"If You Hear My Voice, Do the Hula:" The Nature of Teacher Talk during Classroom Routine in Intermediate Classrooms in an Exemplary Urban School

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"If You Hear My Voice, Do the Hula:" The Nature of Teacher Talk during Classroom Routine in Intermediate Classrooms in an Exemplary Urban School

Abstract
In this study, a gap is identified in the literature about teacher talk in elementary classrooms. In particular, there is not rich description of teacher talk during the routine times of the elementary classroom, the times when the class is being organized and directed so that instruction can commence or resume. The study used an ethnographic strategy of studying four teachers in an exemplary urban school, as an immersed observer, in order to determine the nature of their talk to children during the routine of the school day. The findings included many examples of teacher talk, foregrounded as more important than the researcher's analysis. Analysis revealed that teachers teach during the routine of the day and that teachers in an exemplary urban school show congruence between their stated philosophies and goals, the literature concerning culturally relevant practice, and the nature of their talk to children.

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"If You Hear My Voice, Do the Hula:"

The Nature of Teacher Talk during Classroom Routine in Intermediate Classrooms in an

Exemplary Urban School

By

Karen M. Sangmeister

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Ed. D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by

Dr. Mary Collins
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Be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Education Doctorate degree.

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[Name of 2nd Committee Member if applicable]

August 8, 2005
DEDICATION

To my father and my mother
Vincent and Charlotte Sangmeister

And my son
Kyle Vincent Tunison
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Karen M. Sangmeister was educated in Catholic and public schools in Philadelphia, Pa., Mt. Ephraim and Audubon, New Jersey. She holds a B.S. Optics from the College of Engineering and Applied Science at the University of Rochester, an M.S. in Education from Nazareth College of Rochester and an M.S. Educational Administration from St. John Fisher College, all in Rochester, New York. She has taught in private, suburban and urban school districts in grades K-12 and as an adjunct instructor in the M.S. Education program at Nazareth College.

Ms. Sangmeister currently serves as an administrator with the Rochester City School District in Rochester, New York. She began her doctoral studies at St. John Fisher College in 2006; her research interest lies in the interactions between teachers and children in classrooms, because she is quite sure that that is where teachers can make a difference. Her research was conducted under the supervision of Dr. Mary Collins, and she received her Ed.D. Degree in 2008.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study owes its birth to the extraordinarily kind, knowledgeable and wise guidance of my chair, Dr. Mary Collins; her support of and confidence in this new researcher was unwavering. The study would not have been possible without the coaching of Dr. Gloria Jacobs, committee member, who has the gift of knowing exactly which questions to ask and how to ask them, and a depth of subject matter knowledge that has been invaluable. Both Dr. Collins and Dr. Jacobs gave generously of their time and talent.

My advisor, Dr. Arthur Walton, was a constant mentor for me since I first met him seven years ago; he is a wonderful teacher.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my family, friends, and coworkers, who all provided extraordinary support during this lengthy process. I also "love my team," the Centurions from the Executive Leadership Program, who saw me through this program. Thank you!

The teachers who are quoted at length in this study, and who worked enthusiastically with me for over two years, are so kind, thoughtful, bright, and committed. Having had the chance to work with them, I feel that teaching will be in good hands some day when those of us in my generation retire! Their principal was incredibly generous and open in allowing me access and by discussing her school openly with me.

To my technical editor, Patricia Roffe, thank you for your keen eye to detail, which you generously shared.
To my own students over the years, who have taught me far more than I have ever taught them, thank you for assuming my good will and being patient with me.

Finally, to all of my teachers, from my kindergarten teacher in 1959 to the most recent, thank you for the wonder of your work, which has inspired me to be curious about how to create the same magic that you have.
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ABSTRACT

In this study, a gap is identified in the literature about teacher talk in elementary classrooms. In particular, there is not rich description of teacher talk during the routine times of the elementary classroom, the times when the class is being organized and directed so that instruction can commence or resume. The study used an ethnographic strategy of studying four teachers in an exemplary urban school, as an immersed observer, in order to determine the nature of their talk to children during the routine of the school day. The findings included many examples of teacher talk, foregrounded as more important than the researcher’s analysis. Analysis revealed that teachers teach during the routine of the day and that teachers in an exemplary urban school show congruence between their stated philosophies and goals, the literature concerning culturally relevant practice, and the nature of their talk to children.
PREFACE

“Sticks and stones will break my bones
But names will never hurt me.
Call me this, call me that,
Call yourself a dirty rat!”

(Children’s taunt circa 1965)

The illogic of this taunt was obvious to me as a child. Through the succession from “Jolly Green Giant” (I have always been tall for my age), to “Sea Monster” (my long German surname was a target in a mostly Irish neighborhood), to the popular “Four-Eyes” (glasses in fifth grade), I was happy to taunt back, knowing I was making no sense whatsoever. If the name-calling was not a bother, then why call a name back at the taunter? Why, words mattered.

Flash forward thirty years. I needed to work in the summer and decided to take an open position, teaching in the local jail. There were over forty students on the roster, half in the morning and half in the afternoon; a classroom with twelve chairs and three tables; and eleven gates to be “locked through” every day on the way into class and the way back out at night, often requiring waiting between gates to “hitch a ride” with a deputy bearing keys who was going my way.

Most of my students were African-American. They were young men, ages 16 – 21. I taught a preparation course for students planning to sit for the high school equivalency test, the Test of General Educational Development, for the summer. Many of the students
were still in high school, but high school courses were not offered over the summer, and
coming to school was much more fun than sitting alone in a cell. Most of the students
were incarcerated for things they did while high or drunk, and they had now sobered up,
in many ways. Many of them were connecting to religion, working with an imam to
consider the Nation of Islam. Unfortunately for me, a White woman, the imam seemed to
teach that White people were the devil, but as the students would say, “No offense,
Miss,” because the imam also taught that knowledge is power and teachers should be
respected for their knowledge and therefore power. The imam taught the students that
“Fools talk; people speak.” During a math lesson one day, I was trying hard to help
students to learn how to solve an algebraic equation and the students were chatting. Like
many teachers before and after me, I said, “Please don’t talk when I’m talking.” I was
told in no uncertain terms that I had just called all of the students, “fools,” and had
called myself one as well. I learned to change what I said when I needed some quiet from
my students. And my belief in the power of words was reinforced. Now, however, I was a
teacher, and my words mattered to the students in my care. It mattered to my students
exactly what I said, even in the smallest of moments, for example when I was organizing
all of the participants in the class so I could teach.

My interest in studying “teacher talk” (ironically, the term in the academic
literature) arose from all of my teaching experiences. For most of my teaching career, I
taught students who were disconnected from mainstream education: students who were
suspended, dropped out, incarcerated. Most of my classrooms were in traditional
schools, with my one room providing an alternative to what was going on in the rest of
the building. In addition, early in my career I taught elementary education in two
different open floor plan schools, not yet reworked from the educational experiments of the 1960's. In these settings, I could hear many different teachers teaching and talking. I came to believe that teachers speak differently to children in different settings. When I began to search the literature, I thought I would find models for teacher talk, which could be applied to what might be observed in different settings. I found a wealth of research on teacher talk during instruction, and almost none on what teachers say the rest of the time.

Anecdotally, my experience and the experiences of my students, as I recall my conversations with them, confirm that teachers' words matter. The bits largely overlooked by the researchers, can add up to a powerful whole, which communicates clearly to students that their teachers care, or do not; think they can achieve, or think that they can not. This subtle aspect of daily communication deserves some attention.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Teaching is analogous to building a foundation. The bricks in a foundation symbolize the content, such as science or reading. The mortar between the bricks symbolizes the transitions made by teachers as they move children from one content area to the next. With a solid foundation, children are taught knowledge and skills in many content areas, along with how to be effective students, to be citizens, to be happy, to be responsible, to be kind, and to be patriotic: all of the long-term goals that teachers, families and society hold for their children.

Problem Statement

The problem of what teachers say to children during the “in-between” times is not well studied. The words teachers use during the routine events of the school day seem to pale into invisibility in the literature beside the words used during reading group or math instruction. Yet these words too must be important. Children hear them over and over. Children, who learn from everything around them, must be absorbing the overt and covert messages in all of the words that they hear, especially the words that they hear from authority figures such as teachers. The words said in-between teaching skills and knowledge content may contribute to children’s abilities and beliefs about learning the skills and content.

We do not seem to know what teachers are saying to children “in the cracks,” or where the mortar is: in-between and among the fractions and the state capitals and the
comprehension questions. One place to start learning what teachers are saying is in classrooms in exemplary schools, in order to learn from good examples.

When considering the problem of teaching pre-service teachers (college students who are studying to be teachers) what to say when speaking to children during these in-between times, one is reminded of the advice given to parents of young children. That is, tell the children what you want them to do, not what you do not want them to do. For example, if a child is running, and you want the child to walk, say "Please walk." If you instead say, "Please don't run," the child's brain has to process the idea of running, and then the negative of that, and then think of what to do next, all while continuing to run., perhaps into a street or other dangerous situation. While this is a very small amount of time spent processing in the brain, it is enough to frustrate parents who want the child to respond immediately to a direction that can ensure their safety. In the same spirit, it is more helpful for a new teacher to have good examples of what to do in the classroom. Although not so immediate a safety issue as a little child running near a busy street, it is easier to learn when told what-to-do and not what-not-to-do (which leaves the what-to-do a wide-open opportunity.) In this study, the reader will be provided with good examples of what to say to children during the routine of the classroom.

This leads to the topic for this research work: What is the nature of teacher talk during classroom routines in an exemplary urban school? The reader will note that all names for students, teachers, schools and school districts are pseudonyms.

Known

We know that teacher talk is a deciding factor in whether or not, and what, children learn (Johnston, 2004; Mercer, 1995.) Teacher talk, or the words that teachers
say to students, during instruction has been well studied, described, and analyzed (Cazden, 2001; Johnston, 2004.) In these references, the exact words said by teachers to children as the teachers teach reading, math and other subjects are thoroughly described and analyzed. The wealth of research available on teacher talk during instruction validates the importance of studying the exact words that teachers say to their students. Some of the work to be summarized in the literature review include Dickson, 2005; Glazer, 1995; Larrivee, 2002; Luff, 2001; and Short, Kaufman, Kaser, Kahn, and Crawford, 1999.

Researchers draw a distinction between instruction and classroom routines. Cazden describes classroom routines as “clear and consistent activity structure[s] … that … allow participants to attend to content rather than procedure” (2001, p. 101). Classroom routines include, for example, collecting homework when children arrive in the morning, getting out books and materials, sharpening pencils, lining up to go to another class, passing in or passing out papers, and so on. There has been extensive observation and analysis of classroom routines, including which routines are taught, when they are taught, and which are continued through the school year (Leinhardt, Weidman, and Hammond, 1987.) Routines allow teachers to get to the business of instructing in content.

Children develop an either/or sense of agency, or a belief in one’s own efficacy, between 3rd and 7th grades, which helps to focus this study (Skinner, Zimmer-Gembeck, Connell, Ecles, and Wellborn, 1998). Skinner et al. completed a longitudinal study of over 1000 children between these grades, interviewing the children and their teachers and gathering test scores and report card grades for the children. They showed that children
develop a polarized view of their own academic efforts between these grades: either hard work pays off in achievement, or hard work is pointless because students who do well in school are teachers’ favorites or just lucky. If there are grades in which teacher talk is influential, it is likely to be during these ages and stages of development.

From the discipline of Critical Discourse Analysis, used on classroom discourse, we know that subtle expectations are manifested in teacher talk. Critical discourse analysis first requires an accurate written transcript of what was said by the participant of interest, usually supported by an audio recording of the words. The recording is usually made when the researcher is present, with the researcher taking field notes in order to establish a context for the study. Then, the researcher examines the transcript of the spoken words in the context that has been established by the field visit, in order to determine patterns and themes in the spoken word. These themes are then cross-checked with the participants to be certain that the researcher has accurately interpreted the spoken words (Cazden, 2001). The themes are then reviewed for situations of interest including power and authority (Luke, 1995-1996).

Unknown

It is not known if there is a connection between the development of agency in children and what teachers have said to them over the years. It is not known if children listen to and absorb all of what they hear in-between the instruction. The literature does not provide rich description of what teachers say to children during classroom routines.

A first step in examining and analyzing teacher talk during classroom routines is to learn the nature of what teachers say to students during these routines.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the nature of teacher talk to students during classroom routines in intermediate classrooms in an exemplary school in Charlottesville, a large urban school district. The goal of this study is to provide a rich description of teacher talk during classroom routines. If it were to be found that teacher talk was important, for example that teachers were teaching during classroom routines, then this study could be used as part of the instruction and/or induction of new teachers into classroom best practices, and could also be used by practicing teachers, teacher-supervisors, and executive leaders to provide a starting point for their reflection and coaching on teacher talk during classroom routines.

Topic and Definition of Terms

The broad topic for this proposed study is "teacher talk during classroom routines." Since the study's purpose is to determine the nature of teacher talk, the topic has been further refined to focus on intermediate classrooms in an exemplary school. The terms "nature," "teacher talk," "classroom routines," "intermediate" and "exemplary school" will all be defined for the purpose of this study.

Definition of Terms

"Nature" means both the exact words and an analysis of the implications of those words, with respect to themes that will emerge as the study progresses. "Teacher talk" means the exact words that teachers say to their students (e.g. Dickson, 2005; Crawford, 1999). "Classroom routines" are "clear and consistent activity structure[s] ... that ... allow participants to attend to content rather than procedure" (Cazden, 2001, p. 101). Examples include: the everyday activities of starting the school day, "lining up" to go to
another class or lunch, collecting homework or passing out papers. "Exemplary schools" are those whose students score higher on state tests than district averages. Four teachers of high-performing classes (with regard to academic achievement) in an urban school district would be studied in order to create a composite best practice example.

"Intermediate grades" are grades three through seven; in this study, two third and two fourth grade teachers participated.

Research Questions

Initial research questions were considered in order to guide the study. As with most qualitative research, the researcher expected to refine and change these questions as the study progresses. In an ethnographic study, it is common to begin by posing a central question, followed by sub-questions, which relate to the analysis and interpretation of the themes uncovered (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, the researcher began with:

What is the nature of teacher talk to students during classroom routines in intermediate classrooms in an exemplary urban school?

Sub-questions relating to proposed procedures included:

- How was the site selected?
- What makes the site an “exemplary school?”
- How were the participants selected?

Sub-questions relating to analysis and interpretation included:

- What are the words that teachers say to children during the routine of the classroom?
- What are the implications of what teachers say, when the words are analyzed for themes that are cross-checked with the participants for intent?
• How often do teachers reference their relative power over children in what the teachers say to children?
• How often do teachers imply, without asserting outright, that children are competent?
• Are teachers sharing power with children?
• Are teachers teaching children to be independent learners or to be dependent on the teachers’ authority?

Once data collection began, the researcher also began to refine the research questions. The sub-questions concerning process moved into the description of methodology, and the research questions centered on the teacher talk.

The central question of the proposed study remained the same:

What is the nature of teacher talk to students during classroom routines in intermediate classrooms in an exemplary urban school?

The sub-questions were reduced, and became only two short sets:

• Are teachers teaching during classroom routines? What are they teaching?
• What themes can be identified in teacher talk to children during the routine parts of the class day? What are examples illustrating these themes?

Significance of the Study

The researcher currently works for the Charlottesville City School District (CCSD). Three years ago, the CCSD superintendent set a goal for the district of replicating best practices. In order to replicate best practices, those practices have to be known and understood. A rich description of teacher talk during classroom routines
would help to move the district and the teaching profession to analyze those words further, to decide what works and does not work, and to replicate what is effective.

*Summary Description of the District*

The Charlottesville City School District is one of five large urban districts in New York State. According to the New York State report card, there are about 34,000 students pre-kindergarten through Grade 12 in the Charlottesville City School District. The district has many of the problems of large urban districts all over the country. For example, almost 80% of the students in the district qualify for free or reduced price lunch according to the federal guidelines, a common measure of the amount of poverty in a district. Further description of the district follows in Chapter Three, as part of the site description.

*Assumptions*

The obvious assumption is that teachers’ words cause changes in students’ attitudes, beliefs and/or behavior. Another assumption is that the words said in-between the words used during teaching content are important. A further assumption is that there is reason to study just what teachers are saying, as opposed to studying both what teachers are saying and how students receive it.

The first assumption could be countered with a theory that teachers’ words to students matter. A current theory, suggesting that teachers’ words matter, will be explained in the literature search.

The second assumption will be refuted or confirmed by the proposed project. It remains to be seen if these in-between words carry meaning and therefore, are important.
The third assumption can be countered in two ways. One is to consider the phenomenon of interest. Classroom routines are the phenomenon. During classroom routines, teachers mostly talk and students mostly act. The teacher talk during classroom routines is often directed to small groups or the whole class with little or no verbal response expected or received from the students. The other note is that children in the intermediate grades tend to become attached to their teachers. Just as they accept whatever is happening at home as normal, so do they accept whatever is happening in their classroom as normal. Developmentally and experientially, they may not be able to separate from their relationships with their teacher to offer helpful analysis of a phenomenon that seems ordinary and normal to them. Finally, teacher talk is under the control of the speaker, who is the responsible adult present in the interaction; the children’s responses are not under conscious adult control. For these reasons, it could prove valuable to examine only teachers’ words during routine times.

Organization of Remaining Chapters

In Chapter Two, the literature which suggested the focus and method for this study will be presented. Chapter Three will describe the methodology which was used to conduct this study. Chapters Four and Five present the findings. Chapter Six provides discussion and summation.

Conclusion

Talk matters. Teacher talk matters to students. A rich description of teacher talk during classroom routines, which is currently unknown, in intermediate classrooms in an exemplary urban school will add to the body of knowledge on teacher talk and pave the way for more extensive study of the impact of routine teacher talk on students.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, the literature relevant to the topic of teacher talk during classroom routines will be reviewed. This literature suggested focus and method for the study. The literature on teacher talk helped to decide what part of teacher talk might be worth studying. The literature on agency helped to determine what grades to study. The literature on classroom routines informed the study by providing a framework for routine as opposed to instruction. These three bodies of literature provided a specific focus for the study.

Then, the question arose of how to study teacher talk during classroom routines. The literature on discourse analysis was helpful in this regard, and will be summarized. Once the researcher had teacher talk recorded, and sorted using discourse analysis, she had to decide how to discuss it. The framework of the guided construction of knowledge was helpful in deciding if teachers were teaching during classroom routines. Finally, the constructs of agency (previously used to determine the grades to focus on), shared authority, race, class and the culture of power were useful in providing viewpoints from which to discuss the teacher talk.

This chapter, then, is divided into two sections: the literature that helped to determine what to study, and the literature that helped to determine how to study it.
Literature Which Provided Focus for the Study

In this section, the literature on teacher talk, agency or perceived control, and classroom routines will be described. This literature, from the fields of Linguistics, Education and Psychology, provided focus for the study.

Focus: Teacher Talk

Teacher talk during instruction has been well studied, described, and analyzed (Cazden, 2001; Johnston, 2004); teacher talk during classroom routines has had some cursory attention in these texts. There is a wealth of research available on teacher talk during instruction (Dickson, 2005; Glazer, 1995; Larrivée, 2002; Luff, 2001; Moguel, 2004; Short, Kaufman, Kaser, Kahn, and Crawford, 1999; Patrick, Anderman, Ryan, Edelin, and Midgley, 2001; Steele, 1998). More detail will be provided shortly about each of the projects described by these researchers.

Entering the key term “teacher talk” in a search engine for an educational database is sure to result in a long list of articles which all cite Cazden’s text, Classroom Discourse, originally published in 1988 and now in its second edition (2001). Cazden used the strategies of critical discourse analysis from the discipline of linguistics in order to analyze the discourse, or verbal texts, in classrooms. Cazden describes discourse as the communication system that the teacher sets up, based on the social relationships between the teacher and students. Most of the communication in a classroom is verbal. The teacher controls the communication in order to manage the behavior of a large number of children and to effectively teach all of those children. Cazden uses many examples to demonstrate that children’s intellectual functioning is intimately related to the social relationships in which it becomes embedded. Those relationships, as determined by the
powerful adult in the classroom, are key to the success of children in that classroom. The primary tool used by teachers to establish relationships is their talk. It is the teacher-talk half of classroom discourse that is the focus of this study.

Johnston, in *Choice Words* (2004), references Cazden (2001) as one of his sources. Johnston studied the exact words said by teachers to children as the teachers teach reading, math and other subjects. He also studied children’s responses to teacher utterances, and used these responses to make his case about how teachers should talk. Teachers’ words are thoroughly described and analyzed, mostly with exemplary, short examples. He offers examples of how teachers can craft their questions to children while teaching Spelling, Social Studies, Science, Reading, and so on. Sometimes these examples are actual teacher talk, coming from a recording that was subsequently transcribed, and sometimes the examples were crafted by the author so that the reader has good models. Johnston helps the reader to see how teacher talk influences children, and builds agency in children, among other goals for the teachers’ part of classroom discourse. Both Cazden and Johnston briefly address teacher talk during classroom routines as part of the talk they discuss, although it is not a primary focus.

Additional examples of studies of teacher talk abound.

- Dickson (2005) categorized the types and frequencies of discourses occurring in a fourth grade classroom over six weeks of observation. This report documented one teacher-researcher’s action research to determine the kinds of “teacher talk” that caused fourth grade students to use their time more productively.
• Glazer (1995) used a short anecdote about a misbehaving child in a second or third grade, whose behavior changes for the better when his teacher changes her style of communicating with him. The teacher changes her language and her willingness to constructively confront the child, after conferencing with the child and a school counselor or psychologist. This practice becomes the recommendation of the author: that some self-reflection on the part of teachers, along with coaching provided by another trained professional, can often give a teacher the clues necessary to turn around a misbehaving youngster.

• Larrivée (2002) describes over 20 years of research studies indicating repeatedly that teacher praise tends to create dependent students who lack creativity and learn helplessness. To the contrary, encouragement, often best described as what an effective athletic coach does, provides validation, asks students to make value judgments about their own learning, and helps students to begin to construct their own meanings.

• Luff (2001) wrote about teaching history in England to grades seven through nine using experiences with period costume and period language. He emphasized the importance of careful modeling by the teacher if the students are to correctly learn the subtleties of the period language.

• Moguel (2004) found that teacher education programs, although consistent in encouraging pre-service teachers (education majors) to talk less once they became teachers, also consistently had the college students in those education classes reporting that their professors talked too much.
• Short et al. (1999) transcribed and analyzed teacher talk in literature circles in four multi-age classrooms of children ages 9-11 in Tucson, Arizona. Their work asserted that teacher talk is not studied nearly enough, and is often overlooked because of its ubiquitous seemingly meaningless presence.

• Patrick et al. (2001) investigated the ways that fifth grade teachers communicate mastery and performance goal expectations to their students. They found that high mastery classes were taught by teachers who show, and have, social and affective support for students’ progress, along with an emphasis on learning as an active process that required involvement and effort from all students.

• Steele (1998) provides quotations of teacher talk during a mathematics lesson in geometry. The discourse between teacher and students is then analyzed to show how the teacher’s carefully considered questions helped the students to enter the conversation and begin to construct helpful knowledge for themselves about the shapes under study.

Delamont (1983) noted that “more analysis is needed of the minutiae of teachers’ attempts at controlling and instruction” (p.12). Most of the above studies focused on teacher talk as it relates to instruction, and most of the reports of the studies had very few examples of actual teacher talk, instead providing much talk about teacher talk. This researcher is interested in what happens between the lines, as it were, in the mortar, if the bricks are subjects or content areas such as Reading, Math, Science, and Social Studies. What do teachers actually say during the in-between times, when they are organizing and directing children? Are they teaching during these times? If so, what are they teaching?
The literature on teacher talk leads directly to the primary research question and this first set of sub-questions.

**Focus: Agency**

Johnston (2004) declared, “Children should leave school with a sense that, if they act, and act strategically, they can accomplish their goals” (p. 29). He names this feeling “agency,” citing the work of Skinner in 1998, among others.

Skinner et al. (1998) conducted a landmark longitudinal study called “Individual Differences and the Development of Perceived Control,” published in a monograph in 1998. The study followed 1, 600 children over three consecutive years in grades three through seven. Extensive data collection included children’s reports of their perceived control, children’s perceptions of their interactions with teachers, teachers’ reports of students’ engagement in class, children’s grades given by the teachers and acquired on standardized tests. These data were extensively analyzed using statistical modeling in order to seek connections between the children’s perceptions, the teachers’ perceptions, and the children’s achievement. The researchers learned that children between grades three and seven sometimes lose their sense that they are in control of their learning, and that this loss correlates to academic failure. Children who fail tend to have developed a belief that success in school is based on luck or favoritism. Teachers impact the development of agency, as this belief is called in this work, with their instructional talk and with their management talk. Children who perceived that their teachers cared about them and wanted to support them were more likely to develop beliefs that individual effort affected school success. The reverse proved true, also: children who perceived their
teachers as unsupportive were more likely to acquire beliefs that outside factors such as luck were the most influential in determining success in school.

Agency or its reverse seems to develop between grades three and seven here in the United States. This finding has focused the proposed research project on the intermediate grades.

Focus: Classroom Routines

Researchers draw a distinction between instruction and classroom routines. Instruction is what one usually thinks about when one thinks about school; it is the work of teaching and learning skills and content knowledge. Classroom routines are the structures interspersed throughout the school day that allow one or two adults to move 20–30 children into the classroom and from one kind of instructional task or practice to another. Classroom routines include, for example, collecting homework when children arrive in the morning, getting out books and materials, sharpening pencils, lining up to go to another class, passing in or passing out papers, and so on. Routines also teach children to be organized and thorough, to work appropriately alone and with others, and to take responsibility for work outside the classroom that allows the classroom instruction to progress. Routines allow the teacher to get to the business of instructing. There has been extensive observation and analysis of classroom routines, including which routines are taught, when they are taught, and which are continued through the school year (Leinhardt, Weidman, & Hammond, 1987; Bohn, Roehrig, & Pressley, 2004).

