).

When looking at the above vignette, the fact that Ms. Jane ignored how Bink counted after ten bothered me because it seemed like she was implying that he was only capable of counting to ten. Bink counted: "1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 16." Ms. Jane did not correct the counting, instead she said, "Wow. That's not easy to count like that." In the above interaction, Ms. Jane does not assist Bink to notice the flaws in his counting method, allowing him to continually count out of order. Yet, number sense is central to Bink's learning of key math operations like addition and according to Creative Curriculum and the state standards, Bink should be able to

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count up to 20. In Bink's portfolio from September 12, 2011-May 3, 2012, there are only five

observation notes; indicating that Ms. Jane has not been consistently checking in on Bink's

learning and development. Ms. Jane's underestimation of Bink's abilities are concerning given

that it is the end of the school year and Bink will enter kindergarten in a few months. Other

children from similar backgrounds will have been taught to count in the correct order, so Ms.

Jane is putting Bink at a disadvantage by not correcting his error and teaching him the proper

way. By not teaching him, Ms Jane is sending the message to Bink that telling him that he is not

capable of counting correctly.

Ms. Jane expects Bink to answer in incomplete sentences, get distracted, and need help

completing a task, which is exactly what happens when she asks him to come over to the library

area to help her retell the book *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*.

> Ms. Jane shows Bink the book, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*: "Do you remember this book?"
>
> Bink: "Caterpillar."
>
> Ms. Jane: "Yes, it's about a very hungry caterpillar."
>
> Bink: "Butterfly."
>
> Ms. Jane: "Yes, you are right; he does turn into a butterfly. Let's see how."
>
> Bink turns to the first page: "Ooh a sun. The sun and the moon. A caterpillar."
>
> Ms. Jane: "It's inside." She turns the page.
>
> Bink: "A caterpillar waked up."
>
> Ms. Jane: "He popped out of the…"
>
> Bink begins turning pages, grabbing several pages in his hand and turning them to the left.
>
> Ms. Jane: "Bink, do you want to continue with the book?"

He nods: "The caterpillar hungry."

Ms. Jane: "Excellent, he is hungry."

Bink points to the food: "Apple. Plum. Orange."

Ms. Jane asks Bink to count.

Bink turns the page. "Look ice cream. What's that?"

Ms. Jane: "Sausage."

Bink turns the page: "He's feeling better."

Ms. Jane: "Yes, after he ate the leaf. What's happening now?"

Bink: "He's getting bigger and bigger. Gonna turn into a butterfly." He turns the page: "He's a butterfly" (observation, June 8, 2012).

In the above vignette, Bink is clearly excited about the book. Ms. Jane capitalizes on this excitement by using leading questions to persuade Bink to retell the story of the *Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Ms. Jane's attempts to force Bink to follow the exact plot of the book are thwarted by Bink's urge to flip ahead through the pages. Ms. Jane does not tell Bink that he missed pages; she allows him to tell the story his way. In a way, this response to Bink is child-centered because Ms Jane allows Bink to display his book handling skills, but because she does not expect more of him, like the ability to look through a book, turning page by page, which is an age-appropriate expectation (New Jersey State Department of Education, 2009), Ms. Jane might be seen as curtailing Bink's learning. Similarly, in this interaction Ms. Jane does not correct Bink's grammar usage, or ask for full-sentences when Bink chooses to answer with a single word. Bink is an English language learner, who needs opportunities to engage in conversations so he can become more comfortable and proficient in English.

Since Ms. Jane sees Bink as deficient and lacking in focus, she does not view him as capable, even when his performance in the activity shows that he is. Ms. Jane chooses to focus

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on the activity that she has decided on instead of using the time with Bink to help him improve

on counting or conversing; this adherence to her chosen activity can be seen in the following

vignette:

> Ms. Jane has the game Bugged Out on the table. Bink sits down at the table next to Ms. Jane for his turn.
>
> Ms. Jane: "How are you?"
>
> Bink smiles.
>
> Ms. Jane: "Good. Ready?"
>
> Bink smiles.
>
> Ms. Jane points to the bugs that she has lined up on the table: "Red blue red blue."
>
> Bink: "Red blue red blue." He touches each bug as well.
>
> Ms. Jane: "Now, what do you think comes next?"
>
> Bink: "Red." Bink adds a red bug then a blue bug.
>
> Ms. Jane and Bink: "Red blue red blue red blue" (observation, May 10, 2012).

Bink understood this patterning lesson very quickly, but there was no praise from Ms. Jane. In

fact, there were very few words from Ms. Jane at all. It seems odd that when this child, who Ms.

