Reconceptualizing Research in Early Childhood Education

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Susan Adler, Chelsea Bailey, Suzanne Fine
University of Wisconsin, Madison
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Abstract

Fieldnotes From Academia: Reflections on Becoming a Professional in Early Childhood Education

The purpose of this paper will be to examine the influences of history, ideology, and social and institutional expectations on the construction of practitioner, student, and researcher identities. This paper will trace the tensions and conflicts generated by discontinuities between ideology and lived reality that we experience as graduate students. We will then consider the sources of these tensions personally and within the academy. Finally, we will look at implications that these conditions have upon our personal and academic choices, exemplified through our theoretical and research perspectives.

We each began our work within the field of early childhood in the classroom as practitioners. Similarly, we have all been drawn back to academia to pursue advanced degrees. As we draw upon the knowledge of our past experiences and move towards our work in the future, the discontinuities of these disparate realities shape and reshape the understandings we have of ourselves and our work. These discontinuities are characterized for each of us in very different ways.
We shall each explore the sources of these discontinuities and the tensions which arise from them. Suzanne will consider how family values and practical experience reshape her relationship to her work; Susan will explore how conflict affects her selection of research methodology; and Chelsea will examine the ways in which the structural dynamics of "the institution" influence her theoretical, methodological, and practical orientations.

We have attempted to collectively work across our own differences in theory and practice to consider how we are shaped within our roles as practitioner, student, and researcher, particularly in relation to the academy and our future work. Through this paper, we hope to have spoken to the many discontinuities that characterize the transitional lives of graduate students in the field of early childhood.
Cocaine Exposed Children: 
The Bio-underclass?

Blackwell, Patricia Tulane University 
Buell, Martha Jane Tulane University 
Burns, M. Susan University of Pittsburgh

The paper will review Messick's conceptualization/definition of construct validity focusing on the facets of validity, i.e. the consequential and evidential basis of test interpretation and test use. We will address how questions are framed in research and how such questions are framed in assessing the effects of prenatal cocaine exposure. Specially we will explore the use of the deficits model in this research. Also the file drawer problem will be discussed. Subject selection issues, control groups and researcher expectancy effects will be investigated.

Social policy that sanctions wide range screening of drug use by low income women of color has led to a confounding of prenatal drug exposure and risks associated with poverty. Wide range drug screening of middle income women has not been implemented in this country, therefore the screening for prenatal drug exposure yield a biased sample. This has contributed to a punitive mentality toward substance abusing pregnant women. Pejorative labels of "crack babies", "crack kids", even though the research shows that this is not a homogeneous group of children, has led to negative expectancy among educators, health care professionals, and politicians. Sensationalized media coverage of this issue has served to exacerbate rather than illuminate the situation.

Biased sampling has led to the assumption that prenatal cocaine exposure is a problem faced by lower income women of color. The value implications of such as punitive measures against pregnant substance users reflect this bias. The social consequences of prenatal cocaine exposure will also be explored, focusing on what social action has been taken. For substance dependent mothers there is still little available in terms of treatment, for children prenatally exposed to cocaine few intervention programs exist. More positively we are beginning to see social programs aimed at studying and intervening with this population. This paper will be concluded with a discussion of methodological issues related to the study of prenatal cocaine exposure, specifically the use of comparison groups limiting extraneous variables, multi-trait multi-method assessments and external validity issues will be discussed.
Critical Science and the History of Child Development's
Influence on Early Education Research

Marianne N. Bloch
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Often early childhood educators who fail to frame their research or research methods in positivist traditions or theories of developmental psychology find themselves marginalized in their own field. One reason for the lack of recognition or acceptance of critical theoretical perspectives in early childhood education is the century-long domination of psychological and child development perspectives in the field of early childhood. A second reason relates to the important separate institutional histories of early and elementary education in the United States within academia. This paper explores both the disciplinary and institutional history of early childhood education in an effort to explain the continuing lack of acceptance of critical science perspectives in the field. The costs of this reliance in the past and for the future are discussed.

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1 This paper has been published in Early Education and Development, April, 1991, Volume 2, Number 2, 95-108. A modified version of this paper will also be published in Kessler, S.A. and Swadener, B.B. (Eds.) (in press). Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Education Curriculum. New York: Teachers College Press.
A Question of Voice and Power

A work in progress

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It's a question of whose voice is represented and whether one or more voices should be represented in research. It depends upon the researcher, the questions asked, the goals of the research, and a variety of other political, ideological/cultural, and economic influences. It's a matter of power--including race, class, gender and the opportunity to express language.

The Issue or Paper Focus. Researchers and researched. Collaboration. Voices represented in doing research and in presenting research. What is research by "researchers"? What relationship should "research" bear to those whom it addresses? Who are those that traditional research addresses? Is it "us"? And is that sufficient?

What is "truth" if truth represents the voice of university researchers primarily? What is "scientific" research if the representation of knowledge has been defined by outsiders primarily and is represented through the eyes and interpretations of the university "outsiders"?

But, where is the "researcher", too? The need to deconstruct power relationships and images of "university researcher" and those who are "researched" offers the opportunity to present multiple perspectives or voices representing notions of perspectives on reality; it also offers the opportunity for collaboration to represent a voice, or a perspective...

The question is is one voice possible? This working paper presentation uses a case study approach that focuses on the dilemmas of one university researcher in one project as she has faced institutional demands of granting agencies, the "academy", schools and communities in an effort to construct a "home-school-university" collaboration. It is necessarily qualified as a presentation by the fact that it is one voice that is represented in the paper (there are others from all other participants), and that this one voice reflects the personal ideologies, capabilities, experiences, and perceived constraints of that one person.
THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF URBAN SCHOOLING:
AFRICAN-AMERICAN AND APPALACHIAN FAMILIES

Kathryn M. Borman, Dolores A. Stegelin & Patricia Ziegel-Timm
University of Cincinnati

Abstract

This paper and slide presentation provides an overview of research being completed through the Center for Research on Literacy and Schooling in the College of Education at the University of Cincinnati. Goals and purposes of the Center are described and funding sources are identified. An emphasis on the cross-disciplinary, collaborative research style is made. Specific research sites and strands are identified and explained, as well as data analysis and procedures completed.

The Center for Research on Literacy and Schooling at the University of Cincinnati was initially funded through an Ohio Board of Regents grant. Four research strands were developed which focused on preschool emerging literacy, middle grades and family literacy, middle grades and teacher-student literacy interactions, and family and community variables. The research was conducted at two elementary schools in Cincinnati, Ohio. One school was located in a primarily Appalachian neighborhood and the second in an African-American neighborhood. Collective and individual research processes are described. Comprehensive data analysis has been completed within and across research data strands and sets and ongoing research is being conducted, particularly as related to community and home connections to the
children, schools, and teachers. Publication and data dissemination is also ongoing. It is hoped that these research efforts and knowledge gained from them will contribute to the current reformation of the Cincinnati Public School system.

Specific research findings addressed in this presentation include demographic data about the participating families at the two elementary schools, such as family income and occupation, gender of children participating in the study, household composition, size of household, educational levels of parents, educational goals of parents for their children, and family structure as related to teacher grades and child test scores.

Specific findings from the preschool literacy study are also described. The two major goals of the preschool literacy research are described and findings are explained. Even though the public school as context for literacy development was a secondary goal initially, the research lead the investigators to believe that the public school offers unique learning opportunities for preschool children and their families and that further research is needed in order to better understand the public school setting as a place for young children to play and learn. Conclusions from the study are presented as well as policy recommendations based on the research findings. This study has particular application for the development of future early childhood programs within public school settings, as currently being mandated through federal and state legislation.
Letter Writing by Parents and Children

M. Susan Burns, University of Pittsburgh
Renee Casbergue, Tulane University

Abstract

The purpose of this report is to present in depth information on six pairs of parents and children who together wrote a letter to anyone of their choice. We are interested in identifying instructional variables that affect young children’s development and their socialization toward the educational environment (Hess & Shipman, 1965). Related to emergent literacy activities, Teale (1982) asserts that children internalize the structures of the activities which are conducted in the world around them. Heath (1986), Taylor (1983), and Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) have documented a variety of writing events that children engage in at home. Parents function as instructors in many of these events by supporting, valuing, extending and clarifying children’s writing initiations and by providing necessary materials and events that afford writing as a way to communicate (Fagan, 1987; Hoffman, 1987).

The cases presented will be from two studies. In the first study we observed twenty six 3-to 5-year old children and their parents. The families were recruited from a university nursery school that was attended predominantly by middle to upper income families. In the second study we examined three hundred and fifty 3-to 5-year old children and their parents. The families were recruited from a public school prekindergarten program. While these children attended the program mainly by virtue of their low socio-economic-status, they were all normally developing.

Parents and children were asked to engage in a letter writing task. Parents were not given explicit instruction on what a young child’s letter might look like or on who should write the letter (parent or child). They were asked to engage in the activity for ten minutes.

Through observation of the parent-child interactions while engaged in a writing task, we observed 1) the manner of exchange of information, including parents’ directiveness or tendency toward open-ended input and children’s initiations and responses; 2) the types of information that parents and children exchange during the writing activity, for example, a focus on spelling or on what the child wants to communicate in the letter; and 3) the nature of the children’s written input into the resulting letter product.

The results from both studies indicate that the degree of parental control within writing tasks serves to shape a) the children’s communicative input into the exchanges, b) the literacy focus of the interaction, and c) the children’s written input into the letter product. Parents who exhibit more control within the exchange tend to have children who employ a more passive
interactional style, have exchanges focussed on rule-governed aspects of writing and have children's written products which are conventional looking. Parents who exhibit less control within the exchanges tend to have children who employ more active interactional styles, have exchanges focussed on creative aspects of writing, and have children's written products that are more emergent in appearance. A major difference between the two studies was that parents in the second study had to be more directive to generate the same level of initiation as observed in the first sample.

In the presentation we will examine six of the cases from the two studies. We will present information on the how each parent-child dyad performed on each of the above measures. In addition, we will present more specific information on the variability within each parent-child dyad rather than the group data across pairs. Examples of examination include:

- who was the letter written to and for what purpose (e.g., thank you note, party invitation);
- who gave the content of the message, the parent or child;
- what is the message communicated in the letter;
- what did the letter product look like (e.g., amount of drawing versus conventional writing);
- who initiated a change in literacy focus and what were the old and new focusses (e.g., change from spelling to focus on the conceptional meaning of writing);
- when there was a focus on conceptual meaning who initiated the exchange and what was the content (e.g., you write this letter to Grandmom, the postman delivers it, Grandmom reads it and knows what we wrote to her); and
- who initiated scaffolding, parent or child.