Leinhardt et al. (1987) observed and analyzed classroom routines, including which routines are taught, when they are taught, and which are continued through the school year in six teachers’ fourth grade classrooms in five different schools in a major
metropolitan area in the United States. These researchers studied exemplary teachers, chosen by their principal because of their outstanding standardized Math test scores. The researchers used observational logs, videotapes, and extensive interviews over two school years to learn that exemplary teachers teach 80% of the routines they are going to use on the first day of class, and all of the routines by the third day of class. The researchers further analyzed the routines and sorted the routines into three broad themes: management (housekeeping), support (setting up for learning), and exchange (language contacts involving both teacher and student.) This work defined the structure of classroom routines and how and when they are taught, but did not study in depth what teachers say to children during these ubiquitous classroom routines.

Bohn et al. (2004) later studied primary grade teachers and uncovered a link between classroom routines and teacher effectiveness. They studied six primary grade teachers in five schools, three Catholic school classrooms and three public, in the same Midwestern middle-class area. They used video and observational data, teacher interviews, and the classroom AIMS instrument at the beginning of the school year and again mid-year. Teachers of classes who were more effective in producing student engagement and literacy progress did more to establish classroom routines at the beginning of the school year; they also offered more engaging activities, praised specific accomplishments, and were more enthusiastic about reading and writing. Bohn et al. noted that effective teachers developed strategies of self-regulation, an aspect of agency, in their students during the teaching of classroom routines to students in primary grades. This study further reinforces this researcher’s interest in knowing what teachers are saying to children during routine times.
Focus: Conclusion

These three bodies of literature, on teacher talk, agency, and classroom routines, have helped to focus this study on teacher talk in intermediate (grades 3-7) classrooms during classroom routines. In the next five sections, the literature that informed the process or method for the study will be described. How should one go about studying teacher talk in intermediate grades during classroom routines? What viewpoints should be adopted in discussing the findings?

Literature Which Informed the Process of the Study

First, the literature which informed the process of gathering and analyzing data will be described. Then the literature which informed the discussion of the data will be described.

Process: Discourse Analysis

In his most recent analysis, Nystrand (2006) traced the American interest in classroom discourse, or talking to learn, back over at least 150 years. This strategy, called recitation as opposed to the dominant European strategy of lecture, was thought to be more democratic. At the same time that recitation was valued, researchers noted that teachers have always struggled to stop talking so much and allow students to speak; teachers have been measured talking from 50% up to 85% of the time in the classroom (Nystrand, 2006).

Classroom discourse analysis has established the importance of the talk that occurs in the classroom (Cazden, 2001.) This strategy has evolved from the discipline of linguistics, which originally used discourse analysis to understand talk between and among people in many different ordinary situations, such as standing in line at a store.
The strategy has become a powerful tool of ethnographers who attempt to learn how subtle messages are conveyed and reinforced, such as who has more power in a verbal interaction.

*Critical Discourse Analysis*

The proposed research questions lend themselves to the use of critical discourse analysis embedded in a qualitative methodology. Following is a brief review of this powerful strategy of inquiry, which is widely used all over the world to help teachers to learn all that they are accomplishing in a classroom, intended and unintended.

Cazden (2001) in her groundbreaking book *Classroom Discourse*, first published in 1988, applied the strategies of discourse analysis from the discipline of linguistics to classroom talk. She left university teaching in 1974, for a year, in order to return to an elementary classroom to try to implement some of the ideas she had been teaching about language and young children. She recognized that there are two curricula being taught in every classroom: the planned, intended, overt curriculum, and an unspoken, covert, actual curriculum, and that teacher talk could be analyzed to discover both. Her work was updated in 2001 in order to include analysis of text interactions in new media. As mentioned earlier, Cazden’s work is cited in almost every research article on teacher talk.

Luke (1995-1996) is a linguist who was interested in everyday texts and in the subtle covert messages a speaker could convey. For example, he writes extensively about a one-sided conversation he overheard between a mother and a preverbal child in a grocery store line. He is very interested in the covert messages in text as they affect disenfranchised and disconnected groups of people. Much of his work was done in Australia where there is an indigenous population, which has suffered the same fate of
invisibility in official texts as have people of color here in the United States. Luke has helped education researchers to use the rigor of discourse analysis in order to learn all of what teachers communicate. Luke develops the argument that all texts are “normative, shaping, and constructing,” (p. 19), affirming the power of the teacher who creates the texts in the classroom far more often than the students. Critical discourse analysis can surface hidden meaning and messages in texts that seem unimportant or mundane. Luke asserts that a major purpose of critical discourse analysis is to make speakers and listeners aware of how the content of texts conveys useful information about the relative positions of speaker and listener. Critical discourse analysis can identify texts that reinforce the power of one class, race, ethnicity, or other condition over another. The process of critical discourse analysis can “disrupt common sense” (p. 20) to the purpose of helping both the speaker and the listener to make more conscious decisions about the messages conveyed and received.

Rogers, Malanchravil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, and Joseph (2005) provide a meta-analysis of just how much critical discourse analysis is being used in educational research to dissect and analyze texts from the classroom over the last ten years. They define both lower and uppercase versions of critical discourse analysis, the uppercase version providing a focus on how language establishes, communicates, and reinforces relationships of power and privilege. They describe the role of the analyst as the one who studies the “relationships between texts and social practices” (p. 5). Hopefully, in providing this clearer mirror for teachers, a dialogue could begin about what teachers are actually teaching and what they should be teaching, given their relative position of power in regard to students.
Gee (2005) suggests that all critical discourse analysis search for the seven building tasks of language. Gee's building tasks include:

1. Significance: How and what do different things mean?

2. Activities: What is going on?

3. Identities: Who is being directed by this language?

4. Relationship: What connection is being established between speaker and audience?

5. Politics, as in the distribution of goods: What perspective is being communicated?

6. Connection: How does this language connect or disconnect things?

7. Sign systems: Which languages or sign systems are privileged in the communication?

When studying teacher talk during classroom routines, these questions concerning the building tasks of language will be used to try to uncover some of the deeper meaning in the teacher talk.

*Process: Guided Construction of Knowledge*

It must be established that teachers' words have an impact on the students who hear those words. It seems obvious, and individual anecdotal evidence would support this assertion. However, a bit of imagination would show that it would be extremely difficult to prove that any particular teacher utterance caused any particular bit of learning in a student. The conceptual framework for the belief that teacher talk creates learning is found in Mercer (2000), which identifies the teacher as an educated guide for the students
in his or her care, using talk to transmit knowledge from the teacher to the student. This framework is called the guided construction of knowledge.

The initial framework was built mostly on content instruction by teachers and child-to-child conversation, and posited that one of the purposes of language is to build shared knowledge (Mercer, 1995). Later, Mercer recorded, transcribed, and studied a wide variety of discourse, such as teachers speaking to children during the teaching of content and during routine parts of the day, an FBI informant trying to bribe a politician, and conversation between an architect and a heating consultant as they toured a building under construction (Mercer, 1995). This study further refined the way that language allows us to think together and to create knowledge together, in many of the roles that we occupy in our daily lives (Mercer, 2000). The study confirmed that language created by the teacher and shared with students causes change in what students know and can do (Mercer, 2000).

How does knowledge get from one person to another, from teacher to student? Mercer (1995) theorizes that “...talk is used to construct knowledge” (p. 84). He describes how knowledge can arise both from simple sharing and from the conflict of ideas, which is generated when current talk disagrees with previously learned notions or beliefs. Teacher talk is situated in the institution of school, and the role of the teacher in a school influences how students perceive teachers’ words. Children perceive the teacher is an already-educated guide, who inducts the student into both subject knowledge, or content and skills, and discourse knowledge, or how to talk about what is known (Mercer, 1995).
Mercer categorized strategies that teachers use to guide the construction of knowledge in their students. These include elicitation of prior knowledge in students, responses to what students say, and describing significant shared experiences (Mercer, 1995).

Eliciting prior knowledge fits into two themes: direct and cued. Direct elicitations are usually questions, such as “What motivated the characters to go through the maze rather than just to go home?” Cued elicitations include clues to the answer that the teacher wants, and may use a combination of verbal and nonverbal strategies, such as “What can you use to count time that is part of your body? You can feel it here” (teacher puts fingers on wrist).

Responses to students can be categorized five ways: confirmations, rejections, repetitions, elaborations, and reformulations. Confirmation includes the familiar, “That’s good!” Rejection is the opposite, “No, I don’t think you’ve got it yet.” Repetition is when the teacher reinforces what the student has just said by repeating it, “Fifty-three, that’s right.” Elaboration is when the teacher verbally accepts the student’s response and adds to it. For example, “We did go to the pumpkin patch. And once we were there, we went for a hayride and then what happened?” The last theme of response is the reformulation, sometimes used when teachers need to rein in a discussion gone wrong. For example, “That is certainly one way to get your parent’s attention. Now we were discussing appropriate ways to get your parents’ attention, and the last person to contribute said that showing his parent a good paper from school always worked. What is another appropriate way you can get your parents to notice you?”
Finally, teachers help students to construct knowledge by describing shared experiences in three ways: “We” statements, literal recaps, and reconstructive recaps. An example of a “We statement” is “We’ve just read through the chapter on cell structure.” An example of a literal recap is “So it is important to turn off the Bunsen burner before leaving your station.” An example of a reconstructive recap is “I want you to think about what happened yesterday when Vince added too much water to the clay. It didn’t form up as well, did it?”

This conceptual framework, called the “Guided Construction of Knowledge,” (Mercer, 1995) provides a way to study the words that teachers say to their students. The existence of such a framework is necessary to the study in order to suggest that teachers’ words create change in their students, an unexamined assumption for most people. The framework will be used to determine if teacher talk during classroom routines is teaching, and if so, to try to discover what is being taught.

The following situations of interest were helpful in analyzing the teacher talk from various viewpoints, in providing lenses to use in order to study the samples of teacher talk that were acquired.

Discussion Viewpoint: Agency

One situation of interest is the idea of agency, which has already been described as it pertains to deciding which grades should be included in the study. Agency is also of interest as the researcher begins to examine teachers’ words during classroom routines in these classrooms. Are there examples of teachers inculcating this important belief in children during classroom routines?
Discussion Viewpoint: Shared Authority

Oyler (1993) studied one first grade teacher’s attempts to negotiate sharing authority with her first graders during one school year. Oyler’s study focused on shared authority during language arts lessons in the first grade classroom. She created a framework for and analysis of shared authority between teacher and students (Oyler, 1993). Oyler’s framework is based on the value that teachers give to the “shared co-construction of meaning” (Wells and Chang-Wells, 1992 in Oyler, 1993). Such an approach has the benefit of giving real meaning to the work of the children in the class, who are expected to one day take their place as an educated participating citizen in a democracy, producing as well as acquiring existing knowledge (Oyler, 1993). In Oyler’s framework, shared authority was demonstrated when teachers actively shared their expertise with their students, provided opportunities for students to have choices and respond directly to each other, had and shared their expertise in group process, accepted and encouraged students’ initiations for process and knowledge, and became “an authority on her own teaching and an evaluator of her own work” (Oyler, 1993, p. 207).

Discussion Viewpoint: Race and Class

In World of Wonder School in the Charlottesville School District (pseudonyms), 91% of the students were Black or Hispanic in 2005-06, and 74% of the students received a free or reduced price lunch (New York State Education Department, 2007). In comparison, 86% of the students in the Charlottesville School District were Black or Hispanic that school year, and 74% received a free or reduced price lunch. In contrast, only 26.7% of teachers in large city districts in New York State were Black or Hispanic in 2002, the most recent date for which this information was available (New York State
Education Department, 2004). The contrast between students and teachers makes issues of race and class imperative to any discussion of teaching and learning in the school and district. As this dissertation is being written, the first Black man is about to be nominated by a major party to run for the office of President here in the United States. This event has caused an acceleration in the popular press of dialogue, and diatribe, about issues of race and class in this country. There has been a wealth of scholarship on the topic for generations, and it is difficult to choose which sources to use to inform this study.

Several scholarly sources were chosen. The first is the study published in 1994 by Ladson-Billings, *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African-American Children*. In addition, several collections of essays by adults and adults working with adolescents are reviewed. Several definitions of power are noted, and Delpit's now-classic work, based on a sociological view of power, on the construct of the “culture of power,” is described. In addition to the scholarly sources, it has been noted that the academe does not often acknowledge lived experience as a valid way of “knowing,” and so the researcher will later cite, in the analysis section, a pop culture musician who grew up in the projects of New York City as an expert on that culture.

*The Dreamkeepers*

In 1994, Ladson-Billings wrote about her work to learn about successful teachers of African-American children. She used a culturally relevant strategy for deciding which teachers were successful, by asking parents attending the African-American churches in the California community where she was studying, whom they thought were the good teachers. Her study focused on individuals working in a mostly African-American, economically impoverished school district. She used both qualitative research and reports
of “lived experience,” working across the cultures of the academe and the historical way of knowing for African-American people, who were once denied the opportunities for written expression taken for granted by White people in the United States. Ladson-Billings makes a case for a “culturally relevant” pedagogy, drawing on the experiences of the seven parent-identified effective teachers, and her own observations of and interviews with those teachers. This pedagogy suggests that teachers and schools provide educational self-determination, honor and respect students’ home culture, help African-American students to understand the world as it is and equip them to change it for the better,

Silenced Voices

Fine and Weis, editors of several collections of essays and studies (or Weis and Fine, 1993, 1998, 2000) attempt to give voice to those who, because of race, class, gender, or sexual orientation, are not routinely heard or acknowledged in American communities and institutions. Adults and adolescents speak of commonalities: the desires for parents to have the best for their children, the hopes that families have for education to lift them out of economic poverty. A college professor who grew up in the 1960’s speaks about the difference in political connection that she feels compares to how her mostly middle class, mostly White students seem to feel, even though they are completing practice teaching in mostly working class, mostly Black and Hispanic schools. An elementary teacher writes about using narrative writing to help children in the fifth grade to begin to develop a social consciousness that includes understanding, tolerance, hope, reality, and action. In all of this work, no matter what race or class or
gender or sexual orientation, people still hope that education is the key to acquiring power as a full and accepted participant in society.

*Power and the Culture of Power*

Any teacher who has had the night-before-school-starts kids-gone-wild nightmare knows who really has the power in a classroom. However, teachers spend enormous amounts of time inventing schemes for leveraging students into doing what the teacher wants rather than what the children want. Some of the power held by a teacher keeps students safe and leads them to learn in a productive, supportive environment; this is the kind of power that could be termed "authority."

Teachers struggle with the right balance of appropriate and inappropriate use of their authority. As an Adult Education teacher, the researcher recalls that students would casually ask her how she was going to vote in an election for politicians or on various ballot propositions. She took a great deal of care to refrain from such disclosure, because she knew she had the power to sway votes. Instead, she tried to query students about their interests and beliefs and help them to discover which of the researchers and issues were ones they could support. Johnston (2004) encourages teachers to be particularly careful of their relative power position when they answer questions from students. Johnston would rather have teachers query students in return so that students can think their way towards their own answer, or field the question to other students, reinforcing students’ roles as people who know. Finding this kind of teacher reaction to students' questions would suggest that teachers are trying to use their authority to build competence in their students.
A dictionary definition of “power” is the ability to do or act; political strength, or possession of control or command over others (Merriam-Webster, 1968). Assumption of power over another (possession of control or command) may lead to inadvertent communication that disenfranchises or otherwise disadvantages: a group of children, because of their age, or of people of color, because of their race or ethnicity, or of those who have not yet had the opportunity to complete their formal education, because they do not comprehend the communication. Different types of power can be attributed to the words chosen by a speaker and the exertion of power can change the overt message that seems to be the intended communication (Luke, 1995-1996). Luke (1995-1996) has worked extensively to identify instances of subtly expressed power in mundane discourse between people who identify with different races or ethnicities, one a majority and one a minority in that population, in this case, with the one who belongs to the majority group having political power in the society.

Raven and French (1958) suggested a sociological view of power, identifying a theoretical construct that described an individual who was acted on by an agent. The agent had different kinds of power based on the agent’s ability to mediate rewards, mete out punishment, hold expertise, have status relative to the individual, or have a legitimate right to prescribe behavior for the individual. The implication of this view is that power resides in a person, and that it is always a “power over,” one over another.

D.H. Lawrence (1982) poetically wrote about “…the third thing, that makes it water,” when he wrote a poem for children about the magical connection between hydrogen and oxygen that gives us that ubiquitous substance. Similarly, Foucault (1980), philosophically and also poetically, considers power to be “something that circulates,...
which only functions in the form of a chain” (p. 98), not something that is localized in one person who then uses it on another, but something that is an aspect of relationship. The implication of this view of power as “between” and flowing is that either party to the relationship can and does change the nature of the power between them over time.

Delpit (1988) proposed the idea of a “culture of power” enjoyed by those whose race and ethnicity has allowed them the privilege of access to full power in American society. She subscribes to a sociological view of power, as residing in individuals based on their race and class. Sadly, Delpit describes the “silenced dialogue” between people who are White and people who are Black or Native American, because of their different ways of knowing and their different styles of communicating. This lack of dialogue results in a continuing estrangement between professors of education and people of color who are either studying to become teachers or parenting the children of color in the classroom. Delpit described five aspects of power, which influence the debate over how to teach children of color. These rules include:

1. Issues of power are enacted in classrooms. (E.g. When a teacher asks children to tell what country their ancestors came from, and tells the children who are Black that “Africa” is not a country, she privileges those who know what country their ancestors came from: the White, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American children, and reminds the Black children of their personal cultural loss of reference to their particular ancestry.)

2. There are codes or rules for talking and interacting with others that allow one to have power. (In classrooms, these might include such rules as not speaking when someone else is speaking, or raising a hand before contributing.)
3. The rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power. (In classrooms, the prized individualism of American mythical heroes, such as Paul Bunyan and Christopher Columbus, among other European or European-descent men, results in rules such as only one student may talk at a time, and all grading is based on proof of individual achievement.)

4. It is easier to acquire power if someone explicitly tells you the rules of the culture of power. (In America, adults are expected to meet each other’s eyes and shake hands immediately upon being introduced. If one is taught this as a child, one knows how to negotiate the first few moments of any interaction with any adult American, no matter how important the person might be.)

5. Those with power are often not aware that they have it, believing that everyone is equally treated in our country; those without power are acutely aware that they do not have power and are not equally treated. (A parallel can be made with good health: one tends to forget to “enjoy” good health and only notices when it no longer exists.)

Delpit reminds that teachers may not assume that the parents of children of color want their children taught the same as White children. This practice would reinforce society’s status quo. Instead, parents of children of color want their children to be taught the spoken and written language and behavioral codes that will allow them to fully participate in American society as adults. Delpit suggests that teachers incorporate strategies appropriate for all of the children in the classroom, not only the children who, by reason of race or class, already enjoy the privilege of societal power.
Conclusion

The literature presents a compelling case for studying what teachers say to children during the routine parts of the class day. The intermediate grades, three to seven, are of particular interest because those are the grades during which children develop perceived control of their learning as opposed to developing belief in luck or favoritism as a reason for school success.

The study will use the strategies of critical discourse analysis in order to examine the examples of teacher talk that are acquired. A framework describing how knowledge moves through talk to be transmitted to a learner will be used to learn if teachers are teaching during classroom routines. Small segments of teacher talk will be studied to see if they might be significant.

The teacher talk will then be viewed through some suggested viewpoints: those of agency, shared authority, race and class and the culture of power.

The next chapter will describe a qualitative methodology that was used for gathering and analyzing data in order to answer the research questions about this topic.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes a methodology used to study the nature of intermediate grade teachers’ words during classroom routines in an exemplary school. It should be noted that, true to the structure of qualitative research, the methodology evolved throughout the study.

First, the general perspective of a critical ethnographer, as it relates to the proposed study, is offered. Then, the position and subjectivities of this researcher are described. The research context is then established. Next, research participants are identified. Finally, data collection and analysis procedures are described.

General Perspective

The study is best described as an ethnographic qualitative study, as summarized by Creswell (2003) and described in depth in Denzin and Lincoln (2005). Ethnographic study is used to study an ongoing phenomenon. Ethnographic study requires the researcher to collect observational data in a natural setting over a period of time. The process is flexible and evolves in response to the conditions of the field setting. The researcher fully discloses the purposes, intents, and processes of the study to the participants (see Appendices Two and Three) and reviews the results of data collection and analysis with the participants for their perspectives and input. The purpose of the study is to gain understanding of a process, in this case the process of routine, ordinary communication from teacher to student in an environment that produces extraordinary results. The researcher aims for believability by fully and self-consciously describing
every aspect of the study’s context, participants, and processes, and by providing some autobiographical self-disclosure so the reader can infer bias that might exist (Creswell, 2003).

Critical ethnography is the descriptor for studies which seek to address inequities such as inequality, dominance, and empowerment (Creswell, 2007). This study took place in a school district that struggles with high levels of family poverty and low academic achievement among its students. The teacher-participants, however, are not a part of this broader picture; instead, they serve in an exemplary school, one which has far better standardized test results than the rest of the district. The purpose of this proposed study is to begin to close a gap in the literature concerning description of teacher talk during classroom routines in an exemplary urban school, by recording, transcribing, and studying teacher talk in third and fourth grades in an exemplary urban school.

Critical ethnography includes fieldwork as an immersed participant, cultivating “rapport, not friendship; … respect, not belief; … understanding, not identification…” (Tedlock in Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p. 168) with the participants in the study. This process began during fieldwork early in the researcher's doctoral program. Those who presume to be ethnographers must attend to their own subjectivity (Peshkin, 1988), or their own expertise and positions relative to the study, and so the positionality of the researcher relative to this study is described. A detailed description of the research context follows. Analysis of the data collected was accomplished with the help of critical discourse analysis, a tool from the field of linguistics, which is also described.
Positionality

The researcher has been a teacher since 1989. She has taught in suburban, urban and alternative program classrooms. She taught in fourth through sixth grade for about four years when she first became a teacher. She then worked as a “transition” teacher, with students who had been long-term suspended or who were in danger of being long-term-suspended, with the goal of reducing the suspension rate in an urban high school. Following this experience, she returned to classroom teaching in alternative programs: some for adults who had not had the opportunity to complete their education when younger, and some for students who “dropped out” of high school and immediately “dropped into” a G.E.D. (General Educational Development) test preparation program. Most of the curriculum in her G.E.D. programs was intermediate grade level, grades 4 – 6, as most of her adult students had skill levels as measured on standardized testing at those grades. Finally, the researcher became a school administrator, and has served her district creating a pilot alternative program for students who were failing seventh and ninth grade for the second time and as a House Administrator in an urban high school. She is currently the assistant director in the Office of Student Equity and Placement for her urban district. The researcher has had extensive training in grief and loss support for students, conflict resolution, and crisis management (both individual crises and large group crises). She has also taught the master’s level research course at a local college to students studying to become teachers.

The researcher is a White, middle-class, middle-aged woman, a mother, stepmother and grandmother. She has raised children who are now slightly older than the teacher-participants in this study. She grew up in a large Eastern United States city, in a
family of six children and both parents, and has lived in both urban and suburban environments as an adult. As a child, she and her family qualified for government surplus food; she also qualified for a Christmas shopping spree in fourth grade and a “campership” (free tuition to camp from a charitable agency) in eighth grade as a result of her family’s socioeconomic status. Her bachelor’s degree cost her 25% of the actual amount as a result of financial need scholarships. In the researcher’s opinion, this experience of growing up in a working class family and then going to college and moving into the middle class has made it possible for her to intellectually make connections for the students in her care over the years, and has informed her ability to translate between socioeconomic classes for her students, long before she knew that there was research supporting such practice.

Since adulthood, she has had one six-month period of unemployment, during which she qualified for unemployment, but did not make little enough on unemployment for her son to qualify for a reduced price or free lunch at school. Amazingly to her, even though unemployed, she was now solidly in the middle class, according to her government. She currently lives in a suburb of the city for which she works.

For most of her teaching years, the researcher taught children and adults who were different from her in race or ethnicity and in current socioeconomic status; most of her students were Black or Hispanic, and most belonged to families who currently qualify for free or reduced price lunches in school.

The researcher has long sung in membership-by-audition choirs, with mostly classical repertory. She found that her musical training was helpful while transcribing and analyzing the teacher talk in this study.
The teacher-participants in this study teach in one of the sixty schools in the district where the researcher is employed. The researcher is not in a supervisory role in relation to the teacher-participants, has not ever been in such a relationship, and does not expect to be. She may hold some status in the teacher’s minds because of her work role at the district’s central office, although this status does not exist in her perspective. She has a professional friendship with the principal of the school in which the teachers teach, limited to occasional brief social conversation attached to the work conversations that occur. Five years ago, the researcher completed a semester-long administrative internship at World of Wonder School (a pseudonym), working with the lead teacher to prepare materials to offer the teachers as they prepared fifth graders for the New York State Social Studies test, and also working with the principal to analyze the results of a parent survey and present those results to the faculty.

The researcher is positioned as an insider/outsider, terms familiar to the anthropological ethnographers who first studied cultures in communities and countries different from their own (Bishop, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). She is an insider in that she knows the curriculum for these grade levels and the developmental stages of the children in grades three and four, insider in that she is an administrator in the World of Wonder School’s district, insider in that she considers herself a teacher, has been a classroom teacher, and has taught teachers. She is further an insider to the students in this urban school because she grew up in the socioeconomic class and urban neighborhood of most of the families whose children attend WOWS, although not in the same city or, obviously, generation. She is an insider relative to students because she has taught, and listened to, the parents and teenagers in the district under study.
The researcher is an outsider to the school, expected to sign in as a visitor whenever she enters the school, while wearing a “CCSD” ID badge in order to identify herself to children and staff as someone who is a visitor but as someone who is not a "stranger." She is an outsider in that she is no longer a practicing classroom teacher; she does not work in an elementary school now. She is further an outsider in that she has had experiences in other classrooms and other schools, including while supervising student teachers, and so she is able to consider practices considered “normal,” as in “We all do this,” to the teachers in the study in comparison to what is going on in other schools, and note what is different. The researcher is an outsider in the school in the study, and she is a generation older than the teacher-participants in the study. She is also an outsider to the students in these classrooms because they do not know her or her background, other than as a guest in their classrooms.