Jane seems to think is struggling, shows promise with a lesson the conversation relates directly to

the task at hand with no feedback given about the patterning done by Bink. Since Bink was able

to represent a simple pattern, Ms. Jane should have found more ways to challenge Bink. For

example, she could have capitalized on his enjoyment of the patterns and used this lesson to

work on his counting and conversation.

Although I only observed Ms. Jane's interactions with Bink over four weeks, it appears

that her expectations of Bink are limiting the opportunities he has to expand on his learning of

academic concepts and skills in small group interactions.   Bink is not being taught to use the English language, to handle books properly, or to count in order. There was a lack of observation notes about these three skills in his portfolio. When Bink did understand the concept that Ms. Jane was teaching, she does not expand the lesson to allow Bink to show if he can make different varieties of patterns. Delpit (2006) would say that Ms. Jane is ignoring Bink's patterning fluency in favor of trying to stick to teaching the skill that she had planned because he is a Black student who does not adhere to Ms. Jane's ideals. In these ways, Ms. Jane is holding Bink back from achieving his academic potential. Ms. Jane's lack of confidence in Bink's abilities reflects deficit assumptions. As a low-income, Black, immigrant, English language learner, Ms Jane underestimates Bink's abilities.

During "small group," Ms. Jane offers a lot of encouragement to her students. She smiles and praises the children by telling them exactly what they did correctly. She allows the children to provide incorrect answers, and does not chastise them for these answers; instead she focuses on the positive when that positive is within the expectations that she holds for those students. Ms. Jane does not see beyond the limiting academic expectation she has of each student however. Since Ms. Jane sees Dora as a bright student who is eager to learn, she does not question why Dora does not speak during one of her interactions, and she also does not assist Dora with the underlying issue of color identification that arises during the patterning lesson. Since Ms. Jane sees Bink as struggling, she places words in his mouth and ignores counting errors, not allowing him to try out his new English skills or expand upon his patterning knowledge. She may see herself as one of her students' people, but her interactions with Dora and Bink suggest that she does not have very high expectations for them.

Developmentally Appropriate, but not Culturally Responsive

When Ms. Jane reflected on what her class thinks of her, she said, "They call me mommy. I think that says it all. A lot of times they hang onto me and say I love you. They love school. They say they love me and I'm their teacher. They say all kinds of nice things" (interview, April 17, 2012). Both students echoed Ms. Jane's perceptions. When asked what he thinks about his teacher, Bink replied, "I like her, so I go to school everyday" (interview, May 23, 2012), while Dora said, "Can give me hugs all the time. I like her" (interview, May 23, 2012). Likewise, the students believed that Ms. Jane cared about them. As Dora said, "Loves me" (interview, May 23, 2012) and Bink said, "She like me" (interview, May 23, 2012).

In the interviews, Bink and Dora spoke of the same notion of love and family that Ms. Jane brought up in her interviews. This idea of the classroom as a family may come out of Ms. Jane's attempt to insert herself into the children's culture, since she saw herself as having been part of their community when she was young. By focusing so heavily on this idea of the class as a family, Ms. Jane glosses over the differences between herself and her students, even the differences among the students. While she individualizes lessons developmentally and sets her classroom up to look culturally responsive, she does not include individual children's cultural and personal differences.

At first glance, Ms Jane appears to be a caring and child-centered educator who enacts a curriculum that allows for the give and take between students and teacher. However, upon closer inspection it is evident that all the lessons that are taught to Dora and Bink are derived from themes chosen by Ms. Jane, a white teacher. At the same time, Ms. Jane does not seem to have high academic expectations for her students as she does not scaffold Dora or Bink to learn concepts and behaviors that will prepare them for kindergarten. For each of the small group activities, Ms. Jane did not deviate from her goals regardless of whether Bink or Dora showed

that they had mastered the skill or did not understand a concept. In choosing to stay with the lesson as planned despite the differing needs of her students, Ms. Jane was choosing what knowledge was important and whose "cultural capital" deserved to be acknowledged (Delpit, 1995; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). In doing so, Ms Jane may be helping to reproduce many of the social stereotypes about black, inner city children like Bink and Dora (Rist, 1970; Anyon, 1980; Lubeck, 1994).

Delpit (2006) has argued that progressive approaches to education such as developmentally appropriate practices reflect a middle class way of knowing that does not serve the best interests of African American students. Bink and Dora already face challenges because they are Black and poor therefore entering school academically ready according to Delpit is important if these children are to be seen as capable.