Our findings will be presented and compared to the results of the group studies. We will elaborate on how case examination can add qualitative information to enhance the meaning of group findings and to highlight questions to be addressed in group designs. We will examine whether the time and effort required for qualitative research and its limited generalizability restrict its use as a method in early childhood research. Finally we will present what we thought we gained from pursuing this qualitative analysis and how using this method will enhance the pursuit of research in early childhood education.
The Social Construction of Gender

Betsy Cahill
Kent State University

This presentation comes from a study designed to critically analyze the gender identity development process as it is postulated by the fields of psychology, developmental psychology, and early childhood education. The description and exploration of the impact of cultural norms on self-identity was based on semi-structured life history interviews with four participants differing in race, gender, and sexual orientation. These individuals responded to a set of seven research questions through an interactive and collaborative interview process that elicited feelings, attitudes, memories, and behaviors as constructed by each participant.

The results of this investigation support feminist and reconstructivist perspectives that gender is created by connecting social behavioral expectations to biological or structural differences. Thus, a person who is born female is expected to behave in certain socially proscribed ways as if such behaviors were biologically determined. Such expectations are also true of males. The consequences of this pervasive, and often unconscious, process typically include different life trajectories for females and males.
Gender identity appears to be a cognitive construct that is created by individuals in an attempt to belong in their world. The construction of gender occurs across the life span as critical incidents, experiences, and people assume central importance in our lives. Furthermore, the gender identity process is one of several identity dimensions that comprise the self-identity process. Other dimensions of self-identity include race, class, religion, sexual orientation, and physical ability.

One recommendation gleaned from this study is the reconceptualization of gender identity as one dimension of self-identity that is interwoven among many identities, all constructed by individuals themselves. People can accept, reject, or modify their self-identity to find a sense of belonging in their world.

Implications for early childhood education, research, and teacher preparation are also discussed in this paper.
Kindergarten Children's Perceptions of Teachers' Writing Instruction

Renee M. Casbergue & Angela Love

Abstract

Literature on social cognition suggests that children are active interpreters of classroom reality and that they draw inferences about the causes, effects, and intentions of behavior. These inferences are not always accurate, however, and indicate that children's and adults' views of classroom reality may not necessarily be synonymous. (Weinstein, 1983) Our recent study of the effects of varying instructional approaches on kindergarten children's perceptions of writing illustrates that such differing views of classroom reality may influence how young children perceive the writing process and define the nature of instructional tasks aimed at writing development.

As part of a broader study, 37 children enrolled in two different types of instructional programs were interviewed three times during kindergarten using a protocol developed by Padak and Pryor (1983). One part of the interview focused on whether children believed that their teachers "help them to become better writers," and if so, how. Children's responses to these questions, as well as any spontaneous references to their teachers' instructional behaviors will provide the basis of this presentation.

That children did interpret classroom reality differently is illustrated by one child's description of her teacher's reaction to her invented spelling. This teacher values all attempts at writing, and uses extensive praise of any approximations of conventional usage. Thus, she would be likely to offer only positive responses even when children recognize that work is not "correct." This child, however, interpreted such a response pattern to indicate that the teacher is "glad" when children get something wrong.

Such a misinterpretation is not likely to have profound impact on children's writing development. Other types of misperceptions, however, have greater instructional implications. Responses to the interviews indicated two consistent areas of misperception, the first related to children's perceptions of their teachers' helpfulness and the second related to their understanding of the teachers' role in their learning.

With regard to teacher helpfulness, it is interesting to note the percentage of children who responded that their teachers did not help them to become better writers. During the first interview, conducted within the first three weeks of school, 52% of the children said that their teachers did not help them to become better writers. In most cases, these children referred to the teachers' practice of making them use their own spellings and come up with their own topics for writing as evidence that their
teachers were not helping them. This was especially true for children in classrooms where a writing process approach was used and in which natural emergence of writing and invented spelling were accepted and encouraged. Ironically, these were the classrooms in which the most time was spent on writing instruction, and in which the teachers correctly perceived that they were very involved in helping children become competent writers. For many children, the perception that their teachers were not helpful persisted throughout kindergarten (33% in January, 42% in May).

Even among children who conceded that their teachers were helpful, misperceptions regarding the teachers' functions were evident. Children most often perceived their teachers as evaluators, whose primary function was to tell them what was wrong with their work. Despite the fact that teachers perceived their role in writing conferences to be one of supporting and encouraging writing, only one child the entire year responded that the teacher pointed out what was done well as well as what was wrong. Many children further reported that their teachers were there to provide assistance with letter formation and spelling, again despite the teachers' reports that these aspects of writing were downplayed in their classrooms.

**Instructional Implications**

When children are asked to begin writing in kindergarten, they often react with frustration and fear that they don't know how to write. Teachers who view children as emergent writers go to great lengths to assure children that they are indeed writers; they also avoid responding in terms of standards of conventional writing. One way of doing this is to encourage children to "spell it the best way you can." The intent of this admonition is to allow the children to become comfortable with their own abilities as writers and to prevent them from feeling inhibited by their lack of knowledge of writing conventions. Clearly, however, a number of children perceive this response as an indication that the teacher is not helpful. It is possible that this practice, intended to put children at ease, actually adds to their frustration. This finding would seem to indicate that teachers need to more directly convey their reasons for requiring children to use emergent forms of writing.

The finding that children viewed their teachers' role primarily as that of an evaluator also has implications for instruction. Each of the teachers in the process oriented classrooms describes the kindergarten writing conference as an opportunity to support and encourage writing. Yet, children emerge from the conferences with the belief that all their teacher does is tell them what is wrong with their writing. It is likely that more positive responses are given than are recalled by the children during the interview. Teachers should be aware, however, of how easy it is for young children to focus only on what they perceive as criticism, and should make a concerted effort to be sure that children attend to the positive statements that are made about the ir writing.
PUTTING ASIDE ADULTCENTRISM:  
CHILD-CENTERED ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

PREPARED FOR:  
CONFERENCE ON RECONCEPTUALIZING  
RESEARCH IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN - MADISON  
OCTOBER 3 - 6, 1991

PREPARED BY:  
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PUTTING ASIDE ADULTCENTRISM: CHILD-CENTERED ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

ABSTRACT

"Genius is childhood recaptured at will."

Charles Baudelaire

This presentation will be exploratory. It will take a show-and-tell format (using slides and props) to make the point that research with children is most valid when it is conducted using the native (juvenile) forms of communication (rather than imposing adult modes of communication). Among the forms of child-centered ethnographic research to be discussed will be:

- Observation and participant observation, analyzed so as not to impose adult notions of reality upon children's perceptions and behavior
- Field notes kept by mothers in a similar fashion
- Informant interviews using a child-centered "focused interview" approach
- Various child-focused methods of interviewing: drawing, picture commentaries, puppet figures, role playing (with props), non-verbal probes, storytelling etc.
- Brief commentary on the focused group interview, or "focus group"

Such methods are helpful for taking the child's perspective on customs and cultural contexts, as will be demonstrated based on studying contemporary American rituals (Santa Claus, Easter Bunny, Tooth Fairy). Essential to the success of any technique is the openness to children's views (even when they violate adult perspectives).
A STATEWIDE SEARCH FOR EXEMPLARY PRACTICES
IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN ILLINOIS

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Institute, Pittsburgh; Crews, S., Illinois State Board of Education; and Mabry, L., University of
Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

I. Background of the study

Supporting policy for the education of very young children with and without disabilities has been well documented
over the years (Allen, 1984; Hanson & Lynch, 1989; Peterson, 1987; Shonkoff & Meisels, 1990). Historically,
Illinois has been one of the leaders in providing early childhood (EC) education for young children across a myriad of
administrative structures such as Head Start, early childhood special education, and prekindergarten at-risk programs.
Throughout the state and nation, communities have provided a proliferation of programs fostering the healthy
development of young children, especially needed due to the changing nature of families and the work force. Not
surprisingly, early childhood programs are expanding rapidly, often without clear standards or indicators of program
quality. Further, many programs have developed in semi-isolation as single classes in school districts or community
settings. Few opportunities existed for program developers to profit from the experiences of others. This trend of
supported growth without documentation of success or effectiveness, while understandable, does not facilitate the
development of quality standards for or programs in early childhood education (Maude, 1989). A strong need existed
to identify effective practices in early childhood education throughout the state, to describe and investigate those
practices, and to publicize them, making descriptions available to others developing or wishing to develop programs.

II. Evaluation Design - Evaluation Purposes

In the Spring of 1990, the intent to conduct a statewide search to identify exemplary practices in EC education was
announced by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). Three main purposes guided this study: (1) by merely
conducting the search, the importance of providing quality EC programming for all young children would be
highlighted; (2) the search would provide a mechanism to give recognition to exemplary practices in particular sites
throughout Illinois; and (3) the search would provide models for other schools or community programs developing
and expanding services for young children.

Evaluation Approach

The phrase "search for exemplary practices in early childhood education" contains three concepts that raise particular
issues for evaluators and evaluands and which had important implications for the design, implementation, and impact
of this evaluation. Each of these three concepts (exemplary, practice, and early childhood education) were addressed
in the evaluation framework. Furthermore, due to the real ambiguity of exemplary in this context, the investigators
decided to use a qualitative, connoisseurship model of evaluation (Eisner, 1975). Teams of identified experts in EC,
chosen for disciplinary and geographic representation, were employed extensively throughout the evaluation.
Drawing upon their considerable knowledge in the field of early childhood along with their insight into its special
context and history in Illinois, these experts provided valuable input in identifying exemplary practice. Along with
the decision to use expert review as the primary means of evaluation, five dimensions along which practices were
evaluated were chosen to provide evidence that these practices would be viable in other areas within the State:
program description, description of the practice, personnel involvement, evidence of effectiveness, and transportability.

Evaluation Process

This one-year study included five major phases: peer nomination of reviewers and design and review of instruments;
application; panel review of the applications and selection of semifinalists; site review of semifinalists; and final
panel review and selection of finalists.

III. Evaluation Results

Nine programs were selected as finalists in the "Search for Exemplary Practices in Early Childhood Education." These
finalists represented four practice areas: staffing patterns, service delivery, family involvement, and program
design. No finalists were selected in the areas of integrated settings, administration, cultural promotion, and the
other category. Four honorable mentions were awarded, one each in the practice areas of staffing patterns, program
design, family involvement, and other. Finalists selected for recognition as exemplary practices were awarded small
grants to help them share information as models with others interested in adopting these practices. Upon selection,
their first activity was to provide a brief description of the practice for a resource directory tentatively entitled,
"Exemplary Practices in Early Childhood Education." Finalists were also asked to disseminate materials about the exemplary practice; to conduct training sessions on their exemplary practices at a conference; and, depending upon funds available, to provide technical assistance to interested parties.