Research Context

Like all large organizations, World of Wonder School can be described both quantitatively, with demographic information about the school and its district, and qualitatively, using an organizational framework. These descriptions follow.

The District and the School: Demographic Profiles

The Charlottesville City School District (CCSD) is one of the "Big Five" School Districts in New York State. These districts have an elected school board that does not have the power to tax citizens directly. The school boards propose a budget to the respective city in which they operate and an elected City Council approves or disapproves the budget and taxes accordingly.
The CCSD teaches approximately 34,000 students in 58 schools, 39 elementary (Grades pre-K to 6) and 19 secondary (Grades 7-12). The district employs about 4,000 teachers and about 1,400 other professionals in this work (New York State Education Department, 2007). The poverty level of the children in the district, as measured by the percentage of children who receive a free or reduced price lunch, is almost 80% (New York State Education Department, 2007).

The race and ethnicity of the teachers in the “Big City” schools in New York State does not reflect the race and ethnicity of the children in their classrooms. In particular, there are far more Black children than White, and far more White teachers than Black. The following figures use the most recently available data from state websites to compare the percentages of Black teachers and children, and then White teachers and children.

Figure 3.1. Percentage of students in the CCSD and percentage of teachers in the “Big City Schools” in New York State who are Black
World of Wonder School is the kindergarten through sixth grade school. There are about 300 students with two sections of each grade, one administrator, and about 40 adults (New York State Education Department, 2007). The adults include:

- The principal
- General Education classroom teachers
- Special Education teachers who team-teach in the same classroom with the classroom teachers
- Paraprofessionals
- Lead teachers for literacy and math
- A parent liaison
- Cafeteria and custodial staff

World of Wonder School is located at one end of a large vintage brick school building just inside the loop that defines downtown Charlottesville; another elementary
school inhabits the rest of the building, and the two schools’ hallways on all floors connect without any interrupting doors or walls.

Admission to the school is by a citywide kindergarten lottery. Parents are permitted to choose one of five citywide schools as a first choice. In the last two years, the 42 seats available at World of Wonder School could have been filled three times over; this past year, 190 families applied for the 42 available seats (Sangmeister, 2008). Older students may enter if a seat becomes available in a grade due to attrition.

The school is the only elementary school in the district that uses the Expeditionary Learning Model, a national reform model that stresses democratic process and student inquiry as the primary instructional strategies. The ethnic/racial composition of the student body is 81% Black, not Hispanic, 10% Hispanic, 9% White, not Hispanic, and less than 1% American Indian, Alaskan, Asian, or Pacific Islander in 2005-06. 78% of the students at this school were eligible for free and reduced price lunch in 2006-07. By comparison, the district's ethnic/racial composition in 2004-05 was 65% Black, not Hispanic, 20% Hispanic, 13% White, not Hispanic, and 2% American Indian, Alaskan, Asian or Pacific Islander. 77% of the district's children qualified for a free or reduced price lunch in 2006-07 (New York State Education Department, 2007).

World of Wonder School’s standardized test results are better than the other schools in the CCSD. The results from the New York State assessments are shown in Figure 4. In New York State, assessments are scored with whole numbers, 1, 2, 3, and 4. “1” and “2” are below the standard; “3” meets the standard, and “4” exceeds the standard. ELA stands for the English Language Arts examination, and Math is the Mathematics
examination. The ELA and Math examination results are compared for grades 3 and 4 in 2005-06, the most recently available data.

Figure 3.3 Percent of students who met or exceeded the standard (i.e. combined scores 3 and 4) in World of Wonder School compared to Charlottesville Central School District, ELA and Math examinations in Grades 3 and 4, 2005-06 (New York State Education Department, 2007).

The students at WOWS score consistently above their peers in the district, although the percentage of children who receive a free or reduced lunch is the same as the district average.

Qualitative Description of Research Context

Any complex organization is more than the numbers that describe it. In their 2003 book, Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership. Bolman and Deal suggest a four-frame model for describing an organization. The authors define a frame as “a coherent set of ideas that enable you to see and understand more clearly what goes on day to day” (p. 41). This particular model allows for a comprehensive description of the
exemplary school that is the setting for this study. In this section, the four frames of Bolman and Deal’s model will be summarized, followed by a description of the research setting using Bolman and Deal’s model.

*The Frames*

The first frame is the structural frame. An organizational chart often symbolizes this frame, although in the authors’ view, these charts only begin to describe a complex organization. The structural frame is concerned with dividing work and coordinating the progress of work. New circumstances often require revisions to the structure of an organization. Highly volatile or ambiguous circumstances need different structures from stable, simple situations (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

The next frame is the human resources frame. This frame is modern, within the last thirty years, since large organizations have only just begun to recognize that their employees are a critical component of their success. The human resources frame is concerned with meeting the human needs of employees and with recognizing the interdependency of people and their organizations. A good match between organization and employee benefits both organization and employee (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

The third frame is the political frame. Despite the acknowledged negative connotation of politics in American culture, Bolman and Deal (2003) identify this frame as “simply the realistic process of making decisions and allocating resources in a context of scarcity and divergent interests” (p. 181). The frame is concerned with power, conflict and ethics as these issues affect the decision-making and progress of an organization.

Finally, the fourth frame is the symbolic frame. Symbols are a powerful shorthand communication tool, given meaning by the participants and their shared culture. The
symbolic frame is concerned with shared myth, vision, story, rituals, heroes, play, specialized language, and ceremony: the parts of an organization that carry the true message and meaning of the organization for and to its members (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

**Structural Frame: World of Wonder School**

*Overview.* There is one administrator in this school, the Principal. This is her eighth year in the school. The school is stable and small, requiring a simple organizational plan. The professionals in the building are grouped into grade-level teams of two teachers, kindergarten through sixth grade. Each grade level team decides its Expedition Theme for each semester, based on the NYS Social Studies standards in the fall and the NYS Science standards in the spring. The grade-level teams work together almost daily to coordinate and share the load of extensive lesson planning necessary. Grade-level teams collaborate with special subject teachers (Art, Music, Spanish, Shop, and Physical Education) on their current expedition theme so that the content in those subjects is linked to the core subject content. For example, a Nutrition unit that is part of third grade Science includes a series of planned puppet shows in which the students work in groups to write their own shows. Each group has children from both third grades. The students then make their puppets in Art class and make a puppet theater in Shop class. Thorough unit plans are turned into the principal at the beginning of each semester.

This planning process provides congruency from the students’ point of view. It also permits a wide variety of skills and knowledge reinforcement as teachers and students progress through the expedition together.
*Expeditionary learning.* Expeditionary Learning is a school reform package purchased by the school from Expeditionary Learning Schools. The reform process is based on the work of Kurt Hahn (1886-1974) a German-British educator who created schools in first Germany and later Scotland based on his experiences during World War I. In the 1930's, Hahn, a German refugee, established a school called the Salem School in Salem, England, based on these seven principles:

2. Make the children meet with triumph and defeat.
3. Give the children the opportunity of self-effacement in the common cause.
4. Provide periods of silence.
5. Train the imagination.
6. Make games (i.e. competition) important but not predominant.
7. Free the sons of the wealthy and powerful from the enervating sense of privilege (Expeditionary Learning, 2008).

Hahn first found a vehicle for his ideas here in the United States in the Outward Bound programs, used to challenge adolescents in outdoor expeditions, during which they would accomplish seemingly impossible adventures, and gain in self-awareness and self-respect in return.

These "Salem" principles have expanded since Hahn's time, into the comprehensive school reform package now called Expeditionary Learning. As a K-12 reform plan today, the non-profit organization World of Wonder Schools uses ten design principles, evolved from Hahn’s “Salem” principles, and a foundation of inquiry-based instruction. The ten principles are:
1. Self-discovery
2. The having of wonderful ideas
3. Responsibility for learning
4. Empathy and caring
5. Success and failure
6. Collaboration and competition
7. Diversity and inclusion
8. The natural world
9. Solitude and reflection
10. Service and compassion (Expeditionary Learning, 2008).

Teachers and students together pose problems to be solved based on the requirements of the New York State curriculum for the respective grades. The problems to be studied arise from semester-long themes; first semester is based on the Social Studies curriculum and second semester on the Science curriculum.

*Comparison to Freire.* When describing this school to colleagues, it is often remarked that the school must be founded on Paulo Freire's principles, since his work is commonly taught in urban teacher preparation programs. A pedagogy for teaching adults living in economic poverty was described in Paulo Freire's landmark work, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, first published in 1970 (Freire, 2007) although Freire's work does not reference Hahn, and Expeditionary Learning does not reference Freire in their materials (Cousins, 1998; Cousins, (editor), 2000; Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound, 1999). It is interesting to note the similarities in the recommendations of Freire and Hahn, living and working on different continents forty years apart in time, both trying to create a more
just society by providing real experiences for students, training in the habits of inquiry and use of imagination to solve real problems, and facilitating discussion about the debilitating nature of one socioeconomic class being trained to have privilege over another (Expeditionary Learning, 2008; Freire, 2007.) The specific parallels to Freire's theories are almost eerie. For example, Freire describes a process of teacher-students who immerse themselves in a community and mutually and humbly work with adult students-teachers to develop themes of inquiry. Problems are posed and solved within these themes with teachers facilitating but not imposing values or judgments from outside the culture of the students. Freire is writing about adult teachers of adult students. At WOWS, the adult teachers are teaching children in grades kindergarten through sixth. This past summer, the teachers from World of Wonder School completed daylong team expeditions into the inner city neighborhoods in which their students live. These expeditions were conducted by teacher-leaders from the school, in partnership with the parents of World of Wonder School students. The overt purpose was to gain understanding of the resources available to World of Wonder School students within their community, to create additional options for destinations for expeditions that support the curriculum, and to shift the teachers’ framework from deficit thinking about their students to a strength-based framework. This executes Freire's recommendations concerning immersion of the teacher into the community being served by the teacher. Of course, since World of Wonder School is a public school, the themes of inquiry are determined by the required New York State curriculum, and the WOWS "crew" must work within these imposed limits to pose the problems to be solved by their expeditions.
Decision-making. Many of the WOWS employees serve on school-wide teams specializing in certain support or organizing functions (e.g. the PTA.). All of the teachers serve on at least one committee that supports the goals of the school’s improvement plan for a particular school year, a plan that is built with the help of the faculty every spring for the coming year. The initial work for the improvement plan occurs during a Superintendent’s Conference Day, and does not require teachers to work on their own time.

The principal has taken on the role of monitoring and guiding decision-making so that it is congruent with the model of Expeditionary Learning, using a democratic process whenever possible. For example, the professional community at the school chose this learning model six years ago. This decision concluded the principal’s first year in the building. This model is the preferred mode of teaching and learning in the school, and is modeled in the professional development that is provided to the staff. The school exists as one of over 50 in a large urban district, and so the principal also functions as the liaison to a traditional, hierarchical central office structure, which requires her to budget, discipline, evaluate, report, and so on. The principal fills these roles in a traditional manner, which is the expectation of her supervision.

Human Resources Frame: World of Wonder School

Teachers for this unique school are hired from among the general pool of teachers available to the district, although the school prefers to hire those who student-taught at the school, because those teachers already know what to expect from the organization. Teachers, who transfer in from other buildings, quickly figure out if the transfer is a
“good fit” (personal communication, principal, November 20, 2006). The school is part of a large urban district with a strong teachers’ union, and the administration has to be respectful of union issues.

There is much more teamwork required in this building as a result of the learning model. Within the team, team members know each other’s family, home, and professional situations (e.g. who has a preschool child at home, who teaches adjunct at a local college) and are sensitive to each other’s needs as they organize their mutual planning time.

Teachers are evaluated using the structures agreed upon with the teachers’ union, which requires three observations per year the first three years of teaching and a choice of evaluation structures once the teacher is tenured.

Summer teacher expeditions provide opportunities for teachers to learn about each other, bond, and plan together for the coming school year. These expeditions usually involve an actual expedition, such as a canoe trip, along with shared meals and both quiet and shared reflection time. These are partially voluntary and partially paid time.

Political Frame: World of Wonder School

World of Wonder School celebrates its fortieth birthday next year. It began in the nineteen-sixties with one determined teacher-leader and a handful of equally determined parents, who were interested in creating a school with a curriculum that was relevant to the times and teachers who were learner-centered. The school continued for over thirty years with the idea that children were natural learners and that strategies of inquiry were the best way to link new learning to previous learning. That original teacher-leader
eventually became its founding principal. The school has had four principals since then (principal, personal communication, November 20, 2006).

When she took the reins seven years ago, the newest principal recognized that the school had begun to lose its unique focus and needed to reclaim its identity in the district. The school reform movement, and the money available to schools through adoption of a school reform package, proved the perfect vehicle. The whole staff voted to approve the Expeditionary Learning model, with only one or two staff members voting against this particular model. The Expeditionary Learning model was a perfect fit for the historical raison d’être for this unique school (principal, personal communication, November 20, 2006).

The school exists within a large urban district that has traditional expectations for the principal, such as budgeting, supervising teachers, working with children who misbehave in class, communicating with families, and setting goals and monitoring progress for the school (principal, personal communication, November 20, 2006). Within the building, the principal flexes in order to meet the needs of the unique organization she leads, insisting, for example, that all staff set personal goals to respect and empower children, while modeling those values in her decision-making. She has two doors to her office and leaves both open most of the time, welcoming anyone who wants or needs to see her, closing them only when a private matter is being discussed. She is conscious of the time demands on teachers and very respectful of their need to use time efficiently in order to accomplish all that they do.
Symbolic Frame: World of Wonder School

Like most elementary schools in a security-conscious world, admission to World of Wonder School is through a locked door with a buzzer and an intercom. Once inside, the visitor is immediately inundated by student work. Every available inch of wall and non-trafficked floor space is covered with artwork, maps, posters, sculptures and written expression, all created by children. The sign on the office door announces, “Crew not Passengers.” The office has a “WOWS Staff Person of the Week” poster prominently displayed on its bulletin board, which invites written contributions from the whole staff. There is almost always a box of treats on the counter for any adult passing to have a small snack. The first impression is that this is a place where children are respected, valued, and working proudly and productively alongside equally respected and valued staff.

The morning begins traditionally: children’s voices on the intercom announce and lead the Pledge of Allegiance. Then the whole school recites the World of Wonder School Model Citizen Crew Pledge, which is printed on posters and posted in the offices and in every class. Most of the children have it memorized. (See Appendix A for text of Pledge.) The children continue on the intercom with daily announcements and then an “Expedition Fact of the Day” from their own grade’s current expedition. The contrast with a traditional school is particularly noticeable when, a few minutes after WOWS has completed their morning announcements, the whole school can hear the next-door school going through a similar ritual, except read and led by an adult, and without a crew pledge or an expedition fact of the day.

In all classrooms, the day commences with a morning meeting four days a week. Each teacher has some flexibility about the content of the morning meeting ritual,
although student-to-student greetings are always part of the ritual. The morning meeting routinely has embedded academic content, providing opportunities for clarification and reinforcement of classroom work. Morning meetings provide children an agenda for the day, a few moments to play with some kind of morning “activity,” often an academic practice, sometimes a read-aloud by children or by the teacher, and sometimes an opportunity for self-expression (such as a “show and tell” time.) Morning meetings last from twenty minutes to forty-five minutes. Children usually run the meeting according to their own class’s format, and make many or all of the choices within the format (for example, which kind of greeting, which activity, calling on each other for contributions.) A casual observer to a morning meeting might feel that there is a lot of “fooling around” time; yet Cazden (2001) affirms the value of such time as enormously important to the developing oral competencies, social relationships, and personal identities of young children. In these classrooms, there is also overt respect shown by the teacher to the nature of children: children do better when they start their day with time to greet each other, to get their brains in motion, to tell something important that needs to be shared, to play a little, and to learn what to expect of their day. Children’s narratives during “Morning News” in England and Australia and “La Ronda” in Spain have been well-described and are highly valued routines in the successful development of literacy (Dinsmore, 1986; Christie, 1990; Poveda, 2001).

On Wednesdays, the whole school convenes in the gym for a school-wide morning meeting, which assumes the format of a radio show. The school wide meeting provides a once-every-seven-week opportunity for a particular grade level to “publish” work in a variety of subject areas. It also provides opportunities for every student to
practice productively leading peers. In one typical school-wide meeting, the fifth graders first led the school in both pledges. The music teacher introduced a song version of the school pledge and the whole school practiced singing it. The student mediators, who had just completed their training, were introduced, applauded, and awarded certificates and t-shirts. One fifth grade class presented a song describing part of their Social Studies expedition about the settlement of New York State. The other fifth grade class demonstrated a live-action factoring model from Math. Two students led the school in creative movement to the music from the opera Carmen (during Hispanic Heritage month.) The meeting concluded with the students walking and dancing out to the song “Hit the Road, Jack.” Children in this school are clearly seen as trusted and competent, and quite capable of learning while having appropriate fun.

The school has no children’s desks, and in many classrooms, no teacher’s desk either, emphasizing the expectation of both the collaborative and democratic nature of the Expeditionary Learning model. In many classrooms, children do not have assigned seats, although teachers always reserve the right to make assignments should someone need that additional help with self-control. The tables in the classrooms, which seat four to six, have plastic caddies in the center filled with supplies: glue sticks, pencils, scissors, markers. Children are expected to use the materials appropriately and replace the supplies in the caddy before they leave the table. Children do not sit in one place for long; there is a lot of planned, purposeful movement around the classroom, honoring the active nature of young children. Teachers use games and fun to move children from one activity or lesson to another. For example, on Valentine’s Day, everyone wearing red or pink went back to their seat from morning meeting first; on another day in another class, a teacher
concluded a lesson by putting on music and requiring students to dance the “Macarena” on their way back to their seats; in another class, children are asked to bark like a dog or meow like a cat or chirp like a bird if they can hear the teacher’s voice, and the unusual noise causes the remaining students to become quiet and look at their teacher, after of course first contributing a bark or meow or chirp, which for third and fourth graders is great fun.

Children in the observed classrooms learn their lessons using a wide variety of interactions during the course of any school day. Sometimes the class works as a large group together, either at tables sitting in chairs or “on the rug,” sitting on the floor on a rectangular rug, sometimes facing towards the teacher and a white board and sometimes at the perimeter all facing towards the center. All of the children have a chair that is their own, but they rarely sit in their chair, although they use the seat sack attached to the back of their chair over and over all day to remove and replace individual supplies such as notebooks. Sometimes children work with a partner. Sometimes the children work in a group based on their interests and sometimes they work in a group based on their skill level. Sometimes the children work at “centers:” with a small group of from three to six, for ten to twenty minutes at a time, rotating from center to center and accomplishing a different task at each one. Sometimes children work silently alone, for example when they are reflecting on their day before they go home.

Transitions from one of these modes to another are usually fun. Children move, based on the color of their clothes or what table they are attached to or where they are sitting at the moment. Sometimes music is on while children are arriving in class in the morning and the teacher turning off the music signals the children that it is time for
morning meeting. The teachers get the children's attention in various other ways. They raise their hand and everyone imitates the raised hand. They announce that everyone who can hear them should make a sizzling sound like lightening, or sing “Day-o!” They count. They start talking loudly above the students and then gradually lower their voices as the children begin to listen.

Description of World of Wonder School as an Exemplary School

WOWS is exemplary for at least two defensible reasons: standardized testing measures and esteem provided by a national reform organization.

WOWS posts higher test scores than other schools both in its district and in similar schools in other districts in New York State (New York State Education Department, 2007). The school's students are not privileged in any demographic way; all students in the district have real access to this school, as a result of a centrally controlled school choice process, and the profile of the school with regard to free and reduced price lunch, and race and ethnicity, mirrors that of the district average. This first reason is common in the literature, in particular in Leinhardt et al. (1986) who studied “exemplary” math teachers relative to their classroom routines as those whose students received high test scores on standardized tests.

Further, WOWS was chosen as a site seminar school, in partnership with a Charlottesville Charter School, by the National Expeditionary Learning Schools organization. Teachers, teacher-leaders and school administrators from states east of the Mississippi converged on Charlottesville for four cold snowy days one February recently to sit in on demonstration classes, participate in debriefing sessions after the demonstration classes, and attend workshops when school was over for the day. All of the
teachers in this study were involved in the site seminar in some manner: conducting workshops or teaching demonstration classes and leading the debriefings. Teachers who offered to teach demonstration classes often found themselves with as many adults in the classroom as children as they conducted a morning meeting or taught an everyday lesson. The school is seen by the national organization, Expeditionary Learning Schools, as a model of what can happen in an urban public school that adopts the ELS model.

Conclusion: Research Context of World of Wonder School

World of Wonder School in the Charlottesville City School District is one of those islands of excellence often described in the literature. WOWS first came to the researcher's attention when she completed an administrative internship in the school. When she approached her doctoral work, WOWS was a familiar location to her. During her doctoral work, she completed three field experiences at WOWS in order to be certain that the school was what it appeared to be on the surface: an exemplary school in a large urban district. It seemed to the researcher that something was different in the atmosphere of the school: in the way that children were spoken to in this school, compared to the ways she has heard children spoken to elsewhere; in the way the school is decorated; in the way that decisions are made at every level.

The school posts high standardized test scores on state assessments compared to other schools in the district, yet the children have the same overt characteristics as children in the rest of the district. The atmosphere at the school can be fairly described as both joyful and businesslike. The school is a model of respect for children and for the nature of children as active natural learners. Teachers, teacher-leaders and administrators from schools all over the country come to WOWS in order to study their practices. The
questions that arise from examining such an example have to do with how such success can be replicated. This study illuminates one aspect of World of Wonder School’s teacher practice which contributes to the school’s success.

Research Participants

Selection of Participants

The teacher-participants were originally interesting because of the grades they teach: third and fourth. Children in these grades are in similar psychological and educational developmental stages. In this researcher’s experience, children in these grades are still emotionally attached and affectionate towards their teachers; they perceive their teachers as experts in how to cross-multiply and what to do when you have a stomachache. Educationally, they have just started the shift from learning to read to reading to learn. If teachers are to influence children in the development of agency in grades three through seven, it is more likely to happen more easily when the children are younger and more impressionable.

At first, four potential participants in the study, both third and both fourth grade teachers, were identified. The first criterion for choosing these participants is that these teachers teach in the Charlottesville City School District, which was accessible for study. More importantly, these teachers’ fourth grade students are unusually successful on New York State standardized tests compared to other fourth grade students in this same district; the fourth grade tests are given mid-year and draw on both the third and fourth grade curricula. The teachers have in common that they are women in their late twenties or early thirties, have been teaching six to eight years, and are from White middle-class rural New York State backgrounds. All have only taught at World of Wonder School full
time, although several have taught as substitutes or in summer school elsewhere. Three are married; one is single; one of the married women has a child of her own, and the others do not. All four teachers have master’s degrees, required in New York State for permanent certification. One is also National Board certified and teaches as an adjunct instructor at a local college; one is a member of a pilot Teacher Leadership Institute, a volunteer two-year commitment to unpaid additional training in urban teaching.

Last year (2006-07), all of the fourth grade students of these teachers passed the New York State Fourth Grade Math test with scores at or above grade level, a feat not achieved in any other elementary school in the district (personal communication, principal, September, 2007). The teachers teach in classrooms of about 24 children apiece. In one third and one fourth grade class, seven to ten children are labeled as having disabilities and require services in addition to the classroom teacher’s usual work; in these two classrooms, a Special Education teacher co-teaches part or all of the day. The Special Education teacher is responsible for delivering services to the children who have a level of learning or emotional disability that allows them to be successful if they are included in a general education class with the targeted support of a Special Educator. The Special Educator rarely addresses or teaches the entire class in the two observed classrooms. Instead, she works with small groups, or circulates during large group work to be sure students have the supports they need. (She also has responsibilities beyond what an observer sees in the classroom.) The four General Educators who participated in the study all act as the lead teachers in their classrooms. The ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic composition of the classes reflects that of the rest of the school and the
district. These four classrooms are the only third and fourth grade classrooms in the school.

All four teachers in the two grades agreed to participate, creating a rich data set of teacher utterances supported by a range of philosophies and background motivations. The composite picture of teacher talk during classroom routine creates a model of the ideal, not a statue of a particular teacher or teachers.

*Relationship of the Teacher-Participants to the Researcher*

At first, the teachers seemed to range somewhere between being very welcoming to being slightly nervous about one more intrusion into their classrooms and mildly concerned about their words being captured by the voice recorder. All of the teachers were somewhat surprised that the researcher was interested in their teaching practice as exemplary, and all asked the researcher, several times, for suggestions about how to improve their teaching. Being a participant in a research study as an exemplar seemed to be new to the teacher-participants; Erickson (1988) reminds ethnographers who work in schools that “much of what … may be commonplace to us as observers and to the participants, is nonetheless extraordinary.” Since providing critiques was not the purpose of the research, and since this would have changed the relationship, suggestions for improvement or even observations were not offered. All four teachers were interested in having copies of the transcripts generated by the data collection, and were provided compact discs with copies of their own classroom and interview recordings.

All teachers and all classrooms have "good" days and "bad" days, and the participants were concerned that the researcher might show up on a "bad" day. The researcher assured them that the recording was at their convenience: if the researcher
arrived and it was not a "good" day, she promised to depart and reschedule. This reassurance seemed to make the teacher-participants more at-ease. In fact, there were four times when the researcher was scheduled to record, and arrived to find that the teacher was not there that day to allow the recording to take place. The researcher simply rescheduled. However, there was never a “bad” day that required a rescheduling.

