Places & Spaces of Literacy [Inter]action: Preschool Practices Providing Equitable Opportunities to Learn

BY

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THESIS

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This dissertation is dedicated to my roommate.

You are our coach, our cheerleader, our referee. You are my teammate, and I am your #1 fan. Home Team.
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SUMMARY

The current early childhood educational climate is marked by a contrast between the breathtaking diversity of schoolchildren and the increasing uniformity of early learning standards and classroom practices. To help children achieve maximum benefit from their preschool experience, early literacy instruction must reflect the rich cultural experiences of all children, acknowledging that children from all communities need and respond to a wide range of curricula and practices. This dissertation examined teacher-child interactions in one preschool classroom in a large Midwestern city, focusing especially on the factors mediating those interactions. Mediating factors studied included the policies and protocols of the center in which the classroom is situated, and the classroom place and space. During an 8-week single case study, ethnographic methods complemented by video-based field work addressed three questions: 1) What do racially and linguistically just literacy [inter]actions look like in a preschool classroom? 2) How do preschool policies and protocols both reflect and shape these [inter]actions? And 3) How do the preschool spaces and places both reflect and shape these [inter]actions?

Findings indicate the high incidence of a co-constructive participation structure in which meaning-making occurred organically from the interaction, as the topic, duration, and participants in the interaction were not predetermined or planned by the teachers. Within this participation structure, discourse analysis indicated common features of teachers’ discursive moves, positioning students as agentive learners by validating, then elevating, students’ content learning, play narratives, and problem solving strategies. Center and classroom policies and protocols in place supporting these interactions were often necessitated by compliance with external mandates tied to center funding; and yet, routines and practices were intentional and purposeful—in the global sense of serving the center and agency mission and in the local sense
of serving the personal and intellectual needs of children and their families. Classroom practices were, first and foremost, pedagogically sound while also in compliance with external policies and protocols. Investigations of place and space required ‘trying on’ combinations of theoretical approaches and methods of analysis new to the field of study. The resulting theoretical and methodological implications for research in early childhood settings are discussed, using data to contextualize the discussion.
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Situating the Research

In 2012, the U.S. Department of Education projected public school enrollment would consist of a ‘majority minority’ population by 2014, wherein minoritized students would outnumber their white counterparts for the first time. With young children as the largest growing group within this demographic shift, the norm in early childhood settings is now one of diversity and difference, not homogeneity. And yet, as the student population grows increasingly diversified, learning standards concurrently become more streamlined. The modern educational climate is characterized by a “very puzzling contrast” (Genishi & Dyson, 2009, p. 4) between the breathtaking diversity of schoolchildren and the uniformity of learning standards and classroom practices. Instead, early literacy instruction must reflect the rich cultural experiences of all children, acknowledging that children from all communities need and respond to a wide range of curricula and practices (Clay, 1998). We can no longer afford to view the fostering of academic excellence and the maintaining of cultural identity as separate aims.

The purpose of this dissertation is to unpack the literacy practices of a linguistically and ethnically diverse preschool classroom to understand the broader organizational systems of influence on such practices. To do so is to, first, acknowledge that multiple systems affect and are affected by the classroom’s practices, and, second, to explain the relationships among these systems. Using ethnographic methods complemented by video-based field work, this case study seeks to advance our understanding of how the ethnically and linguistically diverse needs of students are being met to effectively support their language and literacy development. This study investigates (1) teacher-child interactions in one preschool classroom, (2) the ways in which local policies and protocols mediate these interactions, and (3) the ways that place and
space mediate these interactions. This preschool classroom and the center in which it is located are part of a historically under-resourced community on the city’s south side. The student body is 99% African American; and the center receives funds from Head Start, CCAP, and Preschool for All, meaning the teachers and students operate within many mandates and protocols externally imposed. And yet, this classroom has a local reputation for valuing and providing equitable opportunities to learn for all students, and their students have consistently outperformed the state average on standardized measures of kindergarten readiness. Their equitable teaching philosophy, coupled with their continued academic success within a climate of mandates and accountability serve as an example of an early childhood educational setting with a student population from families living in a marginalized community and an infrastructure that overcomes that marginalization. Three research questions will be addressed:

1. What do racially and linguistically just literacy [inter]actions look like in a preschool classroom?
2. How do preschool policies and protocols both reflect and shape these [inter]actions?
3. How do the preschool spaces and places both reflect and shape these [inter]actions?

To gain perspective on the issues addressed in these questions, it is important to consider 1) a sociocultural approach to learning and development, 2) the role of mediation in a sociocultural approach, and 3) the role of cultural differences in learning and development, specifically in a school context.

Review of the Literature and Theoretical Framing

Informing this study are three constructs as theorized by literacy scholars and supported by empirical evidence. First, I describe my theoretical lens as informed by sociocultural theorists, emphasizing a sociocultural approach to child development. I then describe the role of
mediational tools in a sociocultural context using Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) by drawing from Wertsch (1985, 1993) and Engeström (1987, 1999). Lastly, I review the literature informing current understanding of cultural difference in literacy learning and development, specifically in a school context.

**Sociocultural Theory**

Learning and development as seen through a sociocultural lens (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986, 1987) views children as learning to participate in a community’s Discourse (Gee, 1990), or the valued ways of ‘doing and being’, by using cultural tools to navigate their surrounding environment (Wohlwend, 2009) through guided participation (Rogoff, 1995). Over time, cultural and societal knowledge and norms are constructed based on shared experiences, common background, and collective ideas. Learners construct knowledge through the attainment of intersubjectivity, as the world is subject to multiple viable constructions. Social constructivism blurs the lines of the absolute, allowing for knowledge to be recognized as truth when constructed between or among individuals in real time (typically using oral language) or across time and place (through the written word).

Social constructivism proposes that knowledge is created within a dialogic context, considering the social, historical, and cultural contexts of a given situation. Meaning making is an active process, socially mediated, and contextually bound. We construct our own understandings and our shared understandings of the world through interactions with our environment and our social contexts. Social constructivism therefore emphasizes the interaction between parent and child, teacher and student, researcher and researcher, and on and on, as they interact with the world. More specifically, social constructivism also accounts for the significance of cultural and historical influences as intermediaries of interaction. People therefore
rely on shared semiotic systems such as language to develop, maintain, and pass on collective meaning.

These semiotic systems are emergent in our transactions with the world. Language cannot portray meaning in isolation but is instead a situated semiotic tool used to represent something that physically exists in our world. For language, or any sign, to carry meaning, it must be embedded within a practice, related to the signified in some way. Making meaning is an act of triangulation, between the sign, the signifier, and the signified – it is not didactic, but rather transactional. Therefore, signs are "derive[d] from the institutional matrix that society constructs to enforce a particular version of what constitutes reality. They are cultural meanings that guide and control our individual acts” (Bruner, 1990, p. 38). They are not static, but situated, both within a sociocultural context, and within the physical world.

Constructed meaning is then triangulated with the self, with the other, and with the world. The ‘self’ further complicates the achievement of intersubjectivity between self and other, as people are not blank slates. They have well founded, strong beliefs that are the results of their own schooling, how they were parented, the melding of the two, and on, and on. As part of our early socialization in life we learn ways of being in the world – ways of acting and interacting, thinking and valuating, and using language, objects and tools that crucially shape our early sense of self (Gee, 1997). Additionally, ‘self’ cannot truly be separated from ‘the world,’ as in a dualist perspective, but rather we are a part of and not apart from the world (Dewey, 1925). Removing the dichotomy of self and other allows for transactional rather than didactic meaning making (Saussure, 1959).
Mediation and Activity Theory

Language and thinking are tied to people’s experiences of situated action in the material-social world. “For human beings, the material world and our bodies are a part of our environment, human-made tools and artifacts are a part of our environment, and other people and their actions and talk are a part of our environment” (Gee, 2008, p. 82). Human reactions and interactions are mediated by signs, language and other systems, and tools. People learn how to use these mediating devices primarily through social interaction (Vygotsky, 1979). In the study of knowledge and learning, a situated/sociocultural perspective takes as its unit of analysis not the person alone, but “person plus mediating device” (Wertsch, 1985). It is worth mention that mediational devices can take the form of both physical tools, such as books, playthings, or computers, and cognitive tools, such as language, reasoning, or other “ways of meaning” (Halliday, 1978). When people use mediating devices, knowledge is distributed – existing in their heads, existing in the ways they coordinate themselves (as bodies and in terms of social practice) with the tools they use and existing in the tools themselves – and integrated together (Gavelek & Whittingham, 2017).

Vygotsky’s original triangle of subject, object, and mediational means (Wertsch, 1985) expanded by Leont’ev (1978) has been deemed the first generation of Activity Theory. Engeström (1987) identifies what he terms an activity system by expanding this triangle to account for the role of community, the division of labor within a community, and the rules by which the community functions when engaging in an activity. The aim of this enhanced triangle is to shift the unit of analysis from the level of the individual to the level of the social collective (Prior, 2008). Different actors, because of their different histories and different positions in different divisions of labor, may construe the object and the other components of the activity
system in different ways (Leont’ev, 1978; Engeström, 1987; Gutierez, 2008). An activity system that connects individual, sociocultural, and institutional levels of analysis does not exist by itself; it interacts within a network of other activity systems. These second and third generations of activity theory are most influential in contemporary theories of education and practice (Gavelek & Whittingham, 2017).

Foregrounding Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) allows recognition that the same activity may have multiple objects, or goals, creating multiple, simultaneous activity systems which both overlap and are potentially in contention with one another. One source of such tension occurs when tools of the mind, body, and/or environment do not afford the subject the opportunities necessary to achieve the object, or goal, of the activity system. As Gee (2008) describes:

Surely two children have not had the same opportunity to learn if schooling or a given assessment is built on resonances with one child’s vernacular culture and not on the other’s. Worse yet, two children have not had the same OTL if, however unconsciously, schooling or assessment ignores, dismisses, or demeans the one child’s home- and community-based sense of self and ways with words, deeds, and interactions (p. 103). Such tensions affect opportunities to learn, and are described by Gee’s (2008) sociocultural perspective on such opportunities.

A Sociocultural Perspective on Opportunity to Learn

Like the activity systems described by Engeström (1987), a situated/sociocultural perspective considers the relationship between an individual with a mind and with a body, and the environment in which the individual makes meaning using the mind and the body, as mediating factors of learning and development. All environments are characterized by numerous
affordances, or the perceived possibilities of the mediational tools, or features in the 
environment. However, an affordance does not exist for an individual who cannot perceive it as 
an affordance. Even when an affordance is recognized, a human actor must also have the 
capacity to use it as a mediational tool towards achieving the goal of the activity system. 
“Effectivities are the set of capacities for action that an individual has for transforming 
affordances into action. Focusing on affordance/effectivity pairs places the focus not on the 
individual or the environment but on a pairing of the two, a relationship between them” (Gee, 
2008, p. 81, emphasis in original).

Learning involves developing effectivity toward the affordances in specific types of 
environments. Through our earliest socializations, we learn ways of being in the world and ways 
of using mediational tools – both physical and mental – as we create our earliest sense of self. 
These affordances characterize our “vernacular” or “everyday” cultures, into which we are first 
acculturated. A learner for whom certain objects, people, or features of the environment are not 
affordances, either because the learner cannot perceive their possibilities for action or cannot 
affect that action, is not being exposed to the same environment as the learner for whom these 
objects, people, or features are true affordances, open to the learner’s developed or developing 
effectivity.

A situated/sociocultural perspective amounts to the argument that students learn new 
academic ‘cultures’ at school (new ways of acting, interacting, valuing, and using 
language, objects and tools) and, as in the case of acquiring any new culture, the 
acquisition of these new cultures interacts formidably with the learners’ initial culture. 
(Gee, 2008, p. 100)
Therefore, we must ask what affordances are available in the environments of learners, what
effectivities they have or are developing for transforming these affordances into action, and what
pedagogies are necessary and useful to support this transformation (Gee, 2008).

**Racial and Linguistic Diversity in Early Childhood**

With young children as the leading population of a steady demographic change owed to
immigration and the growing number of Latinx and Asian children born in the U.S., it is
imperative that classroom instruction, particularly high quality preschool interactions, reflect the
rich cultural experiences of all children. And yet, creating opportunities to enact culturally
responsive literacy pedagogy within the increasingly tight spaces of a standardized literacy
curriculum presents a challenge for early childhood educators. Therefore, “ethnographic studies
of teachers who accomplish innovative and inclusive early childhood education in culturally
diverse high poverty communities is urgent for the profession” (Comber, 2011, p. 135). Very
few studies of early literacy have investigated the social, cultural, and material features of the
literacy events in which preschoolers participated (Rowe, 2010, p. 135). Acknowledging the
universal need for equitable opportunities to learn, increased racial and linguistic diversity
forefronts theories of equity that focus on racial and cultural difference.

Central to furthering current scholarship towards these aims is the notion of culturally
relevant pedagogy, which I critically evaluate as it relates to preschool literacy and language
education. In doing so, I first discuss theoretical constructs of culturally relevant pedagogy, and
then present a current picture of effective culturally relevant preschool pedagogy in practice.
Although I highlight culturally responsive pedagogies as a key framework guiding this inquiry, I
acknowledge that specifically seeking evidence defined as such by the existing literature limits
the scope of the data deemed relevant to the analysis. Instead, this review contextualizes an
historical approach to cultural difference & diversity. While my knowledge of culturally relevant pedagogies has informed the analysis, the lens through which I viewed the generated data was not bound solely by these traditions.

Theoretical constructs of culturally relevant pedagogy. I employ the term *culturally relevant pedagogy* to refer to a family of theories that aim to address the unique instructional needs and rich cultural resources of linguistically and ethnically diverse students. For example, Lee’s (2003) cultural modeling, Delpit’s (1991) access to the culture of power, Moll’s (1992) funds of knowledge, and, in some ways, Gutierrez’s (1999) third space all contribute to this rich tradition of literacy instruction for diverse learners. Because the theories have most often been applied to adolescent and adult literacy contexts, I have chosen to explore three different theories within this family that are most relevant to an early childhood population. In doing so, I invoke: 1) Au’s (1981) culturally responsive pedagogy, 2) Ladson-Billings’ (1995a; 1995b) culturally relevant pedagogy, and 3) Paris’s (2012) culturally sustaining pedagogy.

*Culturally responsive pedagogy.* By studying the facilitation of native/indigenous Hawaiian children’s learning to read using *talk story* in the classroom, Mason & Au (1981) drew the concept of culture into reading instruction. This focus on student/teacher interaction and participation structure spurred awareness of culturally responsive pedagogy by identifying methods in which culture is important when teaching children. Au’s work demonstrated how culturally responsive instruction could increase both the amount of instructional time and the level and quality of discussion when contrasted with the more dominant, Euro-centric, IRE participation structure. Culturally responsive pedagogy elevates the role of social structures within learning environments to match that of academic achievement, creating opportunities for significant change in the educational trajectory of indigenous Hawaiian students.
Today, culturally responsive pedagogy has become common language in literacy scholarship and practice, having spurred additional research focused on diverse participation structures and cultural literacy practices. Terminology such as culturally appropriate, culturally congruent, culturally responsive, and culturally relevant pedagogy have contributed to the multidimensionality and broader applicability of the culturally relevant pedagogies that began with Hawaiian talk story at its core. Largely stemming from this micro-ethnographic research, additional scholars have investigated similar phenomena in Native American (McCarty & Lee, 2014; Pewewardy, 1993) African American (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Delpit, 2006), and Latinx (Gutiérrez, Morales, & Martínez, 2009; Hildago, 1994) communities.

**Culturally relevant pedagogy.** Built on the work of critical scholars including Cazden and Leggett (1976), Smitherman (1977), Heath (1983), and Moll (1992), culturally relevant pedagogy is a theoretical approach to the research and teaching of diverse student populations. Culturally relevant classroom practices situate academic knowledge and skills within students’ existing frames of reference, grounded in their lived experiences. Classroom content, has higher interest appeal, becomes more personally meaningful, and is more easily and thoroughly learned when connected to students’ authentic experiences (Gay, 2000). Thus, the academic achievement of ethnically diverse students improves when they instruction incorporates their own cultural and experiential filters (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b). Said another way, culturally responsive classroom practices acknowledge and value student’s cultural capital while utilizing this history to achieve academic aims (Ladson-Billings, 1990).

Grounded in the extensive study of eight upper-elementary classroom teachers whose African American students consistently demonstrated academic success, Ladson-Billings (1995) put forth the culturally relevant teaching framework. Teachers adopting this framework commit
to providing students the opportunity to experience academic success, to support the growth of students’ cultural competence, and to help students to develop a critical consciousness to challenge the status quo of the current social order. Ladson-Billings recalls of the teachers included in the study, “They believed their work was artistry, not a technical task that could be accomplished in a recipe-like fashion” (1995, p. 163).

_Culturally sustaining pedagogy._ Culturally relevant teaching values cultural and linguistic differences as important strengths upon which school competencies should build. Paris and Alim (2014) respectfully challenge the assumption that the purpose of culturally relevant pedagogy is assimilation to dominant culture, particularly during a historical moment where ‘dominant’ culture is no longer dominant, per changing population demographics. Culturally sustaining pedagogy instead supports the value of multiethnic and multilingual realities in their own right, and not as a means to a hegemonic end. Recognizing the contributions of Ladson-Billing’s work to this iteration, Paris (2012) states:

> Culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling. In the face of current policies and practices that have the explicit goal of creating a monocultural and monolingual society, research and practice need equally explicit resistances that embrace cultural pluralism and cultural equality. (p. 93)

While Ladson-Billings describes the ability of classroom teachers to work within the educational system as supported by dominant values, Paris charges educational stakeholders to instead _change_ the dominant values to more closely represent both the diverse populations reflected in modern classroom demographics, and the multiple and complicated skills that all students must master to fully participate in the increasingly multilingual and multiethnic society.
Literacy practices of ethnically and linguistically minoritized preschoolers.

Although several scholars continue to theorize the benefits of culturally responsive pedagogy based on ethnographic work they and others have conducted (e.g., Cleovoulou, 2008; Comber, 2011; Gay, 2000), contemporary empirical research regarding linguistically and ethnically diverse preschoolers also contains an abundance of studies which draw correlations between student demographics and academic outcomes. In this body of work, both research and practice discussions about linguistic and ethnic diversity in preschools place responsibility for bridging differences between home and school culture on somewhat of a continuum. What follows is a synthesis of contemporary empirical research reviewed as organized along this continuum. I begin with studies assuming a perspective that children’s home environment is responsible for preparing them for school success and then progressively present studies that move closer to proposing a balance between home and school as influencing school success, finally discussing those studies that only address the school context in meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse preschoolers.

Studies of early childhood diversity with a focus on the home. Recognizing that parents of black and brown children face distinctive challenges in raising healthy children because of unique contextual factors resulting from a history of oppression and current experiences of racism and discrimination, O’Brien and Owen (2015) examined the relationship between cultural socialization during early childhood and cognitive, language, and behavioral indices of school readiness among ethnic minority preschoolers. As one aspect of cultural socialization, O’Brein and Owen describe ethnic-racial socialization as the process of sharing information about race and ethnicity across generations. When comparing the cultural socialization practices of low-income parents of African American and Latinx preschool-age children in relation to children’s
later performance on a measure of school readiness, they found that children who experienced
more frequent cultural socialization displayed greater pre-academic skills, better receptive
language, and fewer behavior problems. This study further developed the prior research O’Brien
and colleagues conducted exclusively with African American parents (O’Brien, Campo,
Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002).

Other explorations of linguistically and ethnically diverse preschoolers are comparative
in nature, viewing the performance of preschoolers from non-dominant populations as compared
to the performance of their monolingual, often Caucasian peers. Wilson, Dickinson, and Rowe
(2013) used this lens when reporting the outcomes of an Early Reading First grant, funded on the
premise that existing preschool programs could improve school readiness for low-socioeconomic
status preschoolers through enhanced professional development and the use of evidence-based
curricula. To determine whether the program was effective for improving English language and
literacy outcomes for English language learners as well as native English speakers, they
conducted a quasi-experimental study, comparing students’ performance on five standardized
tests, including several Woodcock-Johnson subsets (Woodcock, McGrew, & Mather, 2001) and
the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Dunn & Dunn, 2007). Wilson and colleagues found that
while non-native speakers of English continued to score lower on language measures than their
native-speaking peers, one year of preschool put all children on a positive trajectory for long-
term success in school.

Also emphasizing difference as a factor in school success, a number of recent studies
focused on individual literacy skills as reported by standardized measures, with attention to a
specialized population of students. Two such recent examples, both published in a high-ranking
journal of early childhood research, include Trajectories of Behavioral Regulation for Taiwanese
Children from 3.5 to 6 Years in Relation to Math and Vocabulary Outcomes (Wanless, Kim, Zhang, Degol, Chen, & Chen, 2016) and Unique Predictors of Early Reading and Writing: A One-year Longitudinal Study of Chinese Kindergarteners (Wang, Yin, & McBride, 2015). Wanless, et. al. (2015) investigated the influence of behavioral regulation as a feature of Taiwan’s “high-achieving culture.” Wang and colleagues sought to identify the unique and universal skills young Mainland Chinese children applied to reading and writing, motivated by the uniqueness of the Chinese writing system “in its representation of sound and meaning” (p. 51). Both studies were concerned with the additive value of culturally specific character traits in terms of academic outcomes.

Studies of early childhood diversity with a mixed focus. Blurring the lines between the role of home and that of school is a body of research conducted from a sociocultural tradition that explores the performance of linguistically and ethnically diverse students. These studies often select a single subject or small number of students to demonstrate how students from non-dominant backgrounds draw upon their home cultural traditions and multiliteracies to achieve traditional academic expectations. Drawing on a body of work that argues for the necessity and value of viewing young children’s oral and written texts as ‘hybrid constructions that interweave cultural and linguistic practices from children’s lifeworlds inside and outside school’ (Dyson, 1999; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, Alvarez, & Chiu, 1999; Kamberidis, 1998), Solsken and colleagues’ (2000) study is one such example. This research team presented a microanalysis of one Latina 7-year-old’s ability to appropriate the knowledge, texts, and identities of the school curriculum through the strategy of textual hybridization, blending the new school practices with practices familiar from home, community, and popular media (Solsken, Willett, & Wilson-Keenan, 2000). Similarly, Falchi and colleagues draw data from a 5-year ethnographic study of
preschool multilinguals to focus on two students’ distinctive paths as they participate in and negotiate classroom curriculum to develop language and literacy. Observing a small group of Mixteco/Spanish/English speaking children from a 3-year old Head Start classroom through second grade in a public school, the team describes Miguel’s and Luisa’s different but equally appropriate ways of ‘doing and being’ in the context of school (Falchi, Axelrod, & Genishi, 2014).

In this research tradition, children are placed at the center of the framework, ahead of curriculum or standards, to better understand their unique trajectories (Dyson & Genishi, 2013; Genishi & Dyson, 2009). From these studies, we gain knowledge about students’ capabilities but do not move closer to an understanding of effective classroom practices. Despite the discourses organized around balanced literacy that categorize some students as good and others as deficient, we see the children in these studies who came to school with vast multimodal repertoires, and yet for many other children these repertoires are erased or obscured by school literacy practices, especially in the cases of emergent bilingual preschoolers (Falchi, Axelrod, & Genishi 2014). Further along this continuum, then, is the body of work that attempts to bring home practices into the literacy curriculum of the school or after school community programs. One such example is the work of Stuart and Volk (2002).

Because the literature on Latinx families (i.e., Volk, 1999) suggests that literacy interactions are likely to be collaborative and include multiple, often familial, participants, *El Barrio Reading Club* was designed so that two tutors worked with 5-8 children, ages 6-8, to engage in collaborative teaching and learning (Stuart & Volk, 2002). Throughout the summer, teachers and students alike began to develop a positive interdependence with one another, much like that often valued within the Latinx community. Stuart and Volk concluded that there is a
need for the explicit inclusion of “collaboration as an important element of literacy pedagogy for teachers of linguistically and culturally diverse children” (p. 127). Contributions such as these offer insights into the practices currently underway which intend to meet the needs of diverse populations, but unlike the studies that follow, do not take a critical or evaluative approach to their description.

*Studies of early childhood diversity with a focus on school practices.* Language and literacy practices are diverse; and children and their teachers, who are attentive to meaning-making and design practices, can be participants in school cultures that afford time and space to diverse practices, with the support of further research to better understand effective ways to enact these classroom cultures. Three such examples of culturally responsive preschool pedagogy development and description have recently contributed to this scholarship, including and the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence’s (CREDE) Standards for Effective Pedagogy (Yamauchi & Schonleber, 2012), the Personalized Oral Language(s) Learning (POLL) framework (Magruder, Hayslip, Espinosa & Matera, 2013), and the role of dual-language books as an emergent-literacy resource (Naqvi, McKeough, Thorne, & Pfitscher, 2012).

The first example of culturally responsive preschool pedagogy development is the work of Yamauchi and Schonleber (2012). The Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE) standards for Effective Pedagogy (Doherty, Hilberg, Epaloose, & Tharp, 2002) derive from Vygotsky’s (1978) contention that all higher-order psychological functions have their roots in social interaction. The seven standards include: Joint productive activity (teachers and children will work together to create joint products), language and literacy development (developing language competencies is imbedded in instruction), contextualization (instruction is embedded in the interests, experiences, and skills of children and families),
complex thinking, instructional conversation, modeling, and child-directed activities, to encourage learner decision-making. Seeing a need for similar standards in early childhood, the teaching staff of the University of Hawaii at Manoa’s Children’s Center, an early learning preschool that served children of students, faculty, and staff at a large, partnered with CREDE to change the standards so as to make them more developmentally appropriate, with considerations of language development, a focus on goals that included self-management and social skills, and children’s tendencies to be more “egocentric and less self-aware” (Yamauchi & Schonleber, 2012). This approach to early childhood culturally responsive pedagogy, while not ineffective, does not offer much by way of understanding the unique needs of linguistically and ethnically diverse students. This approach might be deemed, as Ladson-Billings (1995) would say, “just good teaching.” The two remaining frameworks arguably show more promise to address the needs of diverse learners by describing more specifically and transparently the nuances of their instructional approaches as applicable to diverse learners.

Also growing out of work with practitioners, the Personalized Oral Language(s) Learning (POLL) program gives teachers a specific set of strategies and practices to increase the effectiveness of language and literacy instruction for all children, with a focus on dual language learners. While working with groups of teachers supporting dual language learners in California, Magruder and colleagues recognized the critical need to both provide more intensive and more individualized support in oral language development to all children and explicitly help dual language learners apply what they already know about language to the task of learning English. The authors therefore developed the features of the Personalized Oral Language(s) Learning (POLL) program by evaluating current research on best practices for literacy instruction in general, and then designing a fine-tuned approach focused on oral language learning in young
children, especially dual language learners. The basic principles of POLL focus on families, classroom environment, and strategy integration. For example, when teachers and families connect early on and in person, they establish a common goal to support the child both at home and in school. Families and teachers together are champions for the child and share responsibility in supporting language and learning goals. Similarly, the classroom’s physical environment sets the tone for active and engaged learning early on. The environment conveys a message to children that they will be safe, nurtured, and valued and establishes learning spaces that engage children’s interest and promote conversations in both large and small groups. Finally, integrating POLL strategies throughout the day and providing extended activities across contexts to reinforce children’s learning of new concepts and vocabulary, places the emphasis on children’s experiences and centers children as agents of their own learning (Magruder, Hayslip, Espinosa & Matera, 2013).

Also turning attention effective classroom practices, Naqvi (2009) demonstrated that using dual language books in literacy instruction promotes children’s cultural awareness, in that they become attentive to the uniqueness of their own and other cultures as well as becoming conscious of the similarities between cultures. Building on this work, Naqvi and colleagues (2013) asked: What constitutes effective linguistically and culturally responsive teaching and learning practices in mainstream kindergarten classrooms? To answer this question, they analyzed culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning in dual-language book (DLB) reading vignettes to demonstrate how teachers and volunteer readers build on linguistic and cultural repertoires of emergent-literacy learners to help them gain metalinguistic awareness, cultural empowerment and identities as capable learners (Naqvi, McKeough, Thorn, & Pfitscher, 2013).
Based on exemplary teaching practices extracted from approximately 45 hours of videotape, they determined that through DLBs, participants were introduced to translation and cognates that highlight the relationships among various languages. By recognizing and labelling languages, the children demonstrated that they were attuned to differences and similarities in sound, meaning and script. Additionally, children’s cross-linguistic references provided opportunities for discussions around diverse cultural practices often otherwise unrecognized. In these discussions, metalinguistic awareness partnered with cultural knowledge in a culturally and linguistically responsive context to promote children’s identities as capable learners and valued multilinguals. Thus, the study showcased how linguistic-minority students discover reading as an important skill, valued not only by the dominant language society, but also by members of their own or other language-minority communities. Also worth mention is the prevalence (or lack-thereof) of effective practices observed in this study – only 10% of the sessions showed substantive evidence. The low percentage of sessions demonstrating substantive evidence of linguistically and culturally responsive teaching speaks to the necessity to support professional learning communities involving in-service teachers as well as integrating such learning opportunities within teacher preparation programs (Naqvi, McKeough, Thorne, & Pfitscher, 2013).

As demonstrated by these studies on CREDE, POLL, and DLB read-alouds, students’ performance is reliant on and influenced by several factors, originating in both home and school contexts, making the study of ethnically and linguistically diverse preschoolers, their literacy practices, and the pedagogies supporting these practices equally complex. It is only by acknowledging the interrelated nature of these complex systems that research can understand how they affect and are affected by one another.
Equitable Opportunities for Literacy Learning

One changing concept of literacy necessitated by social and cultural progress is that of multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996). The New London Group (NLG), offered a theoretical connection between the changing social environment for students and teachers and a new approach to literacy pedagogy, arguing that the modern multiplicity of communication channels, coupled with increasing cultural and linguistic diversity called for a broader view of literacy than what traditional language-based approaches provided. Multiliteracies can overcome the limitations of traditional approaches by attending to the need to negotiate increasingly linguistically and culturally diverse social contexts. The NLG therefore challenged the traditional understanding of literacy as one formalized, monocultural, monolingual, rule-governed form of language, and instead expanded literacy teaching and learning to include the negotiation of a multiplicity of discourses.