Summary

When looking at PreK A and PreK B, I found myself drawn to the child-centered appearance of PreK B. However, beneath the surface the two classrooms were not as different as I first thought. In the next chapter, I examine each teacher and her interactions with her focal students in relation to the research literature on expectations, and preschool curriculum.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Everyday across New Jersey, 43,543 children enter a preschool classroom in the state's poorest districts (Barnett, Carolan, Fitzgerald, & Squires, 2012). The aims of the state preschool program are to prepare students for kindergarten using developmentally appropriate practices, comprehensive learning standards, and teachers with specialized degrees (Barnett et. al., 2012). While it is argued that a high quality preschool program can ameliorate the effects of disadvantage, African American critics (Delpit, 2006; Hallum, 2006; and Ladson-Billings, 2009) of public education have argued that schooling is inherently biased toward White middle class ways of knowing which has served to perpetuate the achievement gap. This argument is supported by a recent study (Chien et. al., 2010) that suggests that white teachers are less likely to provide the attention and instructional scaffolds to student of color when teaching a diverse class of preschool students. The purpose of this final chapter is to answer my research question: What do teacher-student interactions look like in the preschool classroom when teachers' and children's backgrounds differ? To do this I begin with a summary of the research design and methods I used to address this question. I then compare the interactions and expectations of the two preschool teachers with their focal students and what these cases suggest for improving the professional development and practices of teachers. This chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

Research Summary

This study focused on the interactions between two White preschool teachers - Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane - and 2 of their Black students (n = 4) and used a qualitative case study design. In order to obtain information about the teacher-student relationships, I conducted observations of whole group time and small group time in each classroom. I also interviewed

each teacher three times, and interviewed each of the focal students twice. Data collection took

place during the second half of the 2011-2012 school year over an eight-week period.

The data was analyzed in several steps and began with describing each teacher's

expectations and interactions with focal students in her classroom. To build these cases, I worked

to create a portrait of each classroom, using the interviews with the teachers, observations of the

classroom environments, and documents that I collected from each teacher. Throughout each

case analysis I drew on theory (Faubion, 1994; Lubeck, 1994; Cazden, 2001; and Delpit, 2006)

to focus in on whose knowledge and interests were underpinning teacher expectations,

curriculum decisions and their relationships with the focal students. The final step in analysis

involved comparing each case of teacher child interactions. This cross case analysis produced

two key findings: 1) teachers had similar goals for their Black students but enacted them in

different ways, and 2) White teachers use their authority in ways that may not be in the best

interests of Black students.

Cross Case Analysis

When entering into PreK A and PreK B, an observer would notice many differences, but

beyond the surface, both Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane shared similar goals. Because of their

expectations for their Black students, the way these teachers enacted their academic goals were

often not in the best interests of their Black students.

Similar Goals but Different Practices

The literature on teacher expectations shows that teachers make assumptions based on

their first impressions about students. Teachers do not wait to see what the students are capable

of doing in class before making assumptions about their students' academic abilities (Rosenthal

& Jacobsen, 1968; Rist, 1970; DiPerna, 2000, and Ladson-Billings, 2009). Often, these

expectations are made based on appearance and social class (Rist, 1970; DiPerna, 2000; and

Ladson-Billings, 2009). By creating lessons that provide no challenge or no assistance for

students, the teacher is creating an environment that is setting those students up for failure;

likewise expectations that are too high can create the same problem. When a teacher places

expectations too high, the teacher can end up doing the work for the student, not letting the

student actually learn or achieve; according to Rist (1970) this occurs when the teacher has made

up her mind about the competence level of the student, allowing that student no choice but to be

a low achiever.

Both Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane's expectations were that the children do the academics that

they wanted them to learn, not excel, not do better than, but just get through the basics.

According to Delpit (2006) and Lubeck (1985) teaching academic skills is what many teachers

think Black children need, as well as what the Black community may want. Lubeck (1985)

looked at two preschool classrooms, one middle class and white, the other low-income and

Black; she found that the low-income preschool focused more on teaching academic skills and

promoting group growth, as opposed to the individual learning and communication skills focused

on in the middle-class and white preschool. These ideas of focusing on skill based learning and

promoting group growth can be seen in Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane's teaching. Both teachers used

whole group as a vehicle for promoting their chosen themes through questions of the day and

book reading. Likewise, the focus on skill based learning and promoting group growth could be

seen in Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane's small group plans and interactions as every small group was

focused on a single academic skill and that activity was taught to every child in the class, despite

the children's variety of skill levels.