In addition, the researcher attempted to signal to the teachers that she saw them through the eyes of a proud parent. (One teacher remarked that the researcher was the same age as her mother, and the researcher adopted and reinforced this model by referencing her age with the other teachers.) She reiterated that she was there to observe best practice and was free to ignore anything that was not. She remarked on how excited she was and what good work they did while she was collecting data. Since the researcher does have inside knowledge of the pressures on classroom teachers, and also the love of most elementary teachers for any reason to celebrate, she provided lunch for the teachers for Valentine's Day (teachers often do not have time to make lunch for themselves in the morning, or even to eat lunch) and sweets for St. Patrick's Day. Both of these days occurred during the initial data collection. When the researcher noted a particular idea that the class was learning about, and she knew of a good website, she offered it in an email to the teacher. She tried quite consciously to interrupt the teachers or the class as little as possible, a particularly hated practice by teachers everywhere. She took great pains to slide in and out of the classrooms as quietly as possible, given that she had to hand over a small voice recorder and set up a laptop each time she arrived. She felt she was successful with her subtle entrances and exits when most students did not note her arrival or departure. Although not invisible, she worked hard to refrain from being
disruptive. When students would become distracted by the researcher’s presence, she would usually consciously step away from her helpful teacher’s role that she has always had in classrooms previously, and gently redirect the children to their teacher.

In each classroom, the teacher introduced the researcher differently. In one class, the researcher was invited to present the project to the class so that the students could advise their teacher if she should consent to participate in the project. The researcher was afforded enough time during a morning meeting that she was able to provide definitions of qualitative and quantitative research based on the children’s experiences, and then describe the project and answer questions about the project. In two other classes, the researcher was given a shorter time during morning meeting to describe why she was there, after the teachers had already given their consent. In the fourth class, the teacher described the project to the children, also during morning meeting, when the recorder fell out of her pocket and reminded her that the researcher was there.

In each class, the teacher defined the researcher’s relationship to the students similarly. The role was described as: it was ok to ask questions of the researcher, because she was a "nice lady," and she used to be a teacher, as one participant described her, with a caution that the children still had to get their own work done. The teacher-participants told children it was ok to look at the researcher’s field notes and to make contributions or offer ideas.

When the researcher either spoke to the class to introduce herself, or was introduced by the teacher, the students were assured that the research was about the teacher and not the children, otherwise the researcher would have asked their permission. The children were also assured that the researcher was not doing anything secret and that
they could read her field notes any time they happened to be near her. The children tested
this offer, and delighted at first in reading the field notes and in offering improvement
suggestions for the sketched classroom maps used by the researcher to locate the teacher
in the room as she moved around; by the third taping, they became accustomed to the
researcher's presence and merely said hello, if that.

At the conclusion of the study, the researcher offered to return to the classrooms
to tell the children about the study. One teacher accepted this offer. The researcher was
fortunate to be able to work with the students for about an hour, categorizing their
teachers' utterances, transcribed now onto strips of paper in a large font: not an easy task
for young children, although they were assured at the conclusion of their enthusiastic and
hard work that they had been doing "college work."

Description of Teacher-Participants

After the classroom recording was completed, each of the four teachers was
interviewed using the questions in Appendix D as a guide to the conversation. The
interview questions were derived from Ladson-Billings' (1994) questions asked of the
teachers in her study, and the researcher's own questions concerning the talk she had
recorded and her research interest in learning the teachers' motivations and beliefs. Kvale
(1996) would describe such an interview as a semi-structured conversation, "conducted
according to an interview guide that focuses on certain themes and may include
suggested questions." All of the interviews were conducted by appointment, at the end of
different school days, at the teacher's convenience.

The teachers were asked about their backgrounds, their teaching philosophies,
their management styles, their current class and their goals and purposes in the
classroom. Because the purpose of this section is to surface common themes and not attempt critical analysis of specific phrases said by the teachers as they were interviewed, the interview results are reported anecdotally.

Mrs. Sullivan

Mrs. Olive Sullivan is in her seventh year of teaching at WOLS; she turned down several jobs in the district because she “didn’t like the feel” of the schools. She says she believes in “trying to empower the kids and keep them happy.” She goes on to elaborate that she believes in “really making the kids feel they matter every single day.” She cites her experience on athletic teams and her experiences with excellent coaches as her inspiration for teaching. She notes that the Expeditionary Learning approach of integrating literacy into the content area is effective because “the kids really are able to buy in and learn more and really become experts on whatever they’re learning.” She emphasizes that teachers have to have a “good working relationship” with kids built on “mutual respect.” As a teacher, her job is partly to set expectations and logical consequences, and to model expected behavior relative to “the way we talk to each other and treat other people,” and that she will be ineffective at this if she is not respecting the children. She hopes that the parents think she is fair and have their child’s best interests at heart. She prefers to use “gentle reminders” to try to “cool things off before they blow up into bigger things” and tries to give students the “benefit of the doubt” when they forget to take off their hat or fail to hang up their coat or otherwise get “sidetracked.” Mrs. Sullivan reiterates that one of her goals for morning meeting is to “always make every kid feel important by … the greeting.” She likes to let children know ahead of time what to expect of their day, and how to act if there is something quite different about the events
of the day. She also likes to recap the previous day, whether “great or … horrible” and set goals. At the end of the day, Mrs. Sullivan likes to have her students pack up, and then they review homework expectations and review what kind of day it was.

Mrs. Blauers

Mrs. Cathy Blauers is in her eighth year of teaching at WOWS. She knew this was the school for her when she did her first student teaching assignment there, and delights in telling how she negotiated an unprecedented second student teaching assignment in the same school. Mrs. Blauers references “all these little faces” repeatedly as she discusses her teaching philosophy, and talks about how she wants to make “not just a small difference” in her students’ lives; she wants them to “forever” understand that she loved and respected them and that they can always return to talk with her. Mrs. Blauers finds it is important to make connections to both children and their families, and motivate children so that they can “make their difference.” She says that she is “straight” with her students’ families, and does not “sugar-coat things” if a child is wrong. She also follows through on her promises to maintain close contact with her students’ families throughout the year. She is open to helping families when asked, for example “lending” a child lunch-money when she is quite sure the money will not be returned. Mrs. Blauers talks about the “culture we built in here together” as why her children now challenge themselves. Mrs. Blauers describes growing up “very very very poor” despite both of her parents working two or three jobs. Although she does not want to be the “boss of my classroom,” because she wants the students to “make up all the rules, make all the decisions,” she also does not believe in “coddling” students because coddling is “like setting them up for failure because our world out there is not gonna coddle them.” She
would “prefer to teach them to be self-sufficient and manage their own behavior.” She uses logical, consistent consequences in her management and encourages children to manage themselves, since we often cannot control those around us, but can always control ourselves.

Ms. Carson

Ms. Eleanor Carson is in her ninth year of teaching. Ms. Carson believes that all children can learn at the highest level and that mutual respect is necessary to be an effective teacher. She cites respecting the children “as the people they are, the little people they are and their culture and their needs.” She also talks about her belief that it is her responsibility to assure that a child’s basic needs are met so that they can learn at the highest level, and is pleased with her “sneaky” strategies in getting food to children whose families need food. Ms. Carson prides herself on how only she and the child know that she has fed the student’s family that day. Ms. Carson manages her classroom by “building a classroom culture” that includes “talk it through, let’s work it out, ... let’s have a meeting, let’s discuss it.” She likes to “just facilitate the meeting but let the students be the decision makers” and feels her role is to provide a “calm, safe place” for kids to come to every day. She says that she likes to “empower” her students with as much decision-making as possible, noting that she is still the planner. She says that her students “teach me things every day,” and sees her classroom as a “community of learners, ... a family.” One of her goals is that her children are “always respectful,” and that her students know from her face when she is using humor and when she is calmly making a “more serious request.” Ms. Carson tries to see each child as an individual, with needs and strengths; she tries to build on the strengths and meet the needs. She says that
her commitment to her students is not just for a year, and that she tries to avoid power struggles in her classroom, to be a good listener to her students and a good model for them.

*Mrs. Keenan*

This is also Mrs. Keenan’s ninth year of teaching. Her son is in pre-K this year and will be entering kindergarten next year. Mrs. Keenan says that “above all, … kids just need to know that you care about them and that you respect them and their culture.” She says that “emotions are important,” because in the job she has, “it’s more like a family” because teachers are with students so many hours a day. She says that children need to understand that “we are in this together, there’s a purpose for why we are here,” and that this is a job “based on relationships, and … in order for me to do the best job that I can I need to have the best relationships that I can.” Mrs. Keenan tries to “give the kids as much empowerment” as she can. She says that her classroom management is all about “positive and negative energy, focusing on spreading positive energy around the classroom and making our life better and eliminating the negative.” When students do something negative, they owe the class three to five positives, at least one towards the person they were negative towards. If this does not happen in a reasonable time, as determined by the teacher, the child then has to go sit by a large drawing of Harriet Tubman, and think about how “Harriet” was a leader because she made good choices; they then write a short reflection on what happened and how they could have acted differently. Visiting with Harriet is a rare occurrence, apparently; Mrs. Keenan reports that the child usually begins to do positive things when she herself simply looks at “Harriet.”
Summary of Teacher Participant Descriptions

All four of the teachers in this study are White, although that was not a requirement of the research design; they are also middle-class because of their teachers’ salaries. (The reader may recall that the children in their classrooms are mostly Black, and mostly qualify for free and reduced price lunches using the federal guidelines, although there are exceptions to both.) Three of the teachers grew up in rural communities in New York State; one grew up in a suburban community and then moved with her family to a rural community for high school. Interestingly, a recent compilation of essays about rural nurses speaks to the ethos of caring imbued in those who grow up in rural communities (Collins, 2003). The four teachers report that their goal is to teach from within relationship, that their job is to build a classroom culture that empowers children while retaining their own power to do what they are required to do and know how to do, that they want to facilitate learning for children by consistently offering choices inside a community of learners who have respect for each other and for each other’s culture. None of these teachers sees her role as finite in the lives of the children in her care, but instead believes that her teaching will make a difference, and that her students can achieve at the highest levels.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Instruments Used in Data Collection

“Qualitative design requires the researcher to become the research instrument. This means that the researcher must have the ability to observe behavior and must sharpen the skills necessary for observation and face to face interview” (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002).
The researcher practiced observing and recording teacher talk specifically during classroom routines. The researcher first tried taking careful notes on what teachers said, using a stenographer’s notebook and writing only on one side of each page, and later used the other side of each page for comments and analysis. Subsequent discussion of notes with teachers confirmed that the notes were accurate to the best of the teachers’ recollection. These discussions also helped to develop focus questions for future interviews. The researcher realized quickly that it is not possible to keep pace with a teacher talking, no matter how fast one writes. It is also impossible to confirm what was really said, if the teacher does not have perfect recall.

Next, a small hand-held voice recorder was tried. The use of this recorder allowed the observer to take notes during the observation rather than trying to hear and write every word the teacher said. The study made use of this recorder, as described next.

A small hand-held or pocket-located voice recorder was used to record teachers’ voices during the study. The one used was a Sony IC Recorder, Model #ICD-P320. It is usually used as a personal office voice recorder, and has the advantage that it records most clearly the voice closest to it, and only faintly the responding voices. This feature helped to protect the anonymity of the children in the classrooms of the study. When a teacher carries it in her hand or locates it in a pocket, in a shirt or slacks, it records the teacher’s voice quite clearly.

The recordings of classroom teachers’ voices were transferred to a computer. The recording and transcription was then imported into software that aided analysis of the transcription. The software Transana © was used for both transcription and initial analysis.
The transcriptions were printed and multi-color highlighters used to mark developing themes. As the analysis proceeded, initial themes of interest were reviewed and detail describing these themes began to emerge. Additional themes surfaced. The teachers were then interviewed with questions both derived from Ladson-Billings (1990) and with questions developed specific to this study (see Appendix D for questions). After the interviews, which were recorded and transcribed, the researcher did an initial member check concerning preliminary findings. This consisted of showing excerpts from the transcriptions to the teacher-participants and requesting feedback on initial analysis. Then, an early draft of this document was emailed to all four teachers. One of the teacher-participants read that initial draft and provided feedback. The full document was emailed to all participants prior to the defense, with the plan to consider editing or revising the conclusions if any of the teacher-participants had feedback that those conclusions were in error. The teacher-participants did not offer any additional feedback at this point in the study.

Data Collection

Approvals and consents

After approval of the proposal by her committee in November of 2007, the researcher next sought the approval of the St. John Fisher College Institutional Review Board. An exempt review was completed and the project approved in December 2007. The project then received the approval of the Charlottesville City School District’s superintendent, after review by the CCSD’s Research, Evaluation and Testing Department, that included approval obtained from the principal of World of Wonder School, in January, 2008. The prospective teacher-participants were informed by email
during this process of the progress of the project, and provided their consent individually, in writing, after meetings between the teacher-participants and the researcher in late January, 2008.

Immersion into the proposed research setting is important to ethnography in order for the researcher to become as invisible as possible to the participants (Creswell, 2007). Immersion into this setting began five years ago, when the researcher served an administrative internship during one semester of her Educational Administration program. During that internship, the researcher became a familiar figure in the building while accomplishing two projects. One was to analyze the results of the previous year’s fifth grade New York State required Social Studies test in order to give the teachers information about what was working and what needed work. The other project was to analyze a survey of parents from the previous year, and present those results to the faculty in a faculty meeting, in addition to a short workshop provided by the researcher about working with parents who are harder to reach as a result of differences in formal educational levels achieved by the parents and the teachers. More recently, the researcher began to build relationships with prospective teacher participants during the first two field experiences. These were the teachers asked to participate.

Data Collection Process

Data were collected during the school year on several ordinary school days, beginning in February, 2008 and ending in March, 2008. The days were "ordinary" in that there were no special events planned for the times that the researcher was present, and no imminent standardized tests looming, which would have created a more stressful environment for both students and teachers. The researcher prepared a short introduction
to students about why she was there. During the field experiences, each teacher had a different way of using the researcher’s presence to further classroom goals. This occurred again during data collection. Two teachers invited the researcher to explain why she was there during "morning meeting," a daily classroom gathering. One teacher used the researcher’s presence as a teaching opportunity for her students, and permitted the researcher to present her project to the class so they in turn could advise their teacher about whether or not she should consent to the study. During the presentation, the researcher built on the students’ current unit of Science study in order to introduce the ideas of quantitative and qualitative study. The fourth teacher told the children herself, briefly, why the researcher was there, when the recorder fell out of her pocket during morning meeting, after she had forgotten to address the issue of the visitor during morning meeting. Again, the researcher was in the third and fourth grade classrooms the previous school year during field experiences, and so was quite familiar to this year’s fourth graders, in particular, and vaguely familiar to the third graders.

The researcher explained to each teacher how the recorder works and tested it to be sure it was working properly. The researcher observed in the classroom during the taping and took field notes of events correlated with time, an activity often observed closely by the students in the class, who sometimes came over to read the notes on the laptop computer and offer suggestions. When an event occurred in the classroom that might embarrass a child to read in print, for example when a child was scolded and cried a little, the researcher scrolled the field notes screen onto a clean screen so that no one walking by could casually read what she had written. She later removed these large white spaces from her notes before printing them. The researcher also created sketches of the
classrooms, in order to reference teacher locations in the field notes. The researcher added to the field notes after the visit, in order to provide "thicker" description of the experience. Geertz (1973) credits Ryle, who wrote a philosophy of the mind, with discriminating between "thin" and "thick" description: the former, providing surface information; the latter, providing enough clearly described context that the reader can draw his or her own inferences. Geertz deepened his definition: "thick" description takes into account multiple perspectives, multiple frameworks that might inform the actions to be studied. Geertz wisely cautions humility in the anthropologist: all interpretation is fiction, filtered through the researcher, and the reader must consider the writer in order to gain a deep understanding of the culture under study. This consideration is aided by the researcher's disclosure of positionality and known subjectivities (Peshkin, 1988).

After the classroom visits, the researcher conducted an interview with the teacher, which helped to shed light on lingo and shared classroom experiences that lend themselves to short-hand expressions that do not have meaning outside that particular class. This interview also served to provide background about the teachers' conscious intentions and goals for students, along with the teachers' educational and personal backgrounds. The interview was taped and transcribed in order to be available during the researcher's analysis. Questions for the interview were developed from Ladson-Billings' (1993) questions of her exemplary teachers, and from the researcher's consideration of the classroom recordings, in order to learn about the teachers' backgrounds and beliefs that might be relevant to this study. After each interview, the researcher shared some of the early transcription of the classroom recordings of that particular teacher, and early interpretation, as an initial member check.
System Used to Collect Data

The researcher obtained daily schedules for each classroom. The day is divided into three to five sections, which can be approximately described as: Arrival and morning meeting, Language Arts Workshop, Mid-day (transitions to special subjects in other locations, such as Art, Music, Shop, Physical Education, Spanish, and/or lunch), Early afternoon (Math workshop and/or Expeditions), Late afternoon and Departure. The researcher prepared a chart, as shown.

Figure 3.4 Recording planning chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of Day</th>
<th>Mrs. Blauers</th>
<th>Ms. Carson</th>
<th>Mrs. Keenan</th>
<th>Mrs. Sullivan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrival and morning meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Arts workshop;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transition to special subjects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-day transitions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(to lunch and from special subjects)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early afternoon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Math and/or Expeditions)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late afternoon and departure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recording time was scheduled in each block on the chart for each teacher. In order to obtain the broadest sampling of teacher talk, no teacher was recorded straight through any day. This practice also helped to minimize the stress on the teacher associated with being recorded.

The nature of qualitative research is that one gathers data until one starts to see the data repeat. Charmaz, writing in Denzin and Lincoln (2005), describes this as “data saturation” (p. 527) while simultaneously critiquing the concept of saturation as absurd,
given the complexity of any phenomenon worth studying. Christian (2000) and Denzin (1989), also in Denzin and Lincoln (2005), suggest a criterion of "interpretive sufficiency," (p. 528) a criterion leaving the decision about when to stop collecting data to the judgment of the researcher, while warning the researcher that "data saturation" (p. 527) is no excuse for inadequate data collection. Since this study was concerned with ordinary, routine teacher talk, some data began to repeat rather quickly, often within the same classroom visit. Data collection continued until the researcher perceived there was nothing new that was occurring. There was also duplication of data across teacher-participants within the first two visits. The decision was made to cease data collection when the first level of analysis, for descriptive themes and subthemes, started to yield multiple examples across both time and teacher-participants. As a result, the amount of time spent collecting data was modest, amounting to about a classroom day per participant. In order to assure that the data was as ordinary as possible, the data was gathered over two months, February and March, 2008, in visits of an hour to an hour and a half per visit. This data gathering practice helped to eliminate data that might be unusual because of a highly stressed or otherwise unique situation.

The process under study was a static, established process and not an emergent process. All of the teacher-participants have been teaching, and teaching at this school, for at least six years, and have established patterns of communication with their students that work well for them. The teacher talk was recorded in the middle of a school year. This "established" quality of the process of interest further justified data collection over a limited time.
Transcription

The transcription was accomplished with the help of inexpensive software available from Dr. David Woods and the University of Wisconsin, Transana ©. The software allows one to stop, start, and “rewind” a recording with a Control/letter code, while typing the transcription. Jeffersonian notation was used in the transcription, as described in Appendix E.

Children’s utterances were not transcribed, because the focus of this study is on the teachers’ words. When children speak, the transcription shows the notation “child(ren) speaking.” Any words in the transcription indicating a sound other than the teacher talking is indicated with italics, for example, “laughs“ or child(ren) speaking.” The teacher talk was transcribed on the breath unit, so each new line indicates that the teacher apparently took a breath after the last word on the previous line. Gee (2005) reminds that the way an analyst breaks up text into lines affects the interpretation of the text. In this case, the breath unit was chosen because it makes the text read closer to what it actually sounded like, given the limitations of the researcher’s ability to comprehend accurately what the teachers have actually said.

The transcription includes intonation that does not follow expected convention, such as rising inflection when the teacher is making a statement and not asking a question, or falling inflection when the teacher is asking a question and not making a statement. Talk that is loudly directed to the entire class is in all uppercase letters. The transcribed words that are presented in the data section are presented “in vivo,” without being “cleaned up” for grammar or other errors, including vocalizations such as “mnmnm” and “uh,” or elongated sounds that the teacher used to emphasize a point or to
think about what she was going to say next. Appendix E provides the transcription
conventions used.

As Atkinson and Heritage point out, in Denzin and Lincoln (2003), the
preparation of transcripts is a research activity (p. 356), and part of the process of
analysis, which then proceeds with such tools as critical discourse analysis.

*Critical Discourse Analysis*

The purpose for using a tool such as critical discourse analysis is to “see through
appearances to an underlying reality” (Silverman writing in Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p.
342.) This researcher used the tools of critical discourse analysis such as used in Johnston
study of transcripts for themes, followed by identification of key passages that illustrate
the themes. Teacher interviews were used to triangulate the data by connecting teacher
talk to teacher’s intentions for the talk.

A review of the method suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) proved helpful:
that coding should proceed from descriptive to inferential to pattern codes. This process
was useful in sorting through the mass of data. Gee’s questions concerning the building
blocks of language (2005) were used to organize the shorter passages of teacher talk. Five
overlapping descriptive themes appeared: teachers acting in loco parentis, teachers
building relationships with children, teachers reinforcing or establishing classroom
routines, teachers building agency in children (as expected), and teachers establishing or
maintaining an ideal culture of the classroom. At the inferential level, longer passages of
teacher talk were analyzed using Mercer’s framework to discover if teachers were
teaching during classroom routine, and if so, what they were teaching. Finally, a deeper
level of analysis connected the teacher talk to the situations of interest, including shared authority (Oyler, 1993), agency and power, and race, class and the culture of power (Delpit, 1988).

**Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

The voice recorder does not distinguish between a voice addressing children and a voice addressing another adult. One aspect of classroom routines, especially as children enter in the morning and as they get ready to leave in the afternoon, is that there are many interruptions by adults, on the phone, in person, and over the intercom. Everything that the participant says was recorded and transcribed.

The researcher expected to exclude teacher-participant-to-adult talk from analysis. The exception would be talk that can clearly be overheard by students, as that may be significant to the culture of that particular classroom. Children can be aware of conversation that is not directed to them and may be affected by it. Early in the process, the researcher recognized that there may be a need to describe and include this participant to adult talk, or to further narrow the study to exclude adult-directed talk. There was one phone conversation recorded during the study, of a teacher speaking to the principal about a bullying incident that occurred on the bus; the teacher moved into the hallway while she engaged in the conversation and there were no children in the hallway with her during the conversation, not even the child who was the subject of the conversation; her location was far enough removed from the classroom and the bustle of morning preparations that it is doubtful any child heard anything she said. The conversation was transcribed, in order to confirm the lack of student interruption or interaction, but was not further used in the analysis. This was the only example of participant-to-adult talk that
could have been considered for exclusion, and it was not thematically relevant to the research questions.

Because the focus of the study is ordinary communication, the researcher was prepared to make a quick decision if an out-of-the-ordinary situation develops while doing fieldwork. For example, if a child came into class distraught over some family news, it could be more difficult for the child to have a stranger there recording, no matter how well-immersed the stranger has tried to be. There is surely always another day of ordinariness ahead, at which time the researcher can return and resume the study. This actually did not happen during the course of this study.

*General Observations*

When reading transcription of teachers talking, it is obvious that teachers do not speak in grammatically correct complete sentences during the routine of the school day. This is true of many examples of spoken language that appear in the references cited in the literature review. Spoken language has less strict rules, as it is being constructed in the moment with no opportunity to revise or edit, and with the capable assistance of context and body language to create meaning. The reader will notice incomplete sentences, disagreement between subject and verb, and other grammatical errors.

The teachers in this study do not use sarcasm or yelling when speaking to students, during any time the researcher was visiting in the classrooms, for field experiences or for the data collection. The teachers' tones of voice were clear of the "edge" or tone that usually implies sarcasm. When teachers felt the need to emphasize a point, they would occasionally raise their voices, as indicated by all capital letters in the transcription, but the raised volume did not approach a level that a child would call
"yelling." The researcher acknowledges that observing behavior changes the behavior, often in subtle ways, and there is no way to know what goes on when the behavior is not being observed. It should also be noted that at no time did a child say something that would imply the teachers' behavior was different with the researcher present, and in this researcher's experience, children delight in exposing hypocrisy in adults.

The teachers in this study rarely repeat what a student has said in answer to a teacher's question, or as a contribution to a class discussion. The underlying assumption of the teachers seems to be that third and fourth graders can speak loudly enough for their classmates to hear them, and if someone can not be heard, then third and fourth graders are capable of asking each other to speak more loudly. Usually, when children are speaking to the whole class, they are close to each other, sitting on the classroom community rectangular rugs, for example, so practically speaking, the children do not have to project their young voices very far. These practices are a part of the classroom culture that builds agency in students, who have an opportunity to demonstrate competence every time they speak.

Conclusion

In this chapter, an ethnographic methodology was described, to be used to answer a particular central research question and sub-questions relating to the topic of intermediate elementary teacher talk in an exemplary urban school. The researcher enlisted teacher-participants and collected data in an exemplary school in the urban Charlottesville City School District. The data were transcribed, with as little interpretation as the researcher could achieve. The researcher provided some general observations from the data about what was and what was not heard in these classrooms. Analysis used the
tools of critical discourse and initial situations of interest, which included the concepts of
agency, shared authority, race and class and the culture of power, in the hope of
providing a rich description of teacher talk during classroom routines in an exemplary
urban school.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS WITH REGARD TO TEACHERS TEACHING DURING CLASSROOM ROUTINES

The purpose of this study is to describe the nature of elementary teacher talk in an exemplary urban school during classroom routine. In this chapter, the findings with regard to teachers teaching will be presented.