Because literacy changes historically and differs culturally, it can also be characterized as multidimensional. Street’s (1997) ideological view argues that literacy is not a single, essential ‘thing’ with predictable consequences that follow a single trajectory of development, but rather literacies are multiple, they vary with time and place, and are embedded within specific cultural practices. Literacies both vary with the social context and with the culture norms and discourses of a context, such as those related to gender, race, and religion. Therefore, from an ideological perspective, the uses and meanings of literacy are always connected to relations of power. From an ideological stance, the teaching of only one form of literacy can no longer be justified, but instead must explicitly make known the history and features and justifications of literacies to allow students to discuss and understand the various purposes and powers associated with each.
In increasingly diverse classrooms, the role of the teacher as the initiator of communities of practice requires a view of meaning making as transformation. This view of meaning making allows all learners’ account of their paths into language, as into all cultural systems. Even though students may arrive at similar places, they arrive there by different paths – their own (Kress, 2005, p. 96). How the reader/listener/viewer represents a message is not in how the message exists transparently, but rather what they make of the message, the way they hear or see the message “even if, sometimes only subtly, this will vary depending on the listener-reader-viewer’s own interest and own way of re-representing a message to themselves” (Kalantzis & Cope, 2014, p. 181).

One example of teacher’s honoring the listener-reader-viewer’s meaning making is Kong and Pearson’s (2003) description of fourth- and fifth-graders with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds engaging in a year-long process of learning to participate in reading, writing, and talking about books in a literature-based instructional program. Kong and Pearson report that in this space, the teachers created a classroom learning community that respected students’ experience and valued students’ knowledge. The teacher allowed time to build a community around quality literature, and the teacher challenged the students to think both critically and reflectively about this literature by asking “open-ended but pointed questions” (Kong & Pearson, 2003, p. 85). The teacher maintained high expectations of all her students, and assisted students in achieving these aims by using multiple modes of teaching, such as telling, modeling, scaffolding, facilitating, and participating. By varying her support strategies, this teacher both built intersubjectivity with and among her students around the literature they shared, and created opportunities for nuanced and individualized interpretations of that literature to be valued within the classroom space.
**Literacy in Emergent Contexts**

When becoming literate, children gain experience in both their social occasions and their acquisitions of meaning, in both spoken and written language. Children are therefore simultaneously learning linguistic and social cues, linguistic and social organization, linguistic and social practices (Kress, 2005). It is unlikely that children make clear distinctions between the two, and it is precisely this integration that warrants opportunities for social and linguistic experimentation in authentic contexts, for young children to both learn about the word *and* their world (Freire & Macedo, 1987). As Lahteenmaki (2004) noted:

In this view, language is intertwined with the social and cultural practices of a community and can be used to do different things and to pick out specific aspects of reality from various points of view. Thus, there is no one-to-one relationship between linguistic expressions and objects of reality, but, rather, the connection between language and reality exists in potential and is actualized via intersubjective action. (p. 110)

Language is not neutral; rather, language carries with it experience and action, history and context, often in contrast to alternate or competing perspectives: it is “simply the desire for as much intersubjective agreement as possible, the desire to extend the reference of ‘us’ as far as we can” (Rorty, 1985, p. 5). Achieving such intersubjectivity is not without power struggles, as is evident in Gavelek’s (1990) visual representations of symmetric and asymmetric intersubjectivity. Symmetric intersubjectivity occurs when co-authors of meaning bring one another to a place of mutual understanding, where each contributes equally to the ultimately agreed-upon shared meaning, whereas asymmetric intersubjectivity is achieved when interlocutors are not seen as equals, but rather the more dominant individual ‘sways’ the other
towards an intersubjective understanding more or less reflective of his/her individual understanding.

Within the emergent literacy paradigm, children's literacy development begins at birth (not when children first attend school as the reading readiness paradigm insists) and there is no set sequence of reading skills that children pass through. It is increasingly recognized that while print literacy remains fundamental to becoming literate in the early years of school, emergent literacy encompasses broader semiotic systems beyond the written word and incorporates modes accessible during play, art, music, and movement. All signs are complex, and the reading of signs is an attempt to uncover the complexity of the meaning represented by the sign (Kress, 2005). Therefore, reading in the strictest sense, concerned with ‘making sense of the word’, is equally essential and necessary as reading in the metaphorical sense, to ‘make sense of the world’. “Reading is our way of engaging with the word, and that engagement takes place in a multiplicity of ways” (Kress, 2005, p. 101).

Literacy pedagogies that support the conception of emergent literacy I have adopted here embody a combination of authentic, functional, and critical pedagogies, as described by Kalantzis and Cope (2014). Strongly influenced by the individual contributions of both Dewey (1925) and Montessori (1964), authentic literacy pedagogy takes a child-centered approach to literacy instruction, making room for self-discovery and privileging authentic exploration and immersion in personally meaningful reading and writing experiences. Although authentic literacy pedagogies promote growth allowing for individual differences among learners, this approach can profitably be balanced by a functional literacy pedagogy. Functional literacies also engage the learner in authentic textual experiences, but provide more structure and purpose for the literacy event, often asking questions such as “What is the purpose of the text?” and “How is
the text structured to meet this purpose?” Authentic pedagogies privilege self-awareness while functional pedagogies focus on preparing the learner to participate fully and responsibly in society.

Authentic and functional pedagogies have a relatively established presence in the early childhood classroom. However, critical literacy pedagogies, previously reserved for older literacy learners, also have a place in early childhood. Critical approaches acknowledge literacies in the plural, and recognize the many voices that students bring to the classroom. Critical pedagogies build on the learner’s autonomy by viewing literacy as a tool that enables students to take control over the ways meaning is made in their lives. Making meaning through representation and communication creates a participatory culture in early childhood literacy classrooms. Critical pedagogies, and Multiliteracies pedagogies, are “aimed at creating a kind of person, an active designer of meaning, a highly literate learner, acting as agent of their own knowledge processes, with a sensibility open to differences, problem-solving, change, and innovation” (Kalantzis & Cope, 2014, p.188).

High quality early childhood settings create opportunities for children to construct knowledge about themselves, their peers, and the social and cultural worlds in which they participate. Taking a developmental approach to children’s learning (in the sense that learning takes place over time, and builds on experiences that have come before), early educators interact with young children in meaningful, social contexts, creating opportunities for students’ language and literacies to grow (Teale, Hoffman, & Paciga, 2010). Playful interactions are therefore at the crux of learning, and effective early educators make strategic decisions during such interactions to initiate and respond to children authentically and intentionally to support student learning (Pianta, 1999).
The Research Study

It is impossible to separate the teacher-child interactions that Ladson-Billings (1995) details from the broader political and social aims that Paris and Alim (2014) challenge. Federal funding avenues, state grant incentives, district curriculum adoptions, local allocation of materials, and building leadership are but a few of the external factors influencing the instructional experiences provided by classroom teachers (i.e., Darling-Hammond, 2010; Stein, Smith, & Silver 1999). These influences are not unilateral, nor easily defined. The goals of each influence are often extensive, and complicated. Therefore:

the intersection of many different systemic goals requires complex analysis that must be read from many different points of view and that must account for the role of larger structures – macro structures – being localized in the very particular talk and actions of participants in any given activity system. (Moje & Lewis, 2014, p. 42)

For this reason, it is not enough simply to investigate the culturally responsive nature of teacher-child interactions without simultaneously investigating the other activity systems in which these literacy practices are embedded.

Given our understanding of sociocultural theory mediational tools and equitable opportunities to learn, this study describes (1) the nuances of classroom practices creating a racially and linguistically just learning environment, (2) the places and spaces in which these literacy interactions take place, and (3) an understanding of the local policies and protocols supporting the aim of equitable opportunities. This research investigates and documents this preschool site as exemplar to better understand the mediational tools that support and endorse these literacy practices.
Using ethnographic methods complemented by video based field work, mediated discourse analysis and geosemiotic analysis, the study develops detailed descriptions of both the culturally sustained local literacy practices of one preschool setting and provides evidence of the types of systemic structures fostering culturally relevant literacy practices. Because culturally relevant pedagogy is enacted within the nuances of adult-child interactions, a fine-grained analysis of in-the-moment classroom practices is necessary to first identify these moments and then to unpack them. To better understand the complex and multi-focused nature of emergent literacy and language instruction in early childhood settings specifically, “observations need to consider the positioned, local, ideological, material, and spatial nature of children’s participation in literacy events” (Rowe, 2010, p. 142). As such, mediated discourse analysis is a useful tool for inquiry.

Mediated discourse analysis (Scollon 2001) is an attempt to theorize a way in which discourse can be linked with practice “without giving undue weight either to action without reference to the discourse, or to the discourse without reference to the action within which it is appropriated” (n/p). The unit of analysis/of interest is the activity system with its focus on the acting social actors as they are in the moment when and where the discourses of social life are instantiated in the social world as social action. The focus of mediated discourse analysis is the mediated action – within a dialogical chain of such social actions, as well as within a hierarchy of simultaneously occurring practices (Norris & Jones, 2005).

**Positionality**

The purpose of interpretivist research is determining socially bound, local truths. From an interpretivist perspective, then, the researcher is not seen as separate from the scene of investigation but rather embedded in it (Bredo & Feinberg, 1982). Perspective and context come
together to support a constructivist way of knowing, where intersubjectivity is valued over the absolute. As a social constructivist study, the data collection and analysis transparently acknowledge the positionality of the research as influencing the data. “As is a truism in ethnographic research, our own biographies influenced the research, especially [our] reasons for beginning the study and what we s[ee]” (Lareau, 2003, p. 267). This method of analysis is more subjective and more interpretive in nature, and honors the rich cultural and historical differences of families. The qualitative coding process employed in this approach is ‘messier’ than that of statistical analysis, and leaves more room for individual interpretation, but such a method brings value to the inquiry from a social constructivist lens.

Interpretivism values an ethnographic approach to educational research, allowing for description, interpretation, and evaluation of observable and unobservable behavior (Peshkin, 1993). Moving beyond the observable, the interpretivist perspective gains the insight of individuals through ethnographic methods, providing access to otherwise internalized explanations of externally observable actions. Considering the cultural and historical research setting, the interpretivist perspective enables the creation of particularistic solutions, applicable to the population immediately in question. Additionally, the interpretivist perspective often employs a hermeneutic approach to data analysis which sees social life as constituted by social action, and analysis as seeking to understand the meaning of these actions (Little, 2008).

Much like a sociocultural approach provides a way to understand what is cultural about learning (Gutierrez, 2007), a broader social constructivist approach provides a way to understand what is social about learning. "Sociocultural theory has allowed us to explore the intersection of social, cultural, historical, mental, physical, and more recently, political aspects of people's sense-making, interaction, and learning" (Lewis, Enciso & Moje, 2007, p. 2). Social
constructivist perspectives are of value when countering dominant narratives that justify aligning home practices with those of traditional schools, such as when parents are advised to engage their children in school-valued literacy practices (Orellana, 2007).

The nuanced nature of constructivist findings considers the role of the researcher and the specific time, place, and space in which the data were collected. This provides a rich descriptive context for researchers to draw conclusions about numerous interrelated factors, as literacy itself is composed of many such factors. Literacy learning is not an individual accomplishment but instead reflects social, historical, and cultural influences, both local and global. “The single most compelling fact about literacy is that it is a social achievement” (Scribner, 1984, p. 7, emphasis in original). Given these complexities, we, as literacy researchers, scholars, and practitioners, must ask of ourselves and of our education system, "What kind of reader do we want to produce, and for what and whose ends? (Kress, 2005, p. 47). It is only in seeking answers to questions such as this, reflective of a critical pedagogy, that we can do right by young learners.

This dissertation investigates the teacher-child interactions in one preschool classroom in order to understand the features of these interactions and to understand the factors which mediate these interactions. It is written as three stand-alone articles, and as such some broad contextual and methodological information is repeated and rephrased across all three articles. The first article, or Chapter II, presents and ethnographic and microanalytic account of preschool participation structures. The second article, or Chapter III, examines how the policies and protocols of one preschool classroom mediate teacher-child interactions, therefore supporting equitable opportunities to learn. The third article, or Chapter IV, investigates the ways in which place and space mediate teacher-child interactions, and addresses the methodological and
theoretical tensions encountered when negotiating theories of geosemiotics and social geographies.

Together, these three papers draw attention to the ways teachers position students as agentive learners through their [inter]actions, and inform an understanding of what factors support, or influence, teachers’ facilitation of the equitable opportunities to learn.
CHAPTER II: An Ethnographic and Microanalytic Account of Preschool Participation

Structures

At the complex intersections of language and learning, power and identity, discourse and participation, there exists a preschool classroom on Chicago’s Southside. As with all discursive communities, the 17 African American students, the three classroom teachers, and the center’s numerous support staff bring to this community their own storied histories around ‘talk’ and ‘school’ and what these mean in relation to one another. And while schooling in the United States has as long a history as the country itself, for many of these preschoolers, this classroom may serve as their first encounter with the complex and dynamic communicative environment of a classroom. Learning and development as seen through a sociocultural lens (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986, 1987), views children as learning to participate in a community’s Discourse (Gee, 1990), or the valued ways of ‘doing and being’, by using cultural tools to navigate their surrounding environment (Wohlwend, 2009) through guided participation (Rogoff, 1995). Here, be(com)ing a student means becoming enculturated into the multiple normative practices of interaction and participation in discursive classroom events.

For preschoolers first entering school, these normative practices hold immense power – to position students as within, or excluded from, the Discourse(s) of school. A teachers’ discursive moves in part define the classroom practices, and a young child’s identity as a learner is shaped through these initial encounters with classroom practices. The Triangle (pseudonym) classroom is made up of students often described as ‘at risk’ of school failure – African American children living in poverty – who consistently experience academic success in a classroom climate that supports and celebrates students’ individual identities. The three teachers of the Triangle classroom consistently position students as agentive learners by creating racially
and linguistically just teacher-child interactions. This study investigates the characteristics of these classroom practices, by asking: What do racially and linguistically just teacher-child interactions ‘look like’ in the Triangle classroom?

To study classroom literacy practices, it is important to examine the discourses that characterize classroom culture. Classroom discourses involve more than language alone (Jewitt, 2009). They include the social, semiotic, and modal tools that shape classroom life (Gee, 1997; Hicks, 1995). Each utterance, interaction, gesture, or gaze shapes “what participants come to know and who participants come to be within their classroom and larger social worlds” (Van Sluys, Lewison, & Flint, 2006). Therefore, we need to examine classroom discourse practices, specifically those that reflect the integration of various cultural norms, to understand better the ways in which classroom activity can “inform theor[ies] of teaching and learning ... [to] include not only educational goals and practices but also various social goals, institutes, and social influences” (Bloome & Landis, 1999, p. 107).

Adopting Sigrid Norris’s (2004) verbiage, this study describes the higher-order actions and lower-order actions of classroom discourse to identify the classroom participation structures employed, and to discern the ways in which teachers and students position themselves and others within the participation structures (Figure 1). Applying ethnographic methods, I first describe the multiple participation structures—the structures that constitute how social interaction is arranged amongst various participants making up an interaction (Jocuns, 2009)—that characterize a typical day in the Triangle (pseudonym) classroom. I then narrow the focus to describe in greater detail the characteristics of one specific participation structure, that which was most often observed and which proved most fruitful for spontaneous conversation. Examining
classroom discourse at this level, I apply positioning theory to describe the relationships participants take up with one another during interactions.

![Diagram]

**Figure 1. Phases of data narrowing for analysis**

Finally, I further narrow the analytic focus to unpack one example of this participation structure through a multimodal interactional analysis. Because classroom discourse is simultaneously mediated by language and the modalities of numerous semiotic tools, I use multimodal (inter)action analysis to discern the lower-order actions of classroom discourse that position students as agentic in their learning. By combining the affordances of the wide-angle lens of ethnography with the affordances of the narrow focus of a multimodal interactional analysis, it becomes possible to communicate a rich understanding of the classroom context where children’s apprenticeship into literacy and language learning is taking place. Understanding this apprenticeship is guided by the extant literature around positioning theory,
classroom participation structures, and multimodal (inter)action analysis.

**Theoretical Framing within Current Literature**

**Positioning Theory**

Initial instantiations of positioning theory Davies & Harré (1990) use ‘position’ and ‘positioning’ as metaphors to understand how individuals are ‘located’ within conversation as observable and individual social actors in jointly produced story lines. Position and positionings are not static but are dynamic and malleable, as described by Tirado and Galvez (2007). They fluctuate depending on the social context and cultural norms in which they are constructed. Positions and positionings are also negotiable, in that individuals can contest or resist an act of positioning. Harré and van Langenhove (1998), propose position, plotline, and illocutionary force as a triad to be used in the careful work of teasing out the positioning and counter-positioning evident in everyday interaction, institutional documents, public and private events and the interactions between them (Pinnegar & Murphy, 2011, p. 156)

Positioning theory sees language as a historically and ideologically contextualized social action (Foucault, 1972). From this perspective, spoken words carry the weight of action by situating and defining the other and simultaneously situating and defining ourselves. Through discourse, “a system of rights and responsibilities is established which is not transcendent but rather immanent to the actual act of speaking and interacting” (Tirado & Galvez, 2007, p. 233). When combined with contemporary discourse analysis theories, particularly multimodal interaction analysis which has its roots in mediated discourse analysis, we see language *in* action, rather than language *as* action—a distinction that has implications for the methods by which researchers observe and explain the positioning of self and other moving forward.
Thus, numerous contemporary scholars have applied social positioning theory to the analysis of classroom discourse in elementary and high school settings. Davies’s (2001) exploration of an Australian physical education highlighted the power of language by describing the gendered positioning female students adopted when ignoring their male teachers’ mistakes, thus providing him as researcher with the missing information. Similarly, Leander (2002) and Wortham (2004) presented studies investigating social positioning, identity, and learning in high school English classes in the United States. Both studies described the position of African American girls by their teachers and classmates as opinionated and disruptive. Anderson (2009) explains that in applying positioning theory to studies of classroom discourse, Leander and Wortham expand(ed) the imminentist ontology of positioning theory to include a mediational approach to acts of classroom positioning [that] begins to account for how the different layers of interaction, authority, ideology, and time coalesce to construct failures and successes not just through the accumulation of moments but through the collection and sedimentation of many other kinds, positions, and outcomes for learners (p. 294). One such layer of interaction is that of participation structures.

**Participation Structures**

Goffman’s ‘footings’ (1981) presents a theoretical and analytical tool for examining the ways social actors participate in conversation. “Footings” describes a taxonomy of the roles and divisions of labor taken up by speaker and listener. However, some contemporary scholars have criticized Goffman’s footings as dichotomous, resisting his presupposition that speaker and hearer are portrayed as mutually exclusive participants rather than dialogically engaged with or affected by one another. In response, Goodwin (2004) defined participation as “actions
demonstrating forms of involvement performed by parties within evolving structures of talk” (p.232). This approach to participation concurs with Bahktian (1981) and Vygotskian (1978) notions that realize the presence of culture within discursive practices, taking a more constructivist approach. Irvine (1996) also purports a focus on the larger processes, including links among participant role, social identity, and ties to other encounters. Participation is therefore a form of embodiment, and is evidence of a social organization in which multiple parties build the social actions. Acknowledging that participation is always rooted in cultural and historical influences expands the unit of analysis beyond a single utterance or even a turn-taking sequence to instead investigate the classroom as a discursive community – a society with norms, expectations, roles, relationships, etc. (Erickson, 1979; Mohatt & Erickson, 1981; Heath 1983).

Cazden defines classroom discourse as a communication system with the primary subject of study being “the words spoken in classrooms” (2001, p. 60). In early work in this area, most research on classroom discourse involved students and teachers engaged in using their native language, at a time when Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) defined conversational turn taking as locally-managed, party-administered, and interactionally-contingent, a system in which participants orient themselves to “one [speaker] at a time” with minimal gaps or overlaps. This definition is problematic when applied to non-Western traditions of discourse in which other discursive patterns of participation are evident (e.g., Baquedano-López, Solís, & Kattan, 2005; Majors, 2015; Razfar & Rumenapp, 2013). However, since the early 1980s, research on classroom discourse in both applied linguistics and education has broadened the scope of investigation to include second language classrooms, multilingual and multicultural spaces, investigating differences in age group, gender identity (Zuengler & Mori, 2002), often
concluding that minority children underachieve in classrooms due to the nature of the teacher-pupil classroom interaction.

For example, Philips’ (1972) pioneering study of participation structures in American Indian classrooms in Warm Springs demonstrated a mismatch in the cultural ways of ‘doing and being’ (Rogoff, 1995) a part of conversation. She concluded that differences in discursive norms between the home and school structures created an inherent disadvantage for American Indian students and adversely affected students’ academic achievement. Similarly, Erickson (1979) described tensions between teachers and African American students created by the teachers’ misinterpretation of students “listening responses.” Contemporarily, McCollum (1989) found little difference in the educational experiences of Puerto Rican teachers and students in Puerto Rico compared to Anglo American teachers and students in Chicago. However, Puerto Rican students of Anglo American teachers experienced academic difficulties due to cultural differences in conversational turn-taking.

These tensions also exist in early childhood classrooms, as Au and Mason (1981) found in looking at the participation structures of two Hawaiian first-grade classrooms where students were learning to read. Comparisons between the two classrooms showed that one teacher relied on the traditional IRE (Mehan, 1979) participation structure, while the other teacher used Talk Story, a participation structure more closely resembling the norms of non-classroom speech events in native Hawaiian homes. Au found that students typically identified as struggling readers (as a result of their under-resourced backgrounds) who participated in the Talk Story classroom significantly outperformed demographically-matched peers who experienced the mainstream participation structures of school.
While Au’s work describes the literacy learning of first graders in Hawaii, Heath (1983) explored the origins of such communicative differences between cultures by describing the language learning experiences of young children in one white and one Black community in the Piedmont Carolinas. Her pivotal ethnography of these culturally different communities portrayed the ways in which children learning to use language were dependent on the social structure of their homes and families. Although less formal than classroom participation structures, the different ways children ‘were taught’ or ‘learned how’ to talk prepared them more or less so to successfully acclimate to the mainstream classroom discourses expected in schools for even the youngest of learners.

In the lived spaces between at-home language learning and formal first grade reading lessons, preschool settings create opportunities for children to construct knowledge about themselves, their peers, and the social and cultural worlds in which they participate. Taking a developmental approach to children’s learning (in the sense that learning takes place over time, and builds on experiences that have come before), early educators interact with young children in meaningful, social contexts, creating opportunities for students’ language and literacies to grow (Teale, Hoffman, & Paciga, 2010). Playful interactions are therefore at the crux of learning, and effective early educators make strategic decisions during such interactions to initiate and respond to children authentically and intentionally support student learning (Pianta, 1999).

Children learn through social activity and demonstrate knowledge in a variety of ways, often sharing ideas through multiple modes (Kress, 2005). In learning contexts more broadly, and in early childhood settings in particular, modalities other than language are not simply additional contextual information, but used in conjunction with one another for the purpose of making meaning. When participating in classroom discourses, the speaker(s) and hearer(s) select
the mode(s) that afford the most meaning-making potential to achieve the social action in that moment in time. Therefore, a multimodal lens “expands our focus of interaction, moving away from interaction as linguistic to explore how people employ gesture, gaze, posture, movement, space, and objects to mediate interaction” (Jewitt, 2009, p.34). Moving beyond the verbocentric, a multimodal analysis also sheds light on the otherwise ephemeral cultural norms of the activity.

**Multimodal (Inter)actional Analysis**

Multimodal (inter)actional analysis (Norris, 2004) is an extension of Scollon’s mediated discourse analysis (MDA), first theorized in the 1990s. Building on traditional approaches to sociolinguistics (Halliday, 1978), MDA reflects the complexities of social practice by not isolating discourse as the only unit of analysis, but seeing discourse as in unison with or complemented by social action. A basic tenet of MDA is that meaning does not so much reside in a text or discourse alone, but in the actions that people take with it. MDA therefore considers the actions people take with texts and the consequences of those actions. In turn, analysis of concrete social actions can deepen our understanding of discourse(s). Multimodal interactional analysis (MIA) extends this view of language *in* action to also include the multiple modes social actors employ when engaged in meaning making practices.

Multimodal interactional analysis is influenced by interactional sociology (Goffman, 1981), interactional sociolinguistics (Tannen & Saville-Troike, 1985; Gumperz, 1986), mediated discourse analysis (Scollon, 2003), and multimodality (Kress & VanLeeuwen, 2001) – disciplines that take a sociocultural approach to discursive practices. These traditions see meaning making through words and other forms of mediation as neither private nor objective. Instead, meaning making

eman[es] from interpretive practices in social activities in which participants relate what
they see and hear to the socio-historical resources, as well as to the situated resources they have available which may be negotiated in the face-to-face interaction (Wells, 2009, np.).

Therefore, MIA investigates these interactions, or moments of situated meaning making, with heightened interest in the social actor(s) or sign maker(s) performing the action and the modalities mediating the action (Wertsch 1993; Scollon 1998, 2001). As an extension of MDA, MIA expands the focus of the interaction away from exclusively linguistic to also “explore how people employ gaze, gesture, posture, movement, space and objects to mediate interaction in a given context” (Jewitt, 2009, p. 34).

This study looks at classroom interactions within a racially and linguistically diverse preschool classroom to investigate the characteristics that make possible these agentive practices. To do so, I conducted a single case study using ethnographic methods complemented by video based field work. I first identified patterns of participation structures that characterize classroom practices more broadly. I then applied positioning theory to describe the discursive moves teachers make to position students as agentive learners, and finally conducted a multimodal (inter)action analysis to understand teachers’ physical positionality in combination with their verbal moves.

**Methodology**

**Study Context**

Situated on the Southside of a large Midwestern city, Edgeview experiences more violent crimes than 72 of the city’s 77 neighborhoods ([City of [redacted] Data Portal, 2015] and ranks among the city’s five most violent neighborhoods and has a high unemployment rate (over 21%) as well as a median income less than half that of the city’s average. Despite the chaos and
inconsistencies of this neighborhood’s everyday life, found within it is a community center featuring a large, centrally located, oval-shaped, two-story play area surrounded by 14 classrooms used for both child and adult learning. These classrooms accommodate more than 200 children—newborn to 5 years of age—and the center serve thousands through its community support programs.

The Triangle classroom (Figure 2) that is the focus of this research consists of three teachers and 17 students. The lead teacher Ms. Zachmann is a Caucasian female in her third year as a teacher at this center and her third year of teaching. She has a Bachelors’ degree in Psychology and an Early Childhood Teaching license. During data collection, she completed her Master’s Degree in Early Childhood Development. Both assistant teachers have their Associate’s Degree in Child Development, and have experience in infant/toddler and preschool classrooms. Mr. Pearson has worked at this center for 13 years and has been in the preschool setting for the past 9 years. Ms. O’Neal has 31 years of experience, having worked at a daycare prior to moving to this center 18 years ago, spending the most recent 4 in a preschool classroom. Both assistant teachers are African American. This is the team's third year working together in the Triangle Room. At the beginning of the study there were 16 students in the classroom, ages four and five. All 17 students, ages four and five, are African American; 6 are female and 11 are male.
Figure 2. Map of Triangle classroom

Data Collection

Data collection for this study was concurrent with that of two additional studies bound by the same classroom context. For the purposes of this study, field notes and video recordings were the primary sources of data for analysis; interviews with classroom teachers were secondary and used to confirm or challenge the field note and video analysis as a form of member checking. During the first two weeks of data collection I took extensive time stamped field notes, collected classroom artifacts and conducted initial interviews with the three classroom teachers. Camera placements were determined based on the two weeks of field notes taken to understand the classroom routine, to establish normalcy of presence, and to maximize the collection of useful video data during weeks 3, 4, 5, and 6. When taking ethnographic field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011), I recorded instances I found significant or unexpected,
and attended explicitly to what the participants reacted to as significant or important.

Acknowledging that conclusions drawn from data are inherently connected to the methods through which the data were gathered, I referenced my methodological field notes in addition to the observational during analysis to situate my observations within the circumstances of their ‘discovery’ (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). For example, through the initial observational field notes I learned students’ names, the daily schedule, and became familiar with the regular ‘happenings’ of the classroom. Latter observational field notes include more detailed descriptions of specific center events, for example, as this time of day quickly became the focus of the analysis presented here.

Beginning the third week of the study, video data were collected for four sequential weeks during the spring, Monday through Thursday, using two cameras simultaneously, each recording for three hours, for four days a week, for four weeks, resulting in a collective 96 hours of video data used to inform the findings presented in this study. Video-based field work enabled a close look at the sites of interaction between teachers and students as they engaged in literacy events. Unsurprisingly, video is increasingly the data collection tool of choice for researchers interested in the multimodal character of social interaction (Jewitt, 2012), as it affords a fine-grained multimodal record of an event detailing gaze, expression, body posture, and gesture. Video data therefore served to “preserve the temporal and sequential structure which is so characteristic of interaction” (Knoblauch, Schnettler, & Raab, 2006, p. 19). To best capture the range and variation of classroom events, the primary sources of video collection data were fixed, distant, and ‘un-manned’ cameras. Erickson (2009) argues for the need to aim for as ‘raw a footage as possible’: to position a wide-angle camera where it can capture as much as is possible without movement.
The fixed cameras gave a consistent view and were minimally intrusive to classroom practices. To assure the collection of proximal audio data, external sound grabbing microphones were placed in ‘high-traffic’ areas in correspondence with the two video cameras. Camera One was used to record the carpet and both dramatic play areas, capturing children's independent quiet reading time, the classroom's daily morning meeting, play at the block area and house area, and the teachers’ read aloud prior to lunch (in this sequence, daily). Camera Two was used to capture activities taking place primarily at tables 1, 2, and 3, focusing on breakfast table conversation, small group instruction, table-based centers, and classroom writing time (in this sequence, daily).

Data Analysis and Findings

Following data collection, I performed three phases of data analysis to illustrate the literacy and language interactions observed, increasingly narrowing each level of the analysis. Borrowing the terminology of Norris, (Jones & Norris, 2005) I first studied my field notes using descriptive coding to characterize the highest order action of analysis – patterns in participation structures observed throughout each day. Second, I focus coded the field notes to investigate the higher order action – patterns in the discursive moves of the teachers. Third, I conducted a multimodal [inter]actional analysis of one classroom interaction to describe the lower order actions that contributed to the larger actions observed. For clarity, I describe each phase of analysis concurrently with the corresponding findings.

Phase 1 Higher Order Actions: Participation Structures

To understand the data holistically, I first read across the field notes to describe the overall patterns in daily classroom events. The daily events observed mirrored the daily schedule posted in the Triangle classroom. Because breakfast, teeth brushing, music and
movement (Figure 3) occurred more fluidly, with some children in the classroom finishing up their morning meal while others had completed brushing their teeth and were dancing on the carpet, I chose to report this collection of items listed on the Triangle schedule as one event.