IV. Conclusions - Comments on the Evaluation Approach

The decision to use professional review to identify exemplary practice rather than a priori standards or criteria suited the absence of commonly shared philosophies, resources, experiences, and standards. The high level of professional and parental input and interaction surrounding this evaluation may have moved the state closer to an understanding of the commonalities that exist in programs for young children across ability groupings, service providers, and geographic areas.

While the use of a priori standards in this evaluation might have been easier to implement and less labor-intensive, the absence of common agreement about standards might have alienated some potential applicants. The use of professional judgment seemed to give programs ample opportunity to convey their philosophies and evidence of effectiveness through the use of self-nomination and on-site visits.

Comments on the Use of Case Study Methodology

Initially, there was some apprehension among the evaluators and the evaluation client concerning novice evaluators’ use of case study or qualitative methodology. While some experts had experience with site reviews, most of that experience involved compliance monitoring and formalized reporting using checklists. It was a pleasant surprise to discover that with training, experts could produce high quality case study reports. In the debriefing, virtually all site reviewers said that the experience was worthwhile and provided them with additional information that supported or refuted the exemplary nature of the practices. Some said that they wanted to use case studies in their own future work. The case study information was critical in the selection of finalists. Case study information will also be used in the resource directory that will be made available to persons interested in implementing practices in other areas.

Comments on the Importance of the Evaluation to the State

It is generally agreed that the types of practices selected can be used as a profile of the development of early childhood education in Illinois. Most local activity seems to be concentrated in the practice areas of service delivery, staffing, program design, and family involvement, the areas receiving the most applicants, semi-finalists, and finalists. This pattern is not surprising as (1) family involvement has been heavily mandated at both federal and state levels; and (2) many programs are quite new, hence program design may account for a large amount of exemplary. Interestingly, two semi-finalists were selected from the other category, suggesting growth in areas not specified by research or policy. Certainly these practices warrant further study. The evaluation also revealed that good things were happening throughout the state, even in locales challenged by large catchment areas and limited availability of professionals and services. This finding was welcomed with the hope that replication of exemplary practices will be possible in all parts of the state.

Without a doubt, the evaluation dimension that most of the applicants had difficult responding to was the sections asking for evidence of effectiveness. It became clear that local programs did not have access to data concerning the effectiveness of their programs. Possible reasons for this were suggested. It may be that, faced with the need to provide services and to be in compliance with state law, newly developing programs “implement now and evaluate later” instead of incorporating evaluation into program planning and implementation. One problem with the “implement now and evaluate later” strategy is that practices do not have evidence of effectiveness readily available during program development and implementation. It is also possible that local program personnel lack the skills, resources, and encouragement to evaluate their practices. One possible action that the state could take is to provide training and small grant funding to support evaluation in developing programs.

Implications of the Evaluation for Other States and Content Areas

Overall the evaluation approach used in this study seems to be good way to assess exemplary practices in a developing field. Expert involvement and consensus building increases ownership and commitment to the evaluation as well as identifying a substantial group of experts who may be used to describe practice and develop standards in subsequent activities. The inclusion of site visits and case study methodology adds time and money but produces the benefit of increased validity of the study.
Meanings of Readiness and the Kindergarten Experience
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The idea of readiness is used by many audiences to make decisions as young children go to school for the first time. It is typically thought of as a characteristic of individual children that will develop as they grow and mature. Frequently, readiness is seen as a prerequisite for school success; adults search for evidence of readiness in the form of certain behaviors, skills, characteristics, and test performance. As such, readiness has become a gate that restricts the entry or exit to kindergarten.

In contrast to this popular conception of readiness, this paper examines readiness for school as a social meaning that is constructed by people in community settings as they participate in the kindergarten experience. Based on data from an ethnographic study of several kindergartens in the same district, it is based on the assumption that meanings are developed among people socially, then internalized by individuals. The focus is the development of social-level interpretations of readiness: the meanings that are attached to readiness by relevant institutions such as the school, the family, the community. In a middle class suburban community of professionals and a bilingual classroom situated in a culturally diverse school, the developing meanings of readiness were found to be locally formed and distinct, with a coherent, community flavor. The meanings of readiness were dynamic and changing, emerging from the interactions of individuals with varying tools to have input into its definition. Having the power to affect the meaning of readiness was a matter of cultural capital, of knowing how to manipulate institutions and expecting their input to matter in the educational process. These interpretations shaped the kindergarten experience in each setting, forming a framework for understanding children and for the nature of the kindergarten program. Although these classrooms were part of the same school district and shared a common curriculum, the children were involved in very different kindergarten experiences. Ideas about readiness and parental ability to influence school practice were related to this variation.

How does thinking about readiness as a socially constructed meaning change the way we look at our interactions with young children and their families? It moves readiness from inside the individual children to the heads and hearts of the actors in each setting. As such, the assumptions that are brought to kindergarten about the purpose of early education, the mechanism of growth and development, and the relationships between home and school become crucial. The child can no longer bear the burden of being marked as unready; readiness becomes a matter of contextual demand created by adults as they interact.
Judgments of readiness are salient to instructional and placement decisionmaking; this view redistributes the responsibility for actions taken. It shifts the focus away from the isolated interaction of a teacher and her students to the context in which teachers and students work and live. This context is full of resources and constraints, power relationships and varied roles. From this perspective, we must rethink the policies and practices that are related to assessments of readiness, moving from concerns about instrument reliability and validity to concerns of equity.
Life History of a First Grade Teacher:
A Case Study of Cultural Sensitivity in Teaching Practice.

Mary Hauser
Western Michigan University

This investigation, intended as a case study to understand the development, through teaching practice and life experience, of what I am calling the "cultural sensitivity" this teacher demonstrates in her multiethnic class, is a work in progress. Information has been gathered through observation and participant observation in her classroom, several hours of interviews with her during the past year, and interviews with her colleagues and a family member.

In the context of a larger study of the school in which she teaches, I found that despite the fact that this teacher shares ethnicity (Anglo) and background (conservative middle class upbringing) with the majority of the teachers in the school, she approached her students differently. She seemed able to meet the needs of her students with greater sensitivity to and enthusiasm for their cultural backgrounds than any other staff member. Yet she has had no experience with the language or the culture of her Lao, Hmong and Cambodian students. By understanding what makes a teacher who possesses the same background as the majority of our elementary teachers effective in a multiethnic context, we may acquire knowledge that can inform our work with preservice and inservice teachers who will teach ethnically and linguistically different populations.

But what is that knowledge? Is it attitudes, experiences, ways of interacting, pedagogical strategies? The data analysis at this point indicates that what is emerging is a narrative that demonstrates how the variety of life experiences this woman draws upon to develop her interaction style with these students is combined with an attitude about children and learning that transcends ethnicity and/or language. It raises questions about the meaning of life experiences in shaping teacher behavior and the role and responsibility of schools of education to utilize life experience in training students.

The interpretation of this data also raises methodological and philosophical questions. I have begun to question my selection of this woman for a case study. Our perceptions of children and schooling have many similarities. Did I choose her so that my voice could be heard? Is my intention to make a statement for education that is multicultural (in contrast to assimilative) rather than to understand the development of this teacher? Because of the friendship that we have developed, have I been unable to objectively analyze the work of other teachers in this school? The definition of the explicit and implicit questions that this research presents will be explored in the presentation.
Using Videodisc to Simulate
“Real-Life” in Classrooms

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Abstract

Imagine .......3 early childhood or elementary preservice teachers sitting together
at a computer terminal. As the students watch the screen a list of 15 names appears on
the monitor. These names are grouped by ethnicity and include a brief description of
the person’s role/status/occupation (i.e. a Filipino social worker, a Haole Navy officer
parent of a second grader, a Japanese-American elementary principal, a hula teacher,
a Japanese-American professor of ethnic studies. The students choose a Hawai‘ian
name from the list, and a kuma hula comes on the video monitor, and after introducing
herself, she gives her reaction to the discipline segment on our tape, sharing her
thoughts about how children learn and about traditional Hawai‘ian methods of teaching
and disciplining children. At the end of the hula teacher’s discussion, the students are
referred back to the computer monitor menu, and given the chance to choose another
Hawai‘ian name, to get another Hawai‘ian perspective, or to hear from a Japanese-
American or a Haole or a Filipino, or to go back once more to the tape.

Subsequent menus refer the students to a bibliography of writings on discipline:
academic articles on effective elementary classroom management; ethnographic
studies on cultural attitudes toward discipline; studies on families and child-rearing in
Hawaii; oral histories of elementary school experiences in Hawaii’s earlier days.
Bibliographic entries students choose are then printed out, giving them a personalized,
annotated reading guide. Almost two-hours have gone by, so the students decide to exit
from the computer. Before the computer lets them exit they are asked to give their
evaluation of the lesson.

At the core of our approach is a commitment to presenting students with a sense
of the vitality and heterogeneity of cultural perspectives on these important educational
issues. There is not just one Filipino perspective on discipline, there are many Filipino
perspectives. These perspectives are presented not as a checklist of cultural facts, but as
individual Filipino (and Filipina) voices, voices that are simultaneously consistent with
and unique from each other. This perspective is quite different from the traditional or
‘typical’ preservice and inservice teacher (in primary education) introduction to
classroom management. Whereby they are shared techniques that are behaviorist in
perspective (e.g., time out, Assertive Discipline, reward schedules, etc.). These “quick
fix” strategies do not take into account individual child(ren) characteristics. Teacher
training institutes inform preservice teachers to implement or deliver these behavioral
strategies with seemingly little regard for more important child-related understandings
of gender, ethnicity, culture, child development and personality.

Instead of giving answers, answers which we argue nobody clearly has, these
modules are designed to raise questions, some of the toughest educational questions
teachers in Hawaii must deal with: Is it true that Hawai‘ian, Haole, and Japanese-
American families have different beliefs and practices for dealing with children’s misbehavior? If so, what does this mean for a first grade teacher? Should she have different expectations for children in her class of different ethnic backgrounds? Are the values she explicitly or implicitly communicates to children the values that are right for her ethnic group, for all American children, or both?

**Evaluation**

**Formative Evaluation**

The evaluation plan incorporates multiple research perspectives. As instructors/researchers we will study (a) student sensitivity to multicultural and multiethnic issues over time, from the beginning to the end of the semester (e.g., each student will react to the video presentations and will write responsive reaction papers about the presented video content); (b) student values related to multicultural/multiethnic sensitivity; and (c) student understanding and appreciation of the module, multimedia technology, and instructional format via student generated evaluative statements.