First, an excerpt of each teacher’s talking is contextualized and presented. Then, Mercer’s framework, describing how teacher talk causes learning to happen in students, will be used to consider these four near-monologue excerpts of teachers talking during classroom routines in an exemplary school. Next, the issue of what the teachers are teaching is considered. Finally, each passage is more deeply reviewed in order to find what might be significant in the otherwise ordinary passage of teacher talk.

Teachers Teaching: The First Set of Sub-questions

In this chapter, relatively long passages of teacher talk, which are almost monologues, are presented. This was the only criterion for selecting each passage. Each passage has only a few turns taken by the students. Teachers would usually call passages such as this “direct instruction;” this is the “telling” part of teaching. Each passage is introduced so the reader may contextualize these few moments of talk. These longer passages were chosen so that the first set of research sub questions could be adequately addressed. In order to determine if the teachers teach during these often-ignored times, Mercer’s (1995) framework is used after the passages in order to analyze the teacher talk. The analysis moves from Mercer’s framework, about how teacher talk induces the learner
into the teacher's expertise, into conclusions about the possible significance of what is happening during classroom routine. Mercer's (1995) framework is then used to organize analysis of these four extended sections of transcription. Finally, critical discourse analysis is offered to try to surface the deeper level of the underlying meanings of the teachers' talk.

The passages are presented in their entirety, in block quotation format, indented from the remainder of the text. Each line of teacher talk is preceded by its line number from the original transcript. The researcher transcribed as closely as possible on the breath unit; the transcription is not "cleaned up" of ums and elongated letters and repeated sounds, so that the reader has the best chance of really "hearing" the teachers talking. Every time a child spoke or children spoke, the notation is the same, "child(ren) speaking." If words are in all capital letters, the teacher was talking loudly for those words.

For reference, the first set of sub questions are: Are teachers teaching during classroom routines? If so, what are they teaching? What do their words really mean?

First Passage: Today's Agenda

The class is almost concluding the daily morning meeting on Valentine's Day. Students have just finished a game of "Sparkle," a vocabulary and spelling game, and there are two more aspects of morning meeting left. The first is the agenda for the day, and the second is an opportunity for children who have brought something interesting to class, to show the object to their classmates and explain the object and take questions about it. This "show and tell" can also be a performance; on other visits, the researcher sometimes observed children doing a dance for their classmates during this time. Today,
one child has brought a geode and another has a stuffed teddy bear received from a baby sister as a Valentine's Day gift.

886 Yayyyyy (clapping)

887 Ok, unfortunately, we don't have time for a second game

888 but we do have a couple of things left for morning meeting so if we could get back down on our bottoms

889 I will get you a ticket in a moment.

890 Congratulations Jeremiah.

891 (child(ren) speaking)

892 Umm, I wanna go over our schedule.

893 Today is Thursday

894 and the morning,

895 I had a note on the center board

896 but some people are very observant and noticed that those are the same centers as yesterday and we are not doing them today

897 and I didn't take them down

898 so now instead of ( )

899 instead we're gonna play Science Jeopardy

900 and then probably take the vocab test this morning

901 (child(ren) speaking)

902 (laughs) I know, you're on fire!

903 So

904 we're gonna do that this morning and then go to the music
Because it's a Thursday and we have music before lunch

So we'll pick you up for lunch

or pick you up from music take you to lunch

so let you know who made the lunch bunch

then

our afternoons on Thursdays are really long if you remember

so we'll come back we'll do the ( ) read-aloud

ummm Ms. Matthew'll come in to work on some math

then

at 1:30 when she leaves we'll have a little bit more than an hour to do the book ( ) gallery walk?

if you were here on Tuesday?

you were here when we did the book ( )

we're gonna do the same thing but with different problems

and Mrs. Vincent and I were very pleased with the way it went

but we think you learned a lot

and this time

instead of using papers from our class

we're gonna get to look at how the kids in Ms. Carson's class are doing

(child(ren) speaking)

Once again, there's no names on the papers

but it's kinda nice to see cause Ms. Carson is a different teacher than I am and maybe she taught some strategies
926 that I haven't taught you that you could really learn from.

927 So

928 at about 2:45,

929 we'll stop the gallery walk

930 and we're going to do our Valentine's Day celebration then

931 (child(ren) speaking)

932 So if you brought in treats

933 I'm gonna ask you to not pass them out at lunch

934 Thank you for not trying to pass them out this morning and we'll do it at the end of the day

935 right before extended day then we'll go upstairs

936 if you go for for extended day

937 if not that's when we say good-bye.

938 (child(ren) speaking)

939 Any questions about our schedule today?

940 I guess that's a no.

941 So Jennifer has something that she wanted to share and so does Carroll, that they've asked me, and then we'll get on with our day. (Sullivan, 2/14)

At the beginning of this passage, the teacher has stepped back into the circle of students after the vocabulary game “Sparkle” is finished (line 886). She cheers for and congratulates the winner (lines 886 and 890). Then she explains a conflicting message that she inadvertently sent to the class (line 896). The “centers” board usually has a list of which “centers” are set for today. Today, she forgot to erase the centers board and write
today's centers on it; instead there are not going to be any centers today. (Note: "Centers" are when the children are working in groups at various stations around the classroom, each group on a different task; the groups rotate through four or five tasks. All four teachers use "centers" during content instruction.) She compliments the children who were "observant" and caught her mistake, defining the word "observant" without announcing that she is doing so (line 896).

Mrs. Sullivan then begins to describe the events for the day (line 899). A child interrupts her to brag a little and she laughs and agrees that the child is "on fire" today (line 902) without chastising the child for interrupting.

As Mrs. Sullivan tells the story of the day, she switches back and forth between the first person and the third person. "We" have music before lunch (line 905), even though she does not and the children do, and "we'll" pick you up for lunch (line 906), now meaning herself and her co-teacher. She means here that she and her co-teacher will go to the music classroom and walk with the children as a group to the cafeteria, where they will either buy and eat lunch, or eat a lunch brought from home. She moves to second person to say that children will be taken to and picked up from lunch (line 907), and will be told who is in "lunch bunch," the group of children who have earned the privilege that day of eating lunch in the classroom. Teachers often talk about having "leverage" with children. Not all of school is fun for children, and when something is not fun, children will often do a task in order to gain a privilege. The teacher explains in the interview that she used to offer "lunch bunch" to children who did homework, and then found that if she added on the idea that children had to do well with their school work in
the morning, they all had an easier morning. Giving children this incentive means that the teacher does not get a break at lunchtime.

The teacher then moves back to first person plural: “our” afternoon and “we’re” doing a read-aloud (lines 910-911). She explains what will happen during the “gallery walk,” an event for which exemplary student work is posted and the students walk around and discuss the examples. The listener gets a hint that the gallery walk the other day did not go really well the entire time when the teacher says “Mrs. Vincent and I were very pleased with the way it went but we think you learned a lot” (lines 918-919). If she were truly pleased, why is she saying “but” which mitigates “pleased?” This statement serves as a veiled caution that the teacher hopes the children learn a lot today during the gallery walk today, and also that she hopes that whatever small part of the previous experience went poorly, does not happen today.

During the gallery walk description, Mrs. Sullivan humbly suggests that the children might learn additional strategies that the other fourth grade teacher knows how to teach and that she does not, from studying the work of the children in the other class (line 925-926). Mrs. Sullivan clearly makes a strong connection herself, and overtly for her students, between teaching and the results of teaching as shown in student work.

Mrs. Sullivan then describes the end of day Valentine’s event, thanking the children for their cooperation in waiting to pass out treats, which will be rewarded with this end of day celebration (lines 933-934). She is clear that she decided when the celebration would occur, and that the children should save any treats they brought until the end of day celebration.
Mrs. Sullivan segues into the "show and tell" part of morning meeting, making the point that the two presenters have told her ahead of time that they want to present today. She positions herself as the arbiter of who is permitted to "show and tell."

The teacher in this passage is an expert in the plan for the day, as one would expect of the person who plans the school day. The teacher acknowledges a mistake she made in her communication, and the possibility that the children might learn something different from the other teacher. She overtly connects teaching to student work, to results. She is clear that she directs the events of the day, but also offers explanations along the way about why she made the decisions she did. This practice shows respect for the children as participants in the day's events and as active thinkers about how and why their day's events developed.

Second Passage: From Morning Meeting to a Lesson

Teachers call these moments "transitions," and most administrators observe new teachers for their skill in helping children to make transitions. This teacher is interesting in that she does not talk as much as the other three teachers; her transcriptions for the same period of time are half or even a third as long as the other teachers'. Mrs. Keenan told the researcher, after a first review of this work, that she does this deliberately: that the research she has read says that children do not learn as much when teachers are talking, but learn much more when the children are talking or when the children are manipulating or processing information. She is also the only one of the four teacher-participants who is a mother herself; her child is entering kindergarten next year. Interestingly, it was difficult to find a passage of just monologue for this teacher. In addition, although this classroom is the quietest of the four, approaching silence rather
than quiet during a serious work time, it was also so noisy during one time of "centers" that most of the teacher's voice could not be heard on the recorder in her pocket and the transcribing had to be abandoned. This was the only time the voice recorder in a teacher's pocket was "drowned out" by the children's talking and activity, in this case, by a Science activity involving a lot of pouring water.

563 I I think we are used to calling adults in this building by Miss or Mrs. or Mr.
564 ( )
565 That's right. Cause her first name is really Karen. Her last name is Mrs. Sangmeister.
566 Sangmeister ( )
567 (child(ren) speaking)
568 Uuuummm I have a question.
569 Ok we are going to be moving into Readers' Workshop,
570 uuumm,
571 Justin, since you're ( )the best ( ) possible for today, I want you to think about of your buddy( )who is the best person to work with today?
572 (child(ren) speaking)
573 Go home.
574 umm, Connor, and Stephanie, was that who was reading with you this morning?
575 (child(ren) speaking)
576 ( ) Thank you.
577 umm started reading a book about tornadoes today, aaand
it worked out nice because I have an article that my model will be about, about finding out if you've been listening to the news lately, um, you may have heard about tornadoes that have gone through our country, or up, a big one.

To me, it's so exciting that when teachers are what?

Charles do you know?

(child ren) speaking

Ok, let someone double-check.

(child ren) speaking

Three, Ok so like if you could pair up with buddy three, have a seat where you can see the overhead, please.

(child ren) speaking

Jesse, Abbey,

(child ren) speaking

to that cable, so if you could pick it up and come give it to me, that would be great.

(child ren) speaking

Umm, Tyquan, instead of sitting next, could you please put it up there?

(child ren) speaking

Ok, now you're fighting ( ) er and Spencer, David, who's your buddy?

Jenn, good job, thank you!

Nellie, who's your partner?
598 ( )

599 Go pick one, you need to find another spot.

600 (child(ren) speaking)

601 ( )

602 Oh ok

603 WHY IT TAKES THIS TIME TO FIND AND BE WITH A PARTNER
AND BE ON THE ( ) WITH ( )

604 (child(ren) speaking)

605 I DON'T NEED AN EXPLANATION. I NEED YOU IN A SEAT QUIET
AND READY TO GO.

606 Like I see Keith showing me he is.

607 (child(ren) speaking)

608 Jacques and Tyquan, are you in a seat, ready to go?

609 I just got this off the computer today, so this article came ooout, I think it was

610 yesterday,

611 umm so we'll read it and

612 start readinggg from the beginning

613 to yourself,

614 I won't give you that much to look at right now. (Keenan, 2/8)

When this passage begins, the teacher has just finished re-introducing the
researcher to the class. One child remembered that the researcher’s name is “Miss Karen”
(line 564), which is surprising to both the researcher and the teacher, since it had been
over a month since the researcher had been in the classroom. Also, the researcher did not
recall being introduced by her full name. In many daycares and nursery schools and churches, the researcher has noticed that children respectfully and affectionately call grown-ups by their title and first name, and this child used that construction. However, in schools, children usually call adults by a formal title plus surname. The teacher quickly corrected the child, referencing “this building” and it’s norms in redirecting the form of address to the researcher. The teacher then accepted the child’s initiation that the researcher’s name should be written on the white board that is in the front of the classroom, so the children could remember the more appropriate version of her name for the school setting. (The researcher did not correct the teacher in the use of her title, which is “Ms.” and not “Mrs.” She felt she had disrupted the flow of the classroom work, which was not her intention, and also felt uncomfortable correcting the teacher in front of her students, prolonging the length of time that the researcher had everyone’s attention.)

The teacher now moves into the transition, telling the children what they are going to do next, i.e. “Readers’ Workshop” (line 569). She introduces a “model,” a copy of a newspaper article, that has been copied to a transparency so it can be projected by an overhead projector. The class has been studying weather, and there had been a lot of tornadoes in the middle of the United States in the last few days. The newspaper article is about these tornadoes. A child seems to have a situation and she intervenes with a suggestion that another child could be of assistance by “double-checking” (line 583) building agency in both children with this brief suggestion.

The teacher then answers a question from the children about which “buddy” to choose (“buddy three” line 585), suggesting a system of having different buddies, or work partners, on different days or for different tasks, and directs the students to sit
where they can see the screen towards which the overhead projector is aimed. The children then all begin to move from the rug where morning meeting has been conducted to chairs at tables.

As the children start to move, the teacher has to become more involved in the navigation of several children to their new location. Two children “fight” and the teacher stops it immediately (line 594). She asks a child for help in arranging the electrical cable for the overhead projector so no one will trip over it (line 590). The children move around trying to locate their partner and find a place to sit together. This seems to take longer than the teacher wants, and she asks herself a rhetorical question (line 603), but in a louder voice so that the children can hear her musing, as a way to move the children a little more quickly through the transition. When a child tries to answer the question, she stops him and tells the child that she really does not need an explanation; she needs the children to be sitting in their seats, not talking (“quiet”) and ready to walk on this model (line 605). She turns the overhead projector on and covers up most of the article (line 614). During the interview, Mrs. Keenan told the researcher that she realized as she put the article on the overhead that it was more difficult than her lower readers could read, and she started to modify her planned lesson immediately.

The teacher here is expert on the order of events for the day. She is also clearly the instructional leader, having chosen the lesson, the order for events in the lesson, and how the lesson will be delivered and then processed by the students. She is expert in assuring children’s safety with regard to the cord, and feeling of security when they get a little fussy, and acts quickly and effectively to stop a budding conflict. The teacher also is expert on manners in school.
Third Passage: Group Debriefing After a Lesson on Main Idea

In this passage, the teacher is conducting a group lesson with the children seated on the rectangular rug in a nook in the classroom. The children have been working in groups finding details to support a group-decided main idea, and have been encouraged to talk about their ideas with the children in their group. The final task of each group was to discuss their findings with another group. The whole class is now discussing the assignment together, and the first detail has been discussed. The teacher has asked for a contribution to the second idea, and then she says:

306 Tell me if I should hear this while somebody's talking. (*rattles paper*)
307 (*child(ren) speaking*)
308 Ok, just wondering.
309 Ok, so I have three arguments that say, yes, that is a thundercloud.
310 People, somebody who didn't choose it.
311 Do you wanna explain why you said No you don't think that is?
312 (*child(ren) speaking*)
313 Ok, so you're not that, you guys didn't feel that that meant it was created.
314 Now, ( )'s group, I see them going like that, giving the connection sign, they were,
315 they had a big long discussion about whether they wanted to keep that in there or
316 whether they
317 wanted to get rid of it
318 and they chose to get rid of it also.
And I know that one reason was they said

It's not even on these two pages in the book

the two pages that talked about the cloud formation Right, girls?

Is that what you

that's what you're ( ) right?

Ok, so

People who didn't choose it, do you think that the people who did choose it as a detail have a good point?

You can you see what they're thinking?

(child(ren) speaking)

And people who did choose it,

Can you can you hear what the other people thought and said oh, yeah, I can see why they didn't pick it?

(child(ren) speaking)

Do we all have to agree?

(child(ren) speaking)

Do we all have a good argument about how that one fit our main idea or didn't?

(child(ren) speaking)

Then that's all that matters.

(child(ren) speaking)

It's not wrong or right.
339 *(child(ren) speaking)*

340 Right! I

341 honestly I don't know

342 I probably would have picked it

343 But I think that's a really great thought for the people who didn't pick it.

344 Instead of being dramatic and holding up your hand in front of your eyes,

345 what's a

346 a less dramatic decision you can make?

347 *(child(ren) speaking)*

348 So switch over.

349 If the sun's in your eyes, then just move out of the sun.

350 No big deal.

351 Although having the sun on your skin for seven seconds can improve your mood.

352 So if you're in a bad mood ever, go stick your hand in the sun for seven seconds.

353 But I don't think anybody's in a bad mood today We're having such a great day.

354 So it doesn't matter if you have a hundred details

355 As long as you can prove why they go with your main idea

356 and you have a good point and you're well-thought-out

357 That's all that matters.

358 Warm air near the earth is rising into clouds.
359 (child(ren) speaking)

360 Ennh? Abbey, I'm gonna ask you to move off the rug

361 And get yourself together with your shoelaces?

362 And I'm gonna ask that that's the last time I have to talk to you about that?

363 Ok. (Blauers, 3/17)

In addition to conducting the class's discussion, this teacher is teaching the children how to act when they are part of a group discussion. One does not rattle paper (line 306), for example, act dramatic (lines 344-349), or play with one's shoelaces to the point of distraction from the work of the discussion (lines 360-362). The child who is acting dramatic about the sun in her eyes is directed to solve the problem simply by moving to another spot (line 348). Mrs. Blauers then digresses briefly to talk about how sunlight can alter mood. Charlottesville is said to be the second most cloudy city in the country, having more cloudy days than any other major metropolitan area in the United States but one. When this passage was recorded, it was March in Charlottesville, and sun had been fairly scarce for most of the winter; a child who is accustomed to a favorite spot on the rug, where the class sits for community activities, would be surprised to find sun in her eyes. In addition, playing with shoelaces in the middle of the day, when a child has already been asked to "get herself together" around the laces issue, means removal from "the rug" representing the community and the community's work, but only for the time it takes to get the problem resolved.

The teacher decided to teach the children that, in this case, there might be more than one right answer to the question that is being discussed (lines 325-332). She then processes this idea a bit, announcing that everyone had a "good argument," and that
is all that matters. This clearly is not decisive for the children, who want to know what their local expert thinks; they get the teacher to admit which choice she would have made (line 342). The teacher digresses for the comments about sunshine (lines 351-353) and returns from her digression about the sunshine to reiterate that having a “good point” and being “well-thought-out” were all that mattered when answering this question, not having a particular answer (line 356). Although this passage might read as scattered, to children accustomed to the rapid-fire changes of topic in children’s shows such as Sesame Street, this kind of digression is perfectly normal. The reader might recall that all of the teachers in this study are in their late twenties and early thirties, and so were also raised on Sesame Street and 30-second commercials interrupting a television show’s storyline.

The teacher in this passage is an expert in appropriate group participation behavior, and how to answer certain kinds of reading comprehension questions. She has expertise in wide-ranging subject matter, such as her comment about the sunshine; her talk with her class is filled with these “sidebars” in other passages as well. During this passage, the teacher is inducting children into an uncertain world in which not all questions have right or wrong answers, even though the children try to resist this knowledge.

Fourth Passage: Conclusion of a Lesson about Handling Problems Productively

In this section, Ms. Carson has just concluded a lengthy two-day lesson on handling troubles in the classroom so a student can return their focus from a social problem to school work. The children are moving back to their seats so she can begin a math lesson. She is responding to a child’s comment about two of the “good” students in
the class who never seem to have problems. One child is White and is named Justin; one is Black and is named Terrence; both are boys.

1081 J-Justin and Terrence and a bunch of you are in here and people really look to you as models but Justin I just want a yes or no of this question. 1082 Do you have problems that you either solve or ask for help about? Yes or no.

1083 (child(ren) speaking)

1084 So you might do very well on your school work or you might not have to ask for that.

1085 you

1086 but there're other things you have to work through, don't you.

1087 (child(ren) speaking)

1088 But there's a

1089 Right

1090 And so Justin

1091 like Ms. Carson today he doesn't show it as much? maybe?

1092 Maybe because he doesn't go ntdtt Grrrrhh

1093 Or you don't seeee him?

1094 So I don't hear him?

1095 Or his face looks the same every time

1096 His body doesn't show me

1097 But if I asked him

1098 He might say Oh yeah I'm havin' a bad day.
1099 Same thing with Terrence
1100 Terrence doesn't make noises or
1101 pound the table or stomp off or push
1102 his friends but
1103 Terrence don't you have troubles you gotta work on?
1104 (child(ren) speaking)
1105 Yeah
1106 So I think that you think that they don't cause you don't seeee them acting it out? 1107 where other people like we see Grrrhhhh
1108 We know right away
1109 So that's another thing if you would like to keep it private
1110 then you can use Justin and Terrence's example of
1111 you know
1112 not wearing it on your face
1113 not stomping or growling
1114 because then
1115 nobody will be in your business
1116 But if you show it outwardly you're kind of saying to the other people
1117 (high pitched voice) Oh look at me I'm having a bad day
1118 (back to normal) You know?
1119 (child(ren) speaking) (Carson 3/10)

The teacher chooses two children as her models for the desired behavior, one White and one Black, both boys (line 1081). Although at first this might appear to be
sexist, actually her class is about two-thirds boys this year, and she selected the majority
gender for her examples.

The teacher opens this passage with a question (line 1082), and allows only a very
controlled, limited response, yes or no (line 1083). She later tells me in her interview that
this year her class has had to suffer with all manner of societal ills: children who are
homeless, children who do not have food at home, and that she has the largest range of
socioeconomic status she has ever had: some children, she says by way of contrast, have
“play groups at the museum.” The teacher uses both a White child and a Black child,
similarly successful in class, as her models of the strategy she wishes to teach. Ms.
Carson knows that her two highly successful students are also smart enough to know that
their problems do not begin to match the problems of some of the other children. She
controls the role model’s response to the opening question so that his natural empathy
does not allow him to modify his response, since she wants to make a point of the way he
acts. She provides a controlled response question to the second child as well (line 1103).

The teacher then offers the children a guide to how to culture-shift, a strategy
familiar to any child who has learned that one acts differently in church, or around
Grandmom’s knickknacks, than the way one acts at home or on a playground or in a
classroom.

The teacher cites how the majority Anglo culture would describe the desired
behavior, i.e. they “like to keep it private” (line 1109). Then, six-lines-later later, she
rephrases, “nobody will be in your business” (line 1115). Within these two descriptions,
she helps children to literally translate from their community’s language to the broader
society’s language. Now referencing both of her models, the teacher describes mostly
what she does not see these two boys do (lines 1091-1094 and lines 1100-1103 and lines 1106-1107), referencing the White child’s behavior as being similar to her own. Her short description of what she sees is “His face looks the same every time” (line 1095). The remainder of the description is what not to do: acting demonstrative and noisy.

This translation with examples helps the children to navigate in the broader adult world some day. In this case, the teacher cites a “street” value common in this urban district: you do not want anyone “in your business,” which means you want privacy. In another event slightly later that same day, the teacher models her respect for this value by refraining from announcing to the class the name of the one child who did a particular math problem correctly because she has not first asked the child privately if it is ok to disclose his name. The “street” value applies equally to both good news and bad news, and the White teacher knows this and respects the value. This “street” value was articulated by a currently popular musician, Mary J. Blige, in a recent newsmagazine interview. She is reported to have said, of her upbringing in the housing projects in New York City, “…if something good happened to you, you better not tell nobody. If you did something great, you had to pay for it” (Louie, 2008). In the teacher talk above, the teacher is coaching the children about how to move between cultures, and how to maintain privacy when you have strong feelings.

Interestingly, this coaching is counter to the cultural norm concerning grieving in traditional African-American families, which has been described to this researcher by students as noisy and open and heartfelt. The street value being described by this teacher is similar in nature to a more Anglo-American value of the “stiff upper lip,” when strong emotion is borne silently and stoically. However, if she were referencing Anglo culture,
the teacher would be more likely to say something like wanting other people to “mind their own business” rather than choosing to have “nobody … in your business.” She chooses to reference instead a community norm that is familiar to her students, and in so doing, is more likely to gain their confidence that she is an expert.

Following Mercer’s idea that the teacher is an expert guide using language to induct children, this passage situates the teacher as an expert in knowing how to act when you have troubles, and what to name the ways you act at those times. She begins to teach the children that they can consciously move among various culturally-appropriate behaviors, depending on their own desired outcome. The teacher also uses two children who model the desired behavior as models for the rest of the class.

Are They Teaching? If So, What Are They Teaching?

Mercer’s framework is based on the idea that teachers teach using their words by inviting their students into “joint intellectual activity,” (2000, p.28) using their teacher language to get children’s brains working. Mercer describes three broad themes of the ways that teachers do this: by eliciting prior knowledge, by responding to students, and by describing significant shared experiences. Mercer also provides detailed subthemes for each of these broad themes. This work has been described in Chapter Two. Using Mercer’s framework, the above passages can be deconstructed to consider the question of whether or not teachers teach during the routine of the classroom day.

Eliciting Prior Knowledge: Direct and Cued

This researcher has seen teachers teach children about “open” questions, to which many possible answers can be offered, and “closed” questions, with very limited answers possible. These are Mercer’s direct (“open”) and cued (“closed”) elicitations.
In these passages, Sullivan uses direct elicitation when she queries, “Any questions about our schedule today?” (line 939) after she has described and explained the day’s schedule. Blauers uses direct elicitation when she asks “Do you wanna explain why you said No...?” (line 311) as she is conducting a group discussion. Blauers then uses Mercer’s strategy of cued elicitation by asking both the people who chose one detail and the people who did not (lines 325 and 329), to acknowledge with a forced choice that they were able to see the other point of view. Carson uses cued elicitation when she asks a child to give a yes or no answer to her question (line 1081).

