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## Teacher-child interaction in the preschool classroom : gender equity in context.

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TEACHER-CHILD INTERACTION IN THE PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM:  
GENDER EQUITY IN CONTEXT

A Dissertation Presented

by

HIND R. MARI

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 2000

Education

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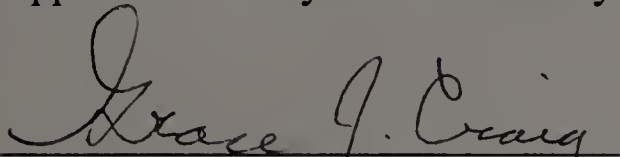
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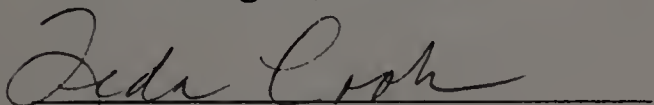
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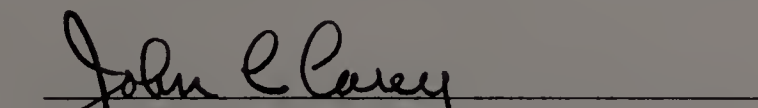
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## DEDICATION

To my mother Hiam Jarrar and the memory of my father Rashid Mari, who brought us up equally, taught me about gender equity, and planted in me the seeds of understanding social justice; my loving husband Abed Jaradat, who is patiently helping me to bring up our two children equally; and to all teachers who strive for gender equity in their classrooms.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ABSTRACT

TEACHER-CHILD INTERACTION IN THE PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM:  
GENDER EQUITY IN CONTEXT

MAY 2000

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This study has investigated the quality and quantity of interactions between teachers and children at three preschool settings to find out whether these teachers interacted differently with girls and boys. The study aimed at understanding how teachers integrated gender equity as a value into their other values through curriculum, classroom management and discipline, conflict resolution, their use of language, discussions with children, and the rest of their daily interactions with the children. Three preschool classrooms were chosen to be studied in depth. The setting of the study was three schools in a rural college community in New England. The preschools included one that is privately owned, another run by a non-profit community organization, and a third that belongs to a prestigious private college. The qualitative data collection process included



three components: Systematic observations and qualitative field notes; videotaping; and exit interviews with the teachers. The researcher spent an average of thirty five hours in each classroom, over the course of seven months. Data analysis revealed that for most of the time teachers managed to incorporate equity into their daily interactions with the children. At the same time, all teachers had a tendency to differential treatment of boys and girls in the area of discipline. The language used referring to animals, proved to be stereotyped in two of the centers. The data revealed also that when teachers used well planned curriculum, and effective classroom management, they provided a classroom atmosphere that fostered girls' and boys' growth as individuals and as community members equally. On the other hand, all children suffered when teachers were ill prepared, or had poor classroom management. The study has implications for teacher education programs. Teacher effectiveness training, that includes gender equity, can be an essential part of pre-service and in-service training.

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## GLOSSARY

Boy Toys - will be used to describe toys that are considered appropriate for boys, from western societal point of view.

Cross-Sex (Gender) Behavior- used when someone acts in a way that is stereotyped as appropriate for members of the other sex.

Equal Framework - to distribute time, interaction, instruction, and resources equally among all the students (Streitmatter, 1994).

Equitable Framework - to work on enhancing the opportunities of a group of students, usually females, that is acknowledged by the teacher as "at risk for not achieving as well as the other group" (Streitmatter, 1994, p. 9). The teacher using this framework might allocate more resources to this group to improve the outcome of their achievement. (Compare this expression with "sex-affirmative").

Gender and Sex - these two terms will be used interchangeably throughout the text referring to a person's gender; female or male.

Gender Inequity - treating males and females differently based on their gender.

Girl Toys - will be used to describe toys that are considered appropriate for girls, from a western societal point of view.

Sex-Affirmative - used in the same sense as "Equitable Framework" (Schau & Tittle, 1985).

Sex Fair - to show both females and males in various roles that are socially assigned to members of one gender only.

Sex Role - refers to "constellations of characteristics that various cultures attribute to individuals according to sex" (Schau & Tittle, 1985, p. 78).

Sex Role Knowledge - the knowledge about the sex role stereotypes that are accepted culturally.

Sex Role Stereotypes - refer to strict attitudes and behaviors regarding sex roles, and the belief that these roles are true for both sexes in all cultures (Schau & Tittle, 1985).

Sex Stereotyped and Sex Typed - will both be used to describe attitudes, activities, materials, and settings that rely heavily on sex role stereotypes.

Sexism - "discrimination on the basis of sex, especially the oppression of women by men" (Collins English Dictionary, 1985, p.1336).

Female and male pronouns will be used alternately throughout the text instead of using "he/she".

## CHAPTER 1

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### Introduction to the Study and Statement of the Problem

As part of the feminist movement in the 1970s, gender equity at schools became an important subject to discuss and study. Many researchers investigated female versus male images in children's literature, basal readers, and other textbooks, documenting the discrimination against females. Data suggests that females were either absent, or marginalized in the books. Researchers also started giving more attention to what was going on in the classrooms, and in schools in general (Sadker, et al., 1989a).

In 1972, several aspects of gender equity gained the force of law with the passage of Title IX (Sadker and Sadker, 1982). This law has made it illegal for any educational program receiving federal funding to discriminate based on the person's gender. The law prohibits discrimination in "admissions, recruitment, educational programs or activities, facilities, course offerings, counseling or appraisal, financial assistance, marital or parental status, athletics, and employment" (Schmuck, et al., 1985). Failure to comply with Title IX can cause programs to lose their federal funding. The law does not cover all aspects of gender equity. For example, critics of the law argue that it does not specify textbooks and teaching materials to be free from bias, nor does it "focus on possible sources of sex inequities in achievement" ( Stockard, et al., 1980, p.186).

The AAUW report (1992), states that researchers who spent six months visiting schools and interviewing administrators, found that the government did not actively enforce the law. They observed many violations of the regulations, especially in higher



math and science classes, and in athletics. In many districts, the researchers observed minimal implementation of the regulations. Researchers indicated that many educators still do not understand gender equity issues well (AAUW, 1992). Thorne mentions that a second-grade teacher commented on the researcher's interest in gender issues, "They're just kids" (Thorne, 1993, p.160)! This comment indicates that this teacher does not believe that children might be affected by gender socialization. Such observations and comments make it important to try to understand this issue better.

McCormick (1994), argues that differential treatment is still prevalent in schools, and that the last reform movement that started in 1983, has not given any attention to gender equity. The author cautions against the language used in the reform reports which considered "excellence" and "equity" as two exclusive educational goals. McCormick urges educators to provide educational excellence and equity to all students, in order to achieve schools that are more multicultural than the current schools. Sadker and colleagues (1989a), also found that between 1983 and 1987, journal articles and reform reports did not include the issue of equity in their discussions.

Thorne (1993) states that the research that has been conducted during the last twenty years as a result of feminist theory, has not been extended enough to include children. Bruce (1985), debates the importance of early childhood education and discusses how early years are crucial in the lives of young learners, as they build a foundation for the process of their future schooling. Bruce also contends that it is an "often under-rated area of education" (p. 49). Bruce suggests that many educators outside this field do not know much about what is going on in early childhood classes. She

attributes this phenomenon, in part to sexism; this is an area of education that is reserved for women mostly. Hence, it is not valued as it should be by teachers of grade school level.

By the time children go to preschool, they would have started acquiring the stereotyped attitudes and behaviors regarding girls and boys (Edwards & Ramsey, 1986). The learned stereotypes affect the process of acquiring sex-role identity by children, and they are strong to a point that even preschoolers can use them to interpret the behaviors of infants (Ruble, 1988).