Initial data collected from summer school students revealed positive attitudes and changes in the way students think about misbehavior, and also about using this kind of technology (videotape narrative accounts of classroom management) to study multiple perspectives of classroom management. The following excerpts from student critiques of the “multicultural-misbehavior” videotapes illustrate the power of this medium for delivering the intended instructional content: “I agree with most of the comments. I agree with David in that one should deal with each situation differently. One does not need to be so strict and structured. One needs to give the students expectation and be direct. The class should be a happy, fun, and comfortable environment...I liked the word the Mexican-American female used. She said she felt like a machine (reference to the teacher praising). That is what all the praising is like, very mechanical.” Another student shared that, “It was interesting to hear the different viewpoints. Some surprised me, but delighted me at the same time because I have also felt the same way, but thought I was the only one who did. For example, I have always felt that because kids are different you need to have different consequences for each child, dependent upon what is most effective for them. It also made me more aware of what I do in the classroom....I had not seen praise as a negative previously, but now my eyes are open to that aspect.”

Another student replied, “I completely disagreed with the teacher who said ‘you should just work with the children and not the parents since parents have enough burdens already.’ Her main point of reference was working with Samoan families who would sometimes smack their children when learning of the children’s misbehaviors in school. Of course this will always be a problem and thus the need for teachers to work all the more with families to help them understand what the teacher is trying to accomplish in the classroom.”

Lastly, a student (and veteran teacher of 15 years) replied that, “in some ways after taking this class, and after viewing the tapes, I do wish I had some training as to the ways different types of children learn, or behave. It would help me to understand my Filipino and black students to have known some of this before. As it was, I learned most things by trial and error, and mostly, by being told by students from other areas or countries when they became close to me.”
Social Competence As Revealed in a Comprehensive Preschool Ethnography

Rebecca Kantor, David E. Fernie, Peg Elgas, James Scott Jr., & Paula McMurray

This paper presents selected aspects of a comprehensive preschool ethnography conducted by faculty and graduate students. The overall goal of which is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the whole of everyday life within a single preschool classroom. As John Gumperz has noted, ethnographic analysis tends to move back and forth between a broad understanding of everyday life and more focussed analyses which, in turn, inform the "whole". Here, we discuss how a series of focussed, microanalytic analyses have broadened and informed our understanding of the multifaceted social competence evidenced by children as they become students in this setting.

Elgas analysis (Elgas, Klein, Kantor, & Fernie, 1988) provides a departure point for the discussion. She focussed on a salient "core group" of players and how they used objects to create, affirm, and sustain their social dynamics. At the same time, this investigation suggested that possessing objects valued by the group was a necessary but not sufficient condition to guarantee access to the group's play. A second analysis (Elgas, Kantor, & Fernie, in preparation) focussed on successful and unsuccessful bidders for group access, and revealed the complex cultural knowledge evidenced in the actions and language of successful core group members.

A third analysis examines, across various contexts of this classroom, the actions of the only girl to gain consistent access to the group—how she "positions" herself simultaneously as a peer, a student, and as a gendered individual in ways which demonstrate a highly accomplished social brinmanship (Fernie, Davies, Kantor, & McMurray, 1991). Providing the negative example of social incompetence, the fourth analysis (Scott, in preparation) describes two "outsiders" whose social difficulties are examined over time and across contexts to reveal the nature of their struggles, the genesis of this negative status, and the impact of "outsiders" presence and actions upon everyday life in this classroom.

In using the example of social competence thus revealed, we hope to tell a story which is both about this classroom and about our research process:—how these analyses evolved out of our nascent understanding of salient features and dynamics of the classroom, how multiple analyses evolved in an interrelated and mutually-informing fashion, how these analyses provoked and reinforced each other, and how our understandings and perspectives shifted over time in light of our findings. Through an explication of these intertwined strands, we will address the social challenges and accomplishments which are an integral and salient part of the fabric and texture of children's everyday life within this preschool classroom.
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RECONCEPTUALIZING THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM

Panel presented at the conference, "Reconceptualizing Research in Early Childhood Education," sponsored by the University of Wisconsin-Madison, National-Louis University, and the University of Illinois

Wisconsin Center
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Madison, Wisconsin, October 3-6, 1991

Introduction: Shirley Kessler, National-Louis University
Beth Blue Swadener, Kent State University

Critical Science and the History of Child Development's Influence on Early Education Research
Marianne N. Block, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Meanings of Readiness and the Kindergarten Experience
Beth Graue, University of Wisconsin-Madison

The Emergent Curriculum: Contextualizing a Feminist Perspective
Janice Jipson, Western Michigan University

Disturbances from the Field: Recovering the voice of the Early Childhood Teacher
Bill Ayers, University of Illinois at Chicago
RECONCEPTUALIZING THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM

The topics discussed in this session relate to our efforts within the past three years to address issues of developmental theory as they relate to the early childhood curriculum. Since the early 1980's many of us who have studied early childhood education from the perspective of curriculum theory began to ask several questions regarding the early childhood curriculum. We asked ourselves how the early childhood curriculum had come to be what it was. We wondered why there was the current debate about what were considered "developmentally appropriate" versus "developmentally inappropriate" practices in early childhood classrooms or settings. We asked ourselves if all early childhood curriculum decisions should be made primarily from the perspective of developmental theory and how other theoretical frameworks might benefit our field. We also wanted to know how developmental theory helped us plan programs for young children and how, perhaps, the exclusive focus of research in early childhood education on developmental theory limited the possibilities for the early childhood curriculum (e.g., Jipson, 1990).

As curriculum generalists, we became aware of alternative theoretical perspectives or paradigms (Kuhn, 1970; Popkewitz, 1984) from which to conduct educational research and examinations of the early childhood curriculum. We became especially interested in examining the early childhood curriculum from an interpretive, critical, and feminist point of view, and wondered what the implications of alternative theoretical perspectives were for current research and practice in early childhood education. In examining the above questions we drew upon much of the curriculum scholarship over the past two decades in the U.S. (e.g., Apple, 1979; 1982; Grumet, 1988; Pinar, 1975; 1988) which represented attempts to "reconceptualize" ways of examining and understanding the school curriculum. This scholarship rejected the "traditional" approach to curriculum planning and deliberation associated with the work of Ralph Tyler (1949), which emphasized behavioral objectives, direct instruction, and achievement testing, and argued for a "reconceptualization" of curriculum discourse by illuminating the philosophical, historical, and political dimensions of what was taught and learned in school.

In addition, of vital interest to this scholarship was the issue of social inequality and the role that schools played in recreating the unequal class, race, and gender relationships which existed in the wider society (Apple, 1979, 1983; Leacock, 1969; Whitty, 1977; Willis, 1978; Young, 1971). Furthermore, this research offered an alternative to the usual "input/output" research design for examining the "educability" of low income children of color by focusing on the "process" of schooling, in particular the school curriculum and teacher-pupil interaction, to study the ways in which social inequalities were produced and reproduced in schools (Apple, 1979). Thus, the object of study within this genre of research was the school curriculum, including the formal body of knowledge which was "transmitted" in schools, as well as the tacit learnings acquired by students as a result of their interaction with teachers and the structures and norms which constituted everyday life in classrooms (e.g., Jackson, 1969).
We also situated our queries about the early childhood curriculum within the "sociology of the curriculum," the basic of assumption of which is the belief that knowledge was a social construction; it was created by individuals to help them make sense of their world and to answer questions which interested them about their life situations. Therefore, knowledge was not objective or neutral, but belonged to individuals and was tied to their interests. While this session appears to be organized around formal papers, we will present the main ideas in a conversational format, and encourage participation by the audience throughout.

Marianne Bloch's topic will be discussed first because it provides perhaps the broadest perspective on the use of developmental theory to plan, implement, and evaluate early childhood programs. Mimi takes issue with the current emphasis in early childhood research on positivist traditions or theories of developmental psychology which marginalize research from other perspectives, such as critical social science and feminist theory. Mimi claims that one reason for these separate research orientations in the field is the separate institutional histories of early childhood education and elementary education in the United States and in the academy. Her topic explores the disciplinary and institutional history of early childhood education in an effort to explain the continuing lack of acceptance of critical science perspectives in the field. She also discusses the costs of this past reliance on developmental theory for the future of research and practice in early childhood education.

Beth Graue's topic illustrates the application of the sociology of knowledge to "readiness," arguing that readiness is not a characteristic of children, but a social construction or concept created by communities of educators to interpret the relationship between their perceptions of children's particular "academic" like behaviors and the educational goals for kindergartners set by a particular community and its local school. Beth goes as far as to question whether the construct, "readiness," actually exists at all. Case studies of two communities are presented and the local policies relative to readiness depicted. One school created several extra-year programs for children, and defined readiness as being ready for an advanced academic kindergarten curriculum. At another school with a separate full day kindergarten for Mexican-American children ideas of readiness were tied to cultural differences. Ready children for first grade meant closing the cultural gap between Hispanic and Anglo children.

Jan Jipson's topic represents several themes within the sociology of the curriculum: feminist pedagogy, connected teaching, the emergent curriculum, and multiple ways of knowing. Jan describes the process of curriculum development in an innovative early childhood education course she taught at the University of Oregon in 1989. Students selected topics, interpreted issues, involved each other in experiential learning activities, and reflected about these experiences in journals. Jan discusses issues of personal theorizing and the curriculum as well as issues of power and imposition in teacher education.

The next topic is presented by one of the "pioneers" in our field, in terms of early childhood teacher autobiography, voice, collaboration for action research, community advocacy, and curriculum, Bill Ayers. The author of The good Preschool Teacher, Bill has worked...
directly with urban teachers from diverse background for much of his career. His paper is a vehicle for progressive urban early childhood educators from the Chicago area to tell their stories, their struggles, and their successes. This topic draws from the dialogue at monthly meetings of a group of Chicago teachers, called 'Teacher Talk.' Through teachers' discussions of testing, curriculum, the daily routines and other reproductive aspects of schooling, and their own points of resistance and "battle" with the system, we are brought into the heart of an important site of educational change.
Children in Day Care:  
A Multi-theoretical Approach to Understanding Experience  

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ABSTRACT  

In this presentation I discuss the theoretical and philosophical framework informing my view of the child, of the research process, and my interpretations of children's lived experience in day care centers, specifically those related to power and emotion. The following perspectives are encompassed:  

Hermeneutic Phenomenology  

The tradition of interpretive theory centers on the importance of lived experience, and the task of description and interpretation in understanding experience. It is acknowledged we are part of the world we study, as the search for "objective" knowledge is abandoned. The interpretive researcher immerses herself into the everyday worlds of those studied to attend to ongoing experience. Through description and interpretation, that is, by developing detailed accounts of experience, the researcher develops understandings of that experience.  