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Ms. Becky was very up front with her focus on academic skills, while Ms. Jane, on the other hand, seemed like she was more about developmentally appropriate teaching. However, in both classrooms the focal children were not being taught the lessons that they needed to succeed in public school because the teachers' academic goals were limited to rote memorization, as evidenced by the repeated morning message and date during whole group. Social knowledge such as asking questions and holding conversations, were not emphasized during small group in either class as the focus of both teachers was on math and literacy skills to the detriment of all other areas of the children's development. The tasks, although focused on specific math or literacy skills, were often meaningless to the students whose skill level was either above or below the lesson. This was very apparent when Ms. Jane tried to teach the Bugged Out pattern lesson to Dora, but Dora could not make the pattern because she did not know the colors. Instead of teaching her the colors, Ms. Jane simply told Dora the answers to ensure that the lesson would be completed. Likewise, when Bink completed the same lesson with ease, Ms. Jane did not use the time to work on other skills he needed improvement on. She simply checked off that the patterning lesson was completed. Ms. Jane taught each child the same skill despite his or her understanding of the concept or skill that was the focus of small group.

Graue (2005) argues that kindergarten and preschool teachers tend to have a prototypical student that they teach to, and these preexisting ideals for students may influence their expectations for their real students. From the observations conducted in both classrooms, it seems that Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane taught to a prototypical child rather than individualizing the curriculum to the learning needs of their Black students. For Ms. Becky, her ideal student was one who could sit still and quietly for long periods of time. She praised the child who accomplished that: Princess, while admonishing the child who failed, Diego. During whole

group, Ms. Becky expected Diego to be disruptive and put him in situations that made it very

difficult for him to behave in accordance with her view of acceptable behavior: sitting quietly

and still for at least fifteen minutes. Ms. Jane stated that her goal for her students was for them,

"to grow on their terms" (interview, April 17, 2012). She took this view as license to allow her

students to maintain lower performances than the state standards suggest they should be doing.

Ms. Jane minimized the flaws in Dora and Bink's performances in small group when they did

not get the correct answers and led them through the activities without really teaching them the

concepts behind the lessons. As a result of their lower expectations, neither Ms. Jane nor Ms.

Becky individualized their interactions with the focal students and overlooked many

opportunities to work with their students on the skills they needed to enhance.

When observing the teaching of Black students, both DiPerna (2000) and Ladson-Billings

(2009) have found that White teachers do not always have expectations that allow their students

to be successful. While it could be argued that Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane's focus on academics

teaches the skills that Black students need to be successful in school (Delpit, 2006; Lubeck

1985), their lowered expectations of the focal students and what they are capable of meant that

both teachers failed to support the learning of their students in meaningful ways.

White Teacher Power and Privilege

White privilege is the unseen, invisible force that is an unconscious habit for many White

teachers (Sullivan, 2006), like Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane. Because of their positioning, White

teachers often have little understanding of how what they teach and how they teach it, privileges

certain ways of knowing over others. By controlling the discourse of the classroom, the teacher

can push White language and norms on the students, making those who do not typically

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subscribe to this discourse an outsider (Hallum, 2006). Given their White privilege as teachers, Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane take for granted that choosing the topics for the lessons, creating the social norms of the classroom, and deciding the schedule and duration of events is an exercise of power.

In both PreK A and PreK B, knowledge and classroom discourse for the most part was controlled by the teachers. In this way, the teachers are enacting power over the students, telling them that the teachers' ideas are more important than the students' ideas. For example, both classes were learning about insects and plants, topics chosen by the teachers. As Delpit (2006) would say, Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane are silencing the children's dialogue. They offer only the repetition and reproduction of what they think that Black children need without thought to culturally responsive teaching (Ladson Billings, 2009).

Culturally responsive teaching means that teachers recognize and respond to the learning differences of students; a teacher using culturally responsive teaching creates an atmosphere that provides students from different backgrounds with a safe environment to express their pride in their backgrounds as well as their goals for success in the present and the future. For White teachers, culturally responsive teaching means that they must recognize that there are multiple perspectives with which to view the world, opening their eyes to their own White privilege and being open to see new ways of constructing knowledge (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). By being open to new ideas, new ways of learning and by building connections between the students' lives and the work they are doing in school, culturally responsive teachers support Black students to become accomplished with the discourses of schooling.

Culturally responsive teaching is not fully realized in PreK A and PreK B. Ms. Becky is oblivious to the use of culturally responsive teaching because she does not acknowledge the diverse backgrounds of her students in her classroom environment or lesson plans and does not state in any of her interviews or lesson plans that she is working to create educational change for her students or understand how her students construct knowledge. One example of her lack of understanding of the students backgrounds is when she taught about Father's Day even though most of the children were being raised by single mothers. Ms. Jane, on the other hand, seems to try to use some elements of culturally responsive teaching; her classroom is set up to give the children a feeling of acceptance: the flags from their countries of heritage on the wall, the native costumes in dramatic play, and the multicultural books around the room. She also tries to set up her whole group time as a community of learners in which the class acts as a community, even though she chooses the topic and questions. However, her efforts at culturally responsive teaching fall apart during small group, which is completely teacher directed and without individualization.