Bruce (1985), reports on an intervention program in Australia that was carried on in the 1970s, and succeeded in increasing the awareness of teachers regarding gender inequity in the classroom, and encouraged them to reflect on their own behaviors. The teachers participating in the project were given control over their own classrooms, by being the ones responsible for the process of observation and reflection in their classrooms. The observations led to better understanding of the students' views of themselves. Teachers, consequently, modified their own practices, and developed more equitable curriculum that promoted less stereotyped views by both boys and girls. The researchers found that even after an intervention program to change students' views of themselves, girls showed less tendency than boys to change their views. They still used their own experiences to guide their choices. This finding led researchers to take into account different factors that might affect girls' views of themselves. Classroom dynamics was one of the factors. The teachers were encouraged to intervene in children's play to ensure equal access and extension of girls' range of activity. Further observation

and reflection helped teachers discover that even that intervention was not enough. They also recognized the interaction patterns between boys and girls in the classroom. The fact that the teachers themselves were the primary investigators in that project was innovative, and encouraged them to keep on reflecting on their own discoveries and implementing needed changes in their classrooms.

Mesor and Sikes (1992) argue that comprehensive understanding of what goes on in schools is necessary before both teachers and students are encouraged to become critical thinkers in gender issues. Ebbeck (1985) stresses the importance of studying the teacher-child interaction as a corner stone in raising the teachers' consciousness, and in promoting their use of more effective teaching strategies. Sadker and colleagues (1989a) argue that teachers themselves have been socialized to have different, stereotyped expectations of girls and boys. McCormick (1994) suggests that many teachers tend to repeat their previous experiences, as students, in their own classrooms. Sadker and Sadker (1982) argue that when teachers have different expectations of boys and girls, their behavior with students will reflect that difference, and consequently affect children's behaviors, as well as, achievements.

Numerous researchers have reported the success of training programs for teachers that aim at changing their stereotyped attitudes and behaviors, by increasing their awareness and providing them with tools for change (AAUW, 1992; Ebbeck, 1985; Sadker & Sadker, 1986, 1994; Streitmatter, 1994; Thorne, 1993). Getting teachers to reflect on their own teaching practices is a key factor in the success of any training the teacher will go through (Ebbeck, 1985; Streitmatter, 1994). Research reviews present

ample evidence that students who are exposed to gender-equitable teaching, curriculum, and material are more likely to have more flexible, and balanced sex-role attitudes, as well as accurate sex-role knowledge. They are also more likely to behave in a way similar to what the material contained (Bruce, 1985; Carpenter, et al., 1986; Ebbeck, 1985; Katz & Walsh, 1991; Koblinsky & Sugawara, 1984; Lewis, 1991; Scott & Schau, 1985).

Despite the availability of some training programs, and the growing awareness among some teachers, Sadker and Sadker (1982), and Streitmatter (1994) report that sex-stereotyped attitudes and behaviors are still pervasive among children, even those who have non sexist parents or teachers. The reason behind this phenomenon is because the children are still surrounded by stronger messages from their books, the media, and other members of the society.

Among those who are already involved in gender equity issues, there is a debate over the use of either "equal" or "equitable" treatment of boys and girls in the classroom (Streitmatter, 1994), which Schau and Tittle (1985), refer to as "sex-fair" and "sex-affirmative". They use the term "sex-equitable" to include both kinds of treatment. Some educators believe that teachers supporting equal opportunities in the classroom will distribute their instruction, interaction, and time equally among all students in the classroom. The stress in this approach is on the process of teaching. It implies that when students start with equal opportunities, their achievements will reflect individual differences rather than biased treatment. Supporters of this approach caution against reversing inequity in the classroom by using equitable framework. On the other hand, supporters of an equitable framework, stress the importance of outcome. They argue that

since a group of children might be "at risk for not achieving as well as the other group" (Streitmatter, 1994, p.9), it is justifiable to purposefully work at enhancing the possibilities for the group at risk. Streitmatter (1994), discusses the problems with each approach. Using the equal approach may not help to balance the gender inequality that is widely spread in society. Nonetheless, using the equitable approach might be difficult for the teacher who has been trained to stress the importance of input more than the outcome. At the same time, there is the risk of false, or incorrect assessment by the teacher of students' needs, leading to reverse sexism in the case of using the equitable framework.

Streitmatter presents data from teachers who used one framework over the other, or a combination of both depending on the situation on hand. The author suggests that when teachers decide to implement one approach over the other, it is helpful to be aware of their own views on both approaches, in order to provide a classroom environment that addresses the issue of gender equity.

The body of research available on preschool years proves that this is an important period in the child's life in terms of forming the basic social knowledge. Children at this age are constructing their knowledge in concepts like gender identity, sex-role knowledge and stereotypes, and general self concepts. Children interact with the environment around them and observe carefully while constructing their social knowledge, and their teacher's behaviors are among the influential factors in constructing that knowledge (Edwards & Ramsey, 1986). Researchers have reported extensively on teachers' gender-biased behaviors at the grade school level (AAUW, 1992; Lewis, 1991; Sadker, et. al., 1989a; Streitmatter, 1994). At the same time, a thorough review of the literature revealed that

there are very few qualitative studies that have been conducted to study the preschool classroom to help us understand the fabric of teachers' behaviors and attitudes. This dissertation is a study of preschool classroom interactions in depth, in order to reach to a better understanding of teachers' attitudes, values and their interaction patterns with children, as well as preschool gender socialization process.

### General Research Questions and Overview of the Design and Methods

This study has investigated the quality and quantity of interactions between teachers and children at three preschool settings to find out whether these teachers interacted differently with girls and boys. The study looked at various interactions to see if teachers distributed their attention equally between boys and girls, and if interactions were of the same nature with girls and boys. Discipline, the teacher's tone of voice, and other nonverbal communications are important aspects of interaction that were observed. In one of the classrooms, management was an important and troubling issue for teachers. Observing discipline became more prevalent than looking for gender equity or the lack of it in that particular classroom. The same investigation was applied to teachers' conflict resolution strategies. Verbal interruption was looked at from two angles: Who did the teacher interrupt? And: Who did the teacher allow more to interrupt her? The use of language by the teacher was also studied; did he use the male pronoun as a generic one? Helping behavior was investigated in light of child's gender, and was differentiated from "short circuiting" the child, which means doing things for her; a category that was dropped from analysis due to the lack of its occurrence. The ways teachers at different sites engaged the children in intellectual discussions proved to be an important aspect in

two of the classrooms, and was analyzed. Teachers' praise to children was studied as well. The study also looked at teachers' comments on children's appearances, as well as the occurrences of physical touch in the classroom. This included giving hugs, kisses, pats, and physically removing a child from an area.

#### Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to explore teacher-child interactions in three different preschool classrooms, using qualitative methods. The study looked at the various interaction patterns in each of the classrooms, and whether teachers used different patterns of interaction with children based on their gender. This aspect of the classroom environment was chosen because it can be, along with the use of language, one of the more subtle and unconscious factors affecting the classroom atmosphere and consequently, children's attitudes. Teachers can hold different expectations of girls and boys, use different tones of voice when talking to children based on their gender, respond differently to girls and boys, and interact more with boys without being aware of their own behavior (Sadker & Sadker 1986, 1993).

A subsidiary purpose of the study was to understand more fully the role that teachers of young children play as socialization agents. Children spend a certain number of hours every week with their preschool teachers, whose values, attitudes, use of language, interaction styles, curriculum presentation, and the materials they use in the classroom, including children's literature and the decoration of the room, affect young children's construction of their social knowledge. It is hoped that this research will contribute to the small number of studies in this field that target this age group

specifically. Most studies that address classroom interaction, target different levels of grade school and not the preschool. There has been some evidence, though, that the same type of interactions take place at the preschool classroom (e.g. Fagot, 1984; Gelb, 1989; Greenberg, 1985; Hendrick & Stange, 1989; Lewis, 1991; Lyons & Serbin, 1986; Roopnarine, 1984).

The goal of the study was to understand what went on in these three preschool classrooms through heavy, thick description, which shows the complexities of interactions and the various factors affecting the setting of the study. Videotaping was used to validate the data (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

#### Significance of the Study

Locke and colleagues (1987) discuss the rationale of doing a study. According to the authors, to prove the significance of any study, the researcher must demonstrate that her study will contribute to the knowledge in the field, and/or to the practice by offering a useful possibility of application. Marshall & Rossman (1989) discuss the importance of contributing to knowledge and to practice, and add a third important domain; the ability to affect policy making. They argue that in a field like education, that is mainly applied, proving that the research will contribute to the three domains has a special importance.