Symbolic Interactionism  

A primary assumption of symbolic interactionism is that human interaction is mediated by interpretation; meanings emerge from interactions with others and influence interactions. From this perspective, childhood socialization occurs within situated interactions in which the child is an active, interpreting participant. While children are active participants in the socialization process, the meanings they assign to their experience are largely dependent on the meanings given to them by their caregivers in their responses and gestures. Symbolic interactionists also study interaction within the settings in which they occur.  

Critical theory  

I turn to critical theory in my concern for children's empowerment. A central question that emerges from this perspective is how caregivers can increase their own self-awareness and enter into the lives of children in such a way as to give them "voice." My research is "critical" to the extent I explore how children and their caregivers are enculturated and subjected to oppressive practices and ideologies.
Feminism

In common with interpretive interactionist perspectives, considerable contemporary feminist theory asserts the importance of lived experience as a basis for grounded understandings. In the research process, feelings and subjectivity are not regarded as inadequate when juxtaposed to traditional (masculinist) scientific values of reason and objectivity. I draw from feminist theory as I attempt to develop understandings of the meanings and problematics of "care" in child care contexts, and the emotional labor of the child caregiver.

Postmodernism

One particular influence of postmodern theory in my work is the idea of research as story-telling, and as a project which does not have disciplinary boundaries. In particular, a postmodern interpretation of children's experiences is informed by a reading of Foucault's work on power and discipline. I also have applied the work of Baudrillard (hyperreal), Barthes (myth) and Lyotard (performativity) to an understanding of children's emotional socialization.

Applications

Excerpts from recent studies of children in day care illustrate how I draw from these perspectives in developing understandings of children's lived experiences and caregivers' practices and daily dilemmas. In particular, a reading of Foucault illuminates the relations of power between children and their caregivers, how power is present in the daily routines and interactions between the children and their caregivers, and the ways in which day care centers are sometimes sites of struggle and contestation, where children's efforts to resist the caregivers' power are often undermined. To further illustrate theoretical applications, I discuss how a reading of Sartre and Hochschild bring to light the emotional labor and alienation of caregivers hired to do the work of caregiving.

Summary

The value of these diverse discourses lies in their contributions to and challenges to our understandings of ourselves, others, and our social world, and the research process. Children and their caregivers are regarded as meaning-makers engaged in joint acts, potentially problematic, and constructed and constrained by the specific and at-large social situations in which they find themselves. These interpretive perspectives all posit the value bound context of our observations and interpretations. Interpretations and understandings of situated, ongoing, everyday life experiences of particular individuals are developed within the contexts in which they occur. The understandings which emerge are viewed as social constructions, value-laden, historically specific, grounded in experience, and always incomplete.
A CURRICULUM FOR YOUNG CHILDREN 
BASED ON FEMINIST LITERARY THEORY 
AND PRAXIS-ORIENTED RESEARCH PARADIGM

Angela Love and Audrey Geoffroy

This work is designed to transfer feminist literary theory and a change-oriented research paradigm into a theory-base for a curriculum for young children concerned with women in history and the children's own literacy development. There are several goals we had in mind in creating this theory-base for our project:

--to share stories of women in American History through autobiography, biography, letter-writing, and oral history records
--to empower young children to act within both expressive and instrumental roles within the context of our present society
--to introduce a focus on self and on family in an historical context by engaging the children in oral history projects
--to enhance in young children values that increase awareness and understanding of others and decrease coercive values (Lather, 1988) that includes racism, classism, and sexism

Feminist literary theory defines autobiography, feminist biography, personal letters, and oral history as literary traditions that are critically important in the study of women's contribution to society and historical development (see, for example, Berkin, C.R. & Norton, M.B., 1979). The study of women in history helps to get a feel for history with a sense of personal lives touched by events and movements, and with the added affect that traditionally is forgotten in the study of history through the eyes of men (reference--Audrey). A feminist research paradigm of women in the present is one that focuses on how to empower the researched through organizing efforts, and are worked into the design of the study (Lather, 1988). Bringing together the literary theory and research paradigm, we hope to develop a curriculum for young children that both aids in the study of women in history and focuses on the empowerment of both female and male children to act within expressive and instrumental roles and to accept perspectives different than their own as valid ones coming from persons with differing experiences. How, then do children who grasp these concepts operate and make their personal experiences the basis for political change in an unjust society?

"Feminist methodology directs us to look for the the political significance of personal experience" (Sherwin, 19--, p. 24). Because the personal is political and because political change must occur for those suffering to be heard, it is our hope that children empowered with a strong sense of respect for self and others can become stronger leaders who are open to operating a society that is pluralistic, complex with diversity, not a dualistic with simple dichotomous solutions. It is our hope to contribute to the development of a sense of complexity, of the power of personal decisions, and of the effect of personal responsibility toward a more just society. Empowerment then becomes our central concern in the development of a working theory-base for young children's curriculum.

Expressive and instrumental roles are defined by sociologists as the roles that have traditionally been assigned to gender, expressive to females, and instrumental to males. Society, traditionally, expects females to be more nurturing, emotional and deliver more affect in their role, and males to be the worker, the productive member of society. Without either role, the society would not survive, but males and females are pressured to act within their socially assigned role, or be unaccepted. There have been historical times that demanded women become instrumental (during wartime), but the instrumental roles are first filled by men; women are the "substitutes" (reference--Angie).

This presentation will include a brief critical examination of the feminist literary theory and gender bias literature in children's picture books, defining character portrayals
in expressive and instrumental roles. The discussion will include research on achievement behaviors of children from reading gender-biased literature. In empowering young children to see the value of both roles and the need for each, we encourage children to see that both sexes may be in either role, depending on their age, situation, or preference. We encourage both roles as healthy to act out of for individuals to be able to build a life for themselves and each other, collectively.

Patti Lather (1988) refers to praxis-oriented research as concerned with change. "For those wishing to use research to change as well as to understand the world, conscious empowerment is built into the research design" (Lather, p. 578). This, she contrast with what she credits Shulamit Reinharz (1979) as calling "rape research", or that which is centered around career advancement of researchers, using alienating and exploitative inquiry methods. Thus, many feminist researchers have made a conscious effort to organize those they wish to study, or have debated the issue of making a profit off of groups of impoverished peoples. At this point, I would like to share some information from oral history projects that have influenced my thinking about this curriculum theory-base.

Several projects will be discussed in the presentation (the Rural Women's History Project in Moscow, Idaho, organized by Corky Bush et al. in 1973-74; the Cambridge Women's Oral History Project, organized by Cindy Cohen et al. in 1980-81; Telling Memories Among Southern Women, by Susan Tucker, 1988; and Brazilian Women Speak, by Daphne Patai, 1988). Funding for several of these projects was through state-wide programs sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, and included not only the interviewing methodology, but an interdisciplinary approach to the presentation of the material: theatrical, museum display of the handiwork, etc. This is an important recognition of the integration of the arts, humanities, and research methodology to help empower the researched, to help bond the researcher, the audience, and the researched, so that all become "the changer and the changed" (Chris Williamson, 1975).

The presentation will include the interdisciplinary design of the theory-base, and include a brief discussion from which disciplines we see the information drawn. I will conclude the presentation with ways in which we envision using oral history, autobiography, biography, and letter-writing as a means for studying women in history and extending the historical study adapted for young children into an experiential research design with the students as the researchers.
Implications of Cross-national Research for Early Education: An Example

Sally Lubeck

A number of theorists have sought to situate children within a broader ecological context. Harkness and Super (1980) have posited a situational theory of child development; Levine (1980) a pancultural psychology of development, and Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986) and Garbarino (1982, 1990) an ecological approach to the study of human development. Unlike developmental psychologists who define environment in terms of the child's immediate experience (e.g., Sameroff, 1987, 1990), these writers have grappled with the complexities of studying development in varying cultural, social, and political contexts.

In this presentation I explore differences in what Bronfenbrenner and Garbarino have called "macrosystems," the broad ideological and institutional patterns of a society. These patterns, they argue, are the "master blueprints for the ecology of human development" (Garbarino, 1990, p. 83), reflecting shared assumptions about the world and how it works. Beliefs represent different social constructions of reality, while the institutions that manifest them reflect different ways in which a society broadly organizes to support a particular view of the world. In order to demonstrate differences at the level of macrosystem, I explore contrasting approaches to child care and early education in the United States and the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), specifically discussing differing ideologies (private vs. public responsibility for young children) and different approaches to organization, administration, and regulation (de-centralization vs. centralization).

The presentation is based on fieldwork in the German Democratic Republic in Summer, 1990. We interviewed administrators in the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry for Women and Families, visited Krippen (for children 1-3) and Kindergartens (for children 3-6), interviewed directors, took photographs, and collected child training materials.
IMPLEMENTING ANTI-BIAS CURRICULUM IN THE KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM

Monica Miller Marsh

A collaborative, qualitative action research study was conducted over one academic year with public school children in an enriched kindergarten setting. The purpose of the study was to describe and better understand 1) how children from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds respond to anti-bias curriculum 2) observe ways in which children enacted anti-bias curriculum through their play, questions and conversations and 3) to determine what happens to the teacher who designs and implements anti-bias curriculum.

Data were collected from a variety of sources and categorized into five major areas: race/ethnicity, gender/sexual orientation, holidays/religious diversity, physical ableness and socioeconomic status.

Several recurring themes emerged from the data. The data indicated that the kindergarten children were aware of differences in race, gender, physical ability and to some degree socioeconomic status. The children seem to use these areas to categorize and organize their thinking. Although their information was not always completely accurate, their comments and questions during group discussions illustrate that many of them were also aware of social issues such as racism, sexism, handicaps and classism.

On several occasions children generated anti-bias discussions. Upon content analysis, the most frequent topic of discussion occurred in the area of holidays/religious diversity. During these child generated
discussions much "peer teaching" took place.

Children enacted the knowledge they were receiving in a variety of ways. In some instances, the anti-bias activities that were presented to the children led them to take action against situations they felt were unfair or unjust.

The teacher who chooses to teach anti-bias curriculum is a risk taker on both a personal and professional level. On a professional level, many administrators, teachers, and parents believe that young children are not "developmentally ready" for anti-bias curriculum. Personal limitations included the ability to admit to myself that there was much I needed to learn in order to present children with accurate information and "authentic experiences." The parents of the children in my classroom proved to be my most valuable resource.
New Interpretations of Early Childhood Education
From Reggio Emilia, Italy: Teacher as Researcher and Partner

Rebecca S. New
University of New Hampshire

An early childhood program which has provided recent incentive to reconsider American notions of appropriate educational goals and practice is the community-based infant/toddler and preschool program in Reggio Emilia. This early childhood program includes an integrated curriculum that is characterized by contextualized learning, real life problem solving among peers, with numerous opportunities for creative thinking and reflection. There are a number of features of the Reggio Emilia program that have attracted world-wide attention, not the least of which is its emphasis on the symbolic languages within the context of a project-oriented curriculum. Less obvious to the casual observer, but perhaps most relevant to attempts to reform American schooling, is the long term commitment "to effort and inquiry" that is the essence of the Reggio Emilia approach to early education.