While it has been argued by scholars that African American children need to know how to navigate and use the academic discourse of school, the academics that Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane are focusing on in their small and large groups do not seem to be working in the best interests of the focal students because the teachers' White privilege seems to be influencing their expectations. Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane have not become socioculturally conscious enough to see beyond their own point of view, nor have they started to try to understand how their students construct knowledge, so the lessons are all presented in the same manner. Neither teacher is really getting the children to the levels of literacy and numeracy that they need to be at to be successful in kindergarten, and both seem to be underestimating their students' abilities.

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While the focal students try to show their teachers that they have more to offer, Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane tend to overlook these offers in favor with sticking to their scripts. Since Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane are not promoting their students' individual ways of constructing knowledge or using their own information about their students' lives to design the lessons, neither teacher is realizing how using culturally responsive teaching could help them prepare their students to be successful in kindergarten and raise their expectations of their students. For example, Diego makes personal connections to the literacy lessons, pointing out when reading a book with Ms. Becky reminds him of a book at home; but since his offerings do not fit into Ms. Becky's expectations, she does not pick up on them. Similarly Ms. Jane ignores Bink's offers of his patterning skills as proof to Ms. Jane that he is more than just a low-achiever, but instead of picking up on Bink's offer, Ms. Jane continues to maintain her viewpoint. Likewise, since Ms. Jane says she thinks Dora is a bright child, she leads Dora through lessons instead of picking up on the silence that Dora offers as proof that something else may be happening with the child. By overlooking the knowledge and understandings offered up by their focal students, Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane favor a scripted curriculum aimed at a prototypical preschooler devoid of race and class instead of embracing the promise of their Black students.

Implications

Although this is a study of only two teachers, the findings of this study would suggest several actions for teachers themselves, for those who educate teachers and for preschool administrators.

From their position as White teachers, educators like Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane are in positions of power and their expectations and interactions have ramifications for their students

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who are Black and low-income. Teachers need to be aware of the messages that their classroom

environments and teaching methods are sending to their students. While most of the focal

children in this study received the message that their teachers were nice and loved them; one

student received the message that his teacher did not like him. The students who were told that

they did well and were loved will find it easier to adjust to kindergarten than the student who

already has a mistrust of teachers and school because of having a preschool teacher who he felt

did not like him.

Moreover, the students who are attending these publicly funded preschool programs may

not be receiving the skill sets that they need to succeed in school, emotionally or academically.

In order to ensure that students are receiving the skills they need to succeed in school, teachers

require professional development opportunities that will help them decide how to choose skills to

focus on for small and large groups. The data from this study shows that teachers tend to have an

ideal student that they plan their lessons around, and this ideal student may not match the

demographics or needs of the students in the teachers' classes.

Administrators must support their teachers to learn about issues of race and class, and

how teachers' racial backgrounds affect their expectations. Administrators should seek out

culturally responsive teaching trainings and encourage staff to attend; when the staff returns from

training a discussion group should be convened to allow for an open forum for the teachers and

assistants to talk about how this training could be helpful and best implemented in their

classrooms. An administrator should be present at the discussion to make sure that questions

about acquiring materials for the classrooms or meeting with parents can be addressed

immediately; this will encourage teachers to use the knowledge that they acquired in the

trainings in their classrooms and ease any worries teachers may have about changing the way that they have been teaching.

In addition to professional development, principals and preschool directors can follow up with teachers in the classroom by working with them about how to individualize instruction, set specific goals for students, and implement culturally responsive teaching practices. The administrators should check lesson plans for individualizations. Both Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane did the same activity in the same way with each student during small group time, showing no individualization, despite the individualization written in their lesson plans. If the administrators had been checking in on Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane to see that the individualizations written on their lesson plans were carried out, their instruction would have been handled differently. Assisting the teachers in planning for each child and making sure that individual goals are reassessed regularly ensures that teachers think about each student before writing lesson, and knowing that there is a chance of observation guarantees that teachers will follow through with the individualizations.

Likewise, teacher educators need to provide preservice teachers with opportunities to think about White privilege. In this study, both Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane silenced the dialogue (Delpit, 2006) of their Black students. ; Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane chose the themes, the questions of the day, the books to read, and the focus for small groups. The initial thought about how other cultures are affected by White privilege provides the beginnings of the urge to teach in a culturally responsive manner (Edwards, 2011; Harmon, 2012; Whipp, 2013). Teacher education programs need to provide opportunities for teacher candidates to fully understand what it means to be a culturally responsive teacher. Information on this kind of curriculum for prospective teachers has been written about (e.g. Villegas &Lucas, 2002) although studies of higher