It is hoped that this research study will contribute to all three domains. As mentioned earlier, the body of research available mostly addresses gender equity and discrimination issues at the elementary and secondary grade levels, or higher education and employment. At the same time, Thorne (1993), claims that not many researchers have studied the attitudes and behaviors of teachers and administrators in terms of gender.



It is hoped that this research study will contribute to knowledge in this field. At the same time, it offers some helpful tools to interested teachers to look critically at their own teaching, and reflect on their practices in order to implement any needed changes to achieve more equitable classrooms. This will be a contribution to the practice in the field.

McCormick (1994) argues that teachers are an important factor in sex equity and discrimination issues in school. They are not, however, the only factor. All other adults at school, such as counselors, psychologists, and administrators are as responsible. The focus of staff development, according to McCormick, has been on the individual, rather than the school as a whole structure. This has made it difficult for teachers to apply what they learn in staff development sessions. It is hoped that his research will demonstrate the importance of teachers' roles, and to add a voice to the current dialogue regarding teacher education and in-service training. With greater understanding of gender-role socialization process, policy makers might change certain aspects of college education and staff development requirements for teachers and other professionals at school to include sex equity training. This research would have, then, contributed to policy making.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Social Agents Influencing Children's Sex-Role Knowledge

Taylor and Carter (1987) suggest that social pressure is very strong in influencing children's behaviors to be sex-typed. Children develop their stereotypic knowledge regarding their gender-role, just because that knowledge is valued by adults and peers. Children try to avoid the negative reactions of these socializing agents by conforming to their valued beliefs.

Boys as young as 25 months of age were found to respond differently to female-stereotyped activities. Bauer (1993) investigated young children's memory in recalling modeled activities that were considered female-, neutral-, and male-stereotyped activities. Boys' recall of male and neutral activities were superior to their recall of female activities. This suggests that boys have already learned about gender consistent and inconsistent activities. Girls' recall of the three types of activities was consistent. The most reasonable explanation of this difference between girls and boys, is that boys are socialized to sex-stereotype earlier than girls, especially by fathers (Fisher-Thompson, 1990). Another factor that may have played a role in this difference is that experimenters were females for both girls and boys. This might have given a signal to girls that it was acceptable to try all those activities in the experiments. Bauer suggests that labeling the activities according to gender stereotypes may trigger different reactions from girls. However, children in different studies were found to make stereotypic judgements selectively (Martin, et al., 1990; Bauer, 1993).

Older children tend to make more extreme stereotypic judgements than younger children. This suggests the influence socialization has on children's learning. In addition, Doescher and Sugawara (1990) found that boys who demonstrated flexibility in their sex-role attitudes, had better pro-social behavior; this connection was not observed in girls' behavior. Boys' flexibility was shown to help them adjust easier in the classroom setting (Doescher & Sugawara, 1990). On the other hand, children who had more stereotypic self-concepts, had high levels of internalizing symptoms on the part of girls, and high levels of externalizing symptoms on the part of boys. These two kinds of symptoms are directly related to poor adjustment at school, and are frequent reasons for clinical referral of children (Silvern & Katz, 1986).

Another study about young children 3-5, found that they stereotyped others more than they stereotyped themselves, with stronger attitudes on the part of 5 year old children. The group of 3-5 year-old children, who demonstrated this phenomenon, consistently chose the more desirable social traits to describe themselves when they were asked to choose one of two traits. This was done regardless of the stereotyping of the trait they chose (Cowan & Hoffman, 1986). This contradiction in children's attitudes can be used by preschool teachers to help the children overcome their stereotypic attitudes; by pointing out their differential judgement (Derman-Sparks, 1989).

Picariello and colleagues (1990), designed a series of four research studies to explore whether young children use color as a factor in attempting to identify the sex of others, and whether their impressions of people are affected by the color of their clothes even when the sex of those is known to the children. Researchers found that young

children were aware of the color stereotypes held by adults, and their preferences were consistent with adults'. The children's impressions of others were tested also. The children were shown a set of twelve drawings that depicted different stereotypic feminine and masculine characteristics, as well as two sets of twin dolls, males and females, with each set having a twin in pink and the other in blue. The children were asked which member of each set of the twins was more likely to play with a certain toy, choose a future role, or be connected with a certain attribute. Children's choices were found to be influenced by the color of clothes the toy twins were dressed in. These results suggested to the researchers that color stereotypes can play an important role in peer socialization, especially that the children made comments during the experiment which suggested that they had the potential to apply those same impressions in daily situations.

#### Peer Influence

Roopnarine (1984), found that in three- and four-year-old preschoolers, both four-year-old boys and girls, and three-year-old girls, received "more positive feedback from same-age same-sex peers than from children in the other groups for sex appropriate activities" (Roopnarine, 1984, p.1082). The researcher also found that positive peer reactions to four year old children, from children of their age and sex, helped them stay longer at a given activity.

In a study about teacher and peer reactions to different play styles, Fagot (1984) found that peer reactions were different for girls and boys. When boys were involved in a highly cognitive task and demonstrated a high activity level, they received more positive peer and teacher reactions than the average boy; while girls in the same categories

received more negative reactions than the average girl. Girls were found to play alone more than boys did. This might be a result of peer and teacher reactions. At the same time, of those children who demonstrated cross-sex behavior, girls received more negative feedback than the average girl. Boys in that category also received more negative feedback and less positive peer reaction than the average child. Of all the children, those who scored low on both female and male traits received less positive peer reactions, and the boys played alone more than others. This type of research shows how peers and teachers alike participate in the reward-punishment system for children according to their sex-role behavior, and how children as young as preschool-age monitor each other's behavior in terms of conformity to the norm (Greenberg, 1985).

In a study of some intervention programs in Australia that were designed to improve teachers' awareness of differential treatment of girls and boys, and aimed at promoting teachers' reflections, Bruce (1985) discusses peer pressure as well. Upon monitoring and reflection, teachers in those projects discovered how boys sometimes harassed girls, verbally and physically, to push them out of certain play areas such as the building area. They also noticed the presence of peer pressure to have individual children conforming to "accepted modes of behavior..." (Bruce, 1985, p.51).

Starting at the age of three or four, children will begin to separate themselves into two groups by gender. By kindergarten, the separation is very obvious to observers (Paley, 1984; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Stein, 1983; Thorne, 1993). Researchers have found that teachers in many cases feed into the separation of both groups by dividing children into boy and girl groups for competition, or to line up. Many of those teachers who do not

use gender as a dividing factor, ignore the separation initiated by the children themselves and do not encourage desegregation. Sadker and Sadker (1994), have found that segregation by gender was a major factor contributing to the marginal role girls have in the classroom. McCormick (1994), argues that the segregation by sex in classrooms, as well as teachers' different interaction patterns with boys and girls, send important messages to both regarding gender stereotypes and expectations.

Differential treatment teaches children early on, that girls are more marginal and boys are more prominent in the society. Safir and colleagues (1992) examined Israeli elementary school children's perceptions of the prominence of their peers. Both girls and boys nominated more boys as prominent in the classroom, with boys rarely nominating girls. This tendency increased in the sixth grade. Furthermore, researchers found that boys disruptive behavior in the classroom was accepted as natural by their classmates. These findings were seen as representatives of the social stereotypic attitude of the teachers in particular, and the whole society in general.

If prospective teachers are trained to become aware of their own biases, and to resist inequitable treatment of girls and boys in their classrooms, they become better equipped to detect children's stereotypic attitudes and behaviors. Teachers then can structure their curriculum in a way that can help children in their classrooms to overcome their biases.

#### General Adult Influence

As mentioned earlier, adults in society play the major role in stereotyping children's attitudes and behaviors. On the one hand, parents play both direct and indirect

roles in this process. Indirectly, parents color-code their children's rooms, dress them according to stereotypic colors of girls and boys, and buy stereotypic toys for their children. Directly, parents interact in different ways with their girls and boys. Fathers, in particular, talk to their baby boys more, and interrupt their daughters more than they interrupt their sons. Even mothers, who tend to interrupt their children's talk less than fathers do, still interrupt girls more than they interrupted boys (Hendrick & Stange, 1989). As a result of this differential treatment, girls get the message that they are less important than boys in the society. Both parents, fathers in particular, discourage cross-sex behavior in their children. Girls, however, are given more freedom in that sense (Brooks-Gunn, 1986). That is why in later years, girls are more willing to play with boys' toys, than boys with girls'.