This discussion will consider a new interpretation of early education inspired by Reggio Emilia, one that views teachers as learners and considers children as capable and competent members of an educational team that also includes parents as determinants of the curriculum.

Aspects of Reggio Emilia's approach to early education that will be included in the discussion include strategies of curriculum planning and evaluation, organizational features that promote
parent-teacher partnerships, and ideological perspectives on teaching and learning. For example, teacher observations of and interactions with children are directly linked to curriculum decisions. Discussions among parents and teachers, in turn, often lead to decisions of implementation that provoke certain types of responses on the part of children. Thus curriculum planning and implementation are based on the reciprocal nature of both adult-child interactions.

Organizational features that incorporate parents into the planning process include the practice of keeping children and two teachers together for three years, thereby establishing a strong sense of community among the families within each classroom. The lack of a principle or head figure in the schools also supports flexibility in curriculum planning as parents, teachers and children explore issues of mutual interest and concern.

Teacher attitudes regarding their own professional development enable them to benefit from these "multiple points of view." They repeatedly emphasize their belief in the importance of not knowing, not understanding; and the value of asking questions and being forced to reexamine and rephrase their positions, as contributors to learning.

The cumulative effect of the Reggio Emilia interpretation of the role of the teacher forces us to question our assumptions about teaching and learning (Egan, 1986); and to reconsider the "questionable metaphor" of the teacher as expert (Welker, 1991). Implications for American early education will be considered.
TURNING OUR WORLD UPSIDE DOWN:
LEARNING TO QUESTION DAP

Leigh M. O'Brien
Nazareth College of Rochester

Paper Abstract
ECE Conference, Madison, WI
October 1991

This paper details a personal journey of unquestioning acceptance of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) through challenge and then gradually dawning awareness of social class-linked bias and eventual revision of my philosophy of Early Childhood Education. The chronology of my dissertation study, questions from my committee, rereading and rethinking until I was at last able to question the universal applicability of DAP is outlined.

"Mainstream" early educators have, by and large, accepted and followed DAP with a fervor born of concern over the pushed down, "academic" approach evident in many school settings. In our haste to embrace DAP, I fear we may have overlooked the need for acknowledgement of cultural variation in teaching and learning styles and curricula. The concern here is that DAP comes from, and supports, a white, middle class perspective and works best for those children from "advantaged" home environments.

Children from so-called disadvantaged backgrounds, largely due to factors related to poverty, may not have the requisite knowledge, skills, and dispositions which allows them to benefit from the DAP approach. Further, parents and
educators of children not from the mainstream culture (i.e.,
white and middle- or upper-class) may have good reason to
believe that these children need early educational
experiences which better prepare them for success in
mainstream society.

I am afraid many early educators (e.g., Greenberg, 1990)
have made assumptions about preferred practice based on
middle-class experiences and values and have not stopped to
question, or have dismissed, the validity of other cultures
and hence needs vis à vis early education. My experience in
a rural, white Head Start program, staffed by women from the
community, forced me to examine my biases and assumptions,
albeit belatedly. Initially I had trouble understanding and
accepting the rather directive teaching styles and
"academic" programming occurring. The teachers spoke of
their struggle to use a child-centered model while still
attempting to prepare children for the more academic schools
they would be entering. I heard what they were saying but
could not really give credence to their dilemma due to my
adherence to DAP.

When I finally began to seriously reexamine my findings,
I found support for my emerging hypothesis of class-based
bias and power differentials in Delpit's arguments about the
educational needs of black children. More recently, Walsh's
and, especially, Jipson's critiques of DAP have lent
support to my belief that we must raise the issue of unequal
power relations between social classes. We must acknowledge
that people are experts on their own lives and we must hear their voices when they speak of the needs of their children. We must also consider whether some mix of academics and a developmental approach, individualized for the children and communities of concern, might not be best for children who do not come to school with the "cultural capital" assumed by DAF.
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Rethinking early childhood education: A sociocultural perspective

In the first part of this presentation I will argue that the model of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) advocated by NAEYC is inadequate as a model of pedagogy for a number of reasons. First, since DAP is grounded in Piaget’s theory it embodies the same model of rational disembodied thought valued in Piagetian thought. The prototypical learning experience, according to the principles of DAP, appears to be one in which each child is assigned to an individual learning center and is working in splendid isolation to construct an abstract representation of some aspect of objective reality. Despite a nod to the notion that "children construct their understanding," no acknowledgement is given of human subjectivity nor of the socio-historical and cultural contexts in which learning is taking place. Learning, therefore, is essentially an individual mental activity of internalizing understanding - a solitary project in which the child takes on the world of schooling on its terms. I will argue that Piaget’s model is unsuitable as a model of schooling if we take seriously the socioculturally constituted nature of meaning-making and the dialectical relationship between the individual and the world. By its unreflexive appropriation of Piagetian theory DAP has adopted a model of the relationship between the individual and culture that is quite unsuited to the kind of constructivist model DAP claims to represent.

Second, as Valerie Walkerdine has argued, DAP is flawed too by its unreflexive dependence on developmental psychology. As Walkerdine demonstrates, Western developmental psychology presents as unquestionable fact the notion that development is centered within the individual as well as the assumption that all development proceeds through a universal series of hierarchically ordered stages. The stress on play and spontaneous activity as sources of learning; the focus on engineering appropriate educational environments (e.g., learning centers) in which learning can unfold; the emphasis on stage-appropriate expectations; the linking of levels of instruction to developmental stages; and the focus on systematic observation and recording of children’s behavior are all symptoms of the degree to which DAP is framed in terms of unexamined assumptions from developmental psychology.

A third problem with DAP is the degree to which the fundamental notion of active learning is treated as unproblematic. The notion that learning should be child-centered and active is presented as if culture, power and communication are not problematic issues in the classroom. The fact is, however, that teachers have authority
and students generally have none. Likewise, teachers have access to privileged forms of discourse and have the power to legislate which cultural norms and linguistic systems are socially sanctioned in school, and students do not. Thus, by not treating power and culture as problematic, supposedly child-centered schools help to perpetuate racial, gender and social class inequities by sanctioning the mainstream white middle-class linguistic and cultural norms of teachers while depriving many students of the kind of validation that would come from constructing understanding on their own terms using referents from their own cultural and linguistic experiences.

What is needed, I believe, is a theoretical framework that takes seriously (1) the fact that all thinking and learning takes place in contexts that are inherently constrained by social, cultural, political, historical and economic factors; (2) the fact that individuals are more than just disembodied minds and that human subjectivity pertains to the totality of the person-acting-in-setting; and (3) that the actual process of meaning-making is not a purely mental activity but is a dynamic process in which the active meaning-making person uses mediational means such as language to engage with the sociohistorically constituted world. All of these can be encompassed within a sociocultural perspective. In my presentation, drawing particularly on Jean Lave's *Cognition in Practice: Mind, mathematics and culture in everyday life* (1988) and James Wertsch's *Voices of the mind: A sociocultural approach to mediated action* (1991) I will present an outline of the main features of a sociocultural approach, and I will illustrate its implications for how we think about early childhood education. I believe that the theoretical framework that arises from this approach is sufficiently comprehensive to accommodate the subjectivity of the person; the multivoiced and dialogical nature of meaning-making; the sociocultural context of schooling; the patterns of power and privilege associated with various modes of spoken and written discourse; and the link between the epistemological assumptions underlying the modes of discourse teachers allow in their classrooms and the messages communicated to students about the validity of their own attempts at sense-making and the beliefs they develop about whether or not they have the power to act to transform their world. At the risk of simplification one could almost summarize the essence of the sociocultural approach in two questions: *Who is doing the talking?* and *On whose terms are they talking?*

**A note on format of presentation**

Since I have just completed a paper that addresses many of the issues that I will discuss in my presentation*, and *since I will distribute copies of this paper to conference participants*, my presentation will be short (15 mins) and designed to stimulate dialogue about the ways in which a sociocultural framework can help us to reconceptualize the theory, research and practice of early childhood education.

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Teacher transformation is a descriptive study of the teacher development process as it occurred in Project FIEL, an intergenerational family literacy program for Mexican and Mexican-American families. Project FIEL is a three-year project funded by Title VII, Office of Bilingual Education and Language Minority Affairs. The project consists of bringing parents and children together, once a week after school, for approximately an hour of instruction. The classes, which consist of five to seven parents and their small children, are facilitated by an instructor with the help of an assistant. The purpose of this paper then is to analyze the experiences of the participants in light of the teacher development process in working with Mexican families in the literacy program. The issues deal specifically with increasing and maintaining parent involvement in their children's education and the often subtle but significant web of sociocultural intricacies which are often overlooked by educators and administrators working in this area. Outcomes regarding implications for teachers working with parents, for working with children, and the teacher-as-intellectual (Giroux, 1988) are explained.

Henry Giroux (1988) and other advocates of critical pedagogy (Freire & Macedo, 1988; Shor, 1988) advocate the fruition of "teacher as intellectual". Giroux (1988) states "...I want to argue that one way to rethink and restructure the nature of teacher work, is to view teachers as transformative intellectuals" (p. 25). Giroux (1988) maintains that this quest of the
intellectual is helpful for three reasons. First, it defines teachers' work as an intellectual endeavor as opposed to a mere technical one. Secondly, it brings to light the conditions necessary for teachers to combine ideological and practical issues and thirdly, it legitimizes teachers' roles in combining political, economic, and social interests through daily pedagogy.

From the outset of working with teachers in Project FIEL, emphasis was put on the teachers' responsibilities to function as intellectuals. This was stressed for many reasons relating both to the context of the classes and communities and to the philosophy underlying the project.

We feel strongly, yet humbly, that the teachers-as-intellectuals with whom we had the privilege to work with in Project FIEL demonstrated both the multicultural activism demanded by Sleeter (1990) and the classroom realities advised by Ramsey (1987). We offer this report of a microcosm in hopes that it will generate more questions, more action, and more equity for teachers, parents, and all of our children.