![Figure 3. Photograph of Triangle schedule posted in the classroom](image)

Reviewing the time-stamped notes for each of the 30 days observed, I catalogued the start and end time of each classroom event, determined the daily duration of each event, and then calculated the average daily durations and standard deviations for each of the seven events observed. Apart from three atypical days that were excluded from the ‘time spent’ analysis (Picture Day, a field trip, and a center-wide performance for parents), a ‘typical’ day in the Triangle classroom is represented in Table 1.

Table 1. Average Duration of Daily Events in the Triangle Classroom
To then characterize the participation structures typical of each of the daily events, I revisited my field notes to look within each event at the participation structure as it reflected the discursive goal of the action (Norris, 2004). Systematically sampling, I selected one of each event (see Table 1) for each week observed (8), with equal sampling across the days of the weeks observed (Monday-Thursday) resulting in the descriptive coding of 56 classroom episodes. With the field notes as the primary data source and video data consulted when possible and applicable, I adopted Mameli and Molinari’s (2014) descriptive codes to categorize the participation structures observed in each episode. Three subcategories of participation structures were identified:

1. **Monologic.** Teacher(s) controls the lesson by determining the learning objective and directing the discourse in a predetermined direction.

2. **Dialogic.** Teacher(s) determine the learning objective, but teacher(s) and children share knowledge and alternative viewpoints, build on each other’s ideas and chain them into coherent lines of thinking.

3. **Co-constructive.** Teacher(s) and child(ren) engage in the development of deduction skills, reasoning, and thinking together by exploring topics introduced by both teacher(s) and child(ren), discussing shared perspectives and outcomes, and exploring different or
alternative perspectives and outcomes.

The Triangle classroom implements a preschool curriculum that advocates learning through discovery. Therefore, a monologic participation structure refers more to the conversational processes of turn taking, and less to the content being discussed. Said another way, any evidence of teachers’ conversational control (e.g., deciding when student talk was allowed, who could do the talking, and when the talking was over) was coded as monologic, even if the content of the conversation was exploratory in nature, taking direction from student inquiry. Dialogic participation may resemble the content of the monologic when a topic is introduced by the teacher and taken up by the students, but the formality of turn taking and conversational bounding are not as present. A co-constructive participation structure occurs when meaning-making truly emerges from the local event, and is not predetermined or planned by the teachers. Events were coded as unstructured participation when teachers were present in the environment but not active participants in the preschoolers’ dialogue. Table 2 shows the results of the average times spent in each of the participation structures in each daily event.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily Duration</th>
<th>Monologic</th>
<th>Dialogic</th>
<th>Co-Constructive</th>
<th>Unstructured</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning Meeting</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Group</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centers</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Workshop</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross Motor</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read Aloud</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Morning Meeting and Read Aloud events were the most structured, spent in their entirety in the monologic participation structure. During both daily events, the teacher determined the
topic discussed and the book to be read with few exceptions. During both daily events, one of the classroom teachers sat in a chair while the students sat on the carpet and faced him/her. The teacher introduced questions, students offered answers by raising their hands and waiting their turn to be called on (Figure 4), and the teacher determined when the event was over, dismissing students either to small group or to lunch. It is worth noting that on at least six occasions the facilitating teacher ended the event with the invitation to continue to explore the topic of the Read Aloud or Morning Meeting later. For example, when one Morning Meeting ended but students continued to show interest in measuring the circumference of a log, Ms. Zachmann invited them to work with her again during center time. Similarly, following a reading of Those Shoes by Maribeth Boelth, when it was time to transition to lunch and a few hands were still raised, Mr. Pearson invited students who wished to continue the conversation to sit with him at lunch.

Figure 4. Monologic participation structure during a read aloud event
Small Group and Writing events were primarily spent in dialogic participation structures. During Small Groups the teacher introduced materials and described the task s/he had planned based on the learning objective of focus for the day. The Triangle teachers planned the focal objectives for Small Groups during their weekly planning meetings, informed by their observations of student learning and guided by the Teaching Strategies Gold assessment tool (See Chapter III for greater detail). Examples of Small Group events observed include classifying plastic animals by shape, size, and habitat; playing Candy Land or other board games, using a numbered spinner to take turns; and writing number sentences on dry erase boards to represent addition and subtraction problems using bear counters. Students took up the task at different paces and required different levels of teacher guidance based on interest and adeptness.

For example, during one Small Group event Ms. O’Neal worked with five students at a table reviewing the names and properties of basic shapes (Figure 5). Students made the shapes with popsicle sticks and answered questions about the number of sides. Students were then given the opportunity to glue the sticks together to make a picture frame. Logan named all the shapes, glued his sticks into a square, and used very few of the embellishments provided to decorate his frame. He left Small Group to transition to Centers after 12 minutes. However, Chloe needed additional guidance remembering the shape names, and decided to use lots of glitter, sequence, and markers to decorate her frame. Chloe spent 28 minutes in Small Group, and had Ms. O’Neal’s undivided attention at the end of the event, as the other 4 children had all transitioned to Centers and were under the supervision of Mr. Pearson and Ms. Zachmann.
In contrast to Morning Meeting and Read Alouds, Center events were discursively co-constructive, with the topic and location of the conversation often initiated by one or more children, with children entering and exiting the event at will and teachers playing an equal rather than authoritarian role in determining the course of the interaction. For example, after watching three girls play in the dramatic play center with silk flowers and the cash register, Ms. O’Neal approached and asked if she could place an order. Talia took up this narrative and presented Ms. O’Neal with a list of flower prices, and Ms. O’Neal asked questions about the types of flowers that were in season. When Ms. O’Neal asked for a bouquet, Talia and Damani filled her order, took her money, and decided to make bouquets for themselves. When Ms. O’Neal asked the occasion, Talia replied, “She [Damani] is getting married.” The cash register was set aside, the
girls dug through a dress up box to find a suitable veil for the bride, and Ms. O’Neal declared that she needed to find her camera, “to document this momentous occasion!"

With a teacher/student ratio of roughly 1:6, it was impossible (and unnecessary) that every child be in constant interaction with at least one adult. However, Center events were coded in their entirety as co-constructive, in that at all times at least 1 (often 2, frequently 3) child-teacher interactions were taking place. The Triangle teachers all viewed the Center event as instructional time, and therefore prioritized making themselves available to students during what otherwise would have been characterized as Unstructured participation. Although the Co-constructive participation structure was also observed in part during Breakfast and Gross Motor events, the remainder of Breakfast and Gross Motor events was coded as Unstructured participation because children interacted solely with one another – under the guidance of teachers but not in direct conversation with them.

Referencing Figure 6, we see that the co-constructive participation structure characterized the largest portion of the Triangle Classroom’s daily routine. Referencing Table 2, it is evident that the co-constructive participation structure was most evident during Center events. Therefore, I further bound the data set for the second phase of analysis by qualitatively coding the thirty observed Center events only, to better understand the discursive moves of both teachers and children characteristic of the co-constructive participation structure. This close attention to Center events also seemed warranted because even when the daily routine was compromised owing to special activities such as Picture Day or a field trip, Center events were never compromised. The classroom teachers were at liberty to rearrange the classroom schedule on days when the daily routine was affected, and in doing so always prioritized the Center event. Secondary analysis of the 30 center events identified features of the teachers’ discursive moves.
Teachers tend to position students as agentive learners by using language to first validate student contributions, then elevate the dialogue. The details of these findings are presented below as the Phase 2: Higher Order Actions.

![Diagram showing instructional minutes each day by participation structure]

**Figure 6.** Instructional minutes each day by participation structure

**Phase 2 Higher Order Actions: Characteristics of Co-Constructive Participation**

Over decades of classroom observation, Johnston (2004) has identified several discursive moves teachers make to create supportive classroom environments that help foster agentic, confident learners. In his example of a teacher asking about a student’s reading progress, Johnston describes the effects of asking, “Have you read this?” compared to asking, “Have you read this yet?” on classroom climate and students’ attitudes towards learning. The power of “yet” positions students as readers-in-progress, acknowledging that their reading accomplishments take place over time, and are fluid. If a student must answer, “Have you read this?” with a “no,” s/he is positioned as having not achieved this expectation. If a child instead may answer, “not yet,” they are positioned as having the capacity to achieve the expectation in the future.
Pairing Johnston’s extensive research in elementary classrooms with substantial research on early childhood language development (e.g., Dickinson & Snow, 1987; Wasik & Bond, 2001), we can confidently assert that, indeed, talk matters. Review of the field notes of the co-constructive participation structures during Centers coupled with analysis of the video clips capturing these events in detail led to the finding that the most salient characteristic of this participation structure was how the teachers supported students’ agency and autonomy through talk. In preschool spaces where students first begin to develop their identity as ‘student,’ the discursive moves of teachers are of exponential value, as these teachers’ positioning of their students is the first experience young children have in seeing themselves as that – a student.

**Validate + Elevate.** To characterize the discursive moves of the teachers, I first revisited my field notes to identify all evidence of teacher/child interactions observed during Center events, identifying 123 interactions. I then revisited the catalogued video documenting those teacher/child interactions and descriptively coded (Saldana, 2012) each instance, resulting in 32 original codes. Through focus coding (Saldana, 2012), I arrived at two features of teacher talk evident in three iterations commonly occurring during the co-constructive participation structure:

- Validate and Elevate the Learner
- Validate and Elevate the Play(er)
- Validate and Elevate the Problem-Solver

Teachers used language to both *validate* and *elevate*. **Validate** involves the act of confirming, affirming, or simply acknowledging a child’s actions, language, or emotions. By approaching the dramatic play area where two girls have a cash register and silk flowers and asking if he can place an order for Mothers’ Day, Mr. Pearson is validating the student-created narrative. Similarly, when Ms. Zachmann approaches L who is crying and says, “It looks like you are sad.
Would you like me to sit with you?” she is validating his emotional state. *Elevate* is the act of extending, challenging, or advancing students’ experiences. After watching Z match a series of objects by color, Mrs. O elevated his experience by proclaiming, “I have a challenge for you! This time, let’s try to sort them by shape.”

Although it is possible to validate or elevate in isolation (e.g., “I see that you are sad,” or “How can we make the music louder?”), more commonly the Triangle teachers entered a discursive space, validated, and then pivoted the interaction to elevate. That is to say, in the vast majority of coded teacher-child interactions teachers simultaneously and nonlinearly engaged in one of the three iterations of validation + elevation. The following two examples illustrate this finding of all three iterations present and co-occurring.

*Example 1: The Block Tower.* Ms. Zachmann is in the block area with three students. Raphael stands near Ms. Zachmann and holds two blocks together. He comments in her general direction.

Raphael: These make a skate park.

Ms. Z: Yes, they do. [using a sweeping motion with her fingers over the blocks] I can see how the skater could go back and forth, back and forth

Ms. Zachmann first validates Raphael’s play, acknowledging the momentary transformation of two blocks as representative of a skating park. She then elevates the interaction, describing how she can see this representation as reality. Raphael loses interest in the skate park and begins to make a tower.

Ms. Z.: What should we do to make it taller?

Raphael adds three blocks to the tower. He stands next to it.
Ms. Z.: Now it is taller than you. Is it taller than me? If it is going to be taller than me, what do we need to do?

Raphael adds three blocks to the tower. Now Ms. Z. stands next to it.

Ms. Z.: It is still below me. It is below where I am.

Ms. Zachmann validates Raphael’s efforts to make the tower taller. She acknowledges that the tower is taller than Raphael, but then elevates Raphael as problem solver by increasing the difficulty of the challenge – they are now attempting to make the tower taller than she is. Ms. Zachmann also elevates Raphael as learner by repeating the words “taller” and “below,” both concepts included in the preschool learning standards. But then…

Ms. Z.: steps backwards.

Ms. Z.: Oh no! I am so sorry! I did not intend to knock it down! May I help you to rebuild it?

Raphael (pauses for a moment, and then): Ah ha!

Ms. Z.: I think that means that you have an idea, because I heard you say “Ah ha.”

Ms. Zachmann validates Raphael as problem solver after (unintentionally) elevating the challenge at hand. For a few moments they work together in silence, rebuilding the tower differently than before, incorporating Raphael’s “Ah ha” idea, a more solid base.

Ms. Z.: I see. When you have two bases here they will support it…We will have to be careful when we dismantle this.

In this final comment, Ms. Zachmann simultaneously validates Raphael as player, learner, and problem solver – by affirming his solution (“I see”), confirming his knowledge (“two bases will support it”) and acknowledging his efforts (“we will be careful”). She elevates the experience through language, using vocabulary including dismantle, intent, and rebuild. By peppering her
casual speech with this elevated vocabulary, she both exposes Raphael to advanced language and affirms his identity as a learner capable of such exposure.

*Example 2: The Birthday Party.* Students in the Triangle classroom learned at the beginning of the school year that only a certain number of students are allowed in each center area at a time. The computer center can accommodate two preschoolers while the dramatic play center can accommodate four, and so on. Students occupy a center by placing their nametag on a Velcro strip which hangs at the entrance of each. In this example, Janiyah is frustrated that the block area is currently full.

Ms. Z.: The block area is full. We will need to find something else to do.

Janiyah [thinks for a moment]: Let’s work on your birthday!

Ms. Z: When is my birthday?

Janiyah: Today!

Janiyah takes out play dough.

Ms. Z: I am going to need a really big cake because lots of guests are coming.

Christian walks over to the art table with a puppet in hand.

Janiyah: How about him?

Ms. Z: Shubert [the puppet] is definitely invited.

In a few moments’ time we see Ms. Zachmann both validate and elevate Janiyah’s problem solving skills and narrative play. In her first statement, Ms. Zachmann validates Janiyah’s problem (“The blocks are full”). By saying “we” will need to find something else to do, but not verbalizing any suggested solutions to the problem, Ms. Zachmann indicates they are approaching the problem together, but elevates Janiyah’s opportunity to be the problem solver. Giving Janiyah the wait time she needs allowed Janiyah to arrive at a solution independently.
(“Let’s work on your birthday!”). Ms. Zachmann validates this narrative by asking a clarifying question (“When is my birthday?”), follows Janiyah’s lead regarding choice of materials, and extends the narrative by introducing a problem that can be solved using the material Janiyah has selected (“I am going to need a really big cake because lots of guests are coming”). Janiyah can choose to take up Ms. Zachmann’s introduced ‘problem’ by constructing the cake out of play dough. Ms. Zachmann again affirms their co-constructed reality when agreeing that Shubert (a previously named classroom puppet) may join the celebration.

The Triangle teachers consistently demonstrated validation + elevation as a feature of their discursive moves, positioning students as agentive learners, players, and problem solvers. Their positioning of students in individual events and their positioning of students over time “interanimate” each other through their repeated occurrence, creating stability across their temporal actions which in turn develops students’ longer-term established identities (Lemke, 2008). Thus far, we have explored the broader participation structures employed in this preschool classroom that support students’ development as literacy and language learners. We then further characterized the discursive moves of the classroom teachers during the co-constructive participation structure. Because different modalities are integrated and cooperate in social actions and interaction, it is necessary to extend the analysis one level further, to examine the complexly intertwined modes that social actors use when acting with or through mediational means (Wertsch 1993, Scollon, 1998, 2001).

**Phase 3 Lower Order Actions: The Multimodality of Student Agency**

As described at the outset, multimodal interactional analysis is a form of mediated discourse analysis, developed to describe and understand what is going on in each interaction by analyzing what individuals express and react to in specific situations, where the ongoing
interaction is always co-constructed (Norris, 2004). Multimodal interactional analysis expands the focus of interaction, moving away from the notion of interaction as purely linguistic to also explore how people employ gesture, posture, movement, space and objects to mediate interaction in each context (Jewitt, 2009) All face-to-face social interactions are by nature multimodal, typically involving the interplay of verbal and visuospatial modalities. Manual gestures, facial expressions, and body posture can together be understood as the components of visuospatial modality (Strivers & Sidnell, 2005). These modalities support and extend one another in various ways to perform the communicative work of co-constructing meaning through social interaction.

Phase 1 analysis incorporated all classroom events observed. Phase 2 analysis was bound by Center events only, narrowing the focus to roughly 60 minutes of classroom activity each day, identifying 123 coded episodes. For this third and final phase, I further narrowed the lens of analysis, focusing on a single interaction to demonstrate the multimodality of meaning making during co-constructive participation wherein the agentic positioning is demonstrated through the validation and elevation of the students. Video data were collected during four weeks of the 8-week study, resulting in approximately 16 hours of Center events captured visually. Beginning with the coded field notes, I identified all instances captured on video involving at least one teacher and at least one student engaged in the co-constructive participation structure during a Center event. There were a total of 31 episodes, lasting between five and 12 minutes in length. I then revisited the video catalog, identifying instances where high modal density (i.e., repositioning, gesture, movement, conversation, gaze, etc.) was evident given camera positioning, etc. From this total of 31 instances, I selected one episode, Richard and Edward and the Ninja Turtles, highlighting two moments of interaction, for further analysis. This interaction was selected because it is representative of how the Triangle teachers used their words and their
bodies to position students agentively. For this interaction (of eight minutes total, with two minutes highlighted here), I transcribed the verbal exchanges between the teacher and students and then represented the visuospatial modalities in a visual transcript.

**Example 1: The Ninja Turtles.** During Center events Ms. Zachmann circulated throughout the room, sometimes remaining on the periphery of student activity and sometimes settling in with a child or group of children. Presumably because Richard and Edward tended to play independently and without conflict, in this example Ms. Zachmann attempted to ‘touch base’ in the space, then move on. Instead, Edward beckoned Ms. Zachmann to engage more fully, using both verbal and visuospatial modalities to draw her back into the narrative. The analysis showed that Ms. Zachmann verifies their play and, due to Edward’s agency, also elevates the exchange by extending her participation. This interaction was (co)constructed through high modal density by the participants because of the complexity of the intertwined multiple modes that the social actors use. Spoken language facilitated their joint attention, but body positioning and gesture were also essential to this moment. Let us first attend to the spoken interaction:

Ms. Z.: Are these the Ninja Turtles? Got it.

Edward: That’s April!

Ms. Z.: It’s who? ...Oh, that’s April.

Ms. Z.: Ok. So, there are five total? There are four and then April?

In the first line Ms. Zachmann verifies Edward and Richard’s narrative, the words, “Got it,” indicating the end of the exchange. However, Edward quickly and enthusiastically extends the exchange, telling Ms. Zachmann, “That’s April!” (April being a secondary character in the Ninja Turtles narrative Edward and Richard have adopted from popular media). Ms. Zachmann re-
engages the two students, pausing for a moment to place the character. She then takes up Edward’s invitation to continue the conversation, asking additional questions about the characters and their invented storyline, as evidence of a change in footing. Interpretation of Goffman (1981) explains:

a change in footing implies a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance. Change in footing is very commonly language-linked; if not, then at least one can claim that the paralinguistic markers of language will be at play. (p. 128)

Both Edward and Ms. Zachmann use language to change footings – their verbal utterances make things happen. First, by ending the exchange (Ms. Zachmann), then by inviting it to continue (Edward), and finally by Ms. Zachmann’s accepting that invitation and continuing the conversation.

Extending the analysis to include the multimodal reveals the ways in which the participants’ alignments, stance, and posture are also indicators of changes in footing. These visuospatial modes, which can be held across an event, cannot be measured in grammatical sentences but instead by semiotic clause. Therefore, the event is bound as beginning and ending by prosodic and not syntactic segments. When analyzing visuospatial modes, a continuum must be considered – from gross changes in stance or position to the subtle shifts in pitch or intonation. For instance, the way people organize their bodies when interacting with one another has been shown to be important for such issues as facilitating a common focus of attention (Kendon, 1990). This physical orientation is what Kendon calls an ‘F-formation,’ or the way speakers co-orient to one another around a central space. This visuospatial modality of body placement conveys participants’ willingness (or lack thereof) to take part in each interaction.
Kendon describes this as an act of establishing interactional ‘withness’ (Kendon, 1990, p. 250).

In Figure 7 we first see Ms. Zachmann as having placed her body between Edward and Richard, leaning over the table indicating interest and participation in their play (56:00). After she says, “Got it,” Ms. Zachmann turns her body to walk away. Edward positions himself between Ms. Zachmann and her second destination, using his arms to make himself larger, stopping Ms. Zachmann from moving any further (56:02). She stops, and Edward relaxes his arms, but remains in front of Ms. Zachmann (56:04). Ms. Zachmann responds to Edwards proclamation that the plastic figure in his hand is “April” by repeating him. Ms. Zachmann then indicates a reengagement in the event, or a ‘withness’ with both her body (pivoting towards the table, rather than away from it) and by asking an extending question (56:06). Ms. Zachmann ultimately recreates the initial F-formation, returning to the position in which the conversation started, with her body between Richard and Edward’s (56:10). Revisiting the characteristics of the co-constructive participation structure described in the Phase 2 Analysis, we see Ms. Zachmann validating their narrative, and extending the play by choosing a new figure and modifying the Ninja Turtles theme song playfully.
Figure 7. Edward invites Ms. Zachmann to continue playing Ninja Turtles
Example 2: “Play with us.” The first example clearly demonstrates the interactional work accomplished via the visuospatial modality. For instance, the way people organize their bodies when interacting with one another is of importance when facilitating a common focus of attention (Kendon, 1990). Taking place just a few moments later, the second example is of interest because Edward verbalizes his discontent with the current F-formation, questioning Ms. Zachmann’s ‘withness’ (Figure 8) Edward does not use this language, of course, but he verbalizes his request that Ms. Zachmann participate fully in the interaction (58:02), and requests that she assume a specific position to demonstrate that commitment (58:05). Edward is interpreting Ms. Zachmann’s initial body posture (standing) as an unstable position relative to the current activity, their imaginative play (Schegloff, 1998). Ms. Zachmann challenges Edward’s request that she “play with us,” saying, “I am playing with you right now” (58:08).

Richard’s peripheral participation is evidenced by his gesture to take a seat (58:11) after hearing Ms. Zachmann challenge Edward’s suggestion that sitting equates playing (“You are not sitting down. He is not sitting down.”). The ultimate persuasion is visuospatial rather than verbal, when both boys take a seat and Ms. Zachmann obliges (58:17). Edward’s interprets Ms. Zimmerman’s new body placement as conveying her wiliness to participate, and the three once again co-construct an F-formation. Edward’s comment, “We are playing Lion Guard” [a practice by which the boys create narratives involving the characters of this popular Disney Jr. show] solidifies Ms. Zimmerman’s participation in this F-formation as stable and signifies the beginning of a new interaction (58:21). This 19-second exchange demonstrates Edward and Richard’s agency as initiators of play and directors of participation. We see Ms. Zachmann’s decision to create a stable rather than unstable participation structure, resulting in the co-creation of a play narrative. These 19 seconds also demonstrate the importance of multimodal
interactional analysis, allowing us to understand more fully the nuanced moves that together comprise such an interaction.

Figure 8. Ms. Zachmann is invited to, “play with us.”
Discussion

This case study used ethnographic methods complemented by video based field work to investigate the features of teacher-child interactions in one preschool classroom where students traditionally identified as ‘at risk’ by their racial and economic demographics achieve academic success in a supportive and respective climate. Findings indicate the high incidence of a co-constructive participation structure in which meaning-making occurred organically from the interaction, as the topic, duration, and participants in the interaction were not predetermined or planned by the teachers. Within this participation structure, discourse analysis indicated common features of teachers’ discursive moves, positioning students as agentive learners by validating, then elevating, students’ content learning, play narratives, and problem solving strategies.

When ‘learning to read’ in both the traditional and the progressive sense, children become experienced in both their social occasions and their acquisitions of meaning, in both spoken and written language. Children are therefore simultaneously learning linguistic and social cues, linguistic and social organization, linguistic and social practices (Kress, 2005). Therefore, “every definition of what fruitful discourse looks like is a non-neutral political decision based on a set of beliefs about what education should be” (Anderson, 2009, p. 44). With young children on the leading edge of a steady demographic change owed to immigration and the growing number of Latinx and Asian children born in the U.S., it is imperative that classroom instruction, particularly high quality preschool interactions, reflect the rich cultural experiences of all children.

In looking for ways to enact culturally sustaining pedagogies, the Triangle teachers both integrate content of relevance to young African American children, but also look beyond the
broader concepts of ‘culture,’ at individual students, and follow their lead. Through the co-
constructive participation structure, Ms. Zachmann, Mr. Pearson, and Ms. O’Neal validate
students as individuals, as learners, and as problem solvers. They then pivot their validation of
children’s individual strengths to elevate their literacy and language development towards
achieving the local academic standards. These practices are racially and linguistically just in that
children’s identities are constructed in part by their racial and linguistic histories and traditions;
by positioning students as agentive learners the Triangle teachers acknowledge and honor these
identities. By narrowing the lens of analysis from first identifying the most prevalent and most
fruitful participation structures, to identifying features of the discursive moves teachers make,
and finally using a multimodal (inter)action analysis to investigate the nonverbal moves teachers
make to position their students as agentive learners, we can begin to better understand each of
the components necessary to create a culturally sustaining preschool such as this one.
CHAPTER III: Not either/or but both/and: How the Policies and Protocols of Preschool Support Equitable Opportunities to Learn

It is a Tuesday afternoon, and the 17 students of the Triangle classroom are resting on their cots after lunch. A few have already drifted off to sleep. Others whisper, and ask for yet another sip of water. Janiyah’s* and Darien’s cots are near the multi-stall bathroom shared with the adjoining classroom, and the florescent light spills onto their blankets. “Ms. Zachmann, can you tuck me in like a race car driver?” Darien asks.

“I can, but you are already like a race car driver, fast, and strong, and ready to go!” she replies.

“Mrs. Zachmann, can you tuck me in like a mermaid?”

“I can, but you are already like a mermaid, graceful, and swift, and ready for new adventures!”

While the two children settle in for nap time, Mrs. Zachmann retrieves her water bottle, her computer, and a Teaching Strategies Gold manual. Along with Mr. Pearson and Mrs. O’Neal, she takes her seat in a wooden chair at a student work table, slightly larger than the others so that the weekly team meeting of the classroom’s three teachers can begin.

Quietly, so as not to disrupt the children around them, she begins, “Ok, so how is the [tree] study going? Any thoughts or feelings?”

Mr. Pearson says, “It’s going pretty good. You know, they are remembering [what we are learning] about the trees. I know that Taliah remembers. ‘Deciduous!’”

“And even just that she pronounced it.”

“…and she even pronounced it correctly too!”
“She didn’t struggle with the word at all she was just like, ‘Yeah, deciduous!’”

And I was like, ‘Yeah!’”

“I was like, ‘Kiss your brain!’ You know?!”

“Yeah, and when we are on the carpet, and I ask her a question, I don’t have to remind her to give me a complete sentence. She will say ‘I prefer...’ Yeah, so that’s progress!”

Part of a community collaborative childhood center (CCCC), the Triangle classroom is financially supported by both Head Start and the Department of Human Services’ Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) funding. The Agency overseeing the CCCC serves as the Head Start grantee, and has established conditions provisionary of continued funding beyond those enforced by Head Start. The weekly team meeting is one such policy. The format the meeting follows is one such protocol. Compliance necessitates many of the classroom and center routines observed during this study, and yet none of these practices serves the purpose of compliance for compliance sake. Routines and practices are intentional and purposeful, in the global sense of serving the center and agency mission, and in the local sense of serving the personal and intellectual needs of children and their families.

The Triangle classroom is supported by Head Start and other external funding entities because it provides early childhood educational services to children whose families could not otherwise afford these opportunities. Because of urban disinvestment, the local community has a national reputation for high rates of crime and violence, with low levels of high school graduation and employment (Todman, Hricisak, Fey, & Sherrod Taylor, 2012; Uehara, Chalmers, Jenkins, & Shakoor, 1996). Unfavorable social conditions create strain for children and families pursuing economic and educational stability. Amidst these challenges the children
and families, teachers and administrators who are all part of the Triangle classroom are doing extraordinary things. Indeed, they are doing what they should by way of protocol, but during the 8-weeks of my observations in the Triangle classroom, what became clear was that although many of their classroom practices related to compliance and mandates, they were not compliance-driven. Classroom practices were, first and foremost, pedagogically sound while in compliance with external policies and protocols. The result was a highly productive and positive environment for young children traditionally categorized as ‘at risk.’

This classroom, and the center in which it is situated, are examples of success despite statistics predicting failure. They must comply with external mandates to secure funding in an economically under-resourced context, but it is also worth noting that in addition to the external compliance required to maintain quality, they also contend with external social and economic factors. This research does not anomalize their success but strengthens the argument that high quality early childhood educational opportunities are possible across economic disparities, if appropriate supports are made available to teachers, students, and families.

In this article, I describe the antecedents and the implications of the ‘accountability climate’ and associated ‘compliance climate’ in early childhood education, seeing the Triangle classroom as a counter-example of one governmentally-funded preschool classroom in an under-resourced community practicing compliance but more centrally attending closely to student academic achievement and overall well-being. The research conducted illuminates the features of this preschool classroom that I argue make such successes possible.
Review of the Literature

Early Learning Standards and Accountability

Whereas academic performance was previously expected as the result of having engaged in formal/K-12 schooling, an unprecedented level of academic performance is expected of children because of their experiences preceding school entry. Improving children’s preparedness for school success has become a national priority (National Governors’ Association Center for Best Practices, 2003, 2004, 2005), increasing a press for and opportunities within early childhood education (Goffin, 2010), especially for children considered to be “at risk” for school achievement. Because all 50 states now have early learning standards in place for children ages 3-5, and most have early learning guidelines for children beginning at birth (Daily, Burkhauser, & Halle, 2010), student outcomes prior to kindergarten entry have begun to dominate the discourse of early childhood education policy. However, while definitions of school readiness tend to focus on social and academic competencies that children are presumed to need to start school ready to learn (Mashburn & Pianta, 2006), research emphasizes the benefit of a ‘process’ over ‘product’ approach to defining the construct.

School Readiness

The National Center for Research on Early Childhood Education found that the growing body of school readiness research demonstrates the importance of positive, well-constructed teacher-child interactions as a means for promoting children’s school readiness (Goffin, 2010). Recent school readiness research therefore reaffirms the longstanding body of early childhood research endorsing high quality interactions with others as effective and productive sites of learning (Heath, 1983; Sheffelin & Cochran-Smith, 1984; Snow, 1983; Teale, 1986). Decades of research have informed our understanding of the pedagogical approaches that facilitate such
learning and development, specifically advancing our understanding of high-quality preschool instruction (Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Phillips, Norris, & Mason, 1996). Because of this research, many children nationally are receiving quality care and instruction with optimistic results (Justice, Mashburn, Hamre, & Pianta, 2008; Pianta, 1999). Children who attend a high-quality center- or school-based preschool program in the year before formal school gain an advantage that persists into the elementary school, with the largest effects seen among marginalized student populations (Magnuson, Meyers, Ruhm, & Waldfogel, 2004).