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education would suggest that early childhood teachers are less likely to get this kind of learning in their programs of preparation (Maxwell, Lim, & Early, 2006) Portraits of educators like Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane could be used in teacher education classes to gauge students' understanding of culturally responsive teaching; the teacher educators could help their students analyze these portraits to help the students see whose knowledge Ms. Becky and Ms. Jane value and how they could have used knowledge about the children's lives to make the lessons more culturally responsive. These types of portraits may also be used to look at the idea of give and take during conversations in a classroom discussion. By having the students indicate whose ideas are being discussed and who is controlling the interaction, the students will be able to see what kind of discourse model is being used and whose knowledge is being valued. Similarly, using portraits in conjunction with written lesson plans could help teacher educators to show their students how teachers express their expectations of students even in what may seem the most benign of interactions.

In summary, the teachers in this study were unaware of how their interactions and expectations of their students were serving to limit their learning. With the President's call to expand preschool education, it is essential that programs of teacher education and professional development are established to support both inservice and preservice teachers to learn how to enact culturally responsive pedagogies.

Limitations and Future Research

Although this was a very small study of two teachers and four children in one early childhood center in one town, this is one of a few qualitative studies to look at expectations in relation to teacher-student interactions in publically funded preschools. This study is also significant, in that I tried to give the preschool students a voice in research and looked to them to

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explain their own perspectives on classroom life, instead of asking parents or teachers to comment on the student's feelings and perceptions. As such, this study adds to the small body of scholarship (Nigro & Wolpow, 2004; Dockett & Perry, 2005) that has begun to include children's perspectives in research.

Unfortunately, I was only in the classrooms for a very short amount of time, since I was conducting the study at my place of employment and was limited to the time that I had available to observe in the classroom. More qualitative research is needed that looks into how teacher-student dynamics evolve in preschool classrooms throughout the year to provide a more in-depth account of teacher expectations and how they mediate student learning.

Very little recent research has been done on culturally responsive teaching in preschool (Purnell, Ali, Begum, & Carter, 2007; Souto-Manning & Mitchell, 2010). Both teachers in this study were not attentive to the cultural knowledge and backgrounds of the focal children. Since there are many minority students attending preschools with White teachers, it is important that further research is conducted that can illustrate the work of preschool teachers who do enact culturally responsive pedagogy in order to show that there are White teachers who are trying to teach in a respectful way that will ensure that all their students have the opportunity for academic success.

Conclusion

In conclusion, preschool teachers hold expectations of their students and these expectations are expressed by teachers in a myriad of ways from the way they set up classroom environments to the instructional events they enact on a daily basis. White preschool teachers may see themselves as part of the Black community in which they teach, but it does not change the fact that they are still White, and therefore have a certain privilege in public schooling. If

teachers become aware of how crucial their expectations and interactions are for the futures of

their students, perhaps they will shun the forced hand raising and quiet sitting that has become so

ingrained in White American education and instead listen to their Black students to create

curricula and classrooms where student knowledge and ways of being are truly privileged.

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A Case Study of Preschool Teacher Expectations and Teacher-Student Interactions

Appendix A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Angela Sansone, who is a doctoral student in the Elementary and Early Childhood Education Department at Rutgers University. The purpose of this research is to determine how teacher-student interactions look in a classroom in which the teacher is from a different racial and/or socioeconomic background as the students.

Approximately 2 subjects over 18 years old will participate in the study, and each individual's participation last approximately eight to nine weeks.

The study procedures include a pre-observation interview, one additional interview, ten classroom observations, and a final interview. Teachers who participate in this study be interviewed twice to gather their opinions on expectations and interactions in their classroom. They will be asked to choose a pseudonym, fake name, to be identified by throughout the study. The interviews take between forty to sixty minutes each. There will be three to four classroom observations that last approximately forty minutes each.

 This research is confidential. The research records   include some information about you and this information will be stored in such a manner that some linkage between your identity and the response in the research exists; however, the data will only be concretely linked to the pseudonym chosen by the participant. Some of the information collected about you includes number of years teaching and reason for teaching. Please note that we   keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location, a locked home office and a password protected computer.

The research team and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated. All study data   will be kept for three years.

 There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study.

You may benefit from this study by being able to share your experiences. However, you may receive no direct benefit from taking part in this study. You receive books for your classroom for completing the entire study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw at any time during the study procedures without any penalty to you. In addition, you may choose not to answer any questions with which you are not comfortable.