"Here you see the Morning Star
Who sees the Morning Star shall see more, for he shall be wise."
Black Elk, 1930
(from, Black Elk Speaks, (1979)
Lincoln NE: University of Nebraska
Early Schooling Conference  
UW-Madison October, 1991  

Growing Up Hispanic  
Lourdes Diaz Soto  
Lehigh University

This ongoing research endeavor has evolved from quantitative data gathering to qualitative ethnographic interviews (Spradley, 1979) affording a voice for the concern of the participants, researcher reflexivity, and a rich source for future theoretical and collaborative methodological explorations. This “growing up” experience is as vital for the participants, as for the researcher, who is also a member of the ethnic group. The uniqueness of the Puerto Rican experience in this nation, where citizenship affords access to both island and mainland society, is depicted by a caretaking grandmother:

“...The grandchildren practiced their “walking”, or it would be better to say their “running”, when I explained to them what life is like in the States. They were so cute... Maria picked up her bookbag and Willie grabbed my apron (as if it were a coat), and they paced back and forth briskly. We laughed until we could laugh no more.... The truth of the matter is that I wanted them to be prepared for this ‘fast’ way of living. I am used to it now, but I remember thinking how rushed people are here. Everything has to be done so quickly.....although it is the same way in Puerto Rico now....the traffic is bumper to bumper and there are lots of fancy and modern shopping centers. It just seems as if my grandchildren are experiencing a whole different world now....and I’m not so sure that it is a better world... I worry about them so...”

Dona Maria Rivera

Concern about how young Puerto Rican children are faring in the mainland was expressed by Dona Maria, who grew up in a basically rural island society where a “caring curriculum” among people appeared more important than a “hurried society”. The concepts of “respecto” and “consejos” continue to be an integral part of a repertoire of selectively retained ethnic/cultural values. Puerto Rican parents in this study continue to express feelings of respect (respeto) for teachers and attempt to follow advise (consejos) almost religiously. Examples of “La Missy Nos Dijo” advise are reported elsewhere (Soto and Smrekar, 1991).

A recurrent theme in the interviews being conducted with Puerto Rican mainland families includes a comparison among responsive ethnic social interactions and perceptions of rejection by an impersonal society. Parents of young children, in particular, continue to express feelings of frustration and helplessness with daily home-school experiences. The teacher’s ability to interact with parents in a manner that is perceived to be genuinely caring, interested, child-centered, and scholastically demanding of the child, appears to be a salient feature of optimal parent teacher relations.
The following excerpts help to exemplify teacher components voiced by the parents:

"That teacher doesn't care...doesn't care one little bit...I swear she hates children! She should be selling shoes...or riding horses en El Yunque (refers to a comparison made by the teacher that children need to be trained like horses)." 

Dona Nelly

"La Missy (the teacher) is not Puerto Rican but we bring her pasteles and 'arroz con pollo' at Christmas because she just loves it....... Sometimes whenever I can.......I bring her a little 'cafe con leche'..... we just cannot do enough for a teacher like her... (details descriptions of homework assignments, examples of child centeredness and caring)" 

Margarita

"Josue has had a fairly good year. His teacher was studying at the University.....she's alright....there's not much to tell.... " 

Zoraida

"There are days when that teacher walks in "inside out" and at other times she is very sweet. Some days there are lots of activities and assignments but most of the time.......I think the children are bored."

Dona Lola

The descriptions by parents of young children as they interact on a daily basis with school personnel is affording insights into the negotiations among the home and school context. Four basic teacher profiles are emerging based upon parental descriptions. The basic comparison is among a basically friendly but neutral teaching style (NTS), a responsive, caring, and demanding capacity (CTS), a clearly hostile approach (HTS), and an inconsistent style (ITS). These emerging profiles have important implications for Early Childhood Teacher Education with regard to a knowledge and experiential base within a culturally and linguistically diverse society; as well as in the attainment and enhancement of teacher interpersonal skills.

Additional information is currently being analyzed from community sources highlighting issues of power and cohesive interpersonal mentoring relationships. The systematic community involvement and participation by selected members of the group is affording participant observation possibilities for the researcher with multiple levels of data sets among the ecological domains. The need for further refinement, theoretical and methodological advancement is highlighted especially with regard to researcher self reflexivity and future collaborative research. The ultimate goal is to continue to disseminate information shedding light on the uniqueness of the Puerto Rican participant and Puerto Rican researcher experience in this nation.
Anti-bias and Culturecentric Early Education: Issues in Research Paradigms, Collaboration, and Interpretation

Chair/Moderator: Beth Blue Swadener
Kent State University

Participants: Monica Miller Marsh and Betsy Cahill, Kent State

Overview of Session

This panel discussion and problem-posing session draws from research and teaching experiences of both early childhood teacher/researchers and university researchers, all of whom have done research on anti-bias, or culturecentric (e.g., Afrocentric) practices and possibilities in early childhood settings. Themes of our session include framing of appropriate research questions and related methods, issues in collaboration between teachers and university researchers, and interpretations of the findings in each study.

The collective research described has looked at issues including (1) the social construction of gender identity from both a lifespan perspective and a feminist, deconstructivist approach, (2) the implementation of an anti-bias curriculum throughout an academic year with kindergarten children in an urban setting, (3) multicultural education and human relations activities and peer interactions in two mainstreamed child care centers, and (4) children's self esteem and cultural identity in a Southern, African-American Head Start program. A brief summary of each research project will precede an open discussion of the questions which follow.

Questions Raised for Discussion

The following are some of the questions which we intend to discuss during the session; we also welcome discussion of issues raised by participants and view this as a problem-posing session.

(1) What are the incentives, supports, and opportunities for early childhood educators to engage in action research in their classrooms?

(2) What are some of the models we now have for collaborative research and how well do these work? Do teachers truly have a voice in the dissemination of "collaborative" research?

(3) How can early childhood teachers find a stronger voice in the early childhood research literature? How have prevailing research paradigms in ECE marginalized teachers' and parents' voices?

(4) How have labels such as "gifted," "at-risk," "early intervention," "gender identity," or "developmentally appropriate" helped or hindered our work with children and families, and how have they been socially constructed?

(5) What are some advantages of life history research in early childhood education? Why has it been used much less in our field and in the U.S. than in other education fields and countries?
(6) How can we work as allies with children, parents, teachers, and others to interrupt racism, sexism, classism, ableism, and heterosexism? What are positive examples of such anti-bias work in early childhood settings?

(7) What issues have children raised during our various research projects? How can we better capture and reflect diverse children’s voices in our research without falling into what Michelle Fine describes as "ethnography as ventriloquy"?

(8) What were specific challenges or issues which teachers and/or researchers on this panel or participating in this session have faced?

(9) What are outlets for support, dissemination, and collaboration available to early childhood teacher/researchers? How could this type of research be more encouraged (e.g., as it has been in the literacy/reading literature)?

(10) What are examples of dilemmas or issues raised when interpreting our research findings – particularly in terms of cultural interpretations (and potential misinterpretations) which may involve "speaking for" or other potentially "impositional" practices.

(11) How might interpretive theory benefit research such as that described in this session? How might feminist theory benefit early childhood research as a whole?

NOTE: Abstracts of individual papers follow on separate pages; Gwendolyn Green, Lock Haven University, will not be able to participate in the conference but will make her paper on African-American Head Start children’s cultural identity and self esteem available. You may sign up for her paper at our session.
Culturally Responsive, Inclusive, and Anti-bias Experiences for Young Children: Reflections on Three Case Studies

Beth Blue Swadener
Kent State University

This discussion, part of a panel and problem-posing session on anti-bias and culturecentric early education, will draw from experiences over the past seven years in three contrasting early childhood settings in which case study or ethnographic studies were conducted. The first settings were two mainstreamed child care centers, the second setting a Friends Elementary School (focusing on the primary age children), and the third, an urban enriched kindergarten program in a public school. A common question addressed in all three studies was, "what happens for children and teachers when active efforts are made to educate multiculturally and infuse human relations and anti-bias experiences in early education settings?"

I will also be discussing the growth in collaboration in each of these studies, beginning with a one year ethnographic case study which involved teachers and directors, to a degree, and capturing their voices through interviews and observations, but still cast them largely as "subjects" of the research. My second case study, a two year collaborative case study of social problem-solving in a Friends School, was indeed a collaborative effort with teachers at a small, alternative school in Pennsylvania. This project evolved to include the co-production of a videotape, based on our work together, as well as several collaborative papers and, most recently, a book chapter. Contradictions and dilemmas raised by my teacher-coolorator will be addressed in this paper.

The most recent collaboration was one which will be directly reported from at our session - an ongoing study of the implementation of an anti-bias curriculum in an urban public school kindergarten. This research, which was the thesis project of Monica Miller Marsh, moved the teacher-researcher into the foreground and placed the university researcher in the background, as Monica drew upon her daily journal entries, understandings of the children's conversations and journal entries, and frequent discussions with parents and me. In this study, I saw my role as resource person (e.g., assisting the teacher in finding/devising anti-bias activities), observer (for purposes of triangulation and comparison of interpretation), and ally in anti-oppression work with young people. Thus, the "products" of our collaboration to date have included a book chapter and a conference presentation, both authored by Monica, as well collaborative presentations.

As a social studies/social policy teacher, one of the great benefits of these collaborations, and of doing sustained, qualitative research in contrasting early childhood classrooms, has been the use of videotapes, vignettes, dilemmas, and "real life" examples of what it may mean to truly implement an anti-bias, culturally responsive, and inclusive learning environment for young children. I have also been supervising students in urban, predominantly African-American schools, and have begun a long-term Institute for Education that is Multicultural project with five schools in Cleveland and Akron, Ohio. This project is also yielding many potential collaborative projects with teachers, parents, community and school leaders, and is largely authored by teams from each school. Thus, the issue of teacher and parent "voice" is being directly addressed in this school change project. An important distinction of this project has been collaboration with a racially and culturally diverse team of researchers and school staff.
Dealing with Sexuality in The American Preschool

a paper to be presented in October, 1991
at the conference on
Reconceptualizing Research in Early Childhood Education

Joe Tobin
University of Hawai'i

To most adults, children's sexuality is embarrassing, unnerving, unseemly, inappropriate, disquieting. This is partly, as Freud pointed out long ago, because children's sexuality is "polymorphous perverse": the sexual interests and behavior of four-year-old children tends toward the voyeuristic, exhibitionistic, libertine, onanistic, bestial, and scatological.

The adults whose views on children's sexuality I currently am studying are preschool administrators, teachers, and parents in the United States, Japan, and Ireland. In these societies young children increasingly are spending their days in institutional care. Thus children's sexuality, which until recently was primarily the concern of parents, is becoming increasingly the responsibility of preschool teachers and administrators.

Preschools are conceptually and intellectually rich institutions to study because they are at the interface of private and public life, between socializing and educating children, between family and society, and between child rearing and public policy. This study is thus both a study of three societies' treatment of sex in preschool and a study of three societies as seen through their treatment of preschool sexuality. My preliminary research in the United States suggests that attitudes towards children's sexuality in preschools reflects larger societal concerns including AIDS, homophobia, and child abuse. Instead of aiming to identify one typical or modal perspective on children's sexuality in each culture, this study attempts to identify diverse, contesting views within each culture.