As a result of differential socialization, girls' sex-typed behaviors were found to be related to their mothers' beliefs, more than boys' (Brooks-Gunn, 1986). Boys' behaviors, on the other hand, seemed to be related to their fathers' attitudes. In a study about children's household chores, McHale and colleagues (1990) found that those chores are still sex-typed for girls. They also found that in two parent families that had one parent only who worked outside the home, who most likely was the father, boys' involvement in household chores was directly related to their fathers' attitudes toward this issue.

Children are capable of understanding direct and subtle messages that adults send to them. These messages come from parents, relatives and friends, the media, children's books and toys, their teachers, and the language that everybody around them chooses to

use. These messages get incorporated into children's development of schemas, and play an important role in their sex-role development.

In an attempt to study preschool children's vocational interests, Barak and colleagues (1991), studied the relationship between the traditionality of those children's attitudes; their parents' gender stereotypes; maternal employment; and the traditionality of parents' occupations. Investigators found that the traditionality of mothers' occupations was the most significant factor among all others, affecting children's attitudes toward occupations. The researchers had several speculations as to why that factor was the most salient. They suggested it is quite possible that even though social roles are changing, and many women are joining the work force, mothers are still the ones who take care of the children, while fathers get involved in other chores. Another explanation could be attributed to the specific age of the preschoolers investigated, who might be influenced by their mothers' behaviors more than their fathers'. There would be a possibility of change in their attitudes as they grow older. The researchers also suggested that it is possible that the mothers who engaged in masculine-typed occupation attracted more attention, even from children, than fathers who got engaged in feminine-typed occupations. Compared with another factor, the investigators attributed the stronger effect to mothers' occupations rather than to parents' attitudes. This may be due to the possibility that parents may not discuss their attitudes with their children, and that "parents' socialization practices are more significant than their attitudes or personality characteristics in influencing their children's attitudes and behaviors" (Barak, et al, pp. 519-520).



There is more than one interpretation to Barak and colleagues' study. By studying the relationship of parents' gender stereotyping, maternal employments and the traditionality of parents' occupation, to the traditionality of their children's vocational interest, the investigators considered that they were investigating the relationship of parental attitudes and behaviors to their children's attitudes (Barak, et al., p. 514). One, though, could argue that interpreting parents' occupations as behaviors is simplifying the issue. People's occupations do not always reflect their attitudes. It could be assumed that studying parents' behaviors would refer to studying how these parents choose to treat their children, and interact with people, rather than what they do for a living. At the same time, making a direct connection between parents' occupations and the attitudes of their children seems to be simplifying a complex issue that could have been given a more comprehensive interpretation. The symbolic effect of the children's attitudes might reflect the society's values and attitudes as well as their parents' attitudes. In addition, the researchers depended on an attitude scale to measure parents' attitudes toward women. They did not question the accuracy of self-reported measures. There is a possibility that some parents chose answers that were more socially accepted, especially that the issue in question was women, and people are aware of all the discussion around this issue.

Martin (1990) studied undergraduate students' attitudes and expectations regarding children who demonstrate nontraditional gender roles. Martin found that women were more accepting of children with cross-sex behavior more than men were. At the same time, both women and men had better acceptance of girls with nontraditional roles than of their counterpart boys.

Martin (1990) suggests that when adults expose children to stereotypic toys only, they limit children's capabilities. Stereotyping children's activities leads people to evaluate children who choose to engage in nontraditional activities negatively. This negative evaluation gets reflected in the way adults treat those children, and gets passed onto other children, leading peers to react negatively to nontraditional children. Those negative reactions by peers and adults alike might be the cause for some adjustment problems for nontraditional children, and not their cross-sex behavior per se.

Parents are not the only ones who discourage children's cross-sex behavior. A sample of college students were tested on their opinions of toys; its sex typing, its type of usage, and if they would buy each toy for a girl or a boy, regardless of its sex typing. Fisher-Thompson (1990), found that the subjects in her sample conformed to the stereotypic standards when they answered the question about buying toys themselves. The investigator found that those adults in her sample did not rely only on the category of toy to choose it, but they attended to other cues, as the color of the toy and the pictures or words written on it. The researcher states that this is done on the part of adults despite the fact that children may use criteria other than sex-typing to choose a toy, such as the way they can use the toy, or what it looks like.

College students who said they expected to become parents or teachers showed stereotypic academic beliefs. Leung (1990, 1992) asked those students to rank five subjects in terms of how important, difficult, and interesting each subject was for an imaginary six-year old daughter or son the student would have. The responses differed between female and male subjects in regard to some of the academic questions.

Nevertheless, both female and male responses were clearly sex typed. The subjects, for example, expected girls to be more interested in Music, and boys to be more interested in Physical Education.

Lyons and Serbin (1986) conducted a study in which adults were asked to record acts of aggression as seen in drawings of children interacting. Subjects looked at two sets of line drawings that depicted children playing. The scene of children included two acts of aggression. The two sets were identical except for different clothing and hairstyle of the children involved in the aggressive interaction. This change made one scene look like the two children were girls, the other made them look like boys. The subjects were given ten different behaviors, and were asked to check any behavior they had seen in each of the drawings, one by one. After that, each subject was shown ten sets of drawings, each consisted of three pictures of two children of the same sex engaged in aggressive interaction. Hairstyle and clothing were changed in five sets as in the previous part to duplicate them into ten sets. Subjects were asked to rate each set on 9-point scales that described a range of behaviors that included dominance, passivity, aggression, submission, active, and well behaved. Some of these traits were considered male sex-typed, others were female sex-typed. Five females and six males in the study (28%) reported more aggression on the part of boys when they looked at the scanning scenes. "Relaxation" was more likely to be reported for scenes that included aggressive girls. When looking at the same-sex couples of children, only male subjects showed that bias in reporting. 70% of the male subjects rated boys as more aggressive than girls. Those subjects were not all the same ones who were biased in their reporting for the first part.

In a follow up to the first study, Lyons and Serbin (1986), replicated the design, applying it to three groups. The first group got the same instructions as those in the first study, the second was asked to be careful to apply the same criteria to both girls and boys, and the third group was asked to avoid the tendency that was proven in previous studies to rate girls and boys differently, especially on rating aggression. Both male and female subjects in the first group rated the pictures like the subjects in the first experiment. Both females and males in the second group had no difference in rating boys and girls. All the subjects in the third group, however, showed bias in reporting aggression in the pictures. The majority rated boys as more aggressive than girls, despite the fact they were specifically told not to do that. Authors state that this finding fits the findings of Cann, and Newbern, 1984, that the "presence of the label makes the schema more salient and, in the case of counter-stereotypic portrayals, a more likely source of bias in recall" (Cann & Newbern, 1984, as cited in Lyons & Serbin, 1986, p. 311). On the other hand, the investigators mention other studies where observers achieved a decrease in their biased ratings after going through careful training to reduce observer bias.

#### Teacher Influence

The above discussed findings, present clearly how prevalent sex-role stereotypes among adults, who transmit their attitudes to children in various ways. Teachers play an important role in affecting young children's attitudes. This is one reason why researchers have been stressing the importance of incorporating sex equity issues in the core of teacher education programs, instead of only mentioning bias in the college classroom, or adding an extra paragraph about it in text books, to make them look like less sex-biased.

This approach, researchers argue, will not solve the problem. What will be helpful is careful training for prospective teachers, and parents if possible, to become able to recognize bias in curriculum material, teacher-student interaction, as well as in books and the media (Jones, 1989a; Sadker & Sadker, 1985b).

According to Schau & Tittle (1985), teachers need to acquire the awareness and knowledge of gender inequity in education first, before they can offer sex-fair curriculum and atmospheres in their classrooms. These experiences, the authors argue, should be sufficient in quantity, rather than casual exposure, to help children incorporate new, nontraditional-role behaviors into their schemas. This is most important for preschool-age children, because they are in the process of forming their sex-role identities.

Children, in many situations, behave in a way that conforms to adults' expectations. When our expectations of both sexes are different, we should expect to observe differences in girls' and boys' attitudes and behaviors (Lyons & Serbin, 1986).