The direct elicitation encourages the children either to support an assertion that they have made, or to process what they have just listened to in order to decide if they did not understand anything that the teacher said. Both of the cued elicitations lead the teacher forward into the lesson she has planned, and engage the children with affirmation of the direction that the lesson is heading.

*Responding To Students: Confirmation, Rejection, Repetition, Elaboration, And Reformulation*

Mrs. Keenan uses confirmation when she does what a child suggests, i.e. writes the researcher’s name on the white board in the front of the class (line 556), so that the children can be polite; she has just described the school’s version of politeness, and wants to teach her students to address the researcher by her title and surname. Rejection is used by all of the teachers, notably by Mrs. Blauers when a child starts to act dramatic and disrupts the class discussion (lines 344-346), and by Keenan when she tells the child she does not need an explanation at that moment (line 592); she just needs the children to be quietly in their seats. As previously mentioned in the general observations, these teachers
do not use repetition of what a child just said very often. As already described, Ms. Carson uses a series of elaborations in her descriptions of how not to have others in your business (lines 1091-1113). Mrs. Keenan uses elaboration when she recognizes the kind intent of the children in “remembering” that the researcher’s name was “Miss Karen;” she does not want to tell the child he is wrong, and she recognizes that there is a teachable moment now about school culture, and reminds the children of how they address adults in school (line 561). Reformulation occurs when, for example, Mrs. Keenan first instructs that children can sit where they can see the overhead screen and then clarifies this direction 576), and several lines later, directs one child specifically about where to sit (line 580).

 Describing Significant Shared Experiences: “We” Statements, Literal And Reconstructive Recaps

Again, all four teachers use all of these strategies.

Mrs. Blauers notes “We’re having such a great day” as she transitions from her digression about sunshine back to her lesson (line 353). Mrs. Sullivan uses “we” as she describes what will happen all day (lines 899, 904, 906, 911, 914, 917, 922, 929, 930, 934, 937). Mrs. Keenan uses a “we” statement to explain how children in schools should address adults (line 561). Ms. Carson uses it to align herself with the class, as in “We know right away” (line 1108) when a child is having troubles and comes into school noisily upset.

Literal recaps include Mrs. Blauers’ “So it doesn’t matter if you have a hundred details…” (line 354) as she reiterates that, in this lesson, having a well-thought-out
argument for a decision was the goal. She also concludes this passage with a recap of the main content idea, “Warm air near the earth is rising into clouds” (line 358).

A reconstructive recap occurs as Mrs. Sullivan describes the gallery walk that occurred the other day, during which “everyone learned a lot;” her use of the word “but” (line 919) implies that perhaps the class was a little noisier or a little less focused than she may have wished, but that overall it was an effective teaching and learning strategy.

**Summary: Are They Teaching? If So, What Are They Teaching?**

Most of Mercer’s strategies are used in these selected passages. During what amounts to about five minutes apiece of talking by each teacher, the teachers have established that they see themselves as experts in what the day’s agenda will be, why the day is structured that way, who will direct the day’s events, how to participate in a group discussion (no drama, no extra noise, everyone participates), how to decide if you did a good job as a student, how to flexibly act if you have conscious goals about whether or not you want others to know something that happened to you, how adults are addressed in schools, when another student can be helpful, and when a student has made a poor choice about where to sit for a lesson.

They have used a wide variety of strategies to induct children into their expertise; they are teaching.

**Critical Discourse Analysis: What Does The Teacher Talk Really Mean?**

While pursuing analysis using Mercer, it was determined that the teachers are teaching during these excerpts from classroom routine, and that they are acting as experts inducting children into a wide variety of knowledge and skills. Critical discourse analysis of these same passages might surface some deeper, intended meanings for these
utterances, and should help to explain "how discourse constructs versions of the social and natural worlds and positions subjects in relations of power" (Luke, 1995-1996, p.8).

The reader may recall that Cazden (2001) demonstrated a relationship between children's intellectual functioning and the social relationships in which that is embedded. What might be learned about these relationships and the social and natural worlds in these classrooms, from the teachers' choices of words, however unconscious or conscious?

Mrs. Sullivan

In the first passage, Mrs. Sullivan was telling the story of the school day to come. She sometimes says "We" meaning "you the students and the two of us the teachers," "We" meaning "We the two teachers," and "you" meaning "you the students." Mrs. Sullivan also uses the pronoun "I" several times. This class has both a General Education teacher, Mrs. Sullivan, who acts as the lead teacher in the classroom, and a Special Education teacher, Mrs. Vincent; these two teachers are in the classroom together every time the researcher is there. There is also a Mathematics lead teacher for the school, Ms. Matthew, who is going to come into the class later on the day of this recording, for a brief time, to deliver a Math lesson.

The "We" meaning the whole class and the two teachers together is used most frequently: 15 times in this passage. The "We" meaning just the two teachers is used twice. "I" is used eight times, and "you" is used ten times.

"We" meaning the whole class plus the teachers is used when Mrs. Sullivan is speaking about an activity that she and the children will do together: playing Science Jeopardy (line 899), do a read-aloud (911), or say good-bye at the end of the day (line 937), even though the teachers' role will clearly be different from the children's roles in
these activities. “We” meaning the two teachers is used when Mrs. Sullivan is referencing a teacher responsibility (picking up the children from lunch, line 906) or reflecting on the success of a previous lesson (line 919). This “we” also precedes a parallel construction including the teachers’ responsibility for announcing who has earned the privilege of being in the lunch bunch (line 908). “I” is used very specifically when Mrs. Sullivan is describing a personal action (the note she left on the board, lines 895 and 897), getting a child a ticket-reward for their Sparkle win (line 889), and teaching particular lessons (line 926). “You” is likewise specific to actions that only children can do, for example listening to the announcement of who is in the lunch bunch (line 908), or being present on Tuesday for a specific experience (line 915), or bringing in or sharing treats for the holiday (lines 932 and 934).

What social relationships is Mrs. Sullivan providing with this revolving litany of “I,” “we” and “you?” With the dominant use of “we” meaning children-plus-teachers, she seems to be saying that they are all experiencing the class day together, similarly. She uses the personal “I” only to describe very specifically actions that she takes, mostly physical, such as writing on the board or handing out a ticket. She uses “you” for actions that the children will or did take. Finally, she uses “we” meaning she and the other teacher quite sparingly. With her dominant use of “we,” Mrs. Sullivan creates a community of people who go through experiences together. She is always clear about her authority, for example in handing out rewards and deciding on privileges, but she sees the day’s agenda as something that she planned and they all will share. She demonstrates that, in her view, the children in this relationship have a right to know ahead of time how their day will proceed and why and what is expected of them. It must be reassuring to
children to have advance warning of what is going to happen when, including specifics on what kind of work is going to be expected of them: listening to a read-aloud, looking for math strategies on the other class’s papers, taking a quiz.

One strategy of Critical Discourse Analysis is to consider all of the other ways that something might be said. One might consider the earliest example of “we” meaning the children and the teachers together: “We don’t have time for a second game “(line 887).

What if the teacher had said, “You don’t have time for a second game?” This would put the responsibility solely on the children for the loss of a fun activity.

Or, “There’s no time for a second game.” This would put the control totally outside anyone in the classroom, all of whom are at the mercy of something unnamed controlling their day.

Or, “I’ve decided you can’t play a second game.” This would be a power-over statement, and very controlling of the teacher, who is exerting control for no stated reason; it would likely feel punitive to children.

All of these variations would change the tone being set in the classroom. Mrs. Sullivan stated in her interview that morning meeting was where she set the tone for the day, and it is clear that her choices of her words supports setting a tone of community and shared experiences, with the teacher the authority, and also the expert on things that teachers should know about and do.

Mrs. Keenan

Mrs. Keenan is beginning the Reading Workshop lesson for her class. She speaks to individual children who, in her opinion, need some specific coaching. “Justin, … I want
you to think about your buddy…who is going to be the best person for you to work with today” (line 571)? She queries several other children about their buddy, or working partner, apparently approving their choices (lines 595, 6, 7). Mrs. Keenan knows who will work well together for the lesson that she has planned. Mrs. Keenan does not tell anyone to work with any particular other child, although she warns Justin that something did not go well at another time and that the partnership he chose that time was probably to blame.

Mrs. Keenan might have made other choices. For example,

“Justin, don’t work with Charles. The last time you two worked together, he distracted you.” This kind of statement would target Charles as a problem and announce to the whole class that anyone working with Charles was not choosing wisely.

Or, “Justin, work with Charles today.” The rest of the class was able to interpret from the direction that they should find Buddy Three; Justin might wonder why he was not capable of doing the same. He also might feel, depending on Charles’ abilities, that he was being asked to do something that was different from the responsibility which the rest of the class had, maybe to help a struggling classmate, or perhaps to work with someone who did not have a high social status like other children.

With her choice of words, Mrs. Keenan has put the responsibility for a good choice on Justin, without targeting anyone else. She encourages him to think about the situation first, which is designed to cause him to reflect for a moment, recall what went wrong before that his teacher is referencing, and then try to make that better choice. This gives Justin power over his own destiny, at least during Readers’ Workshop, and puts responsibility for a good choice on him without embarrassing or blaming him or anyone
else. Justin’s learning is his responsibility and the responsibility of the “buddy” he is going to work with. In this classroom, the teacher expects the relationships between the children to result in effective learning. The children are also learning that, if something does not go well, Mrs. Keenan, their expert on how to learn, will notice and remind them to do something differently the next time. One might imagine that eight-year-olds are being taught to feel competent and powerful with such practices.

Mrs. Blauers

What is the social world being constructed with Mrs. Blauers’ talk, as she helps her class to debrief after a group activity?

Johnston (2004) references a number of studies when he cites the few classrooms in the United States who “entertain or encourage conflicting viewpoints” (p. 70). Disagreement, when well-managed, teaches children who are going to become adults in a democracy to seek reasons for their opinions and to make their own reasons public. In addition, well-reasoned conflict with a previously held opinion can help a student to grow in understanding. Finally, children learn that conflicting ideas help them to learn, and prepares them for the adult discourses they will one day experience (Johnston, 2004).

In this passage, Mrs. Blauers teaches the students that there is more than one viewpoint, more than one right answer. After hearing three groups agree on an answer, she realizes that she has not heard everyone, and rather than allowing the remaining groups to be silent and think either that their answers were wrong, or to feel angry that no one paid attention to them, Mrs. Blauers seeks them out. In line 310, she addresses, “People, somebody who didn’t choose it” and then leads the students through listening to other opinions. She notes the group who had a “big long discussion” (line 315), thus
rewarding them with some attention. She notes that one group used outside expertise to help make their decision; they offered one reason for their decision as the fact that the information was not on the two pages of the reference book that the class was using (line 320-1), reinforcing to the children that in this world, books can be expert sources.

When Mrs. Blauers talks about or to the whole class, she uses the term, “people” six times in this brief passage. She also uses “girls” once when she is talking about a particular work group composed of all girls, and “guys” once to reference another group. She never says “Children,” “Boys and girls,” or “Third-graders.” “People” has great significance to Americans; the United States Constitution starts with the words “We the People,” and therefore, to many Americans, “people” reminds us of our ideals. By using this term of address in a discussion about different viewpoints, and the value of supporting those viewpoints with evidence including the expertise in books, Mrs. Blauers is firmly situating her class of 8- and 9-year-olds within middle-class American tradition and practices. She is teaching them the codes to the culture of power (Delpit, 1988) that they will need as adults.

Ms. Carson

Ms. Carson’s delivery of her message is enlivened with sound effects and both closed and rhetorical questions, designed to secure engagement of students in her message. The entire passage is a “riff” on a comment that a student made as the class was transitioning from one lesson to another. A musician might look at the pattern of when she engages the children’s attention, and notice that it is extremely regularly spaced throughout this near-monologue: in sections of about four or five lines. Here is the
passage again, with the segments of talk in boldface, which are designed to engage children’s attention:

1081 J-Justin and Terrence and a bunch of you are in here and people really look to you as models but Justin I just want a yes or no of this question

1082 **Do you have problems that you either solve or ask for help about? Yes or no.**

1083 *(child(ren) speaking)*

1084 So you might do very well on your school work or you might not have to ask for that

1085 you

1086 **but there're other things you have to work through, don't you.**

1087 *(child(ren) speaking)*

1088 But there's a

1089 Right

1090 And so Justin

1091 **like Ms. Carson today he doesn't show it as much? maybe?**

1092 **Maybe because he doesn't go ntdtt Grrrrhh**

1093 **Or you don't seeee him?**

1094 **So I don't hear him?**

1095 Or his face looks the same every time

1096 His body doesn't show me

1097 But if I asked him
He might say Oh yeah I'm havin' a bad day.

Same thing with Terrence

Terrence doesn't make noises or pound the table or stomp off or push

his friends but

Terrence don't you have troubles you gotta work on?

(child(ren) speaking)

Yeah

So I think that you think that they don't cause you don't seeee them acting it out?

where other people like we see Grrrhhhh

We know right away

So that's another thing if you would like to keep it private

then you can use Justin and Terrence's example of

you know

not wearing it on your face

not stomping or growling

because then

nobody will be in your business

But if you show it outwardly you're kind of saying to the other people

(high pitched voice) Oh look at me I'm having a bad day

(back to normal) You know?
The reader may recall that these passages were recorded in February and March of a school year, and also that Ms. Carson has been teaching for nine years. By this point in the school year, the children are likely to be accustomed to their teacher’s talk, having been in her company for over 100 six-hour days; they probably expect her to grab their attention periodically with a certain familiar rhythm. Ms. Carson, by this point, knows her students and knows just how long they can go without a little tug, usually about four lines of teacher talk, if this passage is representative. She uses a combination of strategies to accomplish her goal of keeping the children present with her throughout the monologue.

Moving back and forth between engaging children’s attention and delivering a message helps to assure that the message is heard by the audience. The great musician and music teacher Carl Orff once explained that children should be taught rhythm in music first, as the first music a child hears is percussion, i.e. his or her mother’s heartbeat. Ms. Carson is skilled at assuring her important, culture-shifting message is being heard by her students in using the subtlety of a regular rhythm in her communication.

**Summary: What Does the Teacher Talk Really Mean?**

With this analysis, the case has been made for teacher talk during near-monologues, which occurs during classroom routine, having significance. In all cases, the teachers were clearly teaching during this in-between talk. In addition, they were establishing an ideal world for their class and for their time with their students. In their world, children and teachers are in community with each other. Children have real responsibility for their own learning. The community is a democratic one, and children
are being taught the skills they will need in order to function effectively as adults in a
democratic society. Finally, important messages are delivered with skills that engage
children so they are most likely to truly hear what their teachers are saying.

In the next chapter, the teachers’ shorter utterances will be studied to determine if
these utterances fit any patterns or themes.
CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS WITH REGARD TO THE ORDINARY

This chapter addresses the second set of research questions, which are: What themes can be identified in teacher talk to children during the routine parts of the class day? What are examples illustrating these themes?

This chapter is entitled “Findings with regard to the ordinary” because the bits of teacher talk which are often overlooked, are considered here. Most of these utterances are short, some only two or three words at a time before a child spoke. Although, after analysis, significance can be attributed to the longer passages in the previous chapter, during which the teachers are doing “direct instruction,” it does not follow that there is any significance in these smaller bits. The findings of this chapter will argue for significance.

Organization of the Presentation

Because there are hundreds of pages of transcriptions of the teacher-participants talking to children from this study, some strategy had to be devised to represent the data while at the same time presenting actual teacher talk. One potential value of this study is to provide the actual words of the teachers so that the reader is reading not only about what teachers say, but what they actually say. The value would be diminished if the reader were asked to read everything that the teachers say.

Therefore, the data are being presented in a summarized form, grouped by themes that grew out of analysis of the data with respect to Gee’s critical discourse questions
(2005), which search for the building tasks of language. The reader may recall that Gee’s questions are:

1. Significance: How and what do different things mean?
2. Activities: What is going on?
3. Identities: Who is being directed by this language?
4. Relationship: What connection is being established between speaker and audience?
5. Politics, as in the distribution of goods: What perspective is being communicated?
6. Connection: How does this language connect or disconnect things?
7. Sign systems: Which languages or sign systems are privileged in the communication? (Gee, 2005).

While asking these questions, the data sorted into five themes overlapping Gee’s questions. For example, one theme might answer both the relationship and identity questions. Each theme is then sorted into subthemes. The reader will find the data organized in this way:

- Each theme is first introduced with a guiding question, “What do teachers say when they are …?” The question is answered with the subthemes listed in paragraph form.

- Following this introduction to the theme, each subtheme is named one by one. An example of teacher talk demonstrating each subtheme is provided, preceded by the line numbers from the transcript. (The reader may recall that the transcription is on the breath unit with each line preceded by a breath, that
it is not “cleaned up” of repeated sounds or “umms,” and that all capital letters signifies that the teacher is speaking in a much louder voice than other times.) After each example of teacher talk, the teacher’s surname and date of the recording are cited. Then, there is a brief description of the context for this example of teacher talk. The reader will read: Subtheme-teacher talk-context, over and over, for each theme. Sometimes more than one example is provided to support a subtheme. The teachers’ actual words are foregrounded as much as possible, in an effort to privilege those words over the researcher’s analysis.

- Finally, the theme is restated with reference to which of Gee’s questions helped to surface the theme, and how Gee’s questions can be answered.

The answers to these questions provide description of what teachers are saying to children in-between teaching content knowledge and skills, i.e. during the routine of the school day.

The five major themes which appeared in the teacher talk are:

1. Teacher acting in loco parentis
2. Teacher building or building on their relationship with the students.
3. Teacher establishing or maintaining a routine.
4. Teachers trying to build a sense of agency in children.
5. Teachers establishing or maintaining an ideal classroom culture. “Ideal” refers to the goals of the teacher for her classroom.
Teacher in Loco Parentis

What do teachers say to children when they are in the place of parents? Teacher talk during this kind of management routine included talk concerning hygiene or health, clothing, food, belongings, commands, and handling of supplies.

_Hygiene or Health_

671 Cover this eye
672 and blink.
673 Blink blink blink blink blink blink blink blink blink now it'll come to the corner and you can grab it. (Blauers, 3/17)

Something is in the child’s eye during a partner activity, and the child complains to the teacher. This procedure works and the child exclaims happily that whatever was in her eye is gone now. Teachers, like parents, are experts in what to do when you have something in your eye, or in the next case, when you feel hot. This exchange occurred while children were talking with each other, doing the class activity.

799 You don't feel good?
800 Hmm you do feel a little warm.
801 Alright, let's try to hang in there until after you eat a little bit of lunch
802 'cause sometimes eating a little bit makes you feel better?
803 and if after lunch if you still don't feel better
804 we can make a decision based on that. How's that?
805 Does that sound fair?
806 (child(ren) speaking)
807 Did you eat breakfast today?
808 (child(ren) speaking)

809 No?

810 Do you wanta go in there and eat a cracker before you go into music?

811 (child(ren) speaking) (Blauers, 3/17)

Teachers are experts in stomach-aches and fevers, as well as motes in the eye. The teacher in this case problem-solves with the child to see if the child is ill or just hungry, and concludes that the child is probably hungry. The teacher keeps a supply of sealed, individually wrapped graham crackers and other such snacks in a lidded plastic container, which her students can access almost any time. The snacks are not fun “junk food” but practical and healthy; children usually only ask for such snacks when they are truly hungry.

Clothing

67 Think what you could do is you're hot? when you get back to class?

68 You don't have to put it all the way on. You could just put it on over your shoulders.

69 You know, at least it will help you to cool down

70 a little bit.

71 Don't forget to wash. (Carson 3/10)

In this example, a child has complained she is hot from her exercise in the gym. The teacher has noticed she is wearing layers today. She recommends that the top layer of clothing be put on more loosely so the child can cool off. In addition, a bit of washing up will help to cool off the youngster. In this example, she is also recommending a hygiene task: i.e. to wash up.
Do you have a sweatshirt today? (Carson 3/10)

After a full teaching day with twenty-four third-graders, the teacher remembers to ask one child if the child wore another article of outerwear that day, which the child seems to be forgetting as the class gets ready to go home.

208 Bennett, bring it upstairs, honey, go ahead. (Sullivan, 2/14)

The teacher is picking up the children in the cafeteria. One youngster has not finished his breakfast. She invites him to bring it up to the classroom. The teacher uses a term of endearment at the same time.

Hi! How are you? Did you have breakfast? (Carson, 2/12)

A child has arrived at school almost an hour after class has started. The teacher greets the child and immediately checks to see if the child has eaten yet. In all of the classes, children who have not eaten are encouraged to eat first and then to join the class. This is handled in a matter-of-fact way, with no judgment expressed or implied in the teacher’s greeting or question.

98 John, is it ok with you if I borrow your vocab. list, for Sparkle? Thank you. (Sullivan, 2/14)

The teacher politely asks John to borrow something that belongs to John, establishing that she respects his belongings, even a vocabulary list that she gave him earlier in the week.

Could you put your chair around so you don’t get hurt. (Carson 3/10)
The teacher was circulating around the classroom, checking individual children’s attempts to complete math problems using a new strategy. This is labeled an “order” since the teacher did not say “please,” which would have made it a request. Although the sentence is constructed as a question, it is uttered as a statement with the voice’s pitch descending at the end.

181 Sometimes your worries Sheila can you get off of the projector and come up
182 Carol please move up
183 away from the machine
184 cause I feel like you and Sheila are distracted
185 So sometimes our problems get in our way so that's why ...(Carson 3/10)

In this example, the teacher is teaching a Health lesson about handling social problems to third-graders. She interrupts herself after three words to redirect two children who appear to be distracted. On the fourth breath, she is back to her lesson again. Although she has given an order to the first child, she uses a “please” with the second child and then offers a brief explanation for her order/ request that is based on her own perception: not blaming or scolding, but instead providing a prevention direction.

Handling of Supplies

323 Don't sit on your glasses, though. (Carson 3/10)

Parents everywhere are grateful to teachers who watch out for those expensive glasses just like parents do.

571 Tyasia,
572 you're pointing the big scissors
573 even though you're trying to be helpful
574 with the blade out
575 so put the scissors up (Carson, 3/10)

Children forget that scissors are sharp and have to be handled with attention. The teacher recognizes that the child is trying to help, and suggests that this particular help is not needed and the scissors should be put away safely, or “up.”

464 Michael! Post office needs you.
465 Throw away your trash, please. (Sullivan, 2/14)

Michael’s help has been requested by the school’s post office operation. He starts to get up to leave the classroom, responding to the teacher’s first words, and needs a little polite reminder that he should throw away the paper products that remain from his breakfast.

**Conclusion to Theme: Teachers Acting In loco parentis**

This theme answers Gee’s questions about activities, what is going on, and relationship, what connection is being established. In acting as an expert on minor health issues, the teacher is acting like a parent and establishing a parent/child relationship with the student. Likewise, in making sure that children eat, in helping children to care for their belongings, in assuring that children do not get hurt, the teacher is acting in the place of the parents.

Gee’s question concerning politics is also addressed by some of these examples. In one case (Sullivan, 2/14, line 98), the teacher assumes that a vocabulary list, which she had previously given to the student, now belonged to the student, and it would be inappropriate for her to take it back to use for a few moments without asking permission
of the child. This is an example of a teacher supporting the child, who has acquired ownership of a key resource.

Teacher Building or Building on Their Relationship with the Students.

What do teachers say to children when they are building or building on their relationships? Teacher talk during this kind of management routine falls into the themes of greetings, affection and endearments, humor, please and thank-you, sorry, protection, celebration, and fun.

Greetings

45 Good morning. (Carson, 2/12)

5 Good morning, Mike. (Sullivan, 2/14)

149 Good morning, Tierra. (Sullivan, 2/14)

All four teachers use formal greetings when children arrive in the morning, i.e. “Good morning.” They work hard to acknowledge every child by name most mornings. This is true when the children arrive in groups from the bus, and when the teacher has gone to the cafeteria to walk the children back from their breakfast to the classroom, and are meeting many children simultaneously for the first time that day.

Affection and Endearments

410 What, honey? (Carson, 3/10)

175 I heard you, baby. (Blauers, 3/17)

777 Right here my darlin'. (Blauers, 3/17)

484 Zavion, which one are you on, honey? (Sullivan, 2/14)

“How, “Baby,” and “Darlin’”” or “Darling” are all terms of endearment. All four teachers use a variety of these terms with children to express affection in the middle
of the work. “Baby” is used more with girls than with boys in African-American culture, and would be seen as a put-down to a boy; in this case, it was used appropriately with a girl. Boys seem to accept “Honey” and “Darlin’” coming from their teachers and probably their mothers and grandmothers.

Humor

280 ‘Kay? Alright so I would need everybody on the message. Lavon, can you move up? I feel like you're far away from me. Marianne and Melisha, can you move up?

281 It's safe, I showered, I did lotion and perfume. So it is safe to come close.

282 (child(ren) speaking)

283 Yep.

284 It is safe. (Carson, 2/12)

There is no more receptive audience for a little body smell humor than a group of fourth graders in the springtime, some of whom are just beginning to use deodorant. The children have been listening to a read-aloud, and have begun to sprawl comfortably across the rug on which they are sitting. Now the teacher is going to do a Science demonstration and she needs them to move closer so they can see what she is doing with a small compass and battery and nail. The humor works and the children move closer to the teacher.

Please and Thank-You

25 THANK YOU TO ALL THOSE PEOPLE WHO CAME IN THE CLASSROOM AND

26 MADE GOOD CHOICES. (Carson, 3/10)
The class has just returned from the gym, and the children have to take turns in the bathroom changing out of gym clothing into their classroom clothing. They are sweaty and hot and want drinks of water; one child is complaining of a stomachache. The teacher is thanking the patient children who came in and sat down ready to listen to a read-aloud and take their turn changing their clothes and getting a drink of water.