Because of these benefits, the number of governmentally-supported early childhood education initiatives is steadily increasing. Johnson’s 1964 ‘War on Poverty’ initiated the first federally funded preschool program in Head Start and state-funded early childhood education programs have since been established in 45 states. Additionally, Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge and other early childhood grant opportunities have increased the number of state-level programs receiving federal funding. In short, more young children in the United States are enrolled in an early childhood education setting outside of their home than ever before, and more of these settings are funded externally than ever before.

Although standardized measures of ‘school readiness’ are becoming increasingly prominent in early childhood settings (i.e., the Gesell Developmental Observation-Revised; Brigance Early Childhood Screen II-K) the funding of early childhood education continues to be based more centrally on center-level compliance rather than on student-level performance. Rather than test scores, measures of mandated policy and protocol observance serve the need for accountability. Ideologically, classroom-level evaluation is consistent with decades of early childhood research (i.e., Mashburn, Pianta, Hamre, Downer, Bryant, & Howes, 2008; Phillips, Gormley, & Lowenstein, 2009) reifying the developmental nature of children’s learning by
emphasizing the evaluation of environment, emotional support and instructional supports over measured student outcomes. Recent interest (i.e., Ludwig & Phillips, 2008; Reynolds & Temple, 2005; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000) and investment (i.e., U.S. Department of Education, Office of Early Learning, 2016) in early childhood educative settings has resulted in progressively more rigorous policies and protocols intended to increase the quality of early childhood education (e.g., Burchinal, Tarullo, & Zaslow, 2016).

The largest government-supported early childhood education program, Head Start has mandated policies and protocols called Program Performance Standards. 81 Fed. Reg. 172 (2016) states:

The Head Start Program Performance Standards are the foundation on which programs design and deliver comprehensive, high-quality individualized services to support the school readiness of children from low-income families…from birth to age five. They encompass requirements to provide education, health, mental health, nutrition, and family and community engagement services, as well as rules for local program governance and aspects of federal administration of the program.

Following the inception of Head Start in 1965, the first set of Program Performance Standards was published in 1978. Since then, the performance standards have been revised following subsequent Congressional reauthorizations. In the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, Congress put forth a bipartisan reauthorization of Head Start, mandating a revision of the program performance standards to update and raise the education standards. This was the first major overhaul of Head Start Program Performance Standards in the organization’s 50-year history, and took nearly a decade to complete. The final rule went into effect in November of 2016 and modernizes the Head Start Program Performance Standards, last revised in 1998.
Compliance with these standards will be phased in over the next few years, with full compliance mandatory by August 2021.

Theoretically effective, this increased accountability can create pragmatic challenges for centers with limited resources. Thus, compliance often takes center stage for early childhood centers, especially where maintaining funds is crucial. The high-stakes of compliance for Head Start grantees has grown out of provisions implemented in recent years. The Head Start Program, Final Rule (2011) states:

Head Start is the largest federal investment in early childhood education, serving nearly one million of our nation’s most vulnerable young children and their families. It is the federal government’s responsibility to make sure that these children and families get the highest quality services possible. This final rule makes structural changes in Head Start that will drive significant improvements in program quality. Specifically, for the first time in the history of Head Start, individual grantees whose programs fall short of certain standards will be required to compete with other organizations to continue receiving funding. Funds will be awarded to the organization that can best meet the needs of Head Start children and families.

Even when competing for resources, compliance does not need to be achieved at the expense of high quality instructional practices. While some early childhood education sites have taken an either/or approach to compliance and quality instruction—seeing the allocation of resources as capable of achieving only one of these successfully—others have found ways to integrate external mandates into practice in meaningful ways, continuing to foreground and value pedagogical excellence while also checking the necessary boxes. This both/and approach results from a steadfast vision of the purpose and intent of early childhood education for all – one that is
not waivered by fluctuating external influences, but instead integrates them into their mission of high quality instruction.

The preschool classroom described here takes the both/and approach. It is not an anomaly, but the instructional practices observed in this room occur in many fewer sites than one would hope. Focusing on the policies and protocols in place that facilitate the instructional practices of the Triangle teachers, we must ask: How do these policies and protocols reflect and shape classroom interactions?

The Present Study

Community & Classroom Context

As a leading social service agency (SSA), the parent organization of the Community Child Care Center (CCCC) serves nearly 40,000 children and families in need each year. The organization delivers over 70 social service programs throughout 40 Illinois counties. Since 1883, the SSA has been a leader in responding to the changing needs of disadvantaged children and families in Illinois, establishing best practices and shaping laws in child welfare, early childhood and juvenile justice. The SSA is recognized as a leading provider of quality programs and services to marginalized children and families at six CCCCs across the state. Responding to the growing need in one urban neighborhood, the SSA opened its second CCCS in the Edgeview* community in 2007. Necessitated by an increased demand for Head Start and Early Head Start slots within the neighborhood, the non-profit has answered the community’s call for resources in a big way, providing both quantity and quality in early childhood care.

Often represented in the media as ‘the most dangerous neighborhood’ in a large Midwestern city, Edgeview continues to be wrought with gang violence, narcotics crime, theft, and robbery. The neighborhood has the fifth highest frequency of violent crimes in the city, and
has a high unemployment rate (over 21%) as well as a median income less than half that of the city’s average (City of [redacted] Data Portal, 2015). The local social and economic challenges facing the families and children served by this CCCC are great – high levels of crime, unemployment, and poverty are the result of generations of systemic disinvestment. Within this climate, the Center has received accolades for their approaches to student instruction and resulting student outcomes at both the state and national levels.

One measure of accountability for Head Start Grantees is the CLASS assessment. CLASS, or the Classroom Assessment Scoring System, is an observation instrument that assesses the quality of teacher-child interactions in center-based preschool classrooms that support children's learning and development: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support (Downer, Booren, Lima, Luckner, Pianta, 2010). Within each domain are dimensions that capture more specific details about teachers' interactions with children. Each dimension is rated on a 1-7 scale, with a score of 1 or 2 indicating low-quality teacher-child interactions, while a 6 or a 7 indicates high quality. Since 2001, the CLASS has been used as a high-stakes assessment when Head Start issued new guidelines stating that, because of increasing demands for limited resources, Head Start grantees could be required to compete for renewed financial support if their CLASS scores were not up to par. Data from Head Start monitoring and CLASS reviews suggest that roughly a third of grantees would have been designated for competition based on the revised criteria (45 C. F. R. § 1307 2011). Looking at classroom-level data, we can compare the CLASS national averages to the preschool classrooms at this community site. Indicated by the orange bars (Figure 9), we see that the preschools at this community center outperformed all national averages on all dimensions of the CLASS assessment tool in 2014.
The Triangle classroom is one of six preschool classrooms in the CCCC, consisting of three teachers and 17 students, and receiving blended funding from Head Start, Preschool for All, and the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). Mrs. Zachmann is in her third year as a teacher, having spent the entirety of those three years in the Triangle classroom. Mr. Pearson and Mrs. O’Neal have 12 and 31 years of experience, respectively; both have prior experience in infant toddler settings and have spent the last four years in the Triangle classroom. This is the team’s third year working together in the Triangle Room. Previously organized as multi-age classrooms, the Triangle classroom now consists of only pre-kindergarten students, ages 4 and 5 in their last year in a preschool setting. For a few of the students this is their second year in the Triangle classroom because of the reorganization.

Learning of and from the Center

I came to know of the Triangle classroom through two colleagues who worked with the CCCC on an Investing in Innovation Development Grant (i3) a few years prior. I wanted to learn more about a preschool setting described as ‘successful’ – both on standardized, externally recognized measures of student achievement and classroom performance, and more local

![CLASS Scores (2014)](image)

Figure 9. CLASS scores: National average and preschool classrooms of the Center
recognition as a site valuing racial, linguistic, and economic diversity. Holly and Jessica introduced me to Ms. Cooper, the Center Director. Ms. Cooper later apologized for the delay in considering my request to initiate research at the CCCC, explaining that their policy of collaborative decision making was effective but sometimes not yet efficient. Ms. Cooper sought input from the Educational Coordinator and the Executive Director before agreeing to let me introduce myself to a teaching team. My request would only then be given full consideration with the expressed interest of the classroom teachers and parent/guardians. Following a successful initial meeting with the teaching team, I was asked to submit my proposal to the SSA’s internal review board (IRB) for approval. The IRB office asked that I clarify a few study details, and revise the language on a student assent form. I complied with their requests, completed the background check and fingerprinting required of all personnel interacting with children at the site, and participated in a formal orientation where the contents of the Volunteer/Intern Handbook were reviewed. After these preparatory steps, I was invited into the Triangle classroom.

Ms. Zachmann, Mr. Pearson, and Mrs. O’Neal welcomed me as a peripheral observer, allowing me to live as a ‘fly on the wall’ in their classroom. They, along with three administrators, participated in multiple one-on-one interviews, the students’ parent/guardian consented to video recording. I was there to watch and learn. During our initial meeting, I clarified my purpose as there looking at, not looking for, something. My purpose for sharing their space was explained the students as wanting to learn how they learn. After a few weeks in the classroom one student commented, “I think I’ll call you Ms. Tree because all you do is stand around.” Aware that my presence itself was intrusive, I still intentionally limited my interaction with the teachers and students to capture the most organic happenings possible.
Study Design

To describe the characteristics of the instructional practices and to understand the policies and protocols facilitating these practices, I conducted an 8-week case study using ethnographic methods (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) complemented by video-based fieldwork (Jewitt, 2012). While video-based field work facilitated a close look at the sites of interaction between teachers and students, more traditional ethnographic methods informed the understanding of the systemic structures at play. Field notes, team meetings and interviews were the primary sources of data for analysis. I also referenced CCCC document artifacts such as job descriptions, employee handbooks, parent communication, and classroom curricula to consider the origins of the policies witnessed in practice.

Data were collected in March, April, and May 2016. During the first two weeks of data collection I took extensive time stamped field notes, collected classroom artifacts and conducted initial interviews with the three classroom teachers. When taking ethnographic field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011), I recorded instances I found significant or unexpected, and attended explicitly to what the participants react to as significant or important. Acknowledging that conclusions drawn from the data are inherently connected to the methods through which the data were gathered, I referenced my methodological field notes alongside the observational during the analysis phases to situate my observations within the circumstances of their ‘discovery’ (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). Beginning the third week of the study, video data were collected for four sequential weeks using multiple cameras simultaneously, resulting in a collective 144 hours of video data. Camera placement and timing decisions were made based on a cursory analysis of the first two weeks of field notes. Here, 30 observational field notes, 12 interview transcripts, and 5 collaborative team meeting transcripts were analyzed for evidence of
center-level policies and protocols as the plausible causes of the racially and linguistically just interactions between teachers and children, as captured on video.

A recursive processes of data collection and analysis provided a responsive and systematic way to meaningfully filter large data sets that are a natural outcome of researching the “wonderful messiness of classroom interaction” (Wohlwend, 2009, p. 240). Each iteration contributed to a detailed account of the classroom practices, and informed the construction of a preliminary codebook. Open coding of classroom observational data identified salient features of instruction (see Chapter 2 for a detailed account of these findings) while interview and team meeting transcripts fleshed out the descriptions of enacted policies and protocols shared here.

**Policies and Protocols**

For purposes of this study, I have loosely adopted the definitions of *policies* and *protocols* from the Business Dictionary (2016). Policies are defined as the principles, rules, and guidelines formulated or adopted by an organization to reach its long-term goals. In most cases, policies are published in a handbook, online, or in another form that is widely accessible. Policies are designed to influence and determine all major decisions and actions, and all activities taking place within the boundaries set by them. In the case of the CCCC, some of the policies in place explicitly derive from the Head Start Program Performance Standards. Others have been developed by the CCCC’s grantee, or the SSA. A few of the policies have been developed and implemented at the center level.

Protocols are the specific methods employed to express policies in action in day-to-day operations of the organization. Most protocols are internally derived, or adopted from other sources to meet the specific needs of the CCCC. For example, hiring Family Support Staff is a policy CCCC follows instated by Head Start, but the way in which Family Support Staff are
assigned their cases follows CCCC policies – Family Support Staff work with family units instead of classroom units. Additionally, local policies require the Triangle teachers to phone the front desk from their classroom any time they exit the building outside of their assigned playground time. Walks to the local library or around the block must be reported to and recorded by the front desk. Together, policies and protocols ensure that a point of view held by the governing body of an organization is translated into steps that result in an outcome, or classroom practices, compatible with that view.

**Findings**

The policies and protocols necessary to adhere to Head Start Program Performance Standards, coupled with other external factors, create multiple influences on the teacher-child interactions of the Triangle classroom (Figure 10). Informed by the analysis of observational field notes, interview transcripts, and team meeting transcripts, it was determined that these influences are related to either organizational infrastructure (yellow), instructional capacity (blue), or a combination of both (green). Organizational infrastructure is defined as policies and protocols that support the healthy operation of the organization and the classroom, but are not explicitly connected to teaching and learning outcomes. Instructional capacity refers to influences that are related directly to teaching and learning. Informed by ethnographic data collection and analysis, and a close read of the 2011 Head Start Performance Standards adhered to during data collection, I define each influence, describe the policies and protocols in place at the CCCC complying with the Standard, and explain how classroom practices integrated compliance in intentional and purposeful ways while continuing to forefront student learning.
Organizational Infrastructure

Organizational infrastructure includes, but is not limited to, administrator leadership at both the SSA and CCCC level, the divisions of labor and/or workload allocations, including the role of support staff, and decisions about teacher-child classroom ratios. Although ‘once removed’ from the happenings of the Triangle classroom, these infrastructures reify the value of rich teacher-child interactions as evidenced by the investment in support staff whom ‘lighten the load’ of the classroom teachers, allowing them to focus on student teaching and learning. For example, it has become commonplace for classroom teachers to devote much of their time to managerial tasks such as collecting permission slips for field trips or hearing/vision screenings, replenishing supplies such as paper towel and tissue, or contacting parents regarding student absences. In the Triangle classroom, current analyses indicate that off-loading of managerial
and/or administrative tasks allowed teachers to spend free-play and open-center time child watching, thereby creating opportunities for genuine, personalized, and scaffolded interactions between teachers and children.

**SSA leadership.** The Social Service Agency has a local history extending more than 125 years. Their mission to “partner with children, youth, and families whose potential is at risk to create hope, opportunity, and bright futures” is similar to the mission and vision of Head Start and other funding agencies that now support the work of the SSA. Founded originally as a foster care service provider, the SSA’s commitment to early childhood education is a result of “responding to the changing needs of disadvantaged children and families in [the state].” The SSA invests in this mission by investing in the quality of interactions children have with any adult on site – including teachers, support staff, volunteers, and interns. In my role as classroom observer I attended an Intern & Volunteer Orientation session facilitated by the Volunteer Coordinator, who walked through a 31-page orientation handbook including information about the mission, vision, and history of the center, and expectations of the volunteer relationship (see Handbook pg. 10 as Appendix A), followed by six pages of volunteer policies and procedures, introduced as follows:

The policies and procedures below are of equal value and importance to [the SSA]. For the ease of organization, they are listed in alphabetical order. If you have any questions or need further clarification, please do not hesitate to ask the Volunteer Coordinator or your project supervisor.

Specific to volunteers and interns working in SSA early childhood settings such as Triangle classroom is an additional handbook including an Appropriate Language Packet (Appendix B), detailing scenarios observed in ECE spaces with suggested verbal responses to such conflicts.
For example:

2. Child who is feeling sad about parent leaving, lost chance at activity, having to wait for turn, being misunderstood, etc.:

   Toddler:  "We know you are sad, mom will be back later."
   "This might be hard for you to do, but you can do that activity later. Let's do this now."

   Preschool: "What's the matter, why are you crying?" Reaffirm the child's feelings and then give the child some choices on ways to say goodbye or another activity to do to give child some power since loss of power may be felt for situation they are feeling sad about.

The scenarios draw from a university research study cited in the handbook, and the Age-Appropriate Speech and Language Milestones information (Appendix C) is referenced to Johns Hopkins. Providing volunteers with this level of research-based support, including an in-person orientation and resources such as the handbook to refer to later, influence the ways in which all adults entering the CCCC building interact with children. It is clear from the outset of one’s involvement with this organization what is valued and how to achieve these values as a member of their team. Ms. Zachmann comments:

   There is a general mission statement for all of [redacted] that I think is very similar to Head Start’s that is about trying to support and empower families, and students, because the center is so much more than just the preschool. We have a GED program and computer classes and a lot of help to get parents jobs and even to help them get bus fare and housing, so it is a very holistic approach.

   **CCCC leadership.** Administrators emphasizing compliance tend to implement a top-
down model of decision making (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). External compliance is achieved when teachers and support personnel comply internally to protocols developed and implemented by the administration, with little to no input from others. At the CCCC, the site director manages the day-to-day operations for the building, with educational coordinators overseeing and supporting the Early Head Start and Head Start classrooms. When Site Director Ms. Cooper needed to make a personnel change, she describes the process employed at the CCCC, which is one of collaborative decision making:

I wanted to consider making a change downstairs. Maybe having this other teacher work with this other team. I could have made the decision [myself]. Like, ‘Yeah, you are going. It just makes sense.’ But we didn’t. We asked the teachers, ‘What do you think about moving to this room to offer each other support?’ And come to find out the one teacher said, ‘I don’t think I would like to do that. I think I would like to wait until someone new comes in, to give me an opportunity to work with someone new.’ I said, ‘Okay, I really appreciate your feedback and for letting us know. I will share this with your direct supervisor, and we will go from there. Thank you for giving us your input.’ And then going from there. So that kind of thing is what we are trying to make sure that we allow people to be a part of the process.

Ms. Cooper’s leadership embraces the mission and vision of the wider SSA, and is constantly seeking ways to put these policies into practice. During our interview, she referenced the SSA intake described above for staff, citing the strength of the agency’s orientation program but she also commented that the same does not currently exist at the center level. She planned to spend the coming summer putting together a handbook for the CCCC specifically, outlining “what to expect the first week, the second week, to help them get that full orientation of what to expect
when they come into the building.” There is an intake process that new hires are expected to complete within the first 2-3 months of employment, but beyond compliance with this policy she wants to invest in new hires’ relationships from the outset. Ms. Cooper believes an employee’s first impressions of the Center really matter. She described a mentor program she will propose to SSA leadership this summer, one in which established staff volunteer to serve as mentors for new staff for…

…maybe six months’ time, to connect with that person every couple of weeks to make sure they are adjusting, see how they are doing, be their friend, get them involved in the community, etc., and then give them a certificate at the end for supporting someone that they can use towards their own credentials, because they have shown initiative as it relates to leadership.

This example highlights the dual purpose of Ms. Cooper’s approach – compliance with the required intake policy established by the SSA through more personal and meaningful means, by involving established staff, who themselves meet the requirements of an external protocol (continued credentialing) in the process. By establishing this local protocol, Ms. Cooper is intentionally and purposefully supporting new hires as they become acclimated with the position and the center. She upholds the SSA’s policies for interviewing and hiring the best candidates, and she sees value in retaining these candidates as employees. Teacher consistency is to the benefit of the organization (orientation requires both time and money), and to the benefit of the children (Ms. Cooper specifically cited recent research detailing the positive effects of consistency of care during our conversations). The effects of the mentoring policy are also two-fold. Newly hired employees gain confidence in their role and establish comradery with peers quickly, decreasing the learning curve significantly, while mentoring teachers are provided an
opportunity to share their expertise, highlighting their professionalism and qualifying them for advance credentialing.

Ms. Cooper feels supported in her role, and her investment in supporting her staff is an outgrowth of her having benefited from the opportunities to grown in her position as an administrator. She has been in her current role for two years, and describes:

I’ve had a lot of support, which is very rare, in a lot of programs don’t have the kind of support, that I feel that I have - from continuing education to professional development opportunities that have been off the charts in my little time in my two years. The different projects, the different levels of students I have had a chance to interact with, to doing research with [Local Private Research University], with [Local Public Research University], just everywhere. The i3 project in itself, was cutting edge. So, that is the best way to describe it. Cutting edge, innovative, creative, passionate, and that's totally me.

Ms. Cooper’s level of workplace satisfaction influences her ability to provide the same for her staff; the comradery and professionalism observed and described within the vertical organizational infrastructure are also evident horizontally, or at the staff/peer level.

**Workload & Division of Labor.** Decisions made by both the SSA level and the CCC level of infrastructural leadership reflect commitment to promoting students’ success by protecting instructional time. Teacher workload is reduced when non-instructional tasks are offloaded to support staff, and division of labor decisions are made at the classroom level, developing organically and adjusting as needed.

The first priority is reflected in the SSA’s decision to fund support staff who help teachers carry the burden of most health and safety compliance tasks, and the CCCC’s decisions
in hiring people who are both qualified to perform the duties of their position and equally committed to the mission of the organization. Ms. Zachmann commented on Ms. Cooper’s leadership style, saying, “she has a very hands-on style with that, she is very, very conscious of hiring people with a very positive attitude that are mission driven and believe that what we are doing is important.”

Examples include the role of the janitorial and facilities staff, the family support service staff, and the division of clerical/maintenance responsibilities between the Triangle teachers. With respect to the janitorial/facilities staff, each day Mr. Jose walks through the classroom with a cart of supplies, replenishing paper cups students use when tooth brushing, paper towels at the teacher’s sink, and toilet paper in the restroom joining two classrooms. During one observation, Mr. Jose commented on the music Ms. Zachmann plays, asked how the special Jell-O treat the students made yesterday turned out, and thanked a student for drawing him a picture. The students know Mr. Jose by name, and he draws from the resources shared with him when he was hired a few years ago to interact with the students, building both language and relationships.

Clerical/maintenance responsibilities are the other area shown through observations to reveal the CCCC’s commitment to protecting instructional time. Access to clean and well-stocked facilities is one provision of the Head Start Performance Standards. Other standards detail classroom safety measures such as:

45 C. F. R. § 1304.13.04(a)(1) Posted policies and plans of action for emergencies that require rapid response on the part of staff (e.g., a child choking) or immediate medical or dental attention.

45 C. F. R. § 1304.22(a)(2) Posted locations and telephone numbers of emergency response systems. Up-to-date family contact information and authorization for emergency
care for each child must be readily available

Whereas updating student contact information, taking inventory of the first aid kit, and replacing worn toothbrushes are often the responsibility of the classroom teachers, and often accomplished during classroom times such as centers or free play when students are involved in learning, the CCCC protects such instructional time by employing a full-time staff member whose primary responsibility is to complete safety checks and file the appropriate paperwork for all 14 classrooms at the CCCC. After observing the facilities manager in the Triangle classroom, I asked Ms. O’Neal to explain her presence. She said:

Oh, she is the facility checker…. She checks the facility, checks our first aid kit, our mailbox, our toothbrushes, the sign in sheet. She was counting children [for teacher/child ratio compliance], making sure the outlets are covered, making sure we have everything, all the supplies we need, making sure, even in that backpack, that all the emergency information is correct, that there are addresses and telephone numbers and things like that. So, she makes sure that everything that we are supposed to have in the classroom we have.

Although Family Support is a position mandated by the Head Start Performance Standards, the SSA began as a social service agency working to support families and therefore it continues to regard the growth and development of families and children as interdependent. Ms. Zachmann noted in her first interview that the general mission statement of the SSA is like that of Head Start in that it is:

…about trying to support and empower families, and students, because the center is so much more than just the preschool. We have a GED program and computer classes and a lot of help to get parents jobs and even to help them get bus fare and housing and, so it is
a very holistic approach.

At SSA, Family Support staff are numerous – six full time employees plus a director and an intern, serving just under 150 students – and work both alongside and independent of classroom teachers. Instead of being assigned to a specific classroom (and a different one each year), each member of the support team carries a caseload of families that remains consistent from year to year. Given this approach, parents have one steady ‘point person’ with whom they have developed a lasting relationship over time, and to whom they can turn if in need of bus fare or employment help, as Ms. Zachmann points out. This relationship also relieves some of the often-stressful conversations about student truancy and tardiness, for example, that may otherwise take place between the classroom teacher and the parent. This is something that Family Support addresses “because they have a stronger relationship with the parents around those nitty gritty things.” Ms. Zachmann distinguishes between the “bubbly” role of the child’s teacher, in contrast to the Family Support staff who “understand what is going on financially with the parents, family wise. On a need-to-know basis they will tell us something, but we don’t need to know everything that is going on, if that makes sense.” Instead, the Triangle teachers can focus their energies on teaching and learning, knowing that the social needs of families are attended to by the Family Support staff. This model also preserves the privacy of the parents, allowing them to also maintain a focus on their child(ren).

Given the supportive nature of the janitorial and facilities staff, along with the family support service staff, only a fraction of teacher resources is required to attend to clerical or other non-instructional duties. Teachers attend to decisions about divisions of labor at the classroom-level, with master and assistant teachers’ voices equally heard. Within the Triangle classroom, defining instructional roles was intentional and yet remains fluid depending on current
circumstances. During the months leading up to Ms. Zachmann’s hire, Mr. Pearson and Ms. O’Neal were running the Triangle classroom as a pair. Ms. Zachmann describes the transition from two to three classroom teachers, and how they decided on their roles:

I came into the room a couple of times just to observe to see the summer before I started how the routine was so I could just kind of ‘fit in’ because I didn’t want to come in and jolt everything and be like ‘this is how we do it.’ I wanted to know how do you do it, what are the things you do and the songs you do and so, that was how they did it. We just kind of stuck after we had our first couple of conversations about who would do what and what makes the most sense and that’s where we landed with it. It hasn’t changed too much.

These roles are somewhat fluid, as will be described in depth as evidence of the Triangle teachers’ weekly planning sessions. Ms. O’Neal concurs, saying, “But we kind of continually sit and assess the routines, like, ‘Hey, I’ve got this going on and I need to take care of this at this time so, ok then will you handle this transition…”

**Teacher/Student Ratio.** Like the parameters set by most state governments, the Head Start Program Performance Standards for teacher/student ratio of 4- and 5- year olds are as follows:

45 C. F. R. § 1306.32 (a)(1). Head Start classes must be staffed by a teacher and an aide or two teachers and, whenever possible, a volunteer.

45 C. F. R. § 1306.32(a)(3). For classes serving predominantly four or five-year-old children, the average class size of that group of classes must be between 17 and 20 children, with no more than 20 children enrolled in any one class.

The SSA caps preschool classroom enrollment at 17. The six preschool classrooms at the CCCC
are each staffed by at least one state-certified teacher of Early Childhood Education (Birth-Grade 3) and two teachers who have earned either the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or an Associates’ Degree in Early Childhood Education. These positions are described and defined as Master Classroom Teacher and Classroom Teacher (Appendix D & E). The title of Aide is intentionally not used within the center. When observing the Triangle classroom, it is difficult to discern which adult in the room is the designated master teacher. As members of a team the Triangle teachers work together as partners with a unified vision; they share an understanding of how to best support their students, and how to develop learning activities to foster student’ learning. Their communication make ongoing collaboration a reality (Baker and Manfredi-Petitt 2004; Casper and Theilheimer 2010).

Staffing of the classroom is intentional, with Ms. Zachmann opening the classroom at 7:00am and remaining until 3:30pm, Ms. O’Neal joining her at 8:00am and leaving at 4:30, and Mr. Pearson arriving at 9:00 and closing the classroom at the end of the day. This structure creates a manageable workday for each of the teachers and provides consistency for children. No instructional time is compromised in transitions necessary when debriefing an additional adult on the day’s happenings. Also, because there are three classroom teachers, the required teacher/student ratios rarely required attention. If an adult needed to step out to talk to a parent, use the restroom, or take their lunch break, the remaining two classroom teachers maintained classroom practices without loss of any instructional time.

**Instructional Capacity**

Center policies and protocols provide the resources necessary for teachers to advance their professional knowledge around developmentally appropriate, culturally sustaining practices. For example, the structured protocol for weekly team meetings normalized the practice
of using classroom observational data to inform pedagogical decisions for the week ahead. Similarly, the center culture purports a ‘teacher-as-learner’ mindset, supporting professional development opportunities for classroom teachers, assistant teachers, food preparation staff, and administrative personnel. The outcomes of such investment in adult learning opportunities are often evidenced in teacher-child interactions, as well as custodian-child, receptionist-child, and cook-child interactions.

Professional Development. Professional development is widely considered by both communities of scholarship and of practice to be the most effective means of improving classroom instruction (Buysse, Winton, & Rous, 2009). From single-day, decontextualized workshops to sustained partnerships between schools and content experts, the term “professional development” can imply a broad range of structures meant to improve teaching and learning in schools, as defined in the Performance Standards:

45 C. F. R. § 1304.52.(j) Grantee and delegate agencies must, at a minimum, perform annual performance reviews of each Early Head Start and Head Start staff member and use the results of these reviews to identify staff training and professional development needs, modify staff performance agreements, as necessary, and assist each staff member in improving his or her skills and professional competencies.

Given this description, centers with limited resources may choose to offer a one-size-fits-all workshop to meet their PD requirements for staff as a way of ‘checking the box.’ However, effective professional development needs to be focused, systemic knowledge, building on pedagogical content knowledge (Raphael, Gavelek, Hynd, Teale, & Shanahan, 2002). It also needs to be actively engaging; not encouraging participants to be passive observers (Raphael, Vasquez, Fortune, Gavelek, & Au, 2014). Center staff share a positive approach to professional
development, seeing participation as an opportunity for personal growth. Ms. O’Neal described PD as “being able to go back to school and freshen up, on little key points,” and Mr. Pearson described the purpose as “helping us focus back onto what you already know, and revisiting how to apply it in the work environment.”

Translating their policies into practice, the CCCC regularly seeks out opportunities to collaborate with local early childhood experts in meaningful, impactful, and sustained ways. The Center participated in a grant-funded, multi-year collaborative coaching program supporting their implementation of reflective decision making. Mr. Pearson described the benefit of participation as allowing them “to look at things from a different perspective.” The project involved monthly meetings with their teaching teams and monthly meetings with their coaches, to review videos of their classroom teaching. Mr. Pearson saw the video reflection as a highlight of participation, saying:

…we were always happy because I was like, ‘I didn’t even notice that I did that,’ or ‘Why was I doing that?’ or ‘Why didn’t I do this better?’ or ‘Why didn’t I say this?’ and things of that nature. We like to view ourselves and get a better feel from the video. We would like to see that video to see what really happened. I like to see what I was doing correctly or what I need to correct to do it better.