### Teacher-Child Interaction

Next to parents, teachers are the most significant socializing agents of children. They affect their opinions strongly (Rodriguez, 1986). Greenberg (1978) discusses the important role parents and teachers play in the lives of young children. She suggests that when children 4-6 years old disagree on an aspect of adult life, they go to their teacher as a judge.

The teacher who is considered as a judge to children, will influence their opinions by the way he acts. Girls are the disadvantaged group in society, especially when it comes

to mechanical and spatial experiences. Boys get exposed to those concepts at home, girls do not have the same chances (Jones, 1989a).

Males in grade school and college levels have advantage over females in computer ability and attitude (Williams & Ogletree, 1992). This advantage could be attributed to gender-role socialization. Parents were found to tend to buy more computers for their sons, and to enroll them in more extra-curricular computer programs than they did for their daughters (Campbell, 1988).

Researchers have been interested to find out if early intervention in computer usage yields positive results for girls. Williams and Ogletree (1992), conducted a study on preschoolers' computer-related attitudes and behaviors. They found that both girls and boys perceived computers as more appropriate for their own sex. Preschool children underwent an intervention experiment to test their attitudes and skills in computer use (Bernhard, 1992). Both experimental and control groups said that computers were more appropriate for their sex during the post test. There was no difference between both groups. In the sample of Williams and Ogletree, boys indicated more than girls that they preferred to use computers. Researchers, however, found no difference in the actual usage of computers. More importantly, the researchers found no difference in the competence level in computer usage. In contrast, in Bernhard's study (1992), boys completed a considerable number of LOGO tasks more than girls did, in spite of the equitable treatment they both got in the program. Bernhard attributes that difference to initial skills, due to differential treatment and socialization. She suggests that interventions should be designed to take that difference into consideration in order to improve girls' performance

early on, so they would not lose motivation. Williams and Ogletree suggest that such intervention may help improve girls' attitudes toward math and help them consider both computers and math as sex-neutral subjects. This connection is made because computers are usually placed in math departments.

In a study of conversation interruption between teachers and children during snack time, Hendrick and Stange (1989), found that teachers, who were also females, interrupted more girls than boys. In return, boys interrupted teachers more than girls did. Those same teachers were careful to send the same number of girls and boys to get snack refills, or pass snack around. This suggested to the investigators that teachers were unaware of their behavior. Researchers, however, interpreted this situation as teachers modeling the submissive behavior of adult females. Teachers' behavior gives a message that it is acceptable for males to interrupt females, and that females ought not react negatively to such behavior. The message that girls are marginal in society is reinforced through teachers' unawareness of interrupting girls more than boys.

In their four-year study of fourth-, sixth-, and eighth- grades in more than 100 classrooms, Myra and David Sadker found that sex bias was so prevalent in classrooms that it did not matter whether the teacher was male or female, black or white. In another study, Jones (1989b) reports that teachers' years of experience had no effect on the amount of biased interactions between them and their students. Sadker and Sadker report that male students are given better opportunities than females to interact with teachers in the classroom. Boys ask more questions, get more time to respond, receive more precise feedback from teachers, and get criticized more than girls. Streitmatter (1994), found that

even in the case of teachers who have succeeded to an extent to provide equal, or equitable atmospheres in their classrooms, they still had gender bias in the area of discipline. Different researchers have presented teachers' views that boys demand more attention, and they usually get it. Boys, for example, call out much more often than girls do, and regardless of the relevance of what they say to the topic of discussion, teachers respond to their questions and comments. On the other hand, when girls call out, they are usually reminded of the rules of the classroom regarding raising up one's hand instead of calling out (Sadker & Sadker, 1986; Jones, 1989b; Sadker, et al.; 1989a; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Sadker and Sadker have identified four types of feedback by the teachers; praise, re-mediation, acceptance, and criticism. Among these types, acceptance was the category that was distributed in the most equitable manner between boys and girls. They suggest that it is the category that has the minimum educational value among all four (Sadker and Sadker, 1986).

In addition, when children get upset or injured, teachers comfort them, and send the boy to finish his activity while girls are kept next to the teacher with their activities abandoned (Greenberg, 1985). This kind of treatment encourages girls to stay close to the teachers which teaches them to imitate adult modeling more than boys (Carpenter, et al. 1986; Greenberg, 1985). Boys are taught to finish their activities, and play alone or with others regardless of the physical presence of the teacher. They receive step-by-step instructions eight times more than girls do (Greenberg, 1978; Lewis, 1991).

Serbin (1972), found that when children solicited attention, teachers got engaged more with boys in extended conversations, and gave them more directions, both long and



short. On the other hand, they tended to do things for girls instead. Another message girls and boys get is that girls get praised only if they are physically close by the teacher, while boys might be praised regardless of their distance from the teacher (Greenberg, 1978 & 1985; Jones, 1989a).

The same effect of distance holds true regarding attention in general. Serbin and colleagues (1973) found that there were no significant differences in teachers' touching the children, helping them, or having brief conversations with them. Serbin and her colleagues argue that these are the kinds of responses that do not encourage children to involve themselves in classroom activities. While the types of responses that are often reserved for boys, encourage their involvement independently in classroom activities. Sadker, et al. (1993/94) argue that when students participate in the classroom, that improves their self-esteem and learning.

Campbell (1986), argues that starting at the preschool level, teachers should offer more hands on activities, especially those that contribute to developing children's spatial skills. Campbell also contends that boys and girls do not start out with different abilities in math and science; there are more differences within each group than there is between the average girl and the average boy. Different treatment and expectations by the teacher of different groups regarding their achievement in math and science, can affect children's achievement in these subjects. Bruce (1985), discusses how girls at the preschool level learn how to be passive in life; not to initiate, not to ask for what they want, and how to remain silent. Measor and Sikes (1992) discuss that these messages of teacher expectations can be conveyed to girls through subtle ways of interactions. Sadker and

Sadker (1982) observed that the types of non academic tasks that teachers assign to girls and boys conform to sex-role stereotypes.

BenTsvi-Mayer and colleagues (1989), found that in an Israeli setting, teachers gave more praise to boys than girls. The type of the praise differed between both groups, even when teachers' expectations were the same. Boys received more meaningful and enthusiastic praise. This finding concurs with Fagot's (1984), Sadkers' studies (1985, 86, 1993, 94), and Serbin and colleagues (1973). Fagot (1984), found that when boys in her study were engaged in a highly cognitive task, and a low activity-level, the teacher gave them more positive reactions than the average boys. This did not apply to girls in Fagot's study. On the contrary, in all the different categories Fagot studied, girls received less positive feedback and more negative reactions from teachers.

The quality and quantity of teachers' interactions with girls and boys differ on various levels, and start as early as preschool level, or earlier (Ebbeck, 1985; Lewis, 1991; Streitmatter, 1994). When a student needs help with a problem, teachers tend to solve it if the student is a girl; and explain how to solve it if the student is a boy (Lockheed & Klein, 1985).

Sadker and Sadker (1994), describe an incident they observed in a third grade classroom. A teacher was teaching parts of speech through a piece on the Middle Ages that was sexist in content. During the lesson, the teacher asked the boys more questions, then asked the class to write their own stories on "how the brave knight slays the dragon and rescues the beautiful princess" (Sadker & Sadker, 1994, p.74). The teacher then divided the class into two groups by gender, sent the girls with the student teacher to the

hallway asking them to talk quietly so they won't bother anybody, and kept the boys in the classroom with her.

### Language

Language is an important tool, and the way it is used facilitates understanding culture. "Language is a mirror of social attitudes, values, and models of human behavior and relations... Language not only reflects people's attitudes and values; it also helps shape them" (McCormick, 1994, p.79). The English language is not inherently biased, its bias is learned. It is acceptable to use words as "mankind" or "man" to refer to humans. "He" is used as a generic pronoun. This sexist use of language is transmitted to children through songs, books, and animal stories that use male pronouns only.