_Sorry_

822 Oh, I'm sorry; I didn't know that. Carter said M; what comes after the M?
(Sullivan, 2/14)

The class is playing “Sparkle” (a group spelling and vocabulary game). The teacher is the judge for the game, and did not hear one child’s contribution accurately. She easily says she’s sorry and moves the game forward.

_Protection_

498 if someone's teasing, cause teasing means over and over and over again

499 you know what, some of you mentioned this morning about ignoring?

500 and ignoring's ok, but be careful not to ignore too much

501 cause if you ignore so much that your head feels like a big balloon that's gonna pop

502 Then maybe ignoring's not working for you any more. (Carson 3/10)

Most elementary teachers today, in this researcher’s acquaintance, have become highly sensitized to bullying and bullying prevention. In this example, the teacher is offering to protect the children when teasing gets to be overwhelming.
Celebration

901 instead we're gonna play Science Jeopardy

902 and then probably take the vocab. test this morning

903 (child(ren) speaking)

904 (laughs) I know, you're on fire! (Sullivan, 2/14)

The teacher is starting her description of the events of the day, and agrees with a child that he is already “hot” today, an expression she often uses, meaning that the child is doing well: behaving appropriately, working hard, and getting correct answers. She celebrates the child’s work so far that day.

523 Yayyy, if you got 40. (Sullivan, 2/14)

The teacher has just worked through a morning math problem, and is cheering for the children who got the right answer.

Fun

285 Get everything out of your hands

286 Your cereal will not walk away on you, I promise.

287 I I talked to it this morning,

288 I asked it to please stay in your bowls. (Blauers, 2/28)

The teacher is interrupting breakfast to get children to stand up and recite a word problem rap which includes motions, so that they can better do their morning work.

Everyone knows she did not talk to their cereal, but it is fun to think about it.

382 I gave you this handy-dandy problem of the day because … (Carson, 2/12)

Several of the teachers use rhyming words in their routine speech to make their speech more playful, and more appealing, for children to listen to.
216 IF YOU HEAR MY VOICE, DO THE HULA.

217 OK, STOP YOUR HULA. (Blauers, 3/17)

After a noisy and complicated group project, in which children worked in groups and then discussed their group’s ideas with other groups, this is the way the teacher gets the children’s attention. It works almost instantly. In two seconds it is quiet enough for the teacher’s voice to be easily heard; the background noise is almost nonexistent.

Conclusion: Teacher Building or Building on Their Relationship with Students

Again, the children’s perspectives, including their need to move frequently and to have fun periodically, are privileged over an more sedate, adult-oriented way to transition from a noisy activity to a full group activity, answering Gee’s significance question about whose perspective is important in the classroom. This also connects to the literature, notably Bohn et al. (2004), who found that more effective teachers actually have more fun with children in their classrooms. In addition, in modeling the use of “please and thank you” (Carson, 3/10, line 25), and “I’m sorry” (Sullivan, 2/14, line 822), the teachers follow Luff’s (2001) exhortation that teachers need to model the language they wish to hear.

In greeting children formally, teachers show children at the very beginning of the school day that they notice and care about each child, confirming Patrick et al.’s (2001) findings that teachers’ goal communication is more effective in an environment of caring. Teachers also show that they care by celebrating with children, even small accomplishments, by saying that they are sorry when they have made a mistake, and by using terms of affection. These strategies address Gee’s question of significance, what do things mean? in that the teachers here mean to communicate that they truly care about
their students as people with feelings and with lives outside the classroom. Further, they care enough to establish special teacher-student relationships (Gee’s question about the connection between speaker and audience) with children, which are not limited to parenting when the parent cannot be there.

Teacher Establishing or Maintaining a Routine.

Leinhardt et al. (1987) created a model of classroom routines, as observed in exemplary fourth grade classrooms. Was there an underlying structure of routine in these classrooms that matched Leinhardt’s model? In Leinhardt, exemplary teachers used three themes of classroom routines: management or housekeeping routines, support routines which set up for learning, and exchange routines which were language contacts between teacher and student. In this study, teacher talk alone is the focus and therefore the first two kinds of routines, management and support, might be located. Both are.

Support Routines

1702 ...put the money away or I'm gonna be a rich lady. (Carson 3/10)

The money is a distraction, and the exaggerated threat, that the teacher will become rich because she takes the money, makes the child smile as the child puts the money away safely. The child is clearly directed by the more powerful teacher, who can “take” something that is distracting to the child if necessary; the child certainly has a choice to comply or allow the teacher to handle the situation.

1773 Hope you're watching the screen cause you're gonna be on these tomorrow they're gonna get even bigger. (Carson 3/10)
The teacher is drawing attention to where the children should be looking, referencing math problems in which calculations are going to require manipulating more and more digits.

1195 Shh Can you put your name on this paper please? (Carson 3/10)

Teachers everywhere have to deal with unnamed, unclaimed papers when children do not follow this classic school routine.

1199 Shh Do not go ahead because we're gonna do this page a little differently? (Carson 3/10)

The teacher's voice goes up at the end of this sentence, not because she is asking a question, but to draw the children's attention to the difference that is going to occur. The activity she expects of the students is going to shift, and she is preparing them for this change.

1308 I'm gonna circle my answer. (Carson 3/10)

This practice is required on state tests, which require students to "show their work," or to write on their paper every step in their logic as they solved the problem. It can be difficult for graders to find the answer in amongst "the work," and so children are constantly encouraged to get into the habit of circling their answers.

232 Do we have a, is that confusing, Cora?

233 (child(ren) speaking)

234 Ok, let me help you with it.

235 (child(ren) speaking)

236 Theee problem of the day?

237 First, you know what I'm gonna tell you? Do one question at a time.
238 You have these two bullets you have to do?
239 Take your fingers and cross tha
240 cover up that second one.
241 and worry about that after. (Blauers, 2/28)

Here the teacher is coaching a child about how to deal with a two-part Math
problem. It is less daunting if you cover up the second part while you do the first, and
take the problem one section at a time.

Management: Routines

1907 Please get those packed please do your end of the day jobs
1908 and wait in line for your end of day note. (Carson, 3/10)

The teacher is directing the students' activities so that the end of the day can
proceed in an orderly fashion. The reader will note the polite and repeated “pleases.”

2064 Ladies and gentlemen, I'm waiting for a nice quiet line. (Carson, 3/10)

The children are standing in a line by the door with their book bags packed and
coats on. Until they are quiet, the teacher will not take them into the hallway and down
the stairs to the door to get on the buses or greet their parents or walk home. Here, eight-
year-old children are being politely addressed as “Ladies and gentlemen.”

2114 Go ahead, walk it out. (Carson, 3/10)

The teacher is speaking to the child who is first in the line. All of the children
have their belongings and are quiet enough that they can move through the hallway. The
teacher refers to the line as “it” and the child apparently understands the direction to
“Walk it out.”
Conclusion: Teachers Establishing or Maintaining a Routine

It was reassuring to the assertion that these were exemplary classrooms that the themes of routines identified by Leinhardt et al. (1987) were present and functioning mid-year in these four classrooms. The teachers use a mix of direct and indirect instructions (Delpit, in Weis and Fine, 1993) to children, for example, using direct in saying to “walk it out” (Carson, 3/10, line 2114) and indirect when modeling a strategy of noting the teacher’s answer with the expectation that the children will follow the model (Carson, 3/10, line 1308).

This theme answers Gee’s questions concerning relationship: the teacher is in charge and the students are in the charge of the teacher as they progress through their classroom day. In one example, the children are addressed formally as “Ladies and gentlemen,” (Carson, 3/10, line 2064), answering Gee’s question of sign systems: in this case, adulthood is privileged and assigned to eight year olds who are lining up to depart school at the end of the day, as a way of assuring their attention to the request. The teachers also use polite manners, saying “please” when they make a request, again privileging the children as partners in the interaction with the ability to say, “No,” again, a remarkable position for young children to enjoy.

Teachers Trying to Build Agency in Children.

What do teachers say to children when they are attempting to build agency in children? Teacher talk while building agency in children falls into the themes of reassurances, asking a child to help, mental rehearsals, phone a friend, accepting a child’s initiation, teaching brain processing, specific praise, and you-need-to.
Reassurances

1758 You can do this because you know how to cluster. It's not on your paper it's only on mine. (Carson, 3/10)

The teacher is expanding on a previously taught Math strategy called “clustering,” used to do long multiplications. In this lesson, she is going to increase the difficulty by having students multiply two digits by two digits, and she has planned to go to three by three tomorrow. She is assuring the students that they can do this harder task, and also reminding them that they have to look at her example first with her before they try to do it on their own. It is typical that teachers shift roles within a breath: in this case, from a reassurance to a reminder of a support routine.

Asking A Child to Help

102 Oooooh, could you do me a favor? Can you pass these out, people's names should be on them? and put them at their seat for me? (Sullivan, 2/14)

A simple classroom task: the teacher asks the child to pass out some materials, and frames her request as a personal favor to her, building on their relationship at the same time.

293 Bridget, would you like to do a job for me?

294 Would you like to empty these out and throw those things away, and then keep the bags? (Keenan, 2/8)

Mrs. Keenan asks a child for some help in accomplishing a routine housekeeping task. She also frames her request as a personal favor.
Mental Rehearsals

23 Well Eddie, how are we going to help you to remember these things? You've been forgetting
24 some of this stuff a lot lately.
25 *(child(ren) speaking)*
26 Soooo do you have a strategy ahhh or anything to put into place
27 to help you remember?
28 Who put your stuff in your book bag?
29 *(child(ren) speaking)*
30 Who puts your stuff in your folder?
31 *(child(ren) speaking)*
32 Ok,
33 so did you did you forget to put the stuff in the folder?
34 *(child(ren) speaking)*
35 So where do you do your homework?
36 *(child(ren) speaking)*
37 The table in the kitchen?
38 Or the table in the dining room?
39 Is there ahhh sign you can put (inaud)
40 *(child(ren) speaking)*
41 Alright. (Keenan 2/ 8)

The first child, “Eddie,” has arrived in the morning and discloses that he does not have his homework with him. The teacher steps the child through a mental rehearsal of
what it takes to get the homework into the book bag so the homework makes it to class. She accepts the child’s assertion that he actually did the homework without question. At the end of the discussion, she makes a recommendation for how the process might be improved, and the child makes a counter-recommendation, which the teacher accepts.

This mental rehearsal process is much like the process a coach uses with an athlete in attempting to visualize a race going well or a game being won: an imagining of how it might go, in the expectation that rehearsing mentally might make that winning pattern automatic when the action begins. Notice that the teacher accepts the child’s plan to correct the situation without question.

35 Didn’t you already write your letter, or did you not have your final copy yet?
36 (child(ren) speaking)
37 Ok.
38 (child(ren) speaking)
39 That’s ok, you can do it tonight? ↓
40 Do you want to write it in your agenda right now, so you don’t forget?
41 (child(ren) speaking)
42 Ok. (Sullivan, 2/14)

This is another example of a task that was supposed to be finished at home that a child has forgotten. The teacher reassures the child that the task is not yet late, and offers a way the child could remember. An agenda is a calendar, usually with lots of space for children to write in their assignments. This is a different teacher from the previous one, and a different grade level; again, the teacher accepts the child’s idea for how to fix the situation.
119 John, are you gonna be ok with when people wanna like, play with him and touch him and stuff?

120 Ok, makin' sure, 'cause if you leave him out, that's totally what's gonna happen. (Sullivan, 2/14)

This is a different kind of mental rehearsal. It is Valentine’s Day, and John has brought a small stuffed bear to school that was a gift from his one-year-old baby sister. He wants to keep it with him all day and show his classmates. The teacher wants to prepare John for the way other children might treat his cute toy. If he is not comfortable with the realistic scenario she has painted, she has a back-up plan: not “leaving him out.”

*Phone A Friend*

603 You wanna phone a friend?

604 (child(ren) speaking)

605 Ok, phone a friend.

606 (child(ren) speaking)

607 Ok, now repeat his sentence so you learn it.(Carson, 2/12)

During the game of Sparkle, a child has volunteered to give a sentence that includes a vocabulary word. The child then “blanks out” when called on. The teacher suggests that the child ask a peer for help, using the phrase “phone a friend” from the popular television show “Who Wants to be a Millionaire?” There is no shame in not knowing something, even when you just volunteered to answer, in these classes, and some version of “phone a friend” is used liberally, both to help someone who temporarily forgets, and to share the responsibility for answering a long question.
Accepting A Child’s Initiation

651 So Ray's tryin' to be fair

652 Could you raise your hand if you haven't had a turn popping a balloon yet?

(Carson, 3/10)

In this example, the teacher has been calling on children to offer a response, and the child who is called on then has the fun of popping a balloon. One of the children in the class suggests that every child should have the chance to pop a balloon, and the teacher accepts the child’s suggestion. After she accepts Ray’s suggestion, she is careful to ask every now and then just for those who have not had a chance yet, to raise their hands with a response.

Teaching Brain Processing

276 We want to see the motion because the motions is gonna get those synapses goin'.

277 Firin' in your brain. (Blauers, 2/28)

The teacher is starting to go over morning work. Morning work includes a math word problem. The teacher has previously taught the children a rap that included words and motions about how to solve word problems. She has asked the children to do the rap with her to remind them of how to do the problem, again having previously taught that involving motions helps a brain to remember better.

Specific Praise

48 Well, I just thought how responsible you are to bring them in to sharpen 'em.

(Keenan, 2/8)
The students are arriving in class. One child has already unpacked and is helping to sharpen pencils brought from home, without having been asked to either bring in the pencils or sharpen them. Although an adult was probably involved in supplying the pencils at home, Mrs. Keenan recognizes and names the child’s sense of responsibility in taking on this task.

691 I can tell, when she's at Fluency Center working on intonation, that she knows to stress those words that are underlined. (Sullivan, 2/14)

During the morning meeting, a child reads aloud. The teacher then praises one aspect of the child’s practiced read-aloud skill. This helps the child to know what is going well, and that practice helps to develop skill.

1573 Umm, Carola honey, your work is so good. Can you write it in on the transparency so I can show the kids? Is that ok (Carson, 3/10)

In this example, Carola had been called on during the lesson, and had used a different strategy to answer the math question than the one the teacher wanted to teach. Although the teacher acknowledged that the strategy would work, she wanted the children to also master the new strategy so that they could work successfully with larger numbers. This is her affirmation that Carola has successfully mastered the newer strategy.

151 UM COUPLE OF THINGS NUMBER ONE I AM
152 VERY HAPPY WITH HOW YOU ALL CAME IN THIS MORNING
153 EVEN THOUGH I WAS TALKING TO A PARENT YOU ALL DID EXACTLY WHAT YOU NEEDED TO DO I SEE YOU WITH BREAKFAST?
154 AND WITH THEIR PROBLEMS IN FRONT OF THEM?
155 THAT'S SHOWING ME YOU ARE
156 UNDERSTANDING WHAT MY EXPECTATIONS ARE

157 NOW YOU'RE SHOWING THAT TO ME

158 THIS IS WONDERFUL (Keenan, 2/8)

In this example, the teacher was upset several days before, when she returned from being out sick to learn that her students did not behave well for a substitute. She makes this whole-class announcement about ten minutes after children have begun to arrive in the room, and after she has engaged in conversation with a parent. She is very specific about what makes her “happy,” and references her own feeling as reason for the children to do the specific tasks which are making her happy. Unless she is in a relationship with the children in her class, it is hard to imagine that the children would care about how happy their teacher is about their behavior. The teacher further characterizes the previous misbehavior as a lack of understanding of her own expectations, and feels happy, “wonderful,” that the expectations have apparently been clarified. All it took for the children to be “wonderful” was for them to fully understand her expectations and then act on their understanding.

812 Mr. Cameron, they're on fire today.

813 Like they are listening when you speak

814 they're following directions really well

815 their bi their minds are creative

816 they're ready to rock. (Blauers, 3/17)

The students have just been walked to Music class, and are being left with the Music teacher. They all hear quite specifically what they have been doing well and what the Music teacher can expect them to continue to do well today.
You-Need-To

596 Justin, you need to take a break. That’s what I need you to do.

597 And come back and I can help you.

598 Take a break and calm down.

599 And then I’ll see you in a minute.

600 Thank you. (Blauers, 3/17)

Children have just started working with a partner doing the motions for kinesthetic vocabulary exercise. There have been some issues getting everyone a partner: two or three had a hard time. One youngster apparently is agitated. The teacher suggests a break, saying first that the child needs to take the break and then that she needs him to take a break. She promises to help him once he is calmer, and thanks him in advance for his compliance.

“You need to” is an interesting construction in that it never seems to evoke the response “Why do I need to,” at least not in elementary school age children. Children seem to accept the implied expertise of the speaker: the speaker, the parent or teacher or lunchroom aide, knows how students or children should act in this particular situation, and the child is provided a description of what behavior they should now implement in order to reach that ideal. In this case, the concluding “thank you” personalizes the description and builds on the teacher owning the need, stated when she moved from “you need to” to “I need you to.”

Conclusion: Teachers Building A Sense of Agency in Children

In order to try to build agency in children (Skinner et al., 1998), teachers use a variety of strategies including reassuring, asking children to help, mental rehearsals,
allowing children to phone a friend, accepting children’s initiations, teaching children how their brains work, providing specific praise and suggesting, sometimes, that one needs to do something.

One of the articles in the literature review recommended that teacher praise take the form of athletic coaching, if it is to be effective in reinforcing children’s behavior: the praise must be specific so the child knows what to do again (Larrivee, 2002). The preceding examples demonstrate how teachers provide this coaching in an elementary classroom. The examples answer Gee’s questions concerning identity, in that the expert teacher is inducting competent novices into habits of classroom behavior necessary to academic success. Gee also provides a question concerning relationship. With these examples, the teacher acts as a coach, praising specifically what works, helping children to plan for success, counting on every child to do his or her part. The teacher further shares her expertise with the “phone a friend” message, teaching children that they can count on each other to know; this strategy answers Gee’s question concerning politics, who is privileged to have the resource of knowledge in this community. Interestingly, one of the teachers privileges a child’s version of “fair,” an aspect of classroom culture that will be addressed in the following theme.

Teachers Establishing or Maintaining an Ideal Classroom Culture.

What do teachers say when they are establishing or maintaining an ideal classroom culture? Teacher talk concerning classroom culture manages who talks, describes how to have a good time in class, describes a right to personal space, organizes children’s movement, helps children to see each other’s viewpoints, and makes sure that people play, and are, fair.
Who Talks?

242 Wait, Joseph is talking. (Carson 3/10)

In our world, the teacher implies, we talk one at a time when the whole class is working together. This is true of many American classrooms during formal instruction. It is often seen as a necessary part of classroom culture in order to show respect to the child who is speaking at that moment, and in order quite practically for each child to be fairly and accurately heard.

Having A Good Time in Class

376 Let's have a good time

377 but let's not shout and scream. (Carson 3/10)

The teacher is reminding her students that school fun is different from fun in other locations, and she specifies what cannot be permitted.

A Right to Personal Space

817 That's so true.

818 But it's hard when someone's reaching into your space isn't it? (Carson 3/10)

In this example, the teacher appears to be referencing previous discussions about how everyone has “space” and how everyone has a right to have others respect that space. She agrees with a suggested strategy to deal with an annoyance, but reminds that this can be very difficult when the annoyance is this intrusion into one’s personal space.

Organizing Children’s Movement

323 CLEAN UP PLEASE AND EVERYBODY TO THE RUG. ... 

328 I like how Ellen and Mary have moved to the rug quietly and quickly.

(Keenan 2/8)
The teacher has directed the class to come “to the rug,” in order for morning meeting to commence. She then recognizes two children who move to the rug the way she expects children to do. In this researcher’s experience, teachers are taught to use this kind of construction in order to positively reinforce children who are doing what the teacher wants all of the children to do. Teachers are taught that scolding someone who is not doing what they are supposed to be doing, gives attention to that child, and a teacher should want to give attention to children who are doing the right thing; this supposedly creates the situation in which the other children then hurry to also do the right thing so they can be recognized, and keeps the teacher in the business of being positive rather than negative.

*Seeing Others’ Viewpoints*

272 Ok, that wasn't everybody. Is that ok?

273 *(child(ren) speaking)*

274 Ok, people who chose it. Explain to the people who didn't choose it, why you thought that was something that went along. (Blauers, 3/17)

Students were deciding if sentences providing details supported an established main idea. The groups had to agree about which sentences should be included and which should not. Not every group made the same choices. Now the whole class is debriefing. The teacher has polled the students after a group activity. The teacher affirms with her question that it is “ok” to have different ideas. However, the students can expect to have to defend their ideas with an explanation.

*Playing and Being Fair*

314 Pedro, did you think you were supposed to be leader today?
Maybe you and Emilia can work together then.

Emilia, I want you to work with Pedro for morning meeting.

Previously, the teacher appointed Emilia to be the leader for morning meeting. Pedro’s name was listed as leader, but Emilia had noticed that Pedro had not yet arrived in class and it appeared he might be absent. Now Pedro has arrived. Mrs. Keenan does not want to take away Emilia’s new privilege, earned as a result of the child’s observation, and she also does not want to deprive Pedro of his chance just because he was a little bit late for school that morning.

**Conclusion: Teachers Establishing or Maintaining An Ideal Classroom Culture**

In all of these examples, the teachers have an idea of what they expect of their classroom culture, and they continuously aim children towards their ideal. The ideal includes people in the class speaking one at a time when they are speaking to the whole class, having fun in a way that does not disturb others in the school building, having a right to personal space, considering other viewpoints, having movement around the classroom being organized, and playing and being fair.

Gee’s questions concerning activity, what is going on? and politics, what perspective is being communicated? are answered by this theme of teachers establishing or maintaining an ideal classroom culture. It is the teacher’s idea that it is best to organize whole-class conversation with one person talking at a time, the teacher’s version of having fun that is reinforced, the teacher’s decision about how to fairly share a high-status responsibility such as leading morning meeting. The teacher is clearly the arbiter of the classroom culture.
When the teacher calls the students to the rug for their morning meeting (Keenan, 2/8, lines 323 and 328), she uses first a direct strategy and then reinforces her request with an indirect strategy (Delpit, in Weis and Fine, 1993) of praising those who are doing what has been requested. This kind of immediate translation helps children who are accustomed to working class direct instructions to learn the language habits of the middle class, and vice versa. It positions the teacher as expert in what things mean in different situations, answering Gee’s question about significance. This teacher talk also equates both language systems of direct and indirect instructions to students, showing knowledge and respect for all of the children’s home cultures; this answers Gee’s question of which languages are privileged.

Conclusion

In this chapter, a wide variety of teacher talk during classroom routine has been presented and sorted into themes. This data presentation met a primary goal of the study, to provide description of the nature of teacher talk in intermediate classrooms in an exemplary urban school.

The themes described in this chapter overlap. A teacher acting as a parent is building and building on a relationship, and these two themes were separated because the data so clearly showed the teacher as a practical, thoughtful parent part of the time, with the other relationships (expert, guide, arbitër, and so on) being more connected to teaching and learning. A teacher building agency and building or maintaining an ideal classroom culture and creating and maintaining classroom routines can do those things because she has already built relationships with the children in the class, and the reverse is true as well. In reality, these themes interact endlessly.
In the final chapter, this study will be summarized and discussed, and the implications of the study will be detailed.
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND SUMMATION

Teaching is both craft and art. The effective teacher, as artist, assembles the frame and stretches the canvas by acquiring deeply held beliefs and commitments to a better future. She then creates that invisible, protective layer of gesso with years of schooling, hours of professional development, and study of her students, her students’ home cultures and communities, and her subject areas. Finally, just as the artist chooses the pretty colors that will be what everyone sees, so a good teacher chooses just which words to say so that a child learns: these pretty colors are what observers hear when they visit a classroom, and they are what children hear for six or seven hours a day, 180 days a year.

The topic for this study was the nature of teacher talk in intermediate classrooms in an exemplary urban school during classroom routines. A first glance would suggest that this in-between talk is ordinary, unremarkable, not worthy of study. The literature showed that the problem of what teachers say to children during the “in-between” times was not well studied, and so no judgment could be made of whether or not this aspect of teacher talk was important. One place to start learning what teachers are saying is in classrooms in exemplary schools, in order to learn from good examples. A primary goal of the study was to provide good examples of what to say to children during the routine of the classroom.

Through the methodology of an ethnographic study in third and fourth grade classrooms, in an urban elementary school exemplary for its test scores, the primary goal was met: now there are some examples of teacher talk recorded in print. In addition,
analysis of the teachers’ words revealed that teachers are teaching during the routine bits of the school day. The immersed perspective of the researcher revealed that teachers in exemplary schools use every moment of time that they have with children to effect learning. In addition to the content described by the state and city curriculum guides, these teachers work hard to teach “soft skills,” such as how to act in a group meeting, how to flexibly change behavior to match the norms of a group, how to take tests. In these classrooms, the children have real expertise; they are “smart” about their families and communities, about geodes and the weather, about supporting main ideas and how to get organized. They help each other because there is always someone you can be an expert for. They defend their opinions with words. The children live daily in a community that is preparing them for full participation as adults in a democracy. They are respected as children with a need for fun and liveliness in their classroom, and actively sought out to contribute to the class’s work, even when they do not hold a majority opinion.

In this chapter, the findings are discussed relative to several notable works in the literature of urban education in the United States today. These include Oyler’s work on shared authority, including her dissertation in 1990 and her further work described in an article in 1997. The concepts of agency and power are discussed. Next, a discussion of race and class issues is informed by The Dreamkeepers (Ladson-Billings, 1993), a study of exemplary teachers of Black children, and Silenced voices (Fine and Weis, 1993) an essay collection offering voice to those from disenfranchised groups who are usually not heard in our educational system. Then, the implications of the study for teachers, teacher-supervisors, teacher-educators, and executive leaders are suggested. Unanticipated
findings and the limitations of the study are described. Finally, recommendations are made for further study.