Mr. Pearson and Ms. O’Neal’s collective attitude towards professional development as opportunities to better their practice can be attributed in part to their participation in high quality PD, but also in part to their own attitudes about teaching and learning. To return to the influence of the SSA and the CCCC on classroom instruction, it can be noted that this Center and the broader organization intentionally seeks out qualified employees who share this philosophy of life-long learning.
In addition to external partnerships, the Triangle teachers have opportunities to participate in professional development in a leadership capacity. Ms. Zachmann described a program recently launched through which the Education Coordinators of each CCCC, along with two teachers from their Center, would attend SSA-wide trainings and then return to their Center to share what they had learned. Ms. Zachmann recalls her response to this opportunity. She approached her Education Coordinator, Ms. Stevenson, and said, “I am so excited and I want to go and I would love to plan Professional Developments for this!”

**Curricular Decisions.** ‘Preschool curriculum’ is at once both a construct over fifty years in the making and a construct of recent emphasis, given the renewed national interest in school readiness. The High/Scope research (Schweinhart, et. al., 2005) and the Head Start program were in their infancy concurrently, and in the over 60 years that have passed since the inception of each, the role of academics in preschool settings continues to be contested. And yet, there is consensus that a curriculum, as broadly defined by Head Start (below), serves as a necessary roadmap for planning and implementing curriculum and instruction. The Head Start Program Performance Standards state:

45 C. F. R. § 1304.3a(5) *Curriculum* means a written plan that includes: (i) The goals for children’s development and learning; (ii) The experiences through which they will achieve these goals; (iii) What staff and parents do to help children achieve these goals; and (iv) The materials needed to support the implementation of the curriculum. The curriculum is consistent with the Head Start Program Performance Standards and is based on sound child development principles about how children grow and learn.

Head Start’s Early Learning Outcomes Framework is a written plan that includes “(i) goals for children’s development and learning,” and compliance with this Framework is a Head Start
mandate. However, grantees are provided a level of autonomy when making curricular decisions regarding “(ii) the experiences through which they will achieve these goals,” including material and instructional decisions.

A near majority (49.2% [Heller School for Social Policy and Management]) of grantees have adopted the Creative Curriculum for Preschool, the CCCC included. This curriculum features hands-on, project-based investigations intended to integrate learning naturally into every part of a preschoolers’ day. Ms. Zachmann concurs that this approach is consistent with her own philosophy of literacy and language learning, saying:

I believe that working it into as much of the day as possible works. And that is really the best way to go, and that is really what the Creative Curriculum, talks about as well. We shouldn’t have a literacy area in the room; it should be more just kind of everywhere. We do have a place where we keep the paper and the pencils and things; but we try to have things around, like in block area there are clipboards and paper and pencil, we have vocabulary words all around the room.

Because the Creative Curriculum emphasizes student exploration and situated learning, the lesson plans include 45-60 minutes of free center play each day. Ms. O’Neal described this as the most fruitful time for student-initiated conversation, when she can elaborate on their interests to develop problem-solving skills and advanced vocabulary:

Within that curriculum they have free choice to go into whatever they want to go into, or what they want to make, or what they want to be. So, we try to build on those things by asking them questions. Like when Taliah and another child said that they were going to build a castle. And I asked, ‘What does a castle have that makes it a castle?’ She came to the pictures and she said, ‘It has like this right here’, and I said, ‘So you need something
that is *pointy*. What can you use?’ …She got the tubes, the big tubes, and she said, ‘That’s too big, and I only have two of them.’ I said, ‘keep looking around. I see unit blocks on the shelves. How can you use those?’ Just building on that, letting them know they can use material to represent something else, that is free play, and that helps them by just prompting…they learn by playing.

Agency and center input ultimately selected and funded the adoption of the Creative Curriculum. But the teachers’ instructional capacity in implementing the tenets of the curriculum lead to opportunities to engage students in meaningful ways. Teachers capitalize on these opportunities, and reflect on ways that they can increase their effectiveness through assessments and documentation.

**Assessment & Documentation.** Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) is an assessment tool used in combination with Creative Curriculum to document and monitor student growth. The Triangle classroom is divided into thirds, and each of the teacher is responsible for maintaining current and accurate documentation for his/her assigned students. Mr. Pearson says they each have their own education folders in the TSG documentation system, but pragmatically teachers can upload evidence for any of the students in the class. He describes:

> When we are in small group we can just write our observations about our small group students, or Ms. O’Neal will be taking pictures so she might say, ‘Mr. Pearson, I put some pictures up’, or ‘Ms. Zachmann I put some pictures up’, and then I go on [the TSG system] and just see the pictures and then just type in the observation. We kind of help out each other instead of just focusing on our own kids. We kind of spread it out, which makes it much easier.
Documentation is used to account for student learning, and as a means of compliance to the TSG system. Center protocol requires current and accurate evidence for all the learning standards addressed within the curriculum, and Center administration check classroom and student files sporadically for completion. Mr. Pearson describes how the Triangle teachers keep up with this accountability, and how it informs instructional planning. Here, the team discusses their plans for small group centers:

Ms. Z.: Ok. That sounds good. Do you have anything in particular in mind?

Mr. P.: Probably some numbers with the quantifying. Like if I have 10 bears, and if I spin and got 10, then how many bears do I have?...So they can identify the number and then know, ‘Ok, so which one is bigger?’

Ms. Z.: I am looking at the math data to see… with number [recognition] we are good, and connecting numerals to quantities we are pretty high. You know what we are lower in?

Mr. P.: What?

Ms. Z.: Comparing and measuring. That is where we are the lowest [on data].

Ms. O.: Like with the scale?

Ms. Z.: Yeah with the scale for comparing.

Mr. P.: Oh, I got something good. I’ve got a measuring tape at home and we can use the scales…

Beyond documentation purposes, observational assessment data are used as evidence to inform classroom practice. Ms. Zachmann commented, “the lesson planning itself is almost less important than what is in the data, what are your kids able to do.” Focusing on student achievement and growth, the Triangle teachers plan classroom experiences to meet their
developmental needs. During one team meeting, the Triangle teachers collectively reflected on their observations of Conner over the past week, and brainstormed instructional strategies to support the class’s newest member in reaching two academic milestones:

Ms. Z: Ok, so he needs work on numeral recognition and letter recognition. So for numeral recognition it will help him to be in [Mr. P’s small group], and as far as letter recognition, I mean, we can continue to push it through all parts of the day. We are constantly referencing letters and letter sounds. Maybe I can grab him in the morning and do a puzzle.

Ms. O.: We can get them to sit on a letter again. Like, after they come in from the outside or something like that.

Ms. Z.: Oh yeah. Ok.

Ms. O.: They liked that. They had to call out what letter they were sitting on. So if they didn’t remember they could help a friend.

Ms. Z.: Ok that’s great. We will utilize the letter… I’ll just call them letter tiles [typing] for them to sit on after gross motor to promote letter name recognition. Sounds good.

The Triangle teachers comply with external requirements for data collection and documentation, but they do so in ways that authentically and meaningfully inform their practice. Ms. O’Neal commented:

We ask, ‘What are you going to be working on?’, and then you follow through on those, and then, ‘What are the children learning?’, and then from the Gold, ‘How can we connect those to their learning?’ So, we tapped those into our teaching strategies, and we were able to look at the CLASS and then the i3 project was letting us see ourselves on video and that helps us enhance our teaching skills.
The Triangle teachers integrate their own professional development experiences with the student assessment and reflections on their own instructional practices to create an environment that supports rich teacher-child interactions, grounded in evidence and research.

**Team Meetings: Organizational Infrastructure Meets Instructional Capacity**

In addition to monthly staff meetings and weekly memos from Ms. Cooper to the staff, the Triangle team meets weekly in compliance with regulations about communication:

45 C. F. R. § 1304.51(e) *Communication among staff.* Grantee and delegate agencies must have mechanisms for regular communication among all program staff to facilitate quality outcomes for children and families.

Every Thursday the Triangle teachers have one hour of protected common plan time to reflect on the prior week and plan for the week ahead. These weekly meetings are only held when all three teachers—Ms. Zachmann, Mr. Pearson, and Ms. O’Neal—are in attendance. If one of them is absent or unavailable, the meeting is rescheduled to a time when all three can participate. As the Education Coordinator for the preschool classrooms, Ms. Stevenson also attends these weekly meetings approximately once a month, mostly to observe but also to answer questions or share additional information relevant to her preschool teaching teams. Ms. Zachmann leads the meeting each week and completes a Weekly Team Meeting Protocol (Appendix F) as the conversation progresses. She shares the completed Meeting Protocol electronically with the Ms. Cooper (Center Director), Ms. Stevenson (Education Coordinator), and her co-teachers Mr. Pearson and Ms. O’Neal for their own records. The Weekly Meeting Protocol provides skeletal guidance for the topics to be discussed, and although each meeting follows this sequence, conversation happens more organically. It is not uncommon for Ms. Zachmann to pause the exchange for a moment to find a place on the form to record the information just shared.
The meetings are both focused and productive, and relaxed and casual. No one checks their watch or phone during the conversation, and when the team has covered all the necessary information, sometimes in just under an hour, other times in just over an hour, they wrap up. These meetings are joyful. Teachers always lead with the positive, sometimes sharing an anecdote or two resembling *Kids Say the Darndest Things* sketch.

During the 8-week case study five of the weekly team meetings were observed. Transcripts of these meetings were qualitatively coded using constant comparative analysis (Saldana, 2012), and the following characterizations reflect the collapsed codes from this analysis. Across the all topics discussed each week, the team engaged in collaborative problem solving and brainstorming. On the Triangle team, this included:

- Soliciting feedback from quiet team member
- Suggesting rather than telling
- Consensus around the goal. How to achieve the goal.
- Celebrating and incorporating other ideas.
- Asking each other for input, and reevaluating decisions based on that input
- Reifying each other’s ideas, asking for clarification towards collaborative understanding
- Validating each other’s observations, actions, choices through indirect compliment

Within this collaborative climate, the Triangle team created an instructional plan for the coming week based on their reflective conversations. These conversations included reflecting on:

- The successes/challenges of their instructional approaches
• The success/challenges/needs/performance of and uptake by students based on student observations and documentation.
• The physical materials present and how they are taken up by students.
• The data and documentation process
• The impact of decisions implemented based on the prior meeting.

Reflective conversations, a result of the collaborative climate, precede classroom decision making. The decision-making processes observed among the Triangle teachers through the weekly team meetings can be characterized as:

• Connecting observations to the standards.
• Drawing on research to justify decision making
• Setting attainable goals based on their reflection.
• Setting concrete student goals with deadlines. SMART goals.
• Creating unique solutions for individual students based on their individual circumstances.
• Verbalizing how they integrate their teaching philosophy in practice.

These weekly team meetings are at the crux of influence in terms of teacher-child interaction. The priorities established by the SSA and the CCCC coupled with the policies and protocols mandated from external sources meld with teachers’ knowledge of the curriculum developed over time through professional learning opportunities. These resources inform the decisions teachers make about classroom practices, including decisions about classroom spaces and places, and how to allocate instructional time.

**Classroom Space & Materials.** Parents enter the classroom each day with their children, enabling a smooth transition for the preschooler from home to school spaces and creating the
opportunity for informal comradery building between teachers and parents. Mrs. O’Neal comments:

We try to make them feel welcome: this is your child’s classroom and you are welcome to come in here, you are welcome to come in and participate in anything that we have. We don’t want to make them feel like they should stand at that door and that is as far as you can go. No. We want you to know what your child is learning. We want your child to feel ok when they are coming here.

The Triangle teachers recognize that the physical classroom space impacts the ways children and adults perceive the practices taking place there, and are mindful of the environment that they are creating. These conversations are ongoing, and decisions about what materials to include in each interest area are informed each week by recent student observations. Per the guidelines of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale- Revised (ECERS-R), an assessment tool adopted by Head Start for classroom accountability, the Triangle classroom has 9 identified interest areas open to students during center time. These include art, music, blocks, dramatic play, science and nature, math and numbers, computers, sand and water, and books. During planning meetings, the team discusses interest areas around the room, gauging student interest and appropriate use of materials. For example:

Ms. Z.: What about block area?

Mr. P.: They are using the blocks more.

Ms. Z.: I noticed that too

Ms. O.: They took the flowers [from floral shop introduced to dramatic play during the plant unit] and put them on their building, and then they took the flowers and put them on the block, with the fabric, making it beautiful.
Ms. Z.: Was Daniyah a part of that?

Ms. O.: yes.

M.Z.: Yeah, she is really into making things aesthetically pleasing. Ok great. Anything else in particular that needs to be changed and updated? How is the water table going?

M.P.: We need more dirt.

**Schedule and time allocation.** The Triangle teachers are mindful of the ways they use classroom time, from ordering the daily schedule in a way that makes sense to children to minimizing the time spent in transitions between one classroom event and another. CCCC logistics mean that certain parts of the daily schedule are prescribed – for example, the Triangle classroom is assigned to a specific time in the gross motor room and a specific time on the playground, and the classroom teachers structure the rest of their routine around these reoccurring events.

When Ms. Zachmann joined the Triangle classroom, she was hard-pressed to find opportunities to document student learning. To both meet the CCCC policies regarding student documentation and to use that information to inform student learning, Ms. Zachmann introduced small group work to the daily routine. For 8-10 minutes, students meet daily with one of the three Triangle teachers to make targeted progress on one of the Head Start Learning Standards for Pre-K. These quick interactions are designed to maintain student interest while also gathering important information about students’ learning and growth. Ms. Zachmann describes:

When I started, small groups was not a thing. So, we added that in and we kind of picked the time that made the most sense to fit it in. We thought it made sense right after morning meeting, right before centers then it is kind of like your exit ticket to go to centers. When you finish your small group then you can go pick your area.
Because each teacher works with a small number of students, and because students are well versed in expectations during center time, they are free to leave small group once they have engaged with the activity. In some instances, students complete the task (e.g., reordering the letters in their name, classifying a group of plastic animal toys, or sequencing a series of story cards) in just a few minutes. In other cases, students may remain engaged for up to 20 minutes, choosing to spend some of their center time remaining in small group. This intentional ordering of the daily events, with small group leading into centers, allows for students’ individual needs and interests to be attended to, without compromising the time requirements imposed on the daily schedule by outside entities. Given their creative scheduling, the Triangle teachers can accomplish all the required curricular activities in addition to practices they value. Small groups are used to transition students into center time, while Writer’s Workshop is a vehicle to transition students out of centers. Mr. Pearson says:

We are the only [classroom] up here [in preschool] that does writing. Some of the styles don’t believe that we should be doing it, but I can’t see myself sending a child to kindergarten if they don’t know how to hold a pencil or write.

Triangle teachers use a chime to ask students to clean up their centers in a staggered fashion – areas like blocks and dramatic play which require more time to reassemble are called first, while table puzzles and the reading corner are called last. This staggering eliminates bottleneck in the bathroom and at the sink (students must wash their hands and are offered a drink of water before getting their writing materials), and allows one classroom teacher to supervise center clean up, while one teacher attends to students washing up, and the third is ready to work with the first students ready to write.
Timely and purposeful transitions such as these are important in early childhood spaces, as they occur frequently during the day. Students do not remain in one place on one task for very long, and time spent on compliance with handwashing and water drinks can add up. The Head Start Performance Standards require:

(ii) Planning for routines and transitions so that they occur in a timely, predictable and unrushed manner according to each child’s needs.

The Triangle teachers also use weekly meeting time to self-evaluate these transitions modifying classroom practice to increase efficiency while meeting individual student needs.

Ms. Z.: I have one we can work on, I wanted to mention, I guess productivity slash positive climate. It has been great that the weather has been warm and we have been able to go outside again, but I feel like the transition to go outside has been pretty hectic the last couple days.

Ms. O: Oh yeah.

Ms. Z.: part of it has been because we have only had two people in the room, but even when we only have two people in the room we should be able to execute a good transition to get outside. So, what are the things, I guess one loose end is Dorian. One of us has to make sure he is getting his coat on, so maybe during writing time one of us can make sure like, I’ll give the heads up that we are about to get in line, but we will make sure, or keep each other accountable to make sure that he has shoes on, and that we are getting him together.

Mr. P.: Yeah today it was those shoes.

Reflecting on ways to reclaim a few minutes each day, these classroom teachers act on their belief that each moment counts. Intentional plans that guide the daily routine, and thoughtful
decisions about how to make transitions within that routine less cumbersome, increase the
opportunity for rich teacher-child interactions to happen in the small moments of the day. Given
the supports provided by organizational infrastructure, and the investment in instructional
capacity, the Triangle teachers are in a unique position to both recognize the value of these
moments, and to make the most of them.

Discussion

Within the world of governmentally supported early childhood education, there are
policies and protocols that must be adhered to in order to ensure continued financial support. In
some cases, increasing external mandates create a climate where compliance is emphasized as
the primary measure of success. Overwhelmed by compliance with external requirements,
limited internal resources can easily be allocated in ways that compromise instructional quality.
Fortunately, some early childhood settings have implemented policies and protocols to ensure
both compliance with external regulation and continued student academic success. Continuing to
investigate the features of such both/and organizations provides opportunities to support sites
that struggle to find such balance. Therefore, “collaborative participatory research and
ethnographic studies of teachers who accomplish innovative and inclusive early childhood
education in culturally diverse high poverty communities is urgent for the profession” (Comber,
2011, p. 135).

With young children on the leading edge of a steady demographic change owed to
immigration and the growing number of Latinx and Asian children born in the U.S., it is
imperative that all classroom instruction, including preschool interactions, reflects the rich
cultural experiences of all children. What has historically been deemed ‘high-quality’ preschool
instruction must now also incorporate the flexibility and sensitivity necessary to meet the needs
of an increasingly diverse population. And yet, in an era of normative standardized literacy curriculum, many early childhood educators are not receiving the support necessary to enact culturally responsive literacy pedagogy in their preschool classrooms. Federal funding avenues, state grant incentives, district curriculum adoptions, local allocation of materials, and building leadership are but a few of the external factors influencing the instructional experiences provided by classroom teachers. These influences are not unilateral, nor are they easily defined. For this reason, it is not enough to simply investigate the culturally responsive nature of teacher-child interactions without also investigating the policies and protocols that sponsor these literacy practices.

In this study, local policies and protocols were enacted in such a way that teachers in the Triangle classroom felt supported by their administration and grateful to be part of a like-minded team in a positive climate. This is not to say that the Edgeview community, the CCCC, or the teachers, students, and families of the Triangle classroom did not face challenges. Many external factors weighing on this classroom community could have compromised teacher-child interactions and instructional quality. Despite these barriers, Ms. Zachmann, Mr. Pearson, and Ms. O’Neal remained focused and dedicated. Triangle teachers could offload many non-instructional tasks, making them more available to students pragmatically, but even more importantly the Triangle teachers engaged each other in emotional offloading, making them more available to students emotionally. Triangle classroom didn’t ‘lose their cool.’ During 128 hours of classroom observation over eight weeks (at the end of the school year), I noted that one teacher was short with one student one time. That is no small feat. Taken together, we can see the impactful ways broader policies and local policies are enacted to build organizational
infrastructures and increase instructional capacity in big ways, but also in the small moments that add up to equal importance.

The influences defined and described here are not exhaustive of all factors at play considering teacher-child interactions. However, they are the most common and most influential observed in the Triangle classroom. Successfully navigating compliance with external mandates and accounting for other factors of influence comes with practice, and is supported by the following four values observed in action at the CCCC:

The Center is a community of individuals. Members of the CCCC feel valued for their individual contributions to a shared mission. The common values held by employees include a respect for diverse opinions, different approaches, and lots of personalities. Mrs. O’Neal describes this call to “be present in the classroom. Be present for your staff, your coworkers, the children, you don’t know what they are going through in their day, and then we have to be present for each other.” The SSA and CCCC leadership hire and work for people whom they respect, and this climate permeates the building. Ms. Stevenson, the Education Coordinator for the preschool classrooms agrees, saying:

There is no I in it. It is about we, supporting each other and helping each other and finding out what works best. We monitor what we do, and I like knowing ‘this is what we are about,’ and we check oursleves. I like that they do all that. I like the whole business of it. We aren’t just out there, trial and error, but we have a plan. We have a mission and we have specific procedures and guidelines to follow. A lot of places don’t have that.

The Center practices consistent flexibility. Policies and protocols are in place to demonstrate consistency and fairness, and yet they are written widely enough that pragmatic
change is welcome when necessary. Always open to improvement, the Center and the SSA are also always open to change when change makes sense. Ms. Cooper looks for ways to meet the changing needs of the community and her students, while remaining consistent in the overall message. She says, “My biggest thing is really just working with my team to know the importance of their role here. When you show up, we win.”

The Center embraces a growth mindset (but not THAT growth mindset). There is a consistent discourse among teachers, staff, and administrators to strive to do better. The Center community celebrates successes and acknowledgements accomplishments, but is tireless in its efforts to continue to raise the bar of achievement – for themselves and for their students. Ms. Stevenson mentioned their interest in developing more reflective practice groups among teachers, saying, “…you want teachers to talk about their practice, you have a topic, or everyone brings a topic, and you want them to be able to talk and reflect about that.”

These shared discourses about the Center and its purpose result in a teaching climate that prioritizes academic achievement while developing the whole child. Much like their ability to comply with regulations and mandates in purposeful ways that do not compromise instructional quality, the SSA, the CCCC, and the employees thoughtfully hired to uphold this mission, believe that a strong educational foundation is one piece of student success. When asked what the single most important skill they each wanted their students to leave their classroom having mastered, the Triangle teachers responded:

The big things that come to mind are just their social and emotional growth. I want them to be able to continue to take a deep breath and think, ‘Is this a big deal or a small deal?’, and really be able to regulate their emotions...And to manage their feelings at the same
time, and not get too disappointed or upset. And the social problem solving too (Ms.
Zachmann).

The social and emotional part. How to self-regulate when something doesn’t go their
way. Instead of just blowing a gasket or blowing their top, to be able to calm themselves
and come to approach someone in a manner that they can be understood, or an
understanding manner. Because no one is going to talk to you if you are yelling and
screaming and just hollering. Nobody is going to talk to you because nobody will want
to deal with you. If you come to them collectively, with a cool calm voice you will get a
better reaction (Mr. Pearson).

I think they are really learning to respect each other. To care about each other. And to
just learn and enjoy learning. Learning is fun. Socially I really, really want them to be
able to communicate their needs, wants, and express themselves verbally. When they are
leaving the classroom, I want them to be able to know about themselves, basically (Ms.
O’Neal).

They need to be able to have higher level thinking skills. They need to be able to solve
problems with their peers for safety reasons. And no matter the school that they go to,
that they have the thinking capacity. That they are inquisitive and they are asking
questions and just curious about life. All the things that kids already are, but it is up to
the teachers to be able to keep that (Ms. Cooper).

The Triangle teachers and the CCCC administration prepare students ready to enter
kindergarten, but this accomplishment is not the central goal for children that drives their
pedagogical thinking. Rather, these teachers and administrators attend to the whole child,
acknowledging that their students will contend with a world that requires not only academic
smarts, but also social and emotional skills as importantly. Equitable opportunities to learn are broadly defined by the organization, as they provide students with an equal opportunities to develop all versions of themselves.

Observing the practices of the Triangle classroom gives substance to the generalities we believe to be true about the purposeful balancing act when navigating requirements imposed globally while teaching young children locally. As the political, economic, and social climate of the United States changes, so will the role and process of external compliance in early childhood education. Amidst these fluid and often competing discourses of influence, the Triangle teachers, and their peer professionals nationwide, must remain steadfast in their vision of the preschool graduate, considering both what young students need to be prepared for school, and what schools need to be prepared for the diverse needs of their students. For the CCCC described here, these values have provided a successful backdrop against which to do just that.
CHAPTER IV: Picking Up Where Scollon(s) Left Off: A Social Geography Perspective on Geosemiotics

Within the field of literacy research, the study of meaning has historically been investigated using a semiotic perspective. Signs alone are limited in their ability to communicate meaning – they must ultimately be connected to that which they represent. Said another way, signs cannot portray meaning in isolation, but are instead situated semiotic tools of representation. For a sign to carry meaning it must be imbedded within a practice, related to a signified in some way. Making meaning is therefore an act of triangulation, between the sign, the signifier, and the signified – it is not didactic, but rather transactional. Meaning is emergent in our transactions with the world; it is not static, but situated, both within a sociocultural context, and within the physical world.

*Semiotics* is the study of signs and the processes of signification, while *social semiotics* is the study of making and communicating meaning through signification (Kress, 2010). As a branch of semiotics, social semiotics focuses on human signifying practices within the contexts of social and cultural relationships (Van Leeuwen, 2005). We are influenced by the field of semiotics in understanding that any sign system—textual, iconic, or otherwise—is capable of conveying meaning. Beyond symbols, we must allow for the potential of images and actions to communicate meaning, as well. Therefore, an important line of inquiry emerging from social semiotics is the study of the multiple modalities by which humans make meaning. While meaning has always been multimodal, systematic research of the role of place and space in meaning making is now a thriving and necessary area of scholarly inquiry.

At the start of the 21st century the field of literacy research was only beginning to reckon with place and space (Leander & Sheehy, 2004), while literacy investigations over the past 20 years
affirm geographers’ assertions that “space matters” (Soja, p. i, 2004). Attending to issues of place and space is not simply an amplification of the role of context in literacy investigations, but rather a more complete and nuanced interpretation of context as built through ongoing interactions, engagements, and practices (Leander, 2004). When and where an interaction takes place mediates the meaning making process. Attending to how spatiality affects social behavior and social relations can bring to light new insights informing literacy theory and practice.

With social, cultural, and anthropological geography contributing to literacy studies as of the middle of the twentieth century, the willingness to recognize in scientific questions the importance of interpretation of place and space has been gradually growing. Moji (2004) applied spatial theories to study out-of-school literacies to understand the spaces youth have access to, the different ways youth see these spaces that shape their everyday lives, and the literacies they use to “claim, reclaim, or construct new spaces” (p. 16). Hirst (2004) investigated the interface between the macro and micro influences on second-language education, considering the “temporal and spatial realities and imaginaries” (p. 41) that shape the physical and material conditions in times of rapid political transitions. And expanding the prior time-space constraints of discourse analyses that previously bound interactions by analyzing closely only a 2- or 3-minute segment of an interaction, Leander (2004) developed an historical-spatial account of student positioning in classroom literacy interactions.

Still in relative infancy, place and space research will benefit from continued theoretical and methodological contributions to outline how to meaningfully approach such investigations. One promising approach to understanding place and space in literacy research is that of geosemiotics (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). Geosemiotics is the study of discourses in place to understand meaning making in the physical world. In applying a geosemiotic approach to
understand the role of place and space in one early childhood classroom, this paper contributes to the field of spatial literacy research by highlighting the affordances and limitations of geosemiotics as applied. Building these contributions is a recursive process of exploration and reflection – trying new methods of data collection, determining if the data generated met the analytic needs, and reflecting on how the analysis aligns with the theoretical position, to inform the development of new tools.

Referencing a case study of one preschool classroom on Chicago’s south side, this paper describes a geosemiotic approach to investigating how classroom spaces and places both reflect and shape literacy interactions. Grounded in existing theories of place and space, it attempts to push the boundaries of existing methodologies to answer on-the-ground questions of classroom practice, such as: (1) What spaces are being made for interaction? and (2) What spaces are being made by interaction? To contribute to these theoretical and methodological conversations of place and space in literacy research, I first discuss the theoretical frameworks that afforded this analysis. Next, I describe the methodological and technical tools that afforded the analysis. I then present my interpretation of the multimodal dataset informed by these approaches, and conclude by discussing this study’s contribution to a growing research base, focusing especially on space for future methodological advancements in critical geographies in literacies studies.

**Role of Place and Space in Literacy Research**

**Spatial Research and Theory in Social Sciences**

Researchers applying a constructivist lens have linked the role of the historical to the social such that this coupling has become assumed for many conducting social science research (Wertsch, 1993; Engeström, 1999). From a sociocultural viewpoint, human learning is mediated by signs, language, and other tools. People learn how to use these mediating devices primarily
through social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, when studying knowledge and learning, the sociocultural perspective views not only the person but also the “person plus mediating device” (Wertsch, 1993) as the primary unit of analysis, that is the activity system (Gee, 2008). The activity system connects individual, sociocultural, and institutional influences on meaning making, each of which contributes different histories, positions, and divisions of labor to the activity system. As Wertsch (1993), Engeström (1999), and others have continued to develop the complexities of cultural historical activity theory (CHAT), history and culture have been foregrounded as significant influences.

In 1980, Foucault was the first to begin to question in impactful ways why ‘history’ was dialectic and rich for interpretation, while ‘space’ continued to be viewed as traditionally static or fixed. The origin of the spatial turn can be traced to Michel Foucault’s 1972 lecture on “Des Espaces Autres,” in which he cites the Copernican Revolution and Galilei as examples. Foucault later wrote about this paradigm shift (1981), tracing the history of the relationship between concepts of space and history in science, and criticizing the acceptance of space as immutable. Theorizing the interplay among knowledge, power, and space, his critique gave rise to a way of also considering spatiality in inquiry, an approach with the potential to generate more casual explanatory and transformative outcomes for literacy studies moving forward.

To a further extreme, American geographer and social critic Edward Soja (1989) attempted to replace the paradigm of time with one of space, stating, “It may be space more than time that hides consequences from us, the ‘making of geography’ more than the ‘making of history’ that provides the most revealing tactical and theoretical world.” (Soja, 1989, p.1). He argued that our current environment is not just a product of history but also the product of human geography, and called for increasing attention to the spatial form in concrete social research and
in informed political practice:

    Western ways of seeing space have blocked from critical interrogation a third interpretive
geography – one which recognizes spatiality as simultaneously a social product and a
shaping force in social life – the crucial insight for both the socio-spatial dialect and an

Where Soja emphasizes spatiality as the shaping force, Lefebvre (1991) saw space as a shape-
able force, where space and society, history and geography are mutually constructed. All the
places and spaces in which we live are socially constructed; therefore, they are neither static nor
permanent. As such, all social relations remain abstractions until they are concretized in space.
By foregrounding the role of space, Lefebvre presents a reinterpretation of the spatial, the
historical, and the social as in balance (Soja, 2004). It is Lefebvre’s balanced approach an
interest in the social production of space that informs the inquiry presented here.

    Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space can be summarized as a conceptual triad,
employing the constructs of spatial practice, representations of space, and representational
spaces. Spatial practice embraces production, reproduction, and the locations and spatial
characteristics of each social formation. Spatial practices are encoded patterns that provide
members of the social space with an understanding of the predictable expectations of
performance. Analytically, the spatial practice of a society is “revealed through the deciphering
of its space” (Lefebvre, 1991, p 38). Representations of space are tied to the relations of
production and to the ‘order’ which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge of signs,
codes, and relations. These representations are communicated through verbal and visual signs
and are therefore observable, as plans or maps, for example. Representational spaces,
embodying complex symbols of social life, are directly lived through associated images and
symbols. Representational spaces overlay the physical, making symbolic use of the objects in the physical space. Thus, representational spaces are alive, and may be said to ‘speak’ through coherent systems of non-verbal signs and symbols.

Like Foucault and Soja, Lefebvre’s writings take a critical slant when considering the relationship between space and power, and concludes that the “producers of space have always acted in accordance with a representation, while the ‘users’ passively experienced whatever was imposed upon them…by their representational space” (1991, p. 43). Lefebvre asks:

- If space embodies social relationships, how and why does it do so? And what relationships are they?
- If the producers of space have a representation of space, from where does it derive?
- Whose interests are served when it becomes ‘operational’?

“If space is a product, our knowledge of it must be expected to reproduce and expound the process of production. The ‘object’ of interest must be expected to shift from things in space to the actual production of space” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 37).

A shift in attention to the production of space demands a shift in methodological approaches. What empirical tools are of use towards answering Lefebvre’s theoretical questions, specific to the context of literacy research? To make sense of the social meaning of the material world begins with the study of signs and discourses of action in the material world. Per sociolinguists Scollon and Scollon, “there is a social world presented in the material world through its discourses – signs, structures, other people, and our actions produce meanings in the light of those discourses” (p. 1, 2003). Geosemiotics is a place-based semiotic interpretation,
primarily concerned with the ways these discourses, or signs, are indexed in the world. Signs take the form of an icon (a sign that resembles the object it represents), an index (a sign that point to or references an object); and a symbol (a sign that arbitrarily represents an object). Sign categories are not mutually exclusive, but can work together to represent meaning. All signs have indexicality in that they only carry meaning in this place at this time in this space. Said another way, sign placement in the real world is in contiguity with other objects in the real world.

**Geosemiotics In Literacy Research**

There is no single method for adopting a geosemiotic lens but, as the studies included in a special issue of the *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy* (2011) focused on Geosemiotics of Early Childhood Literacy reported, a combination of classic ethnographic methods of sustained engagement in the field with multimodal documentation of interactions, texts, spaces and pathways provides researchers with the basis for analysis and interpretation (Nichols, Nixon, Rowsell, 2011). Scholars of early literacy have applied geosemiotics to investigate the situatedness of signs and discourses as dynamic resources for the development of early literacy practices, as they are ‘lived’ within home spaces (Rainbird & Rowsell, 2011), libraries, malls and churches (Nicols, 2011; Nicols & Rainbird, 2013), and in online (Wohlwend, 2011) and commercial spaces (Nixon, 2011). Elevating Neuman and Celano’s (2001) ecological description of children’s early literacy environments, these studies provide a more complex and dynamic description of children’s literacy learning contexts.

Above and beyond context, these studies investigate both material and virtual spaces, indicating research interests directed towards space as cultural constructs and social products (Leander, 2002b). Even so, one of the central challenges Leander and Boldt (2013) identify in
current literacies research is the “textual domestication” of inquiry (p. 32). The emphasis on text, both written and oral, privileges the role of language in practice while backgrounding nonlinguistic dimensions of meaning making, such as the movements and interactions of people and things (Latour, 2005). Literacy researchers attempting to characterize these movements and interactions encounter pragmatic difficulties when transcribing temporal and ephemeral data using traditional static methods. Therefore, the aim of this investigation was to advance both our understanding of geosemiotics theoretically as it relates to early literacy places and spaces and of how data are analyzed and represented in this tradition.

**Geosemiotics as Methodology**

New ways of thinking about place, space, and literacy research are evolving, especially in early literacy research (see, for example, the special edition of the *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy* mentioned previously). Scollon and Scollon’s (2003) place-based approach to semiotics offers some methodological insight for investigating these constructs empirically. Grounded in the analytic tradition of social semioticians such as Halliday (1978), the Scollons describe three systems of social semiotics as interconnected at the site of social action—interaction order, visual semiotics, and place semiotics—to investigate the shift from abstract meaning to real world meaning through the property of indexicality (e.g., a stop sign carries real world meaning for pedestrians and motorists when placed at a highway intersection, but only abstract meaning when located on a truck en route to said intersection). Prior to work proposing a geosemiotic perspective, analytic attempts have foregrounded one of these three systems while the other two have served as ‘context.’ Geosemiotics instead integrates the three to “form the meaning which we call place” (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 12). Interaction order represents embodied forms of
discourse, visual semiotic explores disembodied forms of discourse, and place semiotics investigates the indexicality of discourses in time and space.

In applying the geosemiotic framework as both theory and method to my own investigations of how place and space in one early childhood classroom both reflect and shape local literacy events and practices, I encountered tensions not yet discussed in the literature. In what follows, I address these tensions and describe the ways I employed methods of data collection and analysis in moving the study forward. Thus, the focus of this paper is not on the results of the classroom study per se but on building more robust theory and methodological rigor related to research on place semiotics. What this work contributes is not equal across the three main systems of geosemiotics – interaction order, visual semiotics, and place semiotics. Rather, I address interaction order most briefly, as this system is well grounded in established theoretical traditions and evidence of rigorous methodologies used in related inquiry (e.g., Rettie, 2009; Rish, 2015; Smith, 2011). I describe my analysis of visual semiotics in slightly greater detail, as the insights arising from this study offer methodological alternatives steeped in the strong foundation of Kress and VanLeeuwen’s theoretical tradition. The primary focus of the remarks here focuses on place semiotics, challenging the limitations of a strictly semiotic approach and offering suggestions for increasing methodological rigor.

**Interaction order**

The interaction order of geosemiotics can be defined as the indexability that is provided by the configurations of social interactions within a social scene. It is the way by which we accomplish our spoken, face-to-face discourses in the world. The indexing of bodies in social interactions is a recognizable way of being with others in the social space, and these ways of being represent agreed upon social arrangements that maintain a sort of social interaction. Our
bodies take up space; and our position communicates meaning to people around us, as we are an object in their world. Therefore, our bodies make and give off meaning that is read by others because of where our bodies are and what they are doing in space.

For example, our posture, movement, sense of time, and interpersonal distance are all semiotic resources that communicate meaning through the interaction order. Geosemiotic analysis is concerned with the ways in which internal social, psychological, or cultural states are displayed on and with the body, and how these meanings can be ‘read’ by others as resources to produce interaction order. Returning to the principle of dialogicality, it must be noted that:

…discourses in place take their meaning in no small part from the physical co-presence of others in the same place. The embodied actions of any social actor are produced not only out of internal and personal motivations and meanings but also in reference to and in conjunction with the actions of others within the same space (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 59).

These inhabited spaces co-construct our social selves with the social roles that we perform ourselves and with other social actors. Neither inhabited space nor the social being can be left out of the analysis when seeking to understand the interaction orders of our social semiotic world. For instance, the way people organize their bodies when interacting with one another has been shown to be important for such issues as facilitating a common focus of attention. This physical orientation is what Kendon (1990) calls an ‘F-formation,’ or the way speakers co-orient to one another around a central space. This visuospatial modality of body placement conveys their willingness (or lack thereof) to participate in each interaction. Literacy scholars have engaged in analytic work investigating interaction order through multiple theoretical lenses. For example, from the approaches taken in Flewitt’s explanation of
multimodality (2006; 2014) Norris’ multimodal [inter]actional analysis (2004), and Wohlwend’s mediated discourse analysis (2014), we can see that technology brings resources that enable increasingly sophisticated analyses of video data, furthering our ability to explore interaction order (See Whittingham, Chapter II for an example).

**Visual semiotics**

Heavily grounded in the work of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), visual semiotics is concerned with representations of interaction order in images and signs, analyzing the compositional structures of visual images as they represent different forms of social interaction. Compositional structures such as font (handwritten calligraphy, laser printed from a word processor, etc.) and material (etched in stone, traced in sand, printed in a book, etc.) communicate meaning. Because visual semiotics are not universal, but culturally specific, the description and understanding of the semiotic resources at play in any given sign or situation rely heavily on ethnographic investigations as well as visual documentation. The geosemiotic interest in visual semiotics is at once concerned with how the interaction order is represented visually (per Kress and van Leeuwen’s construct) and with how the visual symbol placement in space influences its meaning. Said another way, visual semiotics explains how images represent the real social world, while the indexicality of visual semiotics explains how images mean what they mean because of where they are. Place semiotics, then, further explores this *where*.

Scollon and Scollon’s (2003) interpretation of visual semiotics relies heavily on Kress and VanLeeuwen’s (1996) construct but extends their conception of textual signs to encompass the nonverbal. Semiotic analyses are common in advertising (Tolstikova & Bode, 2007), product labeling (Gradoll, 2006) and explorations of typeface (Ravelli & Starfield, 2008). Most visual analyses are bound by a single frame or single document, but when considering how the visual
signs *in place* affect meaning, it is the discourses communicated by multiple signs that require investigation. For example, the visual semiotic analysis of the Triangle preschool classroom that I conducted sought to understand the various discourses (Gee, 1990) communicated by signs present in the classroom space. Rather than investigate signs in isolation, my approach to visual semiotics sought patterns between and across classroom signs, describing the discourses communicated to and by the social actors of the space. Combining ethnographic observations with visual analysis of still photos infuses the semiotic with a sense of place and space.

Classroom photographs were labeled and catalogued to assure all visible classroom spaces were documented. Photos were then annotated to identify the predominant signs visible in each. First cycle coding (Saldana, 2012) of the identified signs evidenced 21 distinct classroom discourses. Second cycle recursive coding, in part informed by a cross-check of ethnographic observations and field notes, resulted in four discursive themes encompassing a total of twelve discourses (See Whittingham, in preparation, for details). Indexed signs in the Triangle classroom represented four discourses: order, academics, ownership, and identity (Table 3).

**Table 3. Discourses of Order Defined**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourses of Order</th>
<th>Discourse of protocol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discourse of object placement</td>
<td>Answers the question, &quot;Where does it go?&quot;; visible as shelves and bins labeled with words and pictures at child-height</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse of location identification</td>
<td>Answers the question, &quot;Where am I?&quot;; visible as posted teacher-made signage, often repeated in a location at both adult-height and child-height.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discourses of order made visible classroom expectations, both those externally and internally generated. The discourse of protocol functioned as the discourse most externally derived, reflecting institutional mandates – those imposed by federal workplace laws, federal workplace employment, Head Start as a funding source, and other governing bodies of influence on the happenings of the Triangle classroom. Discourses of external communication were those created by the classroom (or center) to communicate with other adults interacting with the Triangle classroom. Other discourses of order were internally-derived, reflecting issues of classroom management and organization. Discourses of object placement and location identification cued visually where items belonged, what purpose designated areas served, and what was expected in each area. But these discourses were not simply in place for student utility. The Triangle classroom’s discourses of order created a transparency of expectations, so that any student entering would easily be able to identify where dramatic play happens, or any adult entering would easily be able to identify how to exit the classroom in the event of an emergency. When combining the visual analysis with an understanding of the classroom afforded by ethnographic observations and teacher interviews, discourse which at first appears regulatory can instead be interpreted as attempts at transparency for ease of use.

Green highlights in Figure 11 provide an example of these discourses in place. On the far right of the image we see a poster about workplace safety, a wall-mounted toothbrush holder, and step-by-step directions for students to wash their hands. Each of these contributes to a discourse of protocol, the poster reflecting state-wide mandates regarding employee rights;
toothbrushes and handwashing directions serving as an example of Head Start requirements that all funded classrooms facilitate student teeth-brushing following breakfast, and that students spend a full 30 seconds washing their hands each time at the sink. The “Table 3” and “Caring Tree” signs reflect a discourse of location identification, serving as literal sign-posts locating objects in space. Further to the left we see cubbies and bins labeled with student names, reflecting the discourse of object placement – these signs inform students as to where their personal items belong. Lastly, the two wall-mounted organizers above the student cubbies serve as ‘inboxes’ for two of the three teachers (the third is not photographed here), indexing the discourse of external communication – parents, administrators, and service personnel are visually cued as to where to place written communication for the teachers, limiting interruptions to classroom practices.

Figure 11. Discourses of order, annotated

Removed from the wall, the Caring Tree sign the indexicality would change, no longer referencing the children’s creation posted to the right. Similarly, the child’s photograph and
name posted inside his cubby, when removed from the space, would no longer index a discourse of item placement. Where an object exists in space influences its meaning. But what an object means in space can only be surmised by documenting both the visual sign and the ways in which social actors take up the visual sign in interactions. Combining a semiotic analysis of classroom images with an ethnographic investigation of the Triangle classroom afforded a more complete picture of what is meant by Scollon and Scollon’s visual semiotics as a system of geosemiotics.

**Place Semiotics**

The central thesis of geosemiotics is that where an action takes place is an important part of its meaning (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). The physicality of space serves as a semiotic resource to inform the interaction order, co-constructing the social space described by Lefebvre (1991) and others:

Everyone knows what is meant when we speak of a ‘room’ in an apartment, the ‘corner’ of the street, a ‘marketplace,’ a shopping or cultural ‘centre,’ a public ‘place,’ and so on. These terms of everyday discourse serve to distinguish, but not to isolate, particular spaces, and in general to describe a social space. They correspond to a specific use of that space, and hence to a spatial practice that they express and constitute. (p. 16)

These terms of everyday discourse serve to distinguish, but not to isolate, spaces, and in general to describe a social space. They correspond to a specific use of that space, and hence to a spatial practice that they express and constitute. Said another way, the space itself is a sign, and communicates meaning. We know we are in a classroom because we see a chalkboard, desks, bulletin boards, and books, for example. When ‘read’ together, each of these semiotic signs forms a place that tells us what sort of activity might be done in this space. Many kinds of social interaction are supported or encouraged by the built environment of a classroom, and these are
different from the social interactions supported or encouraged by an airport hangar, or an elevator, for example. There are preferred conditions for different social arrangements, existing on a continuum of relatively open, socially available spaces to relatively closed and tightly defined spaces. Therefore, the place semiotic analysis of Triangle classroom focused on the types of social interaction supported or encouraged by this place, and space.

Social action takes place within the regulatory structure, within the structure of the physical space, and within the interaction order of the presentation of appropriate social selves to others in the immediate environment, all within the embodied habits of members of the sociocultural group (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). Therefore, place semiotics includes examining the spatial design through the components of discourse in time/space (how discourse develops over time in various places and spaces in the classroom); examining the ways in which participants used their bodies, items, perceptual spaces and personal distance to make and communicate meaning; and examining the impact of item indexicality and placement upon the discourse and interaction in the classroom. It is this “interdiscursive dialogicality” (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 193) that makes these semiotic aggregates at once incredibly rich for investigation and equally difficult to capture.

**Place Semiotics Analysis.** There are two ways to look at discourses in place analytically – through a discourse orientation or a place orientation. Discourse orientation analysis takes a centrifugal view of a discourse as it is distributed widely across many different times and places, and traces the discourses found in a single place as they lead to (potentially many) other places and times. Discourse orientation analysis focuses on the discourses that flow into, through, and out of one place. Literacy researchers viewing space as a social construct tend to undertake discourse orientation analyses. Leander and Bolt (2013) describe 10-year-old Lee’s fluidity of
literacy discourses as a means of understanding in- and out-of-school literacy practices.

Wohlwend (2014) investigates the discourses surrounding a toddler and an iPad as they lead to other historical and cultural influences. These studies focus on how discourses flow into, through, and out of one place. In these investigations, the discourses and social interactions are foregrounded in analysis, while place becomes secondary.

In contrast, a place orientation analysis of discourse takes a centripetal view of a specific location, focusing on the gathering of discourses that produce a place as unique because of the discourses found there. This analysis sees any place as an aggregate of discourses, or a semiotic aggregate (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). A place orientation analysis allows us to consider the intersection of the interaction order (described in greater detail previously) and the built environment as an aggregate of discourses where social interaction takes place. However, typical place orientation analyses tend to fall short of this intersection, describing the built environment in detail but paying only cursory attention to the social interactions this environment affords.

Scollon and Scollon’s (2003) example of five international street corners relies on ethnographic observation and still photos to describe and define the mediational means of place unique to and common among the five locations. This methodology allowed the anecdotal description of the social interactions of place, but did not offer rigorous or systematic methods for further investigation. Nichols (2013) and others followed Scollon and Scollon’s example, systematically investigating location while descriptively addressing interaction.

In trying on different theoretical and methodological tools to address the intersection of built environment and social interaction in Triangle classroom more thoroughly, my approach differs from those previously conducted in two ways. First, I reference social geography to expand the traditional definition of semiotics – recognizing the social construction of all objects
in space – not just those assigned semantic value – as elements of place and space. In doing so, the following sections include descriptions of spaces beyond the walls of the Triangle classroom to acknowledge their social construction and influence on the social interactions within the Triangle classroom. Second, towards systematizing approaches to data collection and analysis, I then present the procedure followed as I rely on video-based field work to complement ethnographic methods, and I introduce a movement analysis to understand the ways the arrangements of bodies and objects, as influenced by the built environment, afforded social interactions.

Social Spaces. The types of social interactions that take place in the Triangle classroom are supported and afforded by the built environment – the carpet as a gathering place, the presence of books and writing materials, the labeled and well-defined spaces for toys and blocks, etc. The Triangle classroom exists within a community center situated within the Edgeview* neighborhood. By including the places and spaces beyond the walls of the classroom in a place orientation analysis, we are afforded a more complete understanding of space as socially created – through history, politics, and geography. Therefore, descriptions of the neighborhood space, center space, and classroom space are integral to painting a complete picture of the place and spaces of literacy interaction.

Neighborhood Space. Located on the city’s south side, the Edgeview community has a longstanding reputation for its high rates of violence and poverty. Despite recent reinvestment efforts (the city rebuilt the local community college in 2007) the cyclical effects of decades of disinvestment continue to persist. Edgeview’s violent reputation is bad for business. Few economic opportunities have caused a steady and significant decrease in the mostly African American (97%) population (down 24% between 2000 and 2010). Classroom teachers Mr.
Pearson and Ms. O’Neal, both childhood residents of the community describe the most visible changes:

“The changes are all these abandoned houses. That is the big, big, big change. When I was growing up all the houses was always occupied. Even if somebody moved, somebody was owning the house and moved in. Now if someone moves the house is sitting there and sitting there and sitting there. And people come and you know bust windows and just tear up the house and they board.”

(Mr. Pearson, Interview Transcript, 05.10.16)

Ms. O’Neal describes the implications of such visible changes as affecting the safety of the children at the Center, sometimes limiting opportunities to be outside and requiring increased diligence on the part of the teacher to assure student safety:

“Even for our parade we had to get police escort. If we wanted to walk to a park, we couldn’t…If we wanted to walk to a park that had a little more for the children to explore we would probably have to get an escort, there. Whatever outing we have to do we have to do it very carefully and alert. Just stay alert…So we have to teach them about emergency.” (Ms. O’Neal, Interview Transcript, 05.03.16)

And yet the external realities of the Edgeview community show only one of its many faces. Many local practices reflect cultural patterns that have contributed to the resilience of families of color, including supportive social networks, extensive use of extended-family helping arrangements, and strong identification with their racial group (Allen 1993; Boyd-Franklin 1989; McAdoo 1993; Stack 1974). The Center itself in which Triangle classroom is located represents one such supportive social network.
Center Space. Part of a state-wide organization founded over 100 years ago to provide foster care agency, the Center is one of six sites providing childcare and early childhood education services, and one of two located within the city limits. To keep up with the neighborhood’s growing need for high quality early childhood education opportunities, funds were secured to construct an entirely new Center building that opened in 2007 (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Exterior of new Center building, de-identified

In contrast to the original location, the new Center was specifically designed to meet the needs of the programs it houses and the young children it serves. Now the Center is located on a main thoroughfare a little over a mile west of the re-invented community college. Built at a slight elevation to street level with a modern exterior, the Center is both a part of and above the community. Behind the building is an old elevated train line, no longer in use (Figure 13).
Across the four-lane highway on which the building sits is a store-front daycare that opened just a few weeks ago, with worn plastic slides and climbers placed within the fenced yard. Although the front of the building boasts the Center name in large, silver letters, and the fence is adorned with “Enroll Now” Head Start signs, neighbors often wander into the Center mistaking it for the city library that shares this city block, separated only by a small alleyway and a gated green space belonging to the library.

*Figure 13. The Center as seen from the street*

Ms. Cooper, the Center Director for just over two years says:

> Ultimately a lot of our families are dealing with mental trauma. They don’t have a lot of resources like a lot of the communities have, period. So parents have to already kind of fight to get resources in their community as best they can. But I want them to be
emotionally and educationally up to par with their peers when they go to school. [If we] are not intentionally providing these opportunities then we are failing them.

During operating hours the Center doors are always open. Everyone who enters and exits the building is greeted by the receptionist and security guard. Everyone must wear identification and sign in and out each day. These procedures establish both a sense of welcoming and a sense of security for children and adults alike. The 32,000-square foot facility features a large, centrally located, oval shaped, two story play area surrounded by 14 classrooms. The Center can provide direct services it over 200 children – newborn to 5 years of age – with a current enrollment of approximately 175 children. The center also features additional meeting spaces and adult classrooms used to provide community support services to thousands of residents each year.

Classroom Space. In addition to eight architecturally identical classrooms, the second floor of the Center houses six administrator and support staff offices, two meeting rooms, a faculty lounge, and the family support team offices. The classrooms are paired as pods sharing a single entrance from the hallway, creating a ‘separate but together’ feel. Additional windows of various sizes and heights face the hallways, contributing to the aesthetic. One pod houses the Center library and the home-based classroom. The other three pods house six preschool classrooms – three 3-year-old classes and 3 four-year-old classes (Figure 14). The Triangle classroom (4-year-olds) shares a pod with the Circle classroom (3-year-olds) as the only two classrooms receiving childcare subsidies as part of their financial support.
Three classroom teachers and 17 students make up the Triangle classroom. Ms. Zachmann and Mr. Pearson both joined the faculty at the Center immediately following degree completion. Ms. Zachmann has a bachelor’s degree and is in her third year teaching, and Mr. Pearson has his associate’s degree in early childhood and special education, and is in his ninth year teaching. Ms. O’Brien has 31 years of early childhood experience, working in home daycare prior to joining the faculty at the Center 13 years ago. Grounded in recent research regarding the benefits of continuity of care, the center director restructured classroom composition for the 2015-2016 school year to create a ‘looping’ model. For this reason, four of the 17 students were in the Triangle classroom last year with the same teachers. During the study one new student joined the classroom, and one student withdrew from the Center.
Systematic Data Collection. Analysis through a geosemiotic lens requires an ethnographic understanding of the data (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). To this end, I was a participant observer in the Triangle classroom for eight weeks, observing each day from approximately 8:30am to 12:30pm, with extended observations for weekly team meetings (Table 4). However, ethnographic data collection methods are limited by human capacity, only documenting that which captures the observer’s attention, regardless of other interactions taking place outside this focus or line of sight. To provide a richer, more complete data set from which to better understand the role of place semiotics in the Triangle classroom, I also used video-based field work to complement my ethnographic methods.

Table 4. Average Duration of Daily Events in the Triangle Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Start Time</th>
<th>End Time</th>
<th>Duration in Minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast &amp; Teeth Brushing</td>
<td>9:15</td>
<td>9:42</td>
<td>28(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning Meeting</td>
<td>9:42</td>
<td>10:03</td>
<td>21(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Group</td>
<td>10:08</td>
<td>10:24</td>
<td>17(7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centers</td>
<td>10:13</td>
<td>11:07</td>
<td>53(12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Workshop</td>
<td>11:07</td>
<td>11:25</td>
<td>18(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross Motor</td>
<td>11:27</td>
<td>12:00</td>
<td>31(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read Aloud</td>
<td>12:02</td>
<td>12:21</td>
<td>19(4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the first two weeks, I collected extensive field notes, narrating classroom events in real time. However, during the third week of data collection I began video recording, determining the placement of three cameras (two traditional camcorders and one GoPro wall mount) based on a cursory analysis of the prior two weeks’ field notes. The GoPro camera captured whole-body movement through the entire classroom from a pseudo bird’s eye perspective (Figure 15), while the two camcorders were placed strategically in classroom ‘hotspots’ to highlight interaction orders in real time (Figure 16). Each camcorder was outfitted
with a wireless microphone to capture the verbal exchanges between participants while minimizing the effects of background noise.

Figure 15. GoPro camera angle

Figure 16. Camcorder camera angle
I then took still photographs of the empty classroom and used Lucidcharts online software to recreate the classroom floorplan, linking photos to each label (Figure 17). During the remaining six weeks, the center director, the educational supervisor, and the literacy specialist each participated in single interviews, and the three Tiger teacher teammates each participated in a three-part interview. The GoPro video recordings and the classroom photographs were the primary data sources for this analysis, while the interview data and camcorder recordings are mostly supplementary. By privileging the GoPro data in the analysis, I could see the classroom space in its entirety, affording more complete opportunities for understanding.

![Triangle floorplan, labeled Systematic Data Interpretation](image)

**Figure 17.** Triangle floorplan, labeled Systematic Data Interpretation. Preliminary data analysis (e.g., reviews of field notes, initial viewing of videotapes, and transcription of interview data) was a recursive process that
informed ongoing data collection, specifically in terms of daily camcorder placement and follow-up interview protocols (Stake, 1995; 2008). This recursive process of data collection and analysis provided a responsive yet systematic way to meaningfully filter a large data set that is the natural outcome of researching the “wonderful messiness of classroom interaction” (Wohlwend, 2009, p. 240). Video documentation allowed me to make principled choices when sampling for time and space. Revisiting the classroom events afforded microanalyses, determining the different patterns of teacher movement, how people arrange their bodies over time, and what sorts of interactions occurred in space. These initial analyses of large scale movement could then be used to identify ‘hotspots’ in time and place – identifying times of day and locations in the room most fertile for teacher-child interactions. These findings gathered from the GoPro data were then be cross-referenced with the camcorder recordings to better understand the nature of the interactions afforded by the space.

The GoPro video data was the primary source of data used to investigate the ways in which classroom space influenced teacher-child interactions, or the social production of teacher movement in the space. I bound analysis to only include days when (1) all three classroom teachers were present (although during brief moments they may step out of the classroom, these were days when all three teachers were in attendance) and (2) there were no special activities interrupting the routine schedule (walking field trips to the library, school picture day, etc.). Given this narrowing, eight days captured on video were included in the GoPro analysis, totally just short of 32 hours of video. Through a cursory review of the video data I began to identify patterns in the ways in which teachers organized their bodies in the space to best facilitate student learning. To better understand, I needed to see the teachers’ movement both separately and together, to track patterns in movement by person and across different daily events.
As literacy researchers attempting to characterize movements and interactions, we encounter pragmatic tensions when attempting to transcribe temporal and ephemeral data using traditional and static methods. Transcription is theory (Ochs, 1979). The mode of data presentation reflects both the subjectively established research aims, but also inevitably influences research findings. Transcription is therefore both a problematic and necessary component of data analysis. Some type of systematic cataloging is necessary to make data accessible to the researcher, and yet any type of transcription becomes a form of representation subject to the researcher’s perspectives, aims, and lens. When referring to multimodal data, Flewitt, et al. (2014) adopt the term ‘representation’ in lieu of ‘transcription’ to more accurately describe the interpretive processes involved in the transformation of original data into written form.

Below are two examples of attempts to contextualize the tradition in which I situate this analysis. Leander (2002a) represents bodies with ovals, and uses dotted lines to indicate movement. Ehert and Hollett (2014) used a Sim video game to track the movement of one student through a classroom space (Figure 18).

Figure 18. Examples of multimodal transcription showing movement
To create the representation of movement, I used my field note sketch of the classroom to replicate the classroom floorplan to scale using Lucidchart software (see Figure 19). Interviews with the classroom teachers informed my understanding of the floorplan, as they described some of the layout decisions they made in the space over time. Ms. O’Neal described intentional design decisions, explaining that last year they juxtaposed the location of the block area and the reading area with positive results:

Because at first [the large group area] was a little small, and we were using the block area but they were playing with a lot of things and they were distracted. We came together to come up with a way to move the house area out, and move the block area, and take some of the block area to share with the large group area. So, it works out ok. And then, being that the cabinets are kind of lower where we can still see in the classroom, it depends on where you sit and stand, you can see the whole classroom, if you position yourself in different places. I like to move around, so I can see what they are doing. (Ms. O’Neal, Interview Transcript, 05.03.16)

Ms. Zachmann commented on the rearrangement, and noted the intentionality the teachers use when thinking about classroom space and design:

I think that has helped to utilize the space to its fullest extent…. It is shaped in an interesting way, so we do have to be really intentional and think about where the best places are to move things around. Because it does make a difference. If you just move a shelf a little bit over it creates a space to run. There is a way to be really intentional about that. (Ms. Zachmann, Interview Transcript, 04.02.16)
Figure 19. Triangle floorplan as backdrop

Using the floorplan as the backdrop for each representation, I then viewed each 18-minute video clip (the natural demarcation of video segments recorded by the GoPro camera given the standard settings) three times, recreating the movement of one classroom teacher upon each viewing. The example seen in Figures 20-23 show a period of transition from breakfast to morning meeting. When students have finished eating they clear their plates, use the restroom and wash their hands, brush their teeth, use their personalized popsicle stick to choose their job for the day, and then gather on the carpet to dance to music videos until all the children have completed the transition and they can begin Morning Meeting. Ms. O’Neal and Mr. Pearson most often facilitate breakfast clean-up and transition while Ms. Zachmann readies the carpet for the class.
Using a semitransparent paint tool in Photoshop, I marked the teachers’ location in real time, going over the same paths s/he followed when repeated, to create ‘hot spots’ of movement, or to represent the paths most frequently traveled. I repeated the process for each of the three focal teachers for each 18-minute video. Figures 20, 21, and 22 show these paths separately, with Ms. Zachmann’s path documented in red, Ms. O’Neal’s path in blue, and Mr. Pearson’s path in green. Figure 23 merges the paths, to show all three layered simultaneously.