My interest in this topic grew out of my recent experiences working with preservice preschool teachers. Many of my students reported that in their student-teaching they found children's sexuality to be a serious problem. The case studies they shared in our seminar suggested to me that attitudes toward children's sexuality is an area of teacher training that has been given virtually no attention in our curriculum and a subject for educational and cultural research that has been ignored. (The ERIC index, for example, yields dozens of citations for studies on the incidence and prevention of children's sexual abuse for young children, but virtually no studies of children's normal sexuality.)
This study is also influenced in part by Foucault's notion of "disciplinary" practices (1977) -- and specifically by his studies of the history of Western discourses on bodies and sexuality (1979). But unlike Foucault, whose perspective is trans-historical (genealogical) and generalizing, my study is cross-cultural. By this I mean cultural in two related but different ways: in the anthropological sense of a group's shared pattern of norms, rules, and expectations and in the cultural studies' sense of socially constructed and contested discourses.

My interest in children's sexuality also grew out of my previous collaborative cross-cultural work on preschool in three cultures. My earlier fieldwork in preschools in Japan led me to begin to question some American cultural assumptions about children's sexuality, their bodies, and their right to privacy. As in Preschool in Three Cultures, I believe that in this study of attitudes toward sexuality that cross-cultural comparison will work to produce in American readers a useful sense of intellectual defamiliarization and to stimulate a process of cultural critique of otherwise taken-for-granted practice (Marcus and Fischer, 1988). Specifically, my study aims to contribute to a rethinking of American preschool practice by provoking in American readers a greater appreciation of cross-cultural, ethnic, and social class differences in views of children's sexuality, bodies, and privacy.
Finding a Place to Sit
and a Voice with Which to Speak

What I have here is a few thoughts to throw out for discussion, a few thoughts about the relationship between the researcher and those with whom, in my case, he is working. A few thoughts about walking into a teacher’s living room on a Tuesday night and looking for a place to sit from where I can observe and listen, a distance from which both the teachers who are coming into the room and I can work with each other, and a voice with which to speak with them and negotiate my presence and my intentions.

As long and as closely as one works with a group of people, and as much as one develops friendships that go beyond the original research relationship, the researcher/researched relationship and the inherent tension remain. As Geertz, who is always reminding us of something, reminded us:

We cannot live other people’s lives, and it is a piece of bad faith to try. We can but listen to what...they say about their lives....Whatever sense we have of how things stand with someone else’s inner life, we gain through their expressions, not through some magical intrusion into their consciousness. It’s all a matter of scratching surfaces. (1986, p. 373)

A researcher remains an other, an outsider to the group. A researcher’s purposes, after all, are different from those of the people with whom one is working. In the case that I describe in my discussion I simply am not part of the group, or better, I am part of the group only as a researcher, no matter how much I attempt to redefine who that researcher is.

For three years, I have been studying a group of early kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers who have constructed for themselves a group that meets regularly, once or twice a month to talk. My gloss is that they discuss what it means for them to be teachers, although they, in fact, never discuss this explicitly. As often as I visit the group, sit in on their discussions, and occasionally say something, I am not part of the group. I am not a kindergarten, first, or second grade teacher. I do not work for the Blue Ridge County Schools.

So I sit on the side and try to scratch the surfaces, and I try to find a chair in someone’s living room that is off to the side, but not so far off that I appear a voyeur listening in but far enough out that I do not hinder the flow, close enough to my video camera that I
can tend to it, but far enough away so that I am not merely a camera operator. And while I sit there listening I try to find a voice with which to speak. Who am I here? I am an outsider: A man among a group of women. A data collector who has used the very tapes I am collecting and words I am recording to get a grant that buys me research assistants and reduces my teaching load and who continues to use their words to further my career. An educator who very much respects these people, who savors being included in their group to the extent that I am, who intensely envies their closeness and their collegiality, and who is dedicated to helping them in anyway I can. And one who has helped them, if only by being there and recording for them what they have been saying, and somehow-- and this I don't understand but I am told that it is so-- who has validated what they are doing simply by being there and recording it.

Still when I am addressed, I am never sure who is answering. Perhaps there was once, in simpler times before the layers of academic veneer were applied, a "just me." Although I suspect that person is a nostalgic invention. In any case "just me" would not be there. He wouldn't have been invited in the first place. I am there by invitation precisely because I am the university researcher who by long practice has begun to learn to listen. I am more comfortable listening than speaking. But I am still struggling with the whole endeavor.
Reconceptualizing Research in Early Childhood Education

A conference sponsored by
Kent State University
National-Louis University
University of Illinois at Chicago
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
University of Wisconsin - Madison

Wisconsin Center
University of Wisconsin - Madison
October 3-6, 1991

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Beth Blue Swadener
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Reconceptualizing Research in Early Childhood Education
Wisconsin Center, 702 Langdon Street
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Madison, Wisconsin, October 3-6, 1991

Thursday

October 3, 1991

7:30-10 PM  Registration: Informal Wine and Cheese ........ Lowell Hall, 610 Langdon Street

Friday

October 4, 1991

7:30 AM  Continental Breakfast for Lowell Hall Guests .................... Lowell Hall

8:30-9:45 AM  Welcome from Ann De Vaney, Chair, Department of Curriculum & Instruction
The Organizers:
Why we asked you here (and why we’re glad you’re here) ............ Room 227

9:45 AM  Break ................................................. Room 315

10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Through Others’ Eyes ............................................ Room 226

Cindy Clark: Putting aside adultcentrism: Child-centered ethnographic research

Renee Casbergue & Angela Love: Kindergarten children’s perceptions of teachers’ writing instruction

Richard Johnson & Joseph Tobin: Using videodisc to simulate “real-life” in classrooms

Deconstructing Constructivism ..................................... Room 227

Leigh M. O’Brien: Turning our world upside down: Learning to question DAP

Christine Chaille: Constructivism, curriculum-in-practice, and NAEYC’s DAP

Michael O’Loughlin: Rethinking early childhood education: A sociocultural perspective

Rob Proudfoot & Twila Souers: A critique of DAP: A multi-cultural perspective

Jan Jipson: Discussant

12:15 Lunch .................................................. Dining Room, Wisconsin Center
Reconceptualizing Research in Early Childhood Education

1:30-3:45 PM, Friday

**Families and Early Schooling** ................................. Room 227

Lourdes Diaz Soto: Growing up Hispanic

Kathryn M. Borman, Dolores A. Stegelin, & Patricia Ziegel-Timm: The social context of urban schooling: African-American and Appalachian families

Elizabeth Quintero & Ana Huerta-Macias: Teacher transformation

Patricia Blackwell, Martha Jane Buell, & M. Susan Burns: Cocaine-exposed children: The bio-underclass?

**Interactions in Context** ................................. Room 226

Artin Goncu: Developing a Vygotskian framework for analyzing teacher-child interaction

Gail Nelson Swan: Student-teacher interactions in a computer context

M. Susan Burns & Renee Casbergue: Letter writing by parents and children

Rebecca Kantor, David E. Fernie, Peg Elgas, James Scott Jr., & Paula McMurray: Social competence as revealed in a comprehensive preschool ethnography

Joe Tobin: Dealing with sexuality in the American preschool

3:45 Break ............................................................... Room 315

4:00-6:00 PM

**Reconceptualizing the Early Childhood Curriculum** ................................. Room 227

Shirley Kessler & Beth Blue Swadener: Introduction

Marianne Bloch: Critical science and the history of child development’s influence on early education research

Janice Jipson: Teaching and mothering in programs for young children

Beth Graue: Meanings of readiness and the kindergarten experience

Bill Ayers: Disturbances in the field: Recovering the voice of the early childhood teacher

6:15 Cookout ......................................................... Lee Lounge, Wisconsin Center
Saturday

October 5, 1991

7:30  Continental Breakfast for Lowell Hall Guests .................................... Lowell Hall

8:15-10:15 AM

The Researcher and the Practitioner: Issues of Voice .................. Room 227

Mary E. Hauser: Life history of a first grade teacher: A case study of cultural sensitivity in teaching practice

Susan Adler, Chelsea Bailey, & Suzanne Fine: Fieldnotes from academia: Reflections on becoming a professional in Early Childhood Education

Marianne Bloch: A question of voice and power

Daniel J. Walsh: Finding a place to sit and a voice with which to speak

Open Discussion¹ ................................................................. Room 226

10:15  Break ................................................................. Room 315

¹The four meeting periods on Saturday (8:15-10:15, 10:30-12:15, 2:00-4:15, 4:30-6:15) each include a session devoted to open discussion. Participants in those sessions are free to establish their own topical focus. Some topics of wide interest are: (1) Whither DAP?, (2) Empowering Teachers, (3) Issues in Educational Ethnography, (4) Usefulness of Post-Modern Theory, (5) Why are Alternative Research Paradigms Necessary for ECE?, (6) Implications of Alternative Research Paradigms for Curriculum.
Antibias and Culturecentric Early Education: Issues in Research Paradigms, Collaboration, and Interpretation ............................. Room 227

Betsy Cahill: The social construction of gender

Monica Miller Marsh: Implementing anti-bias curriculum in the kindergarten classroom

Gwendolyn Green: African-American children’s cultural identities and self esteem: A southern, rural Head Start program

Beth Blue Swadener: Culturally responsive, inclusive, and anti-bias experiences for young children: Reflections on three case studies

Open Discussion ................................................................. Room 226

12:30 Lunch ................................................................. Dining Room, Wisconsin Center

2:00-4:15 PM

Alternative Paradigms ......................................................... Room 227

Robin Lynn Leavitt: Children in day care: A multi-theoretical approach to understanding experience

Sally Lubeck: Implications of cross-national research for Early Education: An example

Lizanne DeStefano, Susan P. Maude, S. Crew, & L. Mabry: A statewide search for exemplary practices in Early Childhood Education in Illinois

Angela Love & Audrey Geoffroy: A curriculum for young children based on feminist literary theory and praxis-oriented research paradigm

Rebecca S. New: New interpretations of early childhood education from Reggio Emilia, Italy: Teacher as researcher and partner

Open Discussion ................................................................. Room 226

4:15 Break ................................................................. Room 315
Publishing: A Conversation with Editors .............................. Room 227

Amos Hatch, Editor, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*

Bob Pianta, Associate Editor, *Early Education and Development*

Daniel Walsh, Past Associate Editor, *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*

Open Discussion .............................................................. Room 315

8:00  Dinner ............................................................................ On your own

You are on your own for Saturday dinner. However, if many of you wish to stay in one or a few groups, dinner reservations will be made for the large group(s).

Sunday  

October 6, 1991

9:00-11:00  **Working Brunch: About Next Year**  ... Dining Room, Wisconsin Center
Susan Adler  
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Teacher Education Building  

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