Discussion

*Shared Authority*

Oyler's (1993) framework of shared authority was based on an assumption that a "progressive" pedagogy was required if children were to be educated to be knowledge-producing members of an adult democratic society. Her framework was ultimately described metaphorically as a "dance" towards a practice of shared authority in that both teachers and children are experts, that teachers have to consciously decide over and over when to step into the dance and when to stay out, and that teachers have to practice providing children as many choices as possible in the classroom, which helps them to link their new school knowledge "steps" to their home and community dances. Teachers, like parents, understand that they will not always be there, and the more of the dance they can transfer, the better off the students will be.

Oyler wrestled with teacher practices which taught children in the working class to act unlike adults in the working class, i.e. like people in the middle class, people with voice and authority as a result of their privilege; society can visit unpleasant consequences on those who step out of their expected roles, especially children. She and the teacher in her study came down on the side of believing it was better for the children to have a year of the experience of shared authority rather than to have never had it. If the other teachers at WOWS are like the four teachers in this study, the children in this exemplary school will have the experience of seven years of exemplary teaching and many teachers who subscribe to a belief that children are already experts and capable.
All of Oyler's conditions for the construct of shared authority were met, with the practices in the observed classrooms, with the teachers' words to children, and with the teachers' philosophies and beliefs about teaching and learning. Children were frequently offered choices. Children could choose which weather phenomenon to study, how to act, to use a timer or write a note to help them to be more productive or effective, whether or not they would like something to eat. They were offered opportunities to make up anything they did poorly: positives could wash out negatives. Their home lives and experiences were validated while teachers also helped to induct them into the ways of success, from circling answers in math problems to addressing adults appropriately to the setting of school. Shared authority is normal in this exemplary school, and the teachers' talk assures that it is alive and constant.

_Agency and Power_

These constructs are a never-ending tangle leading around and to each other. What teachers say and mean can upend traditional notions of power in elementary classrooms. Building agency in children empowers them to act for themselves, to create their own meanings. The teachers in this study imbue their work in their classrooms with relationship building in order to be most effective; their relationship with their students is then meaning enough for children who will work diligently to please their teacher.

The teachers sometimes act as parents during the routine of their school days, as described in the first section of this chapter. This example of "caring" supports one of the teachers' goals, which is, that they all act as though they are "family" in the classroom. All of the teachers talked about building relationships with their students and their students' families, including manifesting respect for the children and for their home
culture. In fact, the evidence is that they do use their words to work at building and
building on their relationships with the children in their care.

All four teachers are clear that they have responsibilities and that not every
decision can be delegated to third and fourth graders. They are all willing to delegate as
much as possible, and they recognize their professional responsibilities to facilitate, to
create a safe and calm environment for learning, to plan well for each day. None of the
teachers seemed to construct their talk in a way to suggest a “power over” concept of
their role in the classroom. The evidence shows that the teachers use their words to
establish and maintain routines and to establish and maintain their ideal classroom
culture.

Finally, teachers overtly use their words to encourage a sense of agency, of
empowerment in children. They encourage children to build on the sense of community
in the classroom, to “phone a friend” when stuck on a problem. They use their words to
praise specific skills that children have acquired and to talk them through a mental
rehearsal of how things might go better. They encourage children to make choices,
constant pointing out the choices that children have while referencing the consequences
of the various choices. They use their words to teach children how their brains work; they
reassure children who are apprehensive about being able to take the next step, and they
share their planning power with the children by accepting children’s initiatives. The
teachers reference African-American and working class culture (Delpit, in Weis and
Fine, 1993) frequently and respectfully, the culture of most of the children in their
classes, for example using a silent “Harriet” as the classroom’s model of a leader who
made good choices and using both direct and indirect instructions to children.
Race and Class

Four White teachers teaching almost 100 children who are mostly (not all) Black and mostly (not all) poor, in an exemplary urban school: it would be irresponsible to ignore issues of race and class in the relationships between and among the children, their families and the teachers in this research context. The study did not start out with this focus, but sought instead to study the teacher talk in an exemplary urban school. It happened that in this case, the majority of the children in the exemplary urban school are Black, and the teachers are not.

Given the results of this school, and the preponderance of White teachers in large urban districts (see Figures 2 and 3 in Chapter Three), it is heartening to note that White teachers can be effective with Black students.

Dreamkeepers?

In her landmark study The Dreamkeepers, Ladson-Billings (1994) defines “culturally relevant teaching” as “a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes” (p. 17). Teachers target excellence by conducting or coaching students, working with the culture of their students and not against it. Ladson-Billings spends an entire chapter of her book discussing how culturally relevant teachers structure social relations in their classrooms along a family model, with connections that go beyond the walls of the classroom. Knowledge is shared, not owned only by the teacher to be imparted to the students, and teachers expect students to make decisions, to make choices, to work together as a community to solve problems that range from social issues to math. Ladson-Billings further cites the “ethos of caring” (p. 156) central to Afrocentric
feminist epistemology, supported by the Black churches, and speculates that the reason
the teachers in her study all exhibited the crucial ethos of caring is that the majority of her
teacher-participants were Black, and so “set the tone” (p. 156) derived from their own
culture. A similar ethos of caring is cited in Collins (2003) among the residents of rural
communities, in which all of these participants were raised. Ladson-Billings recognized
that the majority of teachers in the American educational system are White, and
concluded her work with a call to capture best practice so that there is a “knowledge base
of effective pedagogical practice for African-American students” (p. 154).

If the four teachers in this study had read Ladson-Billings’ work, the day before
their interviews, they could not have been more congruent with her prescriptions for the
kind of teachers whom Ladson-Billings named as “Dreamkeepers” for African-American
children in the late twentieth century. None of the four teachers in this study had read this
work recently, and not all of them were familiar with her work. However, they speak of
creating a “community of learners” in their classrooms, of “establishing good
relationships” with their students, of “being a family” within the classroom, and they use
their words to build that ideal culture and to establish those relationships. All of the
teachers emphasize to children that the children are continually “making choices,” and
that they can always make different choices. None of the teachers can describe African-
American children as a group, for two reasons, they say: one is that the children are all so
individually different, and the other is that they have never taught a group of anyone else
except African-American children, so they have no basis for comparison of any one
group to any other. The one exception is one teacher who suggests that it is more difficult
to establish trust with African-American families when one is White, because of our
country’s racist history, and she feels she has to earn that trust by doing what she says she is going to do, with regard to both children and parents.

Most of Ladson-Billings research (1994) focused on the qualities of the teachers who had been identified as “good” teachers of children of color; the teachers in this study had those same qualities. For example, these teachers exhibited an ethos of caring with their efforts made to build and build on relationships, to act as parents for the seven hours a day that the children are in their care, and by constructing and ordering the classroom agendas so that children felt safe, worked hard, and felt treasured as children. This study takes a next step, in describing how teachers can show their third and fourth graders that they care, with careful and thoughtful choices of what they say.  

_Silenced Voices?_

In their study of 1993, Fine and Weis collected a series of essays on the practices, and consequences, of silencing in public schools and introduced essays giving voice to those who were being silenced in the public school systems here in the United States. Cummins’ essay (in Fine and Weis, 1993) introduces a framework with the central tenet that students from “dominated” social groups are “empowered” or “disabled” (p. 104) as a direct result of their interactions with educators in the public schools. He suggests that educators move away from creating instructional dependence and use instead a “reciprocal interaction model” (p. 111) in which talking and writing are the primary means to learning, not listening.

With this study in mind, it is notable that the teachers speak in their interviews about “empowering” children to make choices. The teachers expect the children to have opinions and to defend their opinions with evidence, to counter negative actions with
their own reparative positive actions, to use what they know in order to venture into what they do not know. The children’s home and community cultures are respected and referenced by the teachers as they teach the children to flex among cultures at will. They work hard to move children away from dependence on their single authority as teachers, suggesting that children ask each other for expertise, for example. The teachers consciously try to talk less and have children talk more. These practices meet Cummins’ recommendation, which is that teachers refrain from creating dependence in the learners on the teacher.

Delpit (1988) proposed a concept she calls “the culture of power” in an effort to advance ideas from Black educators into mainstream understanding of how best to educate Black children. For example, Delpit speaks about the differences in oral style among many Black and working class parents compared to many White and middle class families: the use of direct (“Go sit down at the table”) as contrasted with indirect (“Would you like to join us at the table?”) instructions to children. The teachers in this study use both kinds of instructions, sometimes within a few breaths, changing their direction style to meet all of the needs of the children in their classes while also teaching children to translate between the two styles. Delpit, in fact, recommends this kind of flexibility in teaching practice, stating that, “the actual practice of good teachers of all colors typically incorporates a range of pedagogical orientations” (p. 282).

Implications of Findings

For Children

Although children were not the focus of this study, their presence is understood during every bit of recorded teacher talk. The children of the teachers in this study
represent urban children in the United States, some of whom live with every social ill and family difficulty imaginable, and some of whom live in middle class well-functioning families. If today’s urban children are to have a chance to contribute in their future adult world, they must develop that critical belief in their own perceived control, or agency. This is facilitated if teachers treat children kindly and thoughtfully and teach them well. If children have seven hours a day during which they have their basic needs attended to by a teacher standing in for their parents, and then have their focus drawn to their own ability and capability, they can achieve academically on a level with children who live in more privileged communities. The World of Wonder School, in this study, and other singular exemplars around the country, prove this every day.

For Teachers

Teachers are encouraged to borrow a small voice recorder and to listen to themselves. Although all of the teachers in this study work in an exemplary school, and are being held up as an example of how to speak to children, they all cringed when they heard their recorded voices at first. Teachers are encouraged to listen for culture-shifting in their directions, such as the teachers in this study do. The direct manner of giving directions often feels rude to middle-class teachers, in this researcher’s experience, and teachers will need encouragement and justification for changing their manner of speaking, and for flexibly moving back and forth between different manners of speaking. Teachers are also encouraged to listen to how often they speak to children in complete sentences and with literature-correct grammar, so that their students have more opportunities to hear spoken Standard English. Children are far more experienced at learning from the spoken word, since they start learning this way from birth, and should
be given as many opportunities as possible to work from this learning strength. Teachers would also be well-advised to listen to how much they talk, and how much their children in class talk, and to listen to what they say, all of the time, not only during instruction of mandated curriculum.

For Teacher Supervisors

Most teachers are people of good will, in this researcher’s experience. However, they are not always fully conscious of how they sound when they speak to the children in their care, nor how important it is to choose one’s words wisely when addressing young children. In this researcher’s experience, an annual teacher observation might include the supervisor writing direct quotations of teacher talk, along with the usual observations, and later, in conference with the teacher, reporting back to teachers what they have said, with constructive criticism. Teacher-supervisors will also want to provide overt instruction to teachers in urban classrooms with regard to the likely culture of children’s homes, along with suggestions for culture-shifting in language. Teacher-supervisors further have the responsibility to observe and critique and coach teachers about everything they say to the children in their care, not only what teachers say when they are teaching content and skills. The ordinary, in-between bits of speech can powerfully set the culture of a classroom and affect the success of the children in the classroom.

For Teacher Education Programs

At one point during a committee meeting, this researcher was queried by her chair with regard to teacher education programs. The chair is a nationally recognized expert in nursing education, and asked if teachers in training receive specific education in how to speak to children. Her experience is that nurses receive specific training in how to
communicate with patients. No teacher training programs known to the researcher or her committee member have a course in teacher-student communication. One clear recommendation of this researcher is that such courses are needed.

Teacher education programs need to provide direct instruction to pre-service teachers about how to communicate to children. Clear communication requires knowledge of children’s ages and stages and the cultures of their homes and communities, in addition to knowledge of self and one’s goals and expectations for the children in one’s care. All of the teachers in this study wished they had learned something, anything, about urban children or African-American children in their teacher preparation programs. In other communities, this researcher can imagine that those adjectives might be replaced by, for example, “rural,” “suburban,” “Hispanic,” “Asian-American,” or “Native American.” In addition, children at different ages must be spoken to differently: the extreme example would be the way one addresses a classroom full of kindergartners compared to the way one addresses a classroom full of college seniors. There are many subtle shifts along the years that should occur in the ways teachers speak to children, and again, overt instruction in these different strategies would be helpful, rather than, as this researcher, and the teachers in this study experienced, leaving these strategies to the pre-service teacher to infer from an Educational Psychology course.

For Executive Leaders

It is tempting, in the world of accountability as measured by standardized tests, to concentrate attention and resources only on the teaching work towards those very tests. In fact, educational institutions have far more responsibility than that. They can, if teachers and administrators are informed and practice their art and craft thoughtfully, help
children to move from working class socioeconomic status into middle class socioeconomic status, by teaching them the practices of thought and habits that will assure them the opportunity for full participation, while holding high expectations for their students’ achievements. They can also insist that classrooms model an ideal community for children who are expected to contribute to a complex society some day, and model these practices in their own work with teachers, teacher supervisors, and teacher educators.

Unanticipated Findings

The research commenced using a model of separate and distinct classroom routines or the teaching of content. Routines and content seemed to alternate and exist independently, in the imagination of researchers. It was immediately obvious that, in these four classrooms, there is no separation mid-year that is visible to an observer. Routine and content are completely enmeshed with each other. Teachers move from routines into content and back again quickly, sometimes within a given breath, as do students. The four teachers plan their classroom time tightly, although the atmosphere does not seem rushed while one is immersed in it; rather, it seems lively and fun and interesting.

The researcher expected that it would take some time when children arrived in the morning for the children to begin doing content work. Instead, she found that almost all of the children in all four classrooms unpack their book bags, put their coats and book bags away, and start to engage in the work of the day within a few minutes of arriving. In fact, a child who did not have a book bag unpacked within five minutes had a private conference with the teacher in order to help the child shift that behavior and become
more organized; an intervention was proposed by the teacher and adopted by the child. It is not unusual to see a child doing a morning math problem while eating breakfast, much as middle-class American adults read the newspaper with their breakfast. In fact, children were praised in one class by their teacher for doing exactly this. It might be noted that, in *The Color of Water: A Black Man’s Tribute to His White Mother*, McBride (1996) tells the story of his childhood and the remarkable achievements of his nine siblings raised in Harlem. He speaks about his mother finding no excuse to not do homework, including hunger.

In these classrooms, children do the normal fool-around, silly things children do, while getting out notebooks, sharpening pencils, and doing that first task of the day, usually called "morning work", and they also move purposefully through the organizing tasks they are doing while they joke and talk and tease. The few children who struggle with starting the day, and who dawdle, either have reminders or in two cases in the classes that were observed, have timers that help them to stay on track.

For the purposes of this study, the distinction between routine and content was maintained. The analysis was conducted on teacher talk that involved routine and was not conducted on teacher talk that was instructive in content. It is worth noting that the amount of reinforcement provided by exemplary teachers with their inclusion of content in so many moments of the school day is extraordinary: no opportunity to teach, reinforce, or re-teach is missed by these teachers.

Limitations

This study examined the teacher talk of four White third and fourth grade teachers in an exemplary urban school of mostly Black and mostly working class children during
classroom routines. The school is a public school in a large urban district, and uses the professional development services and educational practices of a national education reform organization, Expeditionary Learning Schools. The study examined teaching practice in a composite construct, rather than provide description of individual outstanding teachers, with the assumption that all four teachers contribute to their schools’ test results in the standardized tests given throughout third and fourth grades in New York State. As such, it is not an exhaustive study of every teacher utterance of any particular teacher. Such studies could also be immeasurably valuable to the literature.

The study did not consider the model of stand-alone exemplary teachers in otherwise “ordinary” urban schools, schools which do not achieve high standardized test results overall compared to similar schools. The study also did not use the model of an exemplary teacher as defined by Ladson-Billings (1993), in her landmark study, in which she worked with respect to the views of parents and sought the counsel of parents in the community in order to determine which particular teachers were good teachers of African-American children.

The study also is limited to teacher talk towards third and fourth graders. It should not be assumed that students who are younger or older, who are therefore in different developmental stages, should be spoken to identically.

Recommendations

More study is recommended on this topic. Because of the limitations of this study, there is not good description of teachers talking to children in suburban, rural, private or charter schools during classroom routine, and therefore, no basis for comparison or discussion yet. In addition, the teachers in this study were all White women teaching
children who were mostly African American and mostly from working class families. Further study could focus on teachers of color teaching children of color in an exemplary school, and the reverse, i.e. teachers of color teaching White children in an exemplary school, in addition to teachers who are men, Hispanic, and so on. Such study could provoke healthy discussion of the goals we have for children’s education in our society, and how best we might meet those goals.

Conclusion

The teachers in this study present a complicated, layered data set of teacher talk to the children in their care. They shift from direct to indirect instruction within a few breaths, providing a familiar oral style for all of the children in their diverse classes. They move from being parents to being experts in math to being arbiters of classroom culture moment to moment. They are passionate about their care for their children and their respect for all that their children bring to the classroom, and they plan to be influential in their students' lives, not just a one-year experience. They love being in the classroom and love to have fun with their students; they also are highly task-directed, using every possible minute to teach and re-teach and reinforce. These findings argue for the importance of teacher talk during classroom routine in addition to the importance of teacher talk during instruction in content.

This study has provided examples and description of teacher talk during classroom routines in four classrooms in an exemplary urban school. The study has shown that this previously little-studied aspect of classroom interaction is actually a layered, complex and interesting entry into learning how teachers in an exemplary school teach the children in their care. These data are a rich source of information about how
teachers get extraordinary results from ordinary children, by teaching children far more than any state curriculum has ever described. Teachers interested in becoming teacher-artists would be well-advised to examine their own attitudes towards the children in their care, to consciously respect the children in their care, and to learn about the home cultures that their children represent so as to be able to relate new learning and learning strategies to their children’s lived experiences.

The story is widely told that, once upon a time, the wonderful children’s book author and illustrator Ezra Jack Keats was speaking with a novelist at a writers’ conference, and the novelist bragged about how many thousands of words he wrote a week. Keats responded with something like, “I only write sixty words a year, but I choose each one very carefully.” Given the weight of the burden placed on teachers, teachers likewise are well advised to choose each word they say to children, very carefully.
REFLECTION

Like many parents in all times, my parents made sacrifices so that I and my sisters and brother could attend Catholic school for the first eight years. They had faith that, despite large classes, the teachers in the Catholic schools would do well by us. They were right. I still remember every teacher I had, from kindergarten through eighth grade. They are, in order, Mrs. Spears, Mrs. Mackey, Sister Helen Mary Reynolds, O.S.F, Sister Mary Bruno, O.S.F., Miss Zimbald, Sister Mary Reparata O.S.F., Sister Margaret St. Francis, O.S.F. (for choir), Sister Kenneth Agnes, S.U.S.C., Sister Claire Lucille, S.U.S.C., Sister Thomas Mary, S.U.S.C., Sister Bernadette Patrick, S.U.S.C., and Sister Joseph James, S.U.S.C. (We had two for several grades.) Although teachers were free to use corporal punishment in the sixties, and stories of nuns who terrorized children are legion, I had “nice” nuns in two different Catholic schools, St. Benedict’s in Philadelphia, Pa. and Sacred Heart in Mt. Ephraim, N.J. My earliest teachers managed huge classes of diverse children: my first grade had 72 children, including children who were Black and White and recent immigrants, children from two parent homes and children from an orphanage. I am lucky to still be in communication with Mrs. Ann Mackey who taught me to read in the first grade in a reading group of over 30 children, and she has confirmed that first grade class size for me! These women managed those classes with kindness and firmness. They taught every subject, and all day long. They went out to recess with us and jumped Double-dutch rope with us sometimes. I suspect that they also leaned on a lot of private prayer. I am still fascinated at the magic they all
wrought: teaching us to read and write and love poetry, and to be kind and to have self-discipline and to get some exercise, to add and subtract and change decimals to fractions, to be curious about animals and world history and famous people and art and music. They did all of this mostly with their words, which were such a contrast to childhood playground taunts; the 1960's were pre-technology except for the occasional film strip, and the schools had no "specials subject" teachers or classrooms like today. I hope this work has in some small measure added to our body of knowledge about those magic teachers' words.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: WORLD OF WONDER SCHOOL MODEL CITIZEN CREW PLEDGE

We the crew of World of Wonder School
Make this pledge for all model citizens.
We should all give service
And have compassion for others.
We will celebrate our discoveries
And wonderful ideas.
Through reflections we will learn
From our successes and failures.
While collaborating we will show caring
For diverse people and our natural world.
We are all responsible for our own learning.
Our education is our future.
APPENDIX B: INTRODUCTORY LETTER TO TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

50 Lost Mountain Trail
Rochester, New York 14625
20 January 2008

Dear Prospective Teacher-Participant:

I am currently a doctoral researcher at St. John Fisher College.

From my visits to your classroom this past year, you know that my research interest is in the way that teachers speak to children during the ordinary times of the school day. I am particularly interested in studying this phenomenon in depth in an exemplary school, which is one of many accurate descriptors for World of Wonder School.

I plan to study and write about two to four teachers. I am originally asking four of you, the two third and the two fourth grade teachers, if you would be willing to participate in my study.

Participation would include the following:
1) Reading and signing the consent form
2) Allowing me to visit in your classroom for a total of two days, probably parts of days spread out over about two months, in early 2008.
3) During my visit, allowing me to take notes while you either carry or wear a small voice recorder.
4) Subsequent to my visits, meeting with me once or twice for interviews (also recorded) that will probably take about one to two hours apiece. I am happy to make these interviews happen at a time and place of your convenience, for example at a coffee shop on a Saturday afternoon, if that is preferable to after-school time. During these interviews, I will ask clarification questions about what I heard you say in your classroom, and also ask about your beliefs about teaching and students in general, and your current class in particular.

My goal is to provide rich description of how exemplary teachers speak to children in an urban school that is doing well. From my visits to your class, I think you know I admire what you accomplish with children. I am hoping to capture the subtlety of what you do in the ordinary part of the day in a way that could be helpful to other teachers who might wish to emulate you.

A full consent form is attached.

Thank you for your consideration!

Karen M. Sangmeister
Doctoral Researcher
St. John Fisher College

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APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM OFFERED TO TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

St. John Fisher College

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of study: The Nature of Teacher Talk during Classroom Routine in Intermediate Classrooms in an Exemplary School

Name(s) of researcher(s): Karen M. Sangmeister (Ed.D. researcher, St. John Fisher College)

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Mary Collins Phone for further information: (585) 385-8397

Purpose of study: to learn how teachers in an exemplary elementary school speak to children during the routine of the school day

Approval of study: This study has been reviewed and approved by the St. John Fisher College Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Place of study: World of Wonder School, Rochester City School District

Length of participation: 2-4 days of taping, 2-3 follow-up interviews

Risks and benefits: The expected risks and benefits of participation in this study are explained below:

The benefit to teaching in general is that we can learn more in-depth what teachers say to children in classrooms in an exemplary school. The benefit to the participant is to enjoy being part of a study examining best practice in the profession, in part setting the standard of how teachers should speak to children.

The risk is that it can be a bit uncomfortable having a researcher in the classroom, and some people are uncomfortable hearing their own voice, recorded. It may also be annoying to have a tape recorder in a pocket or in hand, and the children in your class may be a little sillier knowing that they are being taped that day.

The researcher expects to thank all of the participants by name in her dissertation acknowledgements.

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy:

The recordings will be analyzed initially this coming year. They may be further analyzed at any time in the next five years. Recordings and transcripts will be locked in a filing cabinet in the researcher's home. All recordings and transcripts will be destroyed within five years.
The participants will be referred to by a pseudonym of the participant's choosing in the dissertation and in any further writing done by the researcher.

**Your rights:** As a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to you.
5. Be informed of the results of the study.

I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study.

Print name (Participant)  Signature
Date

Print name (Investigator)  Signature
Date

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above. If you experience emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, please contact the Office of Academic Affairs at 385-8034 or the Wellness Center at 385-8280 for appropriate referrals.
APPENDIX D: TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The questions which are not cited were the researcher’s own.

1. Tell me something about your background. Where and when were you educated? When and where did you begin teaching? (Ladson-Billings, 1994)


3. Every class seems to have a group personality. How would you describe this year’s class compared to other classes of the same grade that you’ve had?

4. I’ve noticed that the majority of your students are African-American. Can you think of any characteristics that African-American students might have as a group? (adapted from Ladson-Billings, 1994)

5. What is your philosophy of classroom management? How would you describe the teacher’s role in your classroom? How would you describe your students’ role?

6. What do you wish had been a part of your training that would have helped you to be a better teacher? Are there things you wish you had known about urban children? About African-American children? (adapted from Ladson-Billings, 1994)

7. How would you describe your relationship with the parents of your students? How do the parents contribute to their children’s education? (adapted from Ladson-Billings, 1994)

8. How do you think your students’ education compares to the education of their age peers in suburban or rural schools? (adapted from Ladson-Billings, 1994)
9. What do you think are the essential qualities and skills that you have, that contribute to most strongly to your success as a teacher?

10. Have you thought about the way you speak to children during the routine parts of your school day? What are your goals for morning meeting? Transition times? End of day rituals?

11. Is there anything else you would like me to know?
APPENDIX E: TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

The teacher talk was transcribed on the breath unit; a new line indicates that the teacher seems to have taken a breath.

In addition, Jeffersonian notation, according to Transana ©, was used. Examples include:

- ( ) empty parentheses indicate that the speech was inaudible or unable to be decoded.
- CAPS indicate louder speech.
- A capital letter starting a line indicates a new thought. If the line starts with a lowercase letter, the thought seems to be continued from the previous breath.
- ? indicates that the voice’s pitch rose.
- An exclamation point indicates emphasis. If there is no exclamation point, a vocalization such as “Shh” is not emphasized
- Repeated letters indicate that the speech lingered on the sound represented by the letter.
- Vocalization that does not seem to be a word (e.g. “um,” “Grr”) is written as close to a phonetic representation as possible.
- Speech by someone other than the teacher-participants is indicated in parentheses, e.g. (child(ren) speak).
- Ellipses (…) are used when words were said but not written down within a breath unit in the transcription.