From this analysis, we can see locations in the classroom most and least traveled by each adult and by the adults in the room. We can also see where teachers spend their time during different times of day. Each of the 8 days documented show similar paths for teachers during the breakfast transition time, and during the read aloud following gross motor preceding lunch. This indicates a repeated routine predictable for students and teachers during the two major morning transitions. Writing time and small group instruction also show similar paths when comparing the same time across days, with slight variations if Mr. Pearson happens to write with students seated at Table 2 instead of Table 3, for example. However, center time, the 45 minutes of the Triangle day characterized by a co-constructive participation structure (See Chapter II), showed the most variation in teacher location, and the most mobility during each 18-minute segment. This shows us that patterns in teacher movement loosely map on to patterns in classroom participation structure. When the classroom event is structured and routine (read-alouds and writing time), teacher movement tends to follow a similar structured and routine pattern. When the classroom event is open-ended and child-directed (center time), teacher movement is less structured and routine, and more responsive to student activity and interest. In the Triangle classroom, patterns in teachers’ gross motor moves reflected discursive patterns and participation structures described in Chapter II.
Figure 20. Ms. Zachmann's movement

Figure 21. Ms. O'Neal's movement

Figure 22. Mr. Pearson's movement
Figure 23. Triangle teachers' collective movement

Although gaining insight into patterns in teacher movement through the space allows us to both identify locations less frequently visited by teachers (potentially sites of reflection for reconfiguration) and to identify locations most frequently visited by teachers (potentially sites worthy of further investigation), this analysis does not show the temporality of their positioning. In other words, by looking at this image, the position of Mr. Pearson when Ms. Zachmann was seated, for example, is unknown. I needed to represent teacher and student movement differently to better understand where each person was in relation to one another, at any given moment in time during the breakfast-to-carpet transition. Transitions in the Triangle Classroom are designed purposefully, as Ms. Zachmann describes:

We did sit down and think intentionally about how to make those go as quickly as possible. Mr. Pearson is at the tables wiping them down and helping me at the carpet if I need help, and then Ms. O’Neal is doing tooth brushing and then as they brush their teeth then they come to dance and they are picking their jobs and that was very intentional when we planned that out to make it go quickly and accomplish as much as possible in
that short time, because we can kind of squeeze it in with gross motor. That definitely was very intentional. I don’t like the clunky transitions. (Ms. Zachmann, Interview Transcript, 04.12.16)

In a separate interview, I asked Mr. Pearson about the juxtaposition of carpet routines, switching from the silly dance party to the more formal morning meeting. He explained,

They are both important because before we didn’t do it, we just sat down, and we saw them get antsy so we thought let’s just play music until everyone is done brushing their teeth, then one of us can come to the carpet so they will be more settled. Because once they get all the jitteriness, and all of the wiggling out, then they can focus is better when they get it all out of their system and they are able to sit down. (Mr. Pearson, Interview Transcript, 04.11.16)

Informed by these interviews and my understanding of the transition time gathered through my ethnographic investigation, I returned to the raw video data, taking still images every 30 seconds. I recreated the positions of students and teachers, using feet colors that coordinate with the colors from the initial movement analysis, with feet pointing in the direction teachers were facing. It is worth noting that very rarely did the teachers look in a different direction than their body was facing. There was little evidence of ‘pivoting,’ per Kendon’s (1990) description of ‘withness’ in an f-formation. Instead, teachers’ bodies most often reflected a single point of attention as opposed to shared attention between competing influences. Using the screen capture software Camtasia Studio 8, a LiveProGamer Recording Device, I then created a stop-action recreation of the 18 minutes (click or scan the image in Figure 24 to access the video).
This analysis allowed me to view the teachers’ location in the classroom in relation to one another, and the movement of the students through the classroom during a time of transition. Because the feet in the recreation show the direction the teachers are facing, this analysis also affords an understanding of teachers’ attention in relation to one another. For example, when Mr. Pearson faces the sink while helping one student brush her teeth, his back is to the rest of the class. This individual attention is afforded by the presence and position of the other two teachers in the room, as Mr. Pearson does not need to divide his attention between the tooth brushing task and simultaneously supervising other students in the classroom.

When viewing these recreations within and across events, patterns of teacher movement in relation to one another become evident. Rarely are two teachers standing side by side, but often teachers face one another across the room, communicating at a distance. Teachers rarely “check” the position of the other teachers before engaging with an individual student, but (as determined from ethnographic field notes), teachers will verbally signal when they are unavailable. For example, when a Darien approached Ms. Zachmann needing assistance with a
floor puzzle and Ms. Zachmann was occupied with her small group, she commented, “I cannot help you right now but I see Mr. Pearson is at Table 2 and his hands are not busy.” Hearing his name, Mr. Pearson then asked Darien how he could be of assistance.

While the example shared here represents a transition time, the Triangle teachers are aware of their place in space throughout the day, and think about their location in relation to instructional purposes. For example, Mr. Pearson explains:

My role, like if Ms. Zachmann is sitting down at Table 3, and Ms. O’Neal is sitting down, I just kind of walk around. I am between the block area and the house area. Or Ms. Zachmann, she was in the dramatic play area and Ms. O’Neal was sitting down, I’ll be at the table or I’ll be up. I’m at the table and I keep my eye on the block area, and I keep my eye on everything. I’ll make sure nobody gets hurt and make sure nobody has a problem. Or sometimes if I see something about to escalate I kind of try to hurry up and intervene before it gets to anywhere else. (Mr. Pearson, Interview Transcript, 04.11.16)
Figure 25. Examples of movement analysis still images

These multimodal analyses taken together serve as a means of understanding and really seeing the ways in which teachers and students use their words and their bodies to create opportunities for learn, and for better understanding the role of place in these discourses.

**Discussion**

The sociocultural tradition views meaning making as not an individual practice, but resulting from mediated social interaction. In Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Wertsch, 1993; Engeström, 1999) the cultural and historical influences on mediation have thus far been valorized, excluding the role of place and space as influential. Foucault and then Soja challenge the exclusion of space from mediation, purporting space as both producing and productive of social interaction. Lefebvre heightens the importance of space in social
interaction, theorizing that space itself is a social production, and challenges us to not only examine things in space but the production of space through social science inquiry.

Scollon and Scollon’s geosemiotics offers a promising approach to incorporate Lefebvre’s theoretical contributions with ‘on the ground’ social science inquiry. Although they integrate interaction order, visual semiotics, and place semiotics, a potential shortcoming of their approach is the underdevelopment of how these three components work in concert with one another to inform our understanding of meaning making as situated in time and place. In prior work applying a geosemiotic approach, we see this limitation play out, the result being that results are often silo-ed. These investigations contribute new knowledge about how people take up and make meaning with their bodies and how the placement of signs in space contributes to their meaning, but have yet to draw conclusions across findings. Jennifer Rowsell suggests this underdevelopment may be one reason we “were interested in geosemiotics in literacy studies for a moment, and then moved on” (personal communication).

Historically when the literacy research community has needed a way to talk about meaning making analytically, we have turned to semiotics. Semiotics held its weight during the ‘social turn,’ considering not only the meaning of signs, but the ways in which people make meaning from and with signs. Semiotic theories incorporated the social to mean that signs did not hold finite meaning, but their meaning was bound up in the social action and interactions through which meaning was constructed. The ‘spatial turn’ has proven more problematic: one of the topics that has not been fully researched from a semiotic perspective is space. Drawing on the work of Soja, Lefebvre, and others, to conceive of space as a fluid, social construction that embodies and communicates meaning affords the opportunity to ‘round out’ Scollon and
Scollon’s place semiotics system in ways not previously explored. In doing so, semiotics is not left behind but opened up, to include place and space under the growing construct of signs.

To ‘try on’ this ‘opening up,’ the study presented here reports data from a preschool classroom in an urban, under-resourced community where teachers have co-constructed a learning environment that supports students’ agency and individuality, providing equitable opportunities to learn. Applying a geosemiotics framework, I elaborate on the methods of data collection and analysis reported by prior studies employing a visual semiotic approach. Informed by the work of social geographers, I then present two different approaches to movement analysis to demonstrate the role of space in a place semiotics approach. I describe the affordances of each analysis to consider the role of teacher movement in constructing the learning environment.

This merging of social geography and social semiotic perspectives could prove increasingly useful as questions of space and place arise in literacy research. Spatial perspectives offer new theoretical approaches to understanding issues of teaching and learning. For example, early childhood educators have long recognized the importance of creating classroom spaces conducive to learning, but have not thought about how they are physically present in or navigate through the space. Opportunities to increase student engagement, position students positively, and enhance social interactions hinge on our understanding of the influences of place and space on these constructs.

Theoretically, literacy researchers, and early literacy researchers specifically, need to be thinking about place and space when considering our understanding of children’s learning and development. This heightened awareness of the role of place and space in early literacy learning creates implications for how we conduct research. Methodological advancements are necessary
to more accurately collect and analyze data concerned with movement and mobility in
classrooms. The research presented here recreated video data for two analyses, representing
patterns in teacher movement through the space, and moment-by-moment movement of teachers
and children over time. These cursory approaches to data representation and analysis serve as a
placeholder, where advances in technology will soon afford more refined and informative
representations. Much as teachers intentionally design their classroom spaces, researchers must
work intentionally with technology developers to create tools most useful in meeting our
methodological needs.

These methods afford the opportunity to unpack, make visible, and discuss the social
production of space in the classroom. Without advances like these, we cannot get inside the
social geography theories of Soja and Lefebvre in meaningful ways that attend to teaching and
learning. But with such advances, we see how space shapes interactions, and how these
interactions can lead to agency. In comparison to other preschool settings, for example, the
Triangle teachers’ ability to retain children’s unregulated movement between spaces during
center time is a practice less often observed in other preschool settings as academic expectations
increase and therefore free play opportunities decrease. This autonomy of choice and fluidity of
movement creates student agency and ownership of learning. Future analyses could include the
tracking of individual student movement through space to demonstrate how different learners
make use of this autonomy, and identifying patterns in students’ movement to determine the
effectiveness of particular physical arrangements of materials. Geosemiotics provides an analytic
lens to investigate how the physical set up of the classroom space allows for these interactions.

Given the need for further incorporating place and space in early literacy research, and
given the need for methodological innovation to investigate issues of place and space,
geosemiotics offers a very useful approach to advance this field of inquiry. As a construct, geosemiotics is increasingly effective when theories of social geography are incorporated to supplement the system of place semiotics.
CHAPTER V: Discussion & Implications

In an era of increasingly standardized instructional practices and scripted curricula in early childhood settings, this research investigated the characteristics of literacy and language interactions between teachers and children in a preschool classroom valuing racial and linguistic diversity, and the factors that mediate these interactions. Using ethnographic methods and video-based fieldwork, this research: (1) looked closely at the ways teachers use their words and their bodies to position students as agentive learners, (2) described the policies and protocols in place facilitating these interactions, and (3) investigated methods for researching the ways classroom space was made for and by these interactions. The previous chapters report findings for each of these questions, embedded in the research literature and theories that guided each investigation.

This chapter first revisits the need for this research, situating it within the current climate of sociocultural approaches to learning, the role of mediation in learning and development, and how cultural differences mediate these discourses. Next, implications of findings are shared for each research question, followed by a discussion of the contributions of this work to theory and practice. Study limitations are addressed, and the chapter concludes with ideas for future research.

Revisiting the Need for this Study

Sociocultural traditions of teaching and learning see meaning making as a dialogic process that is socially mediated, and contextually bound. We construct our own understanding and our shared understandings of the world through interactions with our social and physical environments. A social constructivist lens emphasizes the role of interaction – between parent and child, teacher and student, researcher and researcher, and on and on – in learning. More
specifically, social constructivism also accounts for the significance of cultural and historical influences as intermediaries of interaction. People therefore rely on shared semiotic systems such as language to develop, maintain, and share information. Socialization into the culturally valued semiotic systems begins in early childhood.

Within the emergent literacy paradigm, we now know that children's literacy development begins at birth. While print literacy remains fundamental to becoming literate in the early years of school, emergent literacy encompasses broader semiotic systems beyond the written word, and incorporates modes accessible during play, art, music, and movement. All signs are complex, and the reading of signs is an attempt to uncover the complexity of the meaning represented by the sign (Kress, 2005). Therefore, reading in the strictest sense, concerned with ‘making sense of the word’ is equally essential and necessary as reading in the metaphorical sense, to ‘make sense of the world’. “Reading is our way of engaging with the word, and that engagement takes place in a multiplicity of ways” (Kress, 2005, p. 101).

Kress (2005), the New London Group (1996), and other sociocultural perspectives support a dialogic view of language and a pedagogy of multiliteracies – lots of modes and contexts contribute to our meaning making of texts, with ‘text’ broadly defined. Literacy instruction must value the plurality of literacy, alongside cultural and linguistic plurality towards creating equitable opportunities to learn for all students (Gee, 2008). While culturally relevant teaching values cultural and linguistic differences as important strengths upon which school competencies should build (Ladson-Billings, 1995), culturally sustaining pedagogy celebrates “linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling” (Paris, 2012, p. 93). While Ladson-Billings describes the ability of classroom teachers to work within the educational system as supported by dominant values, Paris charges educational stakeholders
to instead change the dominant values to more closely represent both the diverse populations reflected in modern classroom demographics, and the multiple and complicated skills that all students must master to fully participate in the increasingly multilingual and multiethnic society.

With young children on the leading edge of a steady demographic change owed to immigration and the growing number of Latinx and Asian children born in the U.S., it is imperative that classroom instruction, particularly high quality preschool interactions, reflect the rich cultural experiences of all children. Therefore, “collaborative participatory research and ethnographic studies of teachers who accomplish innovative and inclusive early childhood education in culturally diverse high poverty communities is urgent for the profession” (Comber, 2011, p. 135). This call is echoed by scholars of color, referencing the need for equitable opportunities at the local level and on larger scales. Boutte and Jackson (2014) state, “if we are not involved in efforts towards achieving equity, we are all complicit in the oppressive cycle that currently exists” (p. 18). Findings from this investigation highlight ways the Triangle teachers and the broader Community Collaborative (CCCC) focus on achieving this equity.

Implications of Findings

Findings from this study, presented in Chapters II, III, and IV, align with and extend the current research. This section briefly revisits findings for each research question, and the subsequent relevance and advancement suggested by each. I address each research question individually, and then discuss additional findings of interest more broadly.

What do racially and linguistically just classroom [inter]actions look like in a preschool classroom?

In experiencing the socio-material world around them, children are simultaneously learning linguistic and social cues, linguistic and social organization, and linguistic and social
practices (Kress, 2005). Therefore, “every definition of what fruitful discourse looks like is a non-neutral political decision based on a set of beliefs about what education should be” (Anderson, 2009, p. 44). Indeed, the ways the Triangle teachers used their words and their bodies communicated to preschoolers their shared beliefs about what education should be. In looking for ways to enact culturally sustaining pedagogies, the Triangle teachers’ topic and text decisions were guided by their observations of students’ needs and interest. Ms. Zachmann, Mr. Pearson, and Ms. O’Neal developed relationships with children’s caregivers to better understand students’ lives outside of the classroom, seeking ways to support their individual needs. But the Triangle team also looked beyond broader concepts of ‘culture’ and enacted racially and linguistically just teaching practices in their conversations with students.

A co-constructive participation structure was the most commonly observed and most often employed by the Triangle teachers. Within this structure, teachers and students shared ownership of conversation length, topic, and included participants. Within the co-constructive participation structure, Ms. Zachmann, Mr. Pearson, and Ms. O’Neal used language and positionality to validate students as individuals, as learners, and as problem solvers. Triangle teachers then scaffolded the dialogue, supporting students from validation to elevation – elevating the complexity of language use and problem solving skills. A multimodal interactional analysis of these discursive patterns showed teachers’ use of language and body to position students as agentive learners and classroom participants, critical elements of culturally sustaining pedagogies in an early childhood context.

**How do preschool policies and protocols both reflect and shape these [inter]actions?**

It is impossible to separate the teacher-child interactions that Ladson-Billings (1995) details from the broader political and social aims which Paris and Alim (2014) challenge.
Therefore, it is not enough to simply investigate culturally sustaining teacher-child interactions without also investigating the other activity systems in which these literacy practices are embedded. The influences defined and described in Chapter III are not exhaustive of all factors at play considering teacher-child interactions. However, they are the most common and most influential observed in the Triangle classroom. These include factors of organizational infrastructure, such as agency-level leadership, center-level leadership, teacher-child ratios, and workload/division of labor policies. Factors of instructional capacity include professional development opportunities, curricular decisions, and assessments. Factors at the intersection of both include the ways teachers allocated classroom time and developed the classroom schedule, including decisions about classroom materials and classroom space.

Within the Triangle classroom, successfully navigating compliance with external mandates and accounting for other factors of influence came with practice, and was supported by a value system enacted within the center. These values include:

- The Center is a community comprised of individuals.
- The Center practices consistent flexibility.
- The Center embraces a growth mindset (but not THAT growth mindset).
- The Center prioritizes academic achievement while developing the whole child.

These findings demonstrate the necessity of a ‘both/and’ mentality on two scales. First, the Triangle teachers are capable of complying with externally imposed mandates without compromising instructional quality. They have integrated local policies and protocols into their classroom practice in seamless and meaningful ways, not privileging compliance over pedagogy, nor the other way around. On a larger scale, the linguistically and racially just interactions observed in the Triangle classroom are not made possible by organizational infrastructure alone,
nor instructional capacity alone. Low teacher/child ratios are only effective if the classroom teachers have the instructional knowledge to make the best use of their small class size, for example. Similarly, an incredibly skilled teacher cannot maintain effectiveness within a system that imposes mandates incompatible with best practice. Taken together, the healthy organizational infrastructure of the SSA and the CCCC partnered with the strong instructional capacity of the Triangle teachers creates a classroom context conducive to rich teacher-child interactions.

**How do preschool places and spaces both reflect and shape these [inter]actions?**

Although the interactions described in Chapter IV are not fully dependent upon the places and spaces co-created in the Triangle classroom, these interactions are supported by a place and space that is intentionally designed to facilitate their frequent occurrence, as described in Chapter IV. The analysis explicated in Chapter IV uses a geosemiotic approach informed by the work of social geographers to understand how place and space afforded equitable opportunities to learn for preschoolers in an historically under-resourced urban community. Grounded in the work of Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), the visual semiotic analysis brought to light twelve classroom discourses influencing and influenced by classroom interactions. These discourses include themes of order, academics, identity, and ownership. To better understand the semiotics of place in the Triangle classroom required experimentation with methods of data analysis, as little work has yet been done integrating the theoretical contributions of social geographers with Scollon and Scollon’s (2003) initial concept of geosemiotics.

To investigate the places made for interaction and the places made by interaction, I foregrounded a movement analysis of video data. Video and ethnographic field notes work on concert with one another to provide a fuller, more detailed account of place semiotics in action –
ethnographic approaches inform how social spaces come to be, whereas video analysis affords a deeper understanding of teachers’ and children’s social interactions in the space. Taken together, the analyses presented here attempts such a hybrid – seeing place semiotics not as an exploration of ‘context,’ or even the ways in which the ‘built environment’ embodies meaning –for these are too static interpretations of place and space - but instead as socially co-constructed with and for the social [inter]actions.

Given these findings, I now turn attention to the contributions this study has made to furthering research theory and practice.

Contributions to Research Theory & Practice

In a call to expand the agenda for early literacy research, Rowe (2010) believes, “we are nearing the limits of what we can understand using the questions generated by an emergent literacy perspective” (p. 134). Similarly, a recent review of the early childhood literacy research conducted between 2006-2015, characterizes the decade as a “period of incremental growth” (Teale, Whittingham, Hoffman, In Progress). If we are to contribute innovative knowledge to the field of early literacy, we must ask innovative questions. New questions demand new approaches to investigation, and therefore this section describes the ways in which this dissertation challenges current theory and pushes current methodologies towards advancing our collective understanding of the racially and linguistically just preschool classroom practices.

Theoretical Contributions

Informed by prior frameworks addressing racial and linguistic differences in classroom teaching, including culturally relevant teaching (Lee, 2003), culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2014) – each grounded in a commitment to educational equity (Gorski, 2016) - this research shies away from culture-
centric frameworks to instead center equity in conversations and practices related to racial and linguistic justice. This is not to say that culture is not a factor in learning. Indeed, it is, but by emphasizing the role of culture in critical approaches to teaching we often fall short of addressing the structural injustices that create disparities in educational outcomes (Gorski, 2016). By instead talking about equitable opportunities to learn, specifically from a sociocultural perspective (Gee, 2008), this research highlights both the micro and more macro factors influencing educational equality – some centered around culture, but others not. Broadly applying a cultural historical activity system (CHAT) perspective affords attention to mediational means – both semiotic and material – to understand influences on teacher-child interactions. By investigating these mediational means this research seeks to push the boundaries of cultural frameworks to both open them up, to include issues of equity more broadly, and make them more critical, towards understanding the racial and linguistic disparities represented in some of these mediational means.

**Contributions to Research Practice**

Each of the three research questions presented in this study introduced methodological implications to varying degrees. In Chapter II, the data collection combined ethnographic methods with video based field work. Suggested by Rowsell (2015), this pairing affords a richer, more complete picture of the case study site because ethnographic field notes can ‘round out’ moments captured on video. Previous studies employing both methods tended to foreground the microanalysis of video, supplementing with anecdotal, contextual information produced through field notes. This chapter instead begins with a qualitative analysis of the ethnographic data by coding field notes of classroom practices, team meetings, and interview transcripts. Findings from this qualitative coding process then were used methodologically to inform the sampling of
video data from the larger corpus, and the resulting manuscript gives equal weight to each. While either approach alone could sufficiently inform our understanding of the teacher-child interactions in the Triangle classroom, integrating both in complementary ways resulted in a more complete understanding of the discursive moves teachers make to position their students as agentive learners.

Although more traditional investigations of policies and protocols employ social network analysis or content analyses of formal documents, this investigation took place within a case study of one classroom. As such, a more ethnographic approach was taken to understand the ways in which policies and protocols influenced classroom practices. Situating an investigation of policies and protocols within a larger study concerned with the feature of teacher-child interaction provides a more grounded account of the ways in which external factors mediate local events. Chapter III references the Head Start Program Performance Standards specifically and uses ethnographic data to connect these standards to the lived practices of the Triangle classroom. This approach attempts to make more transparent the ways policies play out logistically in early childhood settings, and highlights the benefit of the purposeful integration of these policies.

Lastly, Chapter IV begins to reveal the utilities of geosemiotic analysis in classroom spaces, and how to apply these findings ways that are impactful for teaching and learning, in this case for literacy teaching and learning. Returning to Ochs’s (1979) supposition that transcription is a form of analysis, the most significant contribution this analysis makes to research methods is the approach to data representation. Seeking new ways to represent movement through static means, this analysis relies on readily available technologies to recreate movement through time and space visually. Further developing these methods of representation will prove fruitful for
classroom practice, affording teachers a new reflection tool. Reflecting on teacher and student movement can inform strategic changes in the intentional design of classroom spaces and provide insight into how and where teachers engage students most thoughtfully in the classroom.

**Limitations of the Study**

The greatest strength and most impactful limitation of qualitative research is the role of the researcher as the primary tool of data collection. Observational field notes are inherently infused with subjectivity, as the researcher constructs new knowledge informed by what (s)he sees and hears, but also what (s)he comes to the research knowing and believing. The constructivist nature of qualitative research both creates rich description and nuanced accounts of classroom practice, but also reflects only that which captures the researchers’ attention, and is therefore limited by human capacity. The research presented here is no exception. After a week observing the Triangle classroom, Ms. O’Neal asked, “Are you finding what you are looking for?” I explained that my purpose was to look *at*, not *for*, and given my purpose I could not be unsuccessful. But in looking *at* the events of the Triangle classroom I was also looking *as* – as a former early childhood teacher, as an upper-middle class white woman, as the mother of my own preschooler, and as a literacy researcher particularly interested in language and issues of equity. While I privileged the fourth *as* each time I entered the Triangle classroom, I must acknowledge that there were other influences at times during data collection (I have less detailed field notes for classroom read-alouds than for more student-centric center time) and potentially during data analysis, although I can’t identify a specific instance currently.

Researcher positionality can be both a limitation and a strength of qualitative research. During data collection, I included positionality reflections in my field notes daily, and referred to these during data analysis to identify any biases or tensions present in my memos. These
positionality reflections included thoughts about my physical position (“Haven't sat on windowsill during read aloud before. Felt like my body could not get small enough even though I used one carpet square”) to tensions of race and gender (skinny African American male w hood on and backpack walked by, nervously moving his hand in his pocket, walking northbound on sidewalk between library and school. As he rounds the corner, he says, “Excuse me.” I ignored him. He says “Excuse me. You have two behind the garbage,” pointing out two kids hiding when it was time to line up. I felt foolish and embarrassed by my initial reaction, assuming because of the recent sound of local gunshots that his jittery hands were hiding a weapon - lots to unpack here). Acknowledging our human limitations can strengthen our research when we do so purposefully and explicitly. I do not directly address the above anecdote in this research. Its inclusion may be a distraction, while its omission may be another limitation. I include it here as evidence of reflection – the first step in acknowledging the various positionalities we bring to our work, and to acknowledge the hard work that lies ahead in addressing such positions. Maya Angelou (2010) says, “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better” (n.p.).

Another related limitation is the situatedness of this research. In conducting a single case study, I present detailed evidence from one classroom. These findings contribute to our collective understanding of racially and linguistically just early childhood teaching practices, but the features observed here are not to be adopted as universals. “No single story provides a full understanding of any given process, but each provides ‘pieces for a 'mosaic' or total picture of a concept” (Marshall & Rossman 2006, p. 88). For example, the participation structures observed (Chapter II) describe a general heuristic for engaging young children in conversation, but the specific dialogic tools used by the Triangle teachers may not have the same utility in other
contexts. For this reason, additional research is necessary to better understand the features of racially and linguistically just teaching practices in early childhood classrooms across a variety of contexts.

**Future Research**

The findings presented in Chapters II, III, and IV reify our knowledge of classroom practice and the factors mediating these practices while inching forward our understanding of the nuances of each. Chapter II builds on the existing literature that establishes the role of classroom discourse in student positioning by including the role of gesture, posture, and gaze in these discourses. Chapter III affirms that classroom practices exist within a larger system and describes the ways in which a classroom and a center integrate mandates in purposeful ways to achieve compliance and pedagogical excellence. Chapter IV confirms the role of the environment in young children’s learning and begins to investigate the role of movement in relation to the environment in student learning. Given the situated nature of the findings presented here, future research is necessary to 1) expand our understanding of racially and linguistically just teaching practices that take place in the ephemeral moments of teacher-child interactions, 2) investigate direct links between local policies and protocols with the occurrences of these practices, and 3) further develop theories and methodologies towards understanding the role of place and space in classroom interactions.

To deepen our understanding of culturally and linguistically just teaching practices, further research is needed to investigate these practices in multiple settings. Future studies could investigate classrooms of different racial, ethnic, linguistic, and economic compositions than those represented in the Triangle classroom. Although the findings presented in Chapter II are informed by teacher interviews and their self-reports of their interactions with children, further
investigations should include video-solicited reflective interviews to understand in more targeted ways teachers’ motivations and intentions when engaging students in such interactions.

Because external policies and protocols are often changing, and sometimes in contention with one another, it is increasingly important that classroom teachers and center administrators remain steadfast in their commitment to sound pedagogical practices above all else. In this vein, future research is needed to better understand the motivating factors which enabled the Triangle classroom, the CCCC and the SSA to seamlessly integrate protocol and pedagogy in the best interest of children. Learning from Center and Agency leadership who have successfully struck this balance will generate information useful to other administrators who have not navigated these tensions as effectively.

Lastly, further methodological developments are necessary to increase the utility of place oriented semiotic analyses. Current and forthcoming technologies provide fruitful possibilities for advancing the efficiency and effectiveness of video data collection and movement analysis. Tool development and theoretical advancements are a recursive process; methodological contributions will support and further challenge theoretical work, and vice versa. Moving this field from basic to applied research will afford classroom teachers and administrators to learn from and develop their own understanding of place and space as related to teacher-child interactions and over all classroom practices.

**Concluding Remarks**

Given the vast and widely varied cultural and linguistic resources children bring to their preschool experience, and the increased measures at the local, state, and national level to regulate and standardize early childhood instruction in ways that tend to restrict the types of language used and valued, this dissertation contributes to research conversations about literacy equity and
diversity. Specifically, by providing a glimpse into the Triangle classroom and the center in which it operates, this research documents racially and linguistically just classroom interactions and the factors mediating such interactions. This dissertation provides but a few examples of such practices upheld by the Triangle teachers and Center staff. The Triangle classroom serves as a counter-narrative to the dominant discourse of difference, and highlighting the possibilities of their practice contributes to the unlearning of a deficit ideology. The essence of their practice is this: given the proper resources (Chapter IV), within a supportive environment (Chapter III), and encouraging guidance (Chapter II), all students can. As Mr. Pearson said:

I try to remain positive. Because I am a parent myself and sometimes as a parent you always hear negative things. ‘They can't do this, they can’t do that’. That’s why I say, ‘Ok, this is where we are at.’ I always start there. ‘This is where we are at.’ And then I say, ‘This is where we need to be…This is what we are doing. This is what we are trying to do.’ That sounds better than, ‘This is what we are doing and this is what we can’t do.’ ‘Trying to do’ shows effort. That the parent is showing effort and that the child is showing effort. It’s not what you say, it’s how you say it. If I say to you, ‘Ms. Whittingham, you have a child who can’t do this and that,’ you are going to look at me and think, ‘Why are they only giving me the negative?’ And you know there is a positive in every child, you just have to find what positive is in that child. You have to disregard the negative and focus on the positive. Because you know the positiveness of what that child can do will weed out whatever he or she cannot do. You may think he can’t do that and another child can. He or she just has to be given the chance and the tools to succeed to prevent all that can’t stuff. I try my best not to use that word. And I tell the kids, ‘No
we aren’t saying *I can’t*. I *can.*’ Because if we allowed them to use *I can’t*, we allow them to give up.
What you can expect from ![](image)

- You will be treated with respect and consideration as a fellow staff member who contributes to the agency’s mission through your work.
- Your time and talents will always be respected and appreciated.
- Volunteer/Intern tasks will be assigned based on your skill, interests, availability and training.
- Upon assignment, you will receive appropriate job descriptions, orientation, and training for all tasks.
- Your hours will be assigned in accordance with your availability and the schedule at ![](image).
- You will be trusted with confidential information that you may come into contact with through tasks.
- Your personal records, including documentation of your work, will be kept safe and confidential.