Language adds to the invisibility of women in society, and children may learn that maleness is the general case (Gelb, 1989; McCormick, 1994). Children cannot understand that the male pronouns are used in a generic way. That use confuses the children's understanding (Greenberg, 1985; Gelb, 1989; Sheldon, 1990; Safir et al., 1992). By the time children get to preschool, they have internalized the inferiority of the status of women in the society, and would have no trouble using male pronouns as generic. Gelb (1989) presented research findings, where elementary-school children used the pronoun "he" in a generic way, even when they were not aware that it was acceptable to do so. This shows the already biased attitudes children have. In the study Gelb (1989) conducted on the use of language in two preschool settings, he found that teachers used male pronouns three times as many as they used female. In those two settings, children 3-5 years old were asked to make up stories about three neutral-looking drawings. Most of

the girls' stories, and almost all of the boys' used male attributions to the pictures. Gelb argues that pre-service teachers are not trained to avoid the use of biased language in their future teaching. Changing language to become free of bias is a very important step toward equity in early childhood settings (Colon & Rubin, 1988; Sheldon, 1990).

Streitmatter (1994), conducted a qualitative study of eight classroom teachers and their attempts to apply gender equity in their classrooms. In a kindergarten classroom, the teacher had established a routine of reading each story twice, reversing the gender of the main character the second time. Streitmatter discusses that this behavior, along with that teacher's non sexist language in everyday interactions, tells the children that they are equally important, and that they can be whatever they want to be when they grow up.

### Books

Children's books are no exception to the media, language use, teacher-child interaction, or the pedagogical material used in the classroom. Books have always reinforced the invisibility of women. Stories and fairy tales portray women as dull, victims, weak and in need of protection, seductive, or witches. Textbooks use the male pronouns as generic; include male role models only in both biographies and stories; and use mostly males in their illustrations (Lockheed & Klein, 1985; Rodriguez, 1986; Sadker and Sadker, 1994; Streitmatter, 1994).

In the recent years, however, and after all the discussion about the -isms in general in the American culture, some writers of children's picture-books have written books that show girls and women in a positive way. It is possible now to find books that show brave

little girls, and girls and women in nontraditional roles. Nevertheless, these books are not as available as traditional books and remain expensive.

Textbooks on the other hand have been studied to determine whether they have lost some of their biases. Hitchcock and Tompkins (1987) examined six series of basal readers and compared their findings to older studies. They found that publishers used almost an equivalent number of girls and boys, increased the presence of both girls and women, and increased the number of occupations open to women. In addition, the researchers noticed that publishers avoid sexism by creating many more neutral characters.

Purcell and Stewart (1990) also replicated a study that was conducted in 1972 to determine if the female image changed between the early seventies and the late eighties. They found that more neutral stories appeared, many animals had no pronouns and had gender-neutral names, and the female to male ratio was one-to-one.

Girls, however, were still depicted in traditional roles, even though new roles for females had been added. Girls continued to be rescued by animals. Boys were depicted only in traditional masculine roles, never in feminine roles such as nurturer or caretaker. Boys were not shown as rescued by animals, and pronouns were the only alterations in the stories. Publishers were still using biased folk-tales and females were featured in pictures much less frequently than males.

Sadker and Sadker (1994), report that they checked elementary school textbooks from several publishers that were used in 1989, for the ratio of male to female pictures included in the books. They found that the ratio varied from two to one to four to one. A

world history book for sixth grade published in 1992, contained eleven names of females in its 631 pages (Sadker & Sadker, 1994, p.72). Measor and Sikes (1992), cite a study of ten popular history books done by Cairns and Inglis (1989) that showed bias still existed in the text and illustrations as well. Measor and Sikes contend that even when those history books wrote about eras when there is abundance of information on women's roles, bias was practiced by portraying women as passive.

Despite these findings, Hitchcock and Tompkins stress that the responsibility to choose less biased books falls on the teacher. For example, in the case of elementary school teachers, there is the freedom to choose classroom reading materials which are more gender-fair. Sexist material can have a strong effect on distorting children's attitudes toward themselves and others (Streitmatter, 1994). Various researchers have mentioned incidents when children argue that certain roles are inappropriate for a certain gender, even when their own parents had careers in those fields (Sadker and Sadker, 1982; Streitmatter, 1994). When teachers use sexist teaching methods in addition to sexist material or curriculum, the damage is intensified (Sadker & Sadker, 1994).

#### Modification of Children's Attitudes and Behaviors

It is a well-documented fact that boys and girls come to school with different kinds of gender-role socializing experiences. Rather than combating gender role stereotyping, schools complement these socialization processes and help to widen the gap between girls' and boys' experiences. Schools attempt to fill the gaps in boys' backgrounds and experiences while, simultaneously, ignore the gaps in girls' backgrounds and experiences (Greenberg, 1978; Sadker et al., 1989b). For example, schools

incorporate mandatory verbal and small muscle developing activities into their educational programs and leave the large motor and spatial activities as optional outdoor activities. Girls who need the latter types of activities the most, have the option of not participating in them. Therefore, they do not develop competence in these areas (AAUW, 1992; Greenberg, 1985).

Bleakley and colleagues (1988), studied elementary school children's reactions to characters' gender in stories. Researchers investigated if children's reading interest or comprehension were influenced by the main character's sex. Children's comprehension was not influenced by the character's gender. That factor, however, seemed to affect both boys' and girls' interests. Both groups showed less interest in stories with opposite-sex characters. Boys, nonetheless, reacted more negatively than girls when confronted with opposite-sex characters. If this finding can be generalized, one should expect boys to be more interested than girls in the materials available for reading. Girls' lack of interest in opposite-sex stories and the absence of strong female characters in nontraditional roles may lead to a lack of motivation to break out of gender-stereotypic behaviors and achievements. Motivation, along with expectations, are related to achievement (Shaffer, 1988).

By introducing books and other materials that are not very interesting to one sex, the education system may be negatively affecting the achievements of members of that sex in one way or another. The AAUW report (1992) suggests that starting at the preschool level, teachers choose materials that are more interesting to boys than to girls, and present it in a format that promotes boys' learning more.

Streitmatter (1994), suggests that girls do better in cooperative settings than in competitive settings. Such a format, when applied correctly, can enhance the learning of both boys and girls. Sadker and Sadker (1986) found that teachers' effectiveness improves noticeably when they start reflecting on their own behavior, and try to teach in a more equitable style.

Schools can be agents of change in modifying children's experiences, perceptions and behaviors. Interventions can help change the stereotypic behaviors of children. Even though the results of various treatments are inconsistent, perhaps due to factors such as the difference in the intervention techniques used, the length of the intervention treatment itself, the sample size, or the initial level of stereotyping of the individual subjects.

Some consistent and successful results were achieved by a special curriculum structure, and teacher modeling and manipulation program. Carpenter and colleagues (1986) concluded that the structure of activities themselves triggered certain behaviors from the children regardless of personality styles, with some individual differences. This shows that intervention is possible, especially if the program is planned as a long-term one (Koblinsky and Sugawara, 1984).

Most researchers agree that intervention might be most successful with children four to ten years of age (Katz, 1986; Katz and Walsh, 1991). Some studies show that younger children respond more to peer reinforcers, while older children respond more to adult reinforcers. Katz and Walsh (1991) suggest that older children may see themselves as being more similar to adults and therefore react more positively to adult stimuli.



A literature review conducted by Katz (1986) of studies examining children's gender-stereotyped behavior demonstrated that girls in general change more than boys as a result of intervention programs. Katz suggests that multiple techniques might be needed with boys to influence their sex role behavior. Various debates have been going on over who, males versus females, benefit the most from intervention programs (Katz and Walsh, 1991). In a study conducted by Koblinsky and Sugawara (1984), a group of male and female children went through a six-month program of non-sexist curriculum while another group of female and male children was used as a control group. The experimental group exhibited a decrease in stereotyping of objects and activities; the opposite happened with the control group. When researchers combined the results from both groups, examining female and male reactions in each group, they found that the children who were taught by a same-sex teacher showed more stereotyping changes than those children who were taught by an opposite-sex teacher.

A similar observation was made by Lewis (1991), who found that when a male teacher participated in the family corner, it attracted a much larger number of boys and contributed to less stereotyped play in that corner. The same phenomenon was found to be true when a male examiner was present to model activities with the children (Katz and Walsh, 1991). This phenomenon suggests the importance of same sex models in the lives of young children. Early childhood education is a field that is still considered as a female territory by many people, despite the slowly growing number of men entering this field. The presence of male teachers who would present non stereotyped attitudes and behaviors, and introduce the children, especially boys, to nontraditional male roles is

important for boys. Reading books about men in nontraditional roles opens up new opportunities to boys in particular.