If you have any questions about the study or study procedures, you may contact myself at (609) 203-5055 or angelasansone@gmail.com. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Sharon Ryan at 732-932-7496 x8114 or by e-mail at sharon.ryan@gse.rutgers.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:

Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 848-932-0150
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

Sign below if you agree to participate in this research study:

Subject (Print) _____

Subject Signature _____ Date _____

Principal Investigator Signature _____ Date _____

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AUDIO RECORDING ADDENDUM TO CONSENT FORM

You have already agreed to participate in a research study entitled: **Preschool Teacher-Student Interactions and Expectations** conducted by **Angela Sansone**. I am asking for your permission to allow me to **use a digital audio recorder** as part of that research study. You do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the main part of the study.

The recording(s) will be used for transcription assistance and analysis by the principal researcher, Angela Sansone.

The recording(s) include the participant's pseudonym, years of teaching, ethnicity, and the interviews. No recording will be done during the classroom observation.

The recording(s) will be stored *on a password protected computer with only the pseudonym and date identifying each file.*

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recordings for any other reason than those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

Subject (Print) _____

Subject Signature _____ Date _____

Principal Investigator Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix B

April 2012

Dear parents:

Your child is invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Angela Sansone, who is a doctoral student in the Elementary and Early Childhood Department at Rutgers University. The purpose of this research is *Preschool Teacher-Student Interactions and Expectations*.

Approximately 4 children between the ages of 3 and 5 years old   participate in the study, and each child's participation will last approximately two hours over an eight-nine week period.

The study procedures include observations and interviews. Children who participate in this study will be observed in their classroom three to four times for approximately forty minutes to record teacher-student interactions. They will be asked to choose a pseudonym, fake name, to be identified by throughout the study. I will ask the participants about their gender and ethnicity. I will also be asking for three or four children who would like to be interviewed. There will   be three to four interviews per child. Each interview will take less than twenty minutes. If your child wants to stop the interview at any point, he/she just needs to tell me, and I will thank him/her for your time and participation.

This research is confidential. The research records   include some information about your child and this information will be stored in such a manner that some linkage between your child's identity and the response in the research exists. Some of the information collected about your child includes age, type of school, ethnicity. Please note that we will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location. All computer data will be kept on a password protected computer.

The research team and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews research studies in order to protect research participants) at Rutgers University are the only parties (please modify

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if others   have access to the data) that   be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated. All study data will be kept for three years.

There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study.

Your child has been told that the benefits of taking part in this study may be: a chance to voice his/her opinion. However, you may receive no direct benefit from taking part in this study. Your child   receives books for completing the entire study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose for your child not to participate, and you may withdraw your child from participating at any time during the study activities without any penalty to your child. In addition, you/your child may choose not to answer any questions with which you/your child are not comfortable.

If you/your child have any questions about the study or study procedures, you/your child may contact myself at Angela Sansone 721 Parkway Ave. Ewing, NJ 08618, angelasansone@gmail.com, 609-203-5055.

If you/your child have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews research studies in order to protect those who participate). Please contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:

Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 848-932-0150
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

 Your child will also be asked if they wish to participate in this study. You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

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Sign below if you agree to allow your child to participate in this research study:

Name of Child (Print) _____

Name of Parent/Legal Guardian (Print) _____

Parent/Legal Guardian's Signature _____ Date _____

Principal Investigator Signature _____ Date _____

AUDIOTAPE ADDENDUM TO CONSENT FORM

You have already agreed to allow your child to participate in a research study entitled *Preschool Teacher-Student Interactions and Expectations* conducted by Angela Sansone. We are asking for your permission to allow us to audiotape your child as part of that research study. You do not have to agree allow your child to be recorded in order to participate in the main part of the study.

The recording(s) will be used for analysis by the principal researcher, Angela Sansone.

The recording(s) will include *the pseudonym chosen by the child and the age of the child.*

The recording(s) will be stored *on a password protected computer.*

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record your child as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

Name of Child (Print) _____

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Name of Parent/Legal Guardian (Print) _____

Parent/Legal Guardian's Signature _____ Date _____

Principal Investigator Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix C

First Teacher Interview

Interviewer: I am collecting information for a study about teacher-student interactions. I am interested in learning about how teachers express high expectations to preschool students and how those students interpret the teachers' expectations. Are you still interested in participating in this interview?

1). What made you decide to become a teacher?

                    a. Please describe that experience.

2). Tell me about your experiences as a teacher?

3). Please think about your current class. How did you decide on the physical arrangement of your classroom?

4). How did you design your schedule?

5). It's the first day of school in September, how do you introduce yourself to the students?

6). What do you do to help your students feel comfortable?

7). Describe a typical day in your classroom.

        a. How do you greet students in the morning?

        b. How does the day end?

8). Pretend it is November, and I am a preschooler who has just been enrolled in your class.   a.

How would you bring me into the group?

9). What expectations do you have of your students?

a. What are your behavioral expectations?

b. What are your academic expectations?

c. How do you communicate these expectations to your students?