What ![](image) expects from a volunteer:

- ![](image) expects that all volunteers and interns will maintain open communication with the staff, respectfully sharing suggestions and ideas to improve the quality of our programs and services.
- Volunteers and Interns are required to attend all training sessions scheduled for their assigned task(s) and to ask for additional training or direction if required.
- Through training and orientation, volunteers and interns are expected to know their duties and to carry them out professionally.
- Volunteers and interns are expected to respect the privacy of the children and families that we serve by not sharing personal information, obtained directly or indirectly, with anyone who does not have a need to know.
- Volunteers and interns are a part of the ![](image) team and are expected to maintain a positive attitude toward the agency, the staff, and all policies and procedures.
- Volunteers and interns are expected to report for their volunteer tasks on time and properly attired for the assignment and are asked to inform their project supervisor as soon as possible of any planned absence or lateness.
Appendix B: Early Childhood Volunteer Handbook, Appropriate Language Packet

Appropriate Language Packet

The way we communicate with children affects all aspects of their personal growth. The tone of our voice, our body language, and the words we choose makes an impact on how their self-esteem may develop. We, as early childhood educators and caregivers need to use language of respect whenever interacting with children. It is vital that we never shame, insult, belittle, discourage, or label children, their feelings, decisions they make, or acts they may choose. If a child chooses to do something that may be inappropriate or unsafe, we need to find ways to redirect their behavior without negatively affecting their self-esteem.

Using the word "NO"
The word "no" is such an empty response to use with children when trying to stop an unsafe or inappropriate behavior. If you are trying to redirect a child tell them exactly what you expect of them. For instance, if a child is choosing to do something that is hurtful or unsafe you can say, "stop!" You need to explain why you are using such a strong tone. "Stop Jacqueline! I'm using a loud voice because I'm not going to let you hit my friend Lyle, it's not okay to hit others."

To redirect a behavior you can model the following examples:

- "Steve, chairs are for sitting. I'm afraid you might fall off and really hurt yourself."
- "Go around Mora, it's not safe to run into each other on bikes."
- "Remember to use gentle touches."
- "Use your strong words, I can't understand that sound."
- "If you are angry, you can pound on that pillow or stomp your feet, but I won't let you hurt my friends."
- "Diamante, take that toy out of your mouth, yuck, that's germy. If you need something to put in your mouth, find a chew toy."
- "If you need my attention, you can say my name instead of screaming, that's too loud for inside."
- "The cars are not for throwing, find a koosh ball to throw."
- "Instead of pushing Jee-hung, tell him to move over so you can go down the slide."

Labeling
Children live for your response and reactions. They need and want feedback on everything they say or do. It is so important to make sure that when we comment on something a child does
we give them full credit and that we do not label their behavior. Using the phrases, "good job," "pretty picture," or words like bad, cute, great, nice, and handsome provide labels for children. These types of responses convey the idea that what they do has to be a certain way. These responses do not give credit to the child; we are just labeling their behavior according to our general standards.

When children accomplish a task they have been working hard on you can respond the following ways:

- "You did it!" "Way to go!"
- "Wow you worked hard on that puzzle and now you put it all together."
- "That's a tall tower, look how many blocks you stacked on top of each other."
- "Way to pull your pants up."
- "You picked up all the cars you were playing with, thanks for doing that."
- "You put your hat on all by yourself, way to go!"
- "Wow, you thought up the idea of putting those blocks together so you can drive your cars on them."

All these types of responses give a child a sense of accomplishment, a sense that they were able to do it by themselves. This increases their self-confidence and self-esteem, which is vital to children's emotional growth.

When a child creates something, it is essential to respond in ways that credit their ability. Here are some examples:

- "Wow, look at all the colors you chose."
- "You chose bright colors; I see the colors red, blue, and yellow!"
- "You filled your whole paper up with different colors of paint!"
- "It looks like you chose to separate your pieces of play dough."
- "Way to shake up your bag, look, the glitter is moving with the paint."
- "Way to spread the frosting all over your cookie!"

Examples for Different Situations:

1. Children who are in conflict over toy:

   Toddler: With younger toddlers- "Who had this toy? Then we can find you another one and you will have to be next."
   With older toddlers - "What can we do to solve this problem?"

   Preschool: First stop any hurtful behavior. Then gather as much information as possible. "I need to hear from both of you to help." "I'll hold this toy until we figure out what happened." Or "Stop! It looks like you both want to play with this toy at the same time. Let's decide if that can be done. Here let me hold that while we decide together." This takes the focus off the toy and will allow children to focus on the details. Ask children why they are arguing and make clear to them what their problem is. Encourage children to problem solve. Giving the answer to the children would be the last choice. Encourage children to share and
take turns. If the waiting child is sad say, “I hear how sad you sound. It is hard to wait for your turn.” Then help the child redirect.

2. Child who is feeling sad about parent leaving, lost chance at activity, having to wait for turn, being misunderstood, etc:

   Toddler: “We know you are sad, mom will be back later.”

   “This might be hard for you to do, but you can do that activity later. Let’s do this now.”

   Preschool: “What’s the matter, why are you crying?” Reaffirm the child's feelings and then give the child some choices on ways to say good-bye or another activity to do to give child some power since loss of power may be felt for situation they are feeling sad about.

3. Children who do not want to lie down for nap:

   Toddler: “It is not a choice. Your body needs to rest so you can play this afternoon.” Or “I can see/hear that you do not want to lay on your cot but it's not a choice, you can rest on your cot by yourself or I can help you.”

   Preschool: “Put your head down on your cot and relax your body. Our bodies need rest so we have energy for later.” Offer them a backrub, stuffed animal, or soft toy to help them rest their bodies. Give them a choice to lay down by themselves or with help.

4. Child who has been hurt by another child:

   Toddler: “I’m sorry you were hurt. That wasn't okay. Tell (child) to STOP!” Or “I’m sorry you got hurt.” Make sure the child who got hurt used words with the child that did the hurting. If not tell the child who got hurt, “Tell him/her to stop and tell them you didn’t like it.”

   Preschool: If someone comes to report something to you that happened to them. “What did you tell them about that?” Hopefully child was able to tell other child to stop and this should be reinforced. “It is not safe to throw sand.” Then praise child for using their words. Also add, “I'm sad that you've been hurt. How can I help you feel better?” (ice pack or hug) Make sure injured child is okay first and the find out what they need. Have the child that did the hurting help to assist the injured child. Explain the rules and the reasons for them.

5. Child who has hurt another child:

   Toddler: “You may not play until (child) feels better and is ready to play. It is not okay to hurt other children.”
Preschool: Stop the child who is doing the hurting by saying "Stop, you are hurting so and so." Check to make sure the hurt child is okay. Then ask the child who did the hurting what happened and if hitting is okay or if it solves the problems. Depending on responses ask the child what they could do instead of hitting, reminding the child of using their words.

6. Child who is disrupting during a group activity:

Toddler: In the toddler room children are not expected to participate so other activities are available for redirection if they are too disruptive.

Preschool: Have the available staff sit by the child. Give that child something to hold. Give that child a reminder of your expectations during group time.

7. Child who is using toys/materials in a way that may break the toy:

Toddler: "Stop. When you use the toy that way, it will break." Give an example of what the child can do with the toy.

Preschool: "Stop. This is for ________.

"Let me show you a safe way to use the ________.

"Please stop! I'm worried that it may break and then we won't be able to use the toy anymore."

These all demonstrate how to use the toy appropriately while also explaining the consequences of having a broken toy.

8. Child who does not want to end one activity and move on to the next one:

Toddler: "You'll be able to do this activity again, but right now we get to go to the ________."

"It's hard to leave an activity that you like, but it's not a choice, you can come join the rest of the group or I can help you."

Preschool: "It looks like you're really having fun with ________, but right now it's time to clean them up so we can go ________. If you can put these away, I will put these away. These toys will be here later for you to play with some more."

For both groups give notice before activity change.

Source: www.tc.umn.edu
Appendix C. Early Childhood Volunteer Handbook, Language Milestones

Age-Appropriate Speech and Language Milestones

The ability to hear is essential for proper speech and language development. Hearing problems may be suspected in children who are not responding to sounds or who are not developing their language skills appropriately. The following are some age-related guidelines that may help to decide if your child is experiencing hearing problems.

It is important to remember that not every child is the same, and children reach milestones at different ages. Consult your child’s doctor if you are suspicious that your child is not developing speech and language skills correctly. The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders and other experts list the following age-appropriate speech and language milestones for babies and young children.

**Milestones related to speech and language**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Milestones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth to 5 months</td>
<td>• Coos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Vocalizes pleasure and displeasure sounds differently (laughs, giggles, cries, or fusses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Makes noise when talked to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 11 months</td>
<td>• Understands “no-no”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Babbles (says “ba-ba-ba”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Says “ma-ma” or “da-da” without meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tries to communicate by actions or gestures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tries to repeat your sounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Says first word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 to 17 months</td>
<td>• Answers simple questions nonverbally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Says two to three words to label a person or object (pronunciation may not be clear)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tries to imitate simple words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Vocabulary of four to six words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 to 23 months</td>
<td>• Vocabulary of 50 words, pronunciation is often unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Asks for common foods by name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Makes animal sounds, such as “moo”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Starting to combine words, such as “more milk”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Begins to use pronouns, such as “mine”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Uses two-word phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 3 years</td>
<td>• Knows some spatial concepts, such as “in” or “on”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Knows pronouns, such as “you,” “me” or “her”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Knows descriptive words, such as “big” or “happy”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Uses three-word sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Speech is becoming more accurate, but may still leave off ending sounds;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>strangers may not be able to understand much of what is said</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 4 years</td>
<td>4 to 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • Answers simple questions  
  • Begins to use more pronouns, such as "you" or "I"  
  • Uses question inflection to ask for something, such as "my ball?"  
  • Begins to use plurals, such as "shoes" or "socks" and regular past tense verbs, such as "jumped"  
  • Groups objects, such as foods or clothes  
  • Identifies colors  
  • Uses most speech sounds, but may distort some of the more difficult sounds, such as l, r, s, sh, ch, y, v, z, th. These sounds may not be fully mastered until age 7 or 8.  
  • Uses consonants in the beginning, middle, and ends of words. Some of the more difficult consonants may be distorted, but attempts to say them  
  • Strangers are able to understand much of what is said  
  • Able to describe the use of objects, such as "fork" or "car"  
  • Has fun with language; enjoys poems and recognizes language absurdities, such as, "Is that an elephant on your head?"  
  • Expresses ideas and feelings rather than just talking about the world around him or her  
  • Uses verbs that end in "ing," such as "walking" or "talking"  
  • Answers simple questions, such as "What do you do when you are hungry?"  
  • Repeats sentences  
  • Understands spatial concepts, such as "behind" or "next to"  
  • Understands complex questions  
  • Speech is understandable, but makes mistakes pronouncing long, difficult, or complex words, such as "hippopotamus"  
  • Uses some irregular past tense verbs, such as "ran" or "fell"  
  • Describes how to do things, such as painting a picture  
  • Lists items that belong in a category, such as animals or vehicles  
  • Answers "why" questions |
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|  |  |  |
| Source: [http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/healthlibrary/conditions/pediatrics/age-appropriate_speech_and_language_milestones_90,P02170/](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/healthlibrary/conditions/pediatrics/age-appropriate_speech_and_language_milestones_90,P02170/) |  |  |
Appendix D. Master Teacher Job Description

Position Description

Position Title: 08-10/ Master Teacher -Metro

Classification: Exempt

Position Summary:
Responsible for planning and implementing program activities in the classroom with children and their families with an emphasis on Preschool for All (PFA). Required to adhere to other program standards, including National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Head Start, and Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) licensing. Supervises teachers and other staff as assigned in the implementation of the activities. Completes PFA reports and complies with program monitoring requirements. Works with parent advisory committee as required.

Core Responsibilities:

• Develops and implements individualized learning that meet the social, emotional, developmental, and intellectual needs of all children in the classroom.

• Knowledge of Center philosophy and classroom operations and how the Center and PFA program inter-relates to the ECE program overall.

• Conducts developmental screenings and regular assessments and uses information for lesson planning. Enters children’s developmental, social emotional results into COPA or other data management system required.

• Identifies children who may require additional assistance and work with supervisor to make appropriate referrals.

• Completes weekly child observations and enters into Agency Assessment tool; ensures observations completed by classroom staff and assists as needed. Participate in 2-3 Parent-Teacher conference as required by program.

• Provides leadership in the development, writing, and supervision of the implementation of daily lesson plans and classroom routines and transitions, with classroom staff. Meets weekly with classroom and other staff as required to review lesson plans, share teaching strategies and discuss child progress.

• Responsible for the supervision, mentoring, training and evaluation of Teachers, Assistants, Student Interns, and Volunteers assigned in the classroom.

• Collaborates with peer agencies, community resources, the school district, and other State and Federal programs as required. Implement PFA program as required by ISBE and/or CPS. Maintain all child files and records as required.
08-10 Master Teacher- Metro Page 2

• Assist with planning and implementation of kindergarten readiness activities as required. Assists children with the transition from PreK to Kindergarten through all aspects of the transition plan including meeting with teachers, parents, school visits, etc.
• Plans and implements activities for parents to connect home and classroom learning.
• Leads integration of supplemental learning initiatives (such as Raising a Reader) for parents and children into classroom, and plans and implements regular activities for parents to connect home and classroom learning.
• Complete and submit required PFA monthly and monitoring reports, eligibility applications, and all other documentation to supervisor as assigned.
• Demonstrates mastery knowledge of basic child development and is able to integrate therapeutic and child development approaches in the classroom. Mentors other classroom teachers in basic child development and classroom techniques.
• Assists in designing and maintaining the learning environment to support the domains of learning as by Creative Curriculum, ECERS, and CLASS, the content areas of the Illinois Early Learning Standards, and the Common Core Standards.
• Attend Home Visits as required by program. Assist or provide monthly newsletter that incorporates information on parenting skills and child growth and development.

• Plans and provides nine parent/child nights annually as required by the program.
• Maintain Type 04 credential while employed in the PFA classrooms.
• Works with team members to implement primary care giving.
• Assures that safety rules are observed and guards against harmful situations on field trips, walking trips, and on the playground.
• Brings to the immediate attention of the on-site Supervisor any and all concerns regarding service delivery, parental concerns, compliance with standards, including, but not limited to, non-compliances and/or deficiencies in any program area.
• Maintains accurate and current records, using both manual and automated systems as required.
• Collect, review and utilize data and information on clients and services to inform program/department performance.
• Attends required internal and external trainings and ongoing meetings.
• Participates in regular supervision and staff meetings as required by department.
• Reports to work as scheduled and requested.
• Performs other duties as assigned.
The Master Teacher position has the potential for occupational exposure to blood and/or other potentially infectious waste or materials.

**Qualifications:**

- Bachelor’s Degree in Early Childhood Education with an Illinois Type 04 certification. Current participation in Teach for America Type 04 credential project may be accepted.
- Three years Lead Teacher experience or five years early childhood teaching experience. Successful participation in the Teach for America Program may satisfy this requirement.
- Must be proficient in speaking, reading and writing in the English language. Proficient speaking, reading and writing in Spanish and English may be required but can be preferred based upon program assignment. May be required to have English Language Learners endorsement.
- Demonstrates effective written and oral communication skills to convey information clearly and informatively with parents and staff.
- Demonstrates proficiency in organizational skills by multitasking, prioritizing and meeting deadlines.
- Must be attentive to detail, resourceful, self-motivated, flexible and have initiative.
- Works effectively in a team-orientated, collaborative environment and builds positive relationships with children, staff, and parents.
- Demonstrates respect and acceptance of diverse individuals and communities served by, working in partnership with, or employed by Children’s Home + Aid including but not limited to race, gender, ethnicity, social-economic status, and LGBTQ populations.
- Must have valid Illinois driver’s license and auto insurance when the position requires an employee to operate a motor vehicle in connection with executing the positions responsibility, which include driving to and/or from any agency function.
- Must have reliable transportation

**Screenings:**

- The applicant must submit to and pass a drug screen as requested.
- The applicant must clear DCFS’ DMV screening and remain eligible to transport clients if driving for the position is required.
- The applicant must submit to a criminal background check and a child abuse and neglect screening and maintain a cleared status throughout employment.
The applicant must submit to and pass a TB and immunization health screen upon hire and update TB/physicals as required by the licensing standards.

Additional Requirements:
- Must be able to lift and carry a minimum of 30 lbs.
- Ability to physically interact with the children through bending, stooping, climbing, running, walking, sit and rise from the floor, standing, kneeling, and bending from the waist.
Confidential information handled includes all information viewed and discussed related to the delivery of services to clients, program operations and the advancement of mission and programs, all client information, client files, Medicaid documentation, and foster parent files.

This job description does not constitute an employment contract or an offer of employment. reserves the right to change and/or modify this job description. Every effort has been expended to ensure the accuracy and thoroughness of the job descriptions, however, it is not possible to detail every single task of the job or predict some circumstances and changes. As a result, employees may be assigned to perform other related duties in support of the program and the mission of the agency. is an equal opportunity employer offering employment to minorities, females, disabled, veterans, and disabled veterans

➢ Position Description Approved by Human Resources:

[Signature] Date 02/25/2015

➢ I acknowledge that I have received a copy of my position description.

➢ I certify that I am a qualified incumbent and have the ability to perform the core responsibilities/essential functions of this job with or without reasonable accommodation.

_________________________________________ Date _____/_____/_____

Signature of Employee
Appendix E. Teacher Job Description

Position Description

Position Title: 04 - 11 / Teacher  Classification: Non-exempt

Position Summary:
Assigned partial responsibility for planning and conducting age-appropriate activities. Assumes full responsibility for care of children in absence of Lead/Supervising Teacher. Supervised by the Lead/Supervising Teacher.

Core Responsibilities:

- Familiarizes self with Center philosophy and classroom operations.
- Assists in establishing the guidelines and goals for the classroom by contributing ideas for lesson plans.
- Responsible for conducting small group activities.
- Supervises children engaged in play activities.
- Familiarizes self with the therapeutic and educational approaches in early education.
- Knowledge of basic child development of the age group assigned.
- Assures that safety rules are observed and guards against harmful situations on field trips, walking trips, and on the playground.
- Prepares supplies and environment for activities.
- Assists in serving meals and snacks.
- Implements acceptable child management techniques.
- Recognizes the stages of development of young children.
- Sets up and monitors equipment and materials in classroom and playground area.
- Attends to physical care and health needs of the children and keeps records as required. Reports any concerns or issues to the Lead/Supervising Teacher.
- Assists in collecting child’s information for portfolio and writing child’s assessment and conducting parent/teacher conferences.
- Works with team members to implement primary care giving.
- Increases knowledge and skills by participating in a minimum of 15 hours annually in relevant Agency seminars or outside workshops and seminars in the field of early childhood education.
- Aware of and complies with licensing activities and health department standards that directly affect classroom assigned.
Recognizes the stages of development of young children.
Attends required trainings.
Collect, review and utilize data and information on clients and services to inform program/department performance.
Participates in regular supervision and staff meetings as required by department.
Performs other duties as assigned.

Qualifications:

- At least 19 years of age.
- An Associate of Arts Degree in Child Development or related field with six hours of early childhood education credit. OR Child Development Associate Credential (CDA).
- Excellent oral, written, and organizational skills.
- Well organized, attentive to detail, resourceful, self-motivated, and flexible and have initiative.
- Ability to effectively interact with the children and/or lift them if necessary.
- Ability to work as a team player and to communicate effectively with children, parents, and staff. Demonstrates respect and acceptance of diverse individuals and communities served by, working in partnership with or employed by including but not limited to race, gender, ethnicity, social-economic status, and LGBTQ populations.
- Must have valid Illinois driver’s license and auto insurance when the position requires an employee to operate a motor vehicle in connection with executing the positions responsibility, which include driving to and/or from any agency function.

Screenings:

- The applicant must submit to and pass a drug screen as requested.
- The applicant must submit to a criminal background check and a child abuse and neglect screening and maintain a cleared status throughout employment.
- The applicant must submit to and pass a TB and immunization health screen upon hire and update TB/physicals as required by licensing standards.
- The applicant must clear DMV screening and remain eligible to transport clients if driving for the position is required.
Additional Requirements:
N/A
Confidential information handled includes all information viewed and discussed related to
the delivery of services to clients, program operations and the advancement of
Children's Home + Aid's mission and programs, all client information, client files, Medicaid
documentation, and foster parent files.

This job description does not constitute an employment contract or an offer of employment.
Children's Home + Aid reserves the right to change and/or modify this job description.
Every effort has been expended to ensure the accuracy and thoroughness of the job
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circumstances and changes. As a result, employees may be assigned to perform other related
duties in support of the program and the mission of the agency. Children’s Home + Aid is
an equal opportunity employer offering employment to minorities, females, disabled,
veterans, and disabled veterans

*Position Description Approved by Human Resources:

[Signature] Date 02/12/2015

*I acknowledge that I have received a copy of my position description.
*I certify that I am a qualified incumbent and have the ability to perform the core
responsibilities/essential functions of this job with or without reasonable
accommodation.

_______________________________ Date _____/_____/_____
Signature of Employee
Appendix F. Weekly Team Meeting Document

Teaching Strategies- Study/Project/Team Meeting

Focused Teaching Cycle- 1. Standards and Goals

- What are the curriculum goals (GOLD objectives) or Illinois Early Learning Guidelines that we are going to be focusing on this week?
- What are some activities of interest from last week that you or children are wanting to continue?
- What goals for the children have families shared that could be incorporated into this plan?

Children are enjoying learning about trees and plants. Next week we will explore the things we can do with different parts of trees.

Teaching Strategies- Interest Areas, Large Group, Small Group, Read Aloud, Outdoor Experience, Special Activities

Focused Teaching Cycle- 3. Designing Explorations, Interactions and Instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Based on what we know about families and children’s current interests, strengths, and needs...</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interest Areas</strong> (Blocks, Dramatic Play, Toys &amp; Games, Art, Library, Discovery, Sand &amp; Water, Music &amp; Movement, Cooking, Computer, Outdoors)</td>
<td>Art area – Tracing our Bodies Block area – logs in block area Water table – dirt in water table, bug table toys Outdoors – planting seeds Dramatic Play – McDonalds Science – Keeping the Jade Plant alive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What changes to the interest areas will engage children, be meaningful to them, and facilitate their learning and development?</td>
<td>What can we do with parts of trees? Making a cake – Food experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- GOLD Objectives:</td>
<td>Perry – Measuring – using rulers and non-standard units of measure (GOLD 22) Odunewu – Revisit upper/lower case letters (GOLD 16A) Zimmermann – Breaking words down into smaller and smaller (GOLD 15C)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3a. Balances needs and rights of self and others

**Read Aloud**
- What books to be read aloud will engage children, be meaningful to them, and facilitate their learning and development?
- GOLD Objectives: 12a. Recognizes and recalls 18c. Retells stories

| Dinosaur Woods, The Happiest Tree |

**Outdoor Experiences**
- What outdoor experiences will engage children, be meaningful to them, and facilitate their learning and development?
- GOLD Objectives: 3b. Solves social problems

| Weather permitting we will plant plants. |

- What are the child’s strengths and needs toward the GOLD objectives, IEP Goals (if relevant), and the families’ goals?
- What are the child’s current interests or joys? What have we learned about the child’s temperament or learning style?
- What important information has the family shared recently?

| What are we wondering about individual children and families? |

**Plans to learn more?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Children</th>
<th>Progress</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Family Connections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Talasia D.</td>
<td>She has been regulating her emotions more effectively.</td>
<td>We are working with her to write a sentence during writing time.</td>
<td>Family support is aware that she has been dropped off and picked up late. Ms. Odunewu has spoken with the mother about trying to bring her in earlier in the morning.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Jnai P.</td>
<td>She has had much better emotional regulation lately – has been using her words to solve problems and delay gratification. She is also writing sentences!</td>
<td>We will work with her to sound out and identify multiple sounds within a word.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethan T.</td>
<td>He is showing high levels of comprehension on the carpet – answering questions in whole group.</td>
<td>He is working to write sentences – creating a sentence, counting the words, writing the lines, adding the letters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>London B.</td>
<td>His handwriting is more clear and legible, and he is beginning to write some familiar sight words.</td>
<td>He has had an especially difficult week in terms of managing his feelings and handling disappointment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>We will speak with his mother about strategies to help him manage his feelings at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Teaching Strategies - Family Partnerships

#### Focused Teaching Cycle - 3. Designing Explorations, Interactions, and Instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How will we engage families in meaningful ways and partner with them to facilitate children’s learning and development at home and school?</strong></td>
<td>We will send a flyer out to parents next week informing them of the Field Trip on Thursday 5/26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Teamwork – Reflecting as a team

**What worked this week? What changes are needed?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are there any issues regarding teamwork, schedules, routines, or communication?</td>
<td>Mrs. Odunewu will be out on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Teaching Strategies - To Do List

**Focused Teaching Cycle - 3. Designing Explorations, Interactions, and Instruction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What are the Teachers Going To-Do?</strong></td>
<td>Instructional Learning Formats – planning engaging activities for the afternoon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How will I connect with children and extend their learning?</td>
<td>Productivity – We will continue to streamline the morning routine before morning meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What CLASS Supports will I pay special attention to implementing or implementing more frequently?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How so?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Teaching Strategies - Reflecting on the Week

**Focused Teaching Cycle - 4. Facilitating and Documenting Learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How will we know our plans were successful? How will we know that children are feeling supported and is learning?</strong></td>
<td>We will continue to enter checkpoint data into GOLD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How will we observe and document their learning?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What questions do we have? How will we observe and capture information to answer our questions?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Teachers present - List Names

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
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REFERENCES


(Eds.), *Sociocultural studies of mind* (pp. 139-164). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.


COLLEEN E. WHITTINGHAM, Ph.D.
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EDUCATION

University of Illinois at Chicago 2017
Ph.D., Curriculum & Instruction
• Specialization in Literacy, Language, and Culture
• Dissertation Title: Places and Spaces of Literacy [Inter]Action: Preschool Practices Providing Equitable Opportunities to Learn
• Dissertation Committee: Drs. William Teale (chair), James Gavelek, Nathan Phillips, Deborah Rowe (Vanderbilt University), Joseph Rumenapp (Judson University)

University of Illinois at Chicago 2009
M.Ed., Curriculum and Instruction
• Specialization in Literacy, Language and Culture

University of Dayton 2002
B.S., Early Childhood Education
• Graduated with Honors, Magna Cum Laude

PUBLICATIONS

Peer Reviewed Journals


Book Chapters

Invited Submissions

White Papers

PRESENTATIONS
International & National


Regional, State, & Local


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**TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

**UNIVERSITY**

University of Illinois at Chicago
Master's Courses
Instructor, CI 525: Assessment and Instruction for Struggling Readers, K-12 Fall 2014
Instructor, CI 528: Assessing Literacy in Classrooms Summer 2014

K-12 CLASSROOM
- Third Grade Teacher, Tyler School
Woodland School District 50 2003-2004
- First Grade Teacher, Woodland Elementary
LaGrange School District 58 2003-2007
- Summer Bridges summer school teacher

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS (*denotes invited participation)


UNIVERSITY RESEARCH EXPERIENCE
Research Assistant, UIC Center for Literacy 2014-present
- Gather, code, and analyze data for an impact and implementation evaluation study of statewide professional development initiatives
- Analyze data for Head Start survey
- Conceptualized and coauthored Center white papers

Research Assistant, UIC Reading Clinic 2012-2015
- Conducted qualitative research to explore the tutors’ perceptions of the Multi Dimensional Reading Model.
- Facilitated pilot of an online tutoring program using Blackboard Collaborate.
• Supported graduate students in implementing the Multi Dimensional Reading Model with grade 2-9 students.

Program Director, the CIRCLL  
Summer 2014
• Developed curriculum for adolescent parents and their toddlers focused on literacy and language development
• Conducted research to evaluate project impact on adolescent parents
• Facilitated involvement of adolescent participants in collaboration with local high schools and community organizations

Program Director, Open Books Open Doors  
Summer 2013
https://news.uic.edu/books-open-doors-for-teen-moms-toddlers

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Literacy Research Association
Alumni Liaison, Doctoral Student Innovative Community Group  2017
Senior Co-Chair, Doctoral Student Innovative Community Group  2016
Junior Co-Chair, Doctoral Student Innovative Community Group  2015
Assistant Co-Chair, Doctoral Student Innovative Community Group  2014
Manuscript Reviewer, *Literacy Research: Theory, Method, and Practice*  2015-present
Proposal Reviewer, Annual Conference  2015-present

*Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*
Manuscript Reviewer  2016-present

*Literacy Research and Instruction*
Manuscript Reviewer  2016-present

*Midwestern Educational Researcher*
Manuscript Reviewer  2015-present

UIC College of Education Student Leadership Advisory Board
Committee Member  2014-2015

Austin Early Childhood Collaborative, Chicago
Steering Committee  2014-2015
Family Engagement Committee Co-Chair Chicago  2012-2014

HONORS, AWARDS, & GRANTS

External
2017 American Education Research Association Early Education and Child Development SIG Travel Grant $250
2016 International Literacy Association Helen M. Robinson Grant $1,200

Internal
2016 University of Illinois Graduate College Dean’s Scholar Fellowship $35,000
2016 University of Illinois at Chicago College of Education Dissertation Grant $500
2014 Dean’s Community Collaborative Engagement Grant $5,000

Department of Curriculum and Instruction Conference Travel Award
2016 $500
2015 $500
2014 $500
2013 $500

OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Illinois Professional Development Systems 2014-present
• Gateways to Opportunity Registry Trainer

United States Dream Academy 2014-2016
• Developed professional development for 8 Educational Specialists across the country
• Developed curriculum for Educational Specialists to implement in an after school environment
• Provided ongoing coaching for Educational Specialists throughout curriculum implementation

University of Illinois Urban Health Initiative 2015
• Provided literacy support and instruction for students in the Early Outreach Summer Program

UIC Center for Literacy & Chicago Department of Child Support Service 2014
• Coordinated recruitment for participation in the Chicago Teen Mom Program, as part of One Summer Chicago
• Developed and implemented professional development for program mentors and participants
• Provided ongoing coaching for Teen Mom Mentors throughout program.

AFFILIATIONS & MEMBERSHIPS

International Literacy Association
Literacy Research Association
National Association for the Education of Young Children
National Council of Teachers of English
American Educational Research Association

CERTIFICATES

Illinois Teaching Certificate Type 03; Early Childhood Age 0-9
Illinois Teaching Certificate Type 10; Reading Specialist K-12