Katz has a reasonable interpretation for both of these findings about girls being more susceptible to change and boys responding more to the presence of males. She suggests that intervention to change involves risk-taking on the part of the children. When girls change their behavior to less-stereotyped, they take less risks than the boys since they improve their status (Katz, 1986). When boys see other males--who can exercise very powerful socializing effects--permitting cross-sex behavior, they become more willing to try non-traditional behaviors themselves (Katz and Walsh, 1991).

Thus, the presence of an adult male is a key factor in boys being willing to take behavioral risks since they may perceive a greater danger of punishment from peers for engaging in such behaviors. Legitimization from an adult male is a necessary ingredient to behavioral changes in boys. It is therefore important to encourage more males who are not sexist to enter the early childhood education profession. In addition, multiple techniques may need to be employed in order to help both girls and boys change their stereotyped behaviors. The AAUW report suggests "using more than one textbook, eliminating sexist language, and showing fairness in their (teachers') treatment and expectations of both girls and boys" (AAUW, 1992, p.71).

#### Teacher Education and Sex-Stereotypes

The practice of teachers is influenced by their beliefs and thoughts (Measor & Sikes, 1992; Sadker & Sadker, 1982). These authors emphasize the importance of working closely with teachers to achieve positive attitudes toward sex-equity issues. Very

little research and curriculum development have been done on sex-equity and teacher education (Sadker & Sadker, 1985b). Without access to research, educators will not be able to deliver the message to their students (Rose & Dunne, 1989).

Educators who take gender-equity seriously, often find themselves without adequate research or text books to support their views (Rose & Dunne, 1989). Sadker and her colleagues (1989a), have analyzed articles that appeared in prominent journals on reform movement, to find out how much the equity issue was given in the movement. Investigators found that only 1% of those articles mentioned gender equity, and usually by the end of the article. They also found a scarcity in female authors, illustrators, and general presence in the articles.

As a result of pre-service socialization, prospective teachers graduate with different expectations of girls and boys, and reflect this bias in their future teaching. Prospective teachers are also found to believe that men are dedicated more than women as teachers (Jones, 1989a).

Nevertheless, non-sexist intervention programs for pre- and in-service teachers have proven to yield positive reactions. Pre-service students who reacted to an intervention project stated that it helped them become aware of the issue and showed them the great influence of teachers in stereotyping their students (Sadker & Sadker, 1985b). In another intervention project for pre-service teachers, Sadker, et al. (1986) found that training eliminated biased behavior, and helped students achieve unanticipated effectiveness in their teaching techniques (Sadker, et al., 1986; Jones, 1989a). On another level, elementary-school children who went through intervention showed a positive

change in their attitudes when their teachers were actively involved in the projects (Schmuck, et al., 1985).

### Summary

This literature review has presented the strong effect of numerous social factors in affecting children's sex role attitudes and behaviors. Children are socialized from birth on, to think and act differently according to their gender. Parents dress their babies in sex typed colors, decorate their rooms differently according to sex, and buy different kinds of toys for their infant girls and boys. Parents treat girls and boys differently, and have different expectations of each gender. Books and media work in the same direction of stereotyping young children.

By the time children go to school, they would have internalized the socialization processes, and have sex-typed attitudes themselves. Children behave in stereotyped ways, and tend to punish other children who do not conform to that behavior. Children tend to give negative feedback to their peers who demonstrate cross-sex play behavior.

The review discussed the important role of the teachers. Teachers can encourage children's sex-stereotyped attitudes and behaviors, by treating girls and boys differently, and by holding different expectations of their female and male students. Research has shown that this sex-biased treatment is common in schools. On the other hand, teachers can be an important social factor in changing children's sex-typed attitudes and behaviors. Research has shown that intervention programs to change children's behaviors can be successful. Teachers can introduce curriculum that is sex-fair by choosing materials free of bias; books that are not biased in their language nor content; by using sex-fair language

themselves; and finally by treating their students equally. Teachers have to give an equal time of instructions to both; give the same quality and quantity of feedback to all students; and react in the same way to solicitations by students, in order to become fair. Sometimes, teachers may intentionally structure parts of the curriculum to enhance the learning of one group that they perceive as at-risk in certain subjects or areas. This strategy is different from unconsciously interacting differently with boys and girls.

The review also discussed the lack of sex-equity in teacher education programs. Pre-service teachers are not exposed to equal treatment as students at the college level. At the same time, their course of study does not address equity issues as they pertain to the preschool, nor to the grade-school levels.

In addition, there is a gap in the literature regarding gender equity issues at the preschool level. Most of the information presented in this review includes studies done at the elementary and secondary school levels. Few studies dealt with preschool-age children. Several of those studies were conducted in either Australia or Israel. There is a need to try to understand the dynamics in the preschool classroom. Better understanding of teacher-child interactions as they pertain to a child's gender will offer some valuable insights to understanding classroom dynamics in general. It is hoped that this dissertation will contribute to knowledge in this area.

## CHAPTER 3

### DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of this study was to examine teacher-child interaction at the preschool level in three classrooms, using qualitative methods. The study has looked at various interaction patterns in each of the classrooms, and whether teachers used different patterns of interaction with children based on their gender.

The main goal of the study was to understand what went on in these three preschool classrooms through heavy, thick description, because "description and quotation are the essential ingredients of qualitative inquiry" (Patton, 1990, p.429-30). According to Marshall & Rossman (1989), the in-depth description helps validate the data, because it shows the complexities of interactions and the various factors affecting the setting of the study.

Many of the interaction patterns that were examined have been identified through the work of David and Myra Sadker, whose research was in grade-level school and in college. The plan for the study was to use the Sadkers' research instrument, adapting it as necessary to fit the preschool level. Other interactions studied were derived from a study conducted by Serbin (1972) at the preschool level. In addition, the study has attempted to look at interruption patterns by the teacher. This category comes from the study of Hendrick and Stange (1989), which showed a trend related to gender in terms of who gets interrupted more by the teacher, and who is more tolerated to interrupt the teacher. The teachers' use of language was included in the study as well, because at the preschool level there is a lot of talking and storytelling in the classroom about animals. Often, the male

pronoun is used as a generic one or as a way to personalize animal stories and songs.

According to Gelb (1989), this confuses the children who take these pronouns literally.

### The Overall Approach to the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine interactions between teachers and young children at the preschool level to understand the dynamics that govern the studied classrooms. The study also aimed at understanding the underlying assumptions of each teacher in these classrooms, and the strategies they employed in their daily interactions with the children, and the decisions they took throughout the day . In order to fully understand the complexity of daily interactions, and with the assumption that "the world is ... a function of personal interaction and perception" (Merriam, 1988, p.17), qualitative research methods were chosen as the design for this study. To fully understand the quality of interactions that take place in the classroom, the researcher spent one morning every week for over a seven-month period in each classroom, collecting data because "the most effective way to study a given phenomenon is through direct, on site, face to face contact with the people and events in question. What people do is often different from what they say. . . . Only first-hand observation would reveal such subtleties" (Rogers in Hosford, 1984, p. 86).

### The Setting

Three classrooms were chosen to be studied in depth, using observing in the classrooms, videotaping, and conducting interviews with the teachers. The setting of the study was three schools in a rural college community in New England, with a population of about 39,000. There are two private colleges in town and a large state university with

about 27,000 students. This number of students that includes about 7-8% international students, helps diversify the population of the town considerably with respect to race and ethnicity. At the same time, the issues of diversity, equity, and multicultural education are of special importance at these institutions, especially the university. Various workshops and programs are conducted regularly on campus to increase the awareness of workers and students regarding these issues. Since many teachers in the area have some kind of affiliation with the university, either as current or former students, as in-service trainees, or by other means of contact, these social issues have affected the atmosphere of many schools in the area. Many teachers are expected to have read books like Derman-Sparks' (1989) "Anti-bias curriculum" which devotes a chapter to sex equity issues in early childhood classrooms. In addition, those preschool teachers who earned their degrees at the University had to go through at least one required class that deals with diversity and equity issues as part of multicultural education.