10). What do the students do that helps you understand if they comprehend your expectations?

a. How often does this happen?

b. Please name some examples.

12). How would you describe your classroom climate?

a. If positive, how did you build that sense of community?

b. If negative, what do you plan to do to improve the climate?

11). Now, please think about whole group time.

a. How do children know where to sit during whole group time?

b. If you have assigned seats, how did you assign them?

c. Tell me about how you choose which student gets to answer questions during whole

group time.

       d. If a student did not attempt to answer questions during whole group, walk me through how you would help that student?

12). How do you think your students would describe you?

       a. Would any children describe you differently? How so?

13). What strengths do you see your students bringing to the classroom?

14). What weaknesses do you see your students bringing to the classroom?

15). How would you characterize your relationship with your students?

Interviewer: Thank you, I really appreciate you taking the time to answer my questions.

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Appendix D

Second Teacher Interview

The interviewer selected a transcript of an observation from a conflict that occurred within the classroom. The interviewer hand the transcript to the teacher and ask her to read the transcript before the interview begins.

1). Please describe what happened during the observation that you just read.

2). What did you perceive as the conflict?

      a. Who was the antagonist?

      b. Who do you see at fault?

3). What was the precursor to this conflict?

      a. How could this conflict have been avoided?

4). What was your response to this conflict?

5). Why do you think you responded in that way?

6). How do you teach the children to respond to conflict?

7). Do you think they were able to use your teachings when this conflict occurred?

8). How was the conflict resolved?

9). If you could go back to this situation, what, if anything, would you do differently?

10). Overall, after going over this conflict, how do you feel about the way your students handled the situation?

11). How do you feel about the way you handled the situation?

12). How did this interaction inform your teaching?

13). What have you gained from examining this conflict?

14). Does reviewing this conflict change your perception of either student involved?> Why or why not?

Interviewer: Thank you for talking to me.

Appendix E

Third Teacher Interview

The interviewer selected a transcript of an observation from a conflict that occurred within the classroom. The interviewer hand the transcript to the teacher and ask her to read the transcript before the interview begins.

1). Please describe what happened during the observation that you just read.

2). What did you perceive as the conflict?

      a. Who was the antagonist?

      b. Who do you see at fault?

3). What was the precursor to this conflict?

      a. How could this conflict have been avoided?

4). What was your response to this conflict?

5). Why do you think you responded in that way?

6). How do you teach the children to respond to conflict?

7). Do you think they were able to use your teachings when this conflict occurred?

8). How was the conflict resolved?

9). If you could go back to this situation, what, if anything, would you do differently?

10). Overall, after going over this conflict, how do you feel about the way your students handled the situation?

11). How do you feel about the way you handled the situation?

12). How did this interaction inform your teaching?

13). What have you gained from examining this conflict?

14). Does reviewing this conflict change your perception of either student involved?> Why or why not?

Interviewer: Thank you for talking to me. Please take the next while to look over the transcripts of our previous interviews and my initial analysis and let me know if I misquoted you or if you have any questions about how I portrayed you as I would like to make sure to create an accurate depiction of you and your classroom. Thank you very much.

Appendix F

First Student Interview

Interviewer: Thank you for coming to talk to me. I'm going to read you a book about a teacher at a school. I would like to ask you some questions after I read you the book. Do you still want to continue to talk to me? It is okay to say no. Interviewer: Read *The Best Teacher Ever by Mercer Mayer*

1). What do you think about the teacher in this book?

2). How is she like your teacher?

3). How is she different than your teacher?

4). What do you think about your teacher?

5). What do you think your teacher thinks about you?

6). How do you feel when you think about your teacher?

7). How do you feel about coming to school?

8). What do you think your teacher wants you to do while you are in school?

9). What kinds of things did the children in the book do at school?

10). What do you do at school?

      a. Tell me about whole group time.

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      b. Tell me about small group time.

Interviewer: Thank you for talking to me. I'll be back one more time to talk for this project.

Appendix G

Second Student Interview

Interviewer: Thank you for coming to talk to me. I'm going to read you a story about something that happened in your class. I would like to ask you some questions after I read you the story. Do you still want to continue to talk to me? It is okay to say no. Interviewer reads the story.

1). What do you think was going on in the class?

    a. Who was fighting?

    b. What do you think they were fighting about?

    c. What did the teacher do about it?

2). How do you feel when you think about this happening?

    a. What makes you feel that way?

3). How do you think the teacher felt about this (name situation)?

    a. What makes you think she feels that way?

4). What has your teacher told you to do when you don't get along with another person?

    a. How did the teacher's idea work in this (name situation)?

5). How do you think the teacher could have helped with (situation)?

Interviewer: Thank you for talking to me.