The sites of this study were three preschool classrooms in the above-mentioned college community. Two of the selected classrooms had two female teachers each, while the third had two to three teachers in the classroom. A female teacher was there during the entire period of study; a male teacher was there at the beginning and the end of the study; another male teacher was added to the staff shortly after the start of the study; and a female teacher was there most of the period, until she was placed at the toddler room toward the end of study when she was switched with her male colleague who came back to the room. Each classroom serves a different population: One classroom is a morning program only, where children are dismissed after lunch. It is located in a facility that is



rented from a religious center, and serves a population of diverse middle-class families. At the time of study there were three biracial children in the class, and one child whose parents come from Europe. Some of the children came from single-parent homes, who all lived with their mothers. The second program where the two male teachers work, is a full-day program, and located in an independent facility. It also serves a diverse middle-class population. At the time of the study there were two children from Africa, and two African-American children in the classroom. An Asian child joined the program during the study. Three children in the classroom had two mothers, and many of the children lived with their single mothers. Many of the parents of children at this center were full time students at the university. The third classroom is part of a day care center that is operated by a private college, where enrollment priority is given to children of staff, faculty members and students. At the time of study there were no children of students attending the classroom. This means there were more children from upper-middle class families at this center than the other two centers. In addition, during the period of study, all children in this specific classroom came from two-parent homes. There were no children of color in the classroom other than one U.S. born child whose immigrant parents are Moslems and they are both college professors in the area. One factor that affects the interaction patterns in any classroom, is having a multicultural population. In many situations the teacher has to deal with different issues including language ability or cross-cultural communication. In such a classroom, the study of interaction becomes more complex than that in a classroom of a more homogeneous population.

### Selection of Participants

Patton (1990), discussed the importance of purposeful sampling in qualitative research to obtain rich information about the cases that will be studied in depth. He presented several strategies that can be used in purposeful sampling, where each strategy serves a specific purpose. Two of Patton's strategies are employed in choosing participants in this study; "maximum variation sampling", and "critical case sampling" (Patton, 1990, pp. 172 & 174).

By choosing schools with diverse populations, "maximum variation sampling" was used in terms of the children involved in the interactions observed. This is important because many of the teachers' behaviors that were recorded were in reaction to initiations by the children themselves. Also, by choosing the three classrooms from the same town where sex-equity awareness is likely to be high, the researcher hopes to have fulfilled the "critical case sampling" purpose. According to Patton, a critical case exists when one can consider that "if it happens there, it will happen anywhere" (Patton, 1990, p.174).

Another factor that contributed to choosing these particular schools was their accessibility. During the planning stage of the study, the researcher tried to include two other classrooms; one in a housing project that served low-income families, the other was a community-based classroom, also serving low to middle-class income families. Access was denied to both based on the fact that they have many "children at risk" and parents "would never agree to having their children videotaped." The director at the housing project was willing to grant access to the school if videotaping was dropped from the

proposed study. Nevertheless, the current selected sites for the study have diverse populations, and were reasonably accessible in time and distance.

### Gaining Access to the Schools

The researcher met with the directors of the programs chosen as sites of the study, to negotiate initial entry, and arrange to meet with the teachers themselves and to explain the study to them. The basic purpose of the study; to study teacher-child interaction, was explained to the directors of the programs and the teachers respectively. At that stage, teachers were not given details about the exact types of interactions that were going to be examined. Studying the naturally occurring interactions was crucial to the study. The occurrence of natural behaviors might have been affected if teachers knew which factors affecting interactions were of special importance to the researcher. They were told, however, that the findings will be shared with them upon the completion of the study. This was done to protect the study from obtaining skewed findings if the teachers knew exactly what was being observed in their classrooms. At the same time, this covert approach allowed the researcher to be "truthful but vague" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p.25).

The teachers were also told that the researcher expected to spend eight mornings in their classrooms, over a period of three to four months, observing and videotaping the four different activities that were going to be used for collecting the data of the study. During the study, the researcher felt there was a need to spend a much longer time in each classroom in order to have a better understanding of that environment, and to increase her ability to describe it more accurately and articularly. At that point, new access

permissions were requested by the researcher and were granted by all three schools.

Teachers were also told at the beginning of the study that they were going to have audio-taped interviews with the researcher while looking at videotaped segments from their classrooms. Those were changed to audio-taped exit interviews that were conducted upon the completion of data collection sessions. At that time, informed consents were obtained from the participants of the study (Appendix A). Once the study plan was approved and finalized with the participants, consent letters were sent to parents of the children as well, informing them about the study and asking them to sign and return these to the researcher if they agreed to have their child videotaped (Appendix B).

### Data Collection

The data collection process included three components: Systematic observations and qualitative field notes; videotaping; exit interviews with the teachers. Data collection started late spring in two of the sites. By July, a decision was taken to stop and resume in the fall because children's enrollment was dropping down due to summer vacations, and the daily schedules were different from the rest of the year in both settings. In the fall, data collection was resumed in the three sites and lasted until the spring. Total hours spent at each center varied from twenty six to forty five hours over the course of study. Data collected earlier at two of the sites was included in the analysis.

### Observations With Field Notes

An extensive amount of time was spent in each classroom observing and taking rich field notes. The initial interest of the study was to observe free play, circle time, small group activity, and transition. These activities were chosen for the following

reasons. Free play is the least structured interaction time between teacher and children, and some discipline issues arise; circle time is the time the teacher spends with the entire group; small group activity is the time when children are following instructions by the teacher, and have a better opportunity to interact with her; transition between activities is the times when many discipline issues arise. Teachers and children interact differently when group size varies, and that is why activities that utilize different group sizes were chosen to be studied. Upon starting the data collection process, though, it was realized that small group activities varied among the three schools. One school had no small group activity built into their daily routine. They had a long period of free play time, which included specific activities set up at tables and children had the choice whether to utilize them. It was an expectation, though, that certain long-term projects be done by all the children, either at their own pace, or with strong encouragement from teachers to catch up with projects. Free play also included optional snack time taken on an individual bases. The second school had some activities set up during their free play. Children were invited to take part in them, and all were strongly encouraged to do so, but no child was required to be at the activity table at any given time. The third school had a mandatory small group activity time. As the children belonged to three different age groups, they were divided by age into three groups for the activities. All children were expected to be at their assigned tables during that activity, even though teachers had a hard time managing to keep children at their table, or making them participate in the activity.

The instrument that was adapted by the researcher to be used for the study served as a guide only. That instrument consisted of Sadker and colleagues' (1982) original

instrument in addition to the following items that were added to it: Verbal interactions other than feedback; which included questions, giving directions, and social conversations. Reprimand; whether soft, loud, or yelling was also added to feedback. Non verbal behavior that consisted of physical touch; whether to encourage, warn, give a hug, restrain, or remove was another category that was added to that instrument. Interruption behavior was added to the instrument as well. The researcher had proposed to use the adapted instrument to collect and code interactions in the classroom one by one. Once observations started at the centers, it became clear that the adapted instrument could not be used as initially proposed. This was due to the fact that the structure of any preschool classroom is much less formal than that of a classroom at the grade level. The informal structure at the preschool classrooms meant that children may call out, more than one at a time, and it was very hard to establish who initiated any given interaction. Using an instrument to code interactions would not have allowed for the detailed, thick descriptions that were needed to move the study beyond simple counting of occurrences of behaviors.

The purpose of taking detailed field notes was to get a better holistic sense of the classroom atmosphere, to be able to describe complete incidents, to follow up on certain interactions, and to describe the circumstances surrounding certain incidents or interactions. An important aspect of teacher-child interaction was also observed and recorded, when observed, during these visits; the use of language by the teacher. It was noted what generic pronouns the teacher used in general, and especially when talking about and personalizing animals and birds (Gelb, 1989).

## Videotaping

Another source of data came from videotaping free play, circle times, transitions between activities, and small group activities, when applicable. Videotaping was chosen because other researchers found that teachers are often unaware of the subtle gender bias in their own classrooms, and get very surprised when they are shown tapes of themselves in action (Sadkers, 1994). It was proposed that the tapes of this study would be used during stimulated recall interviews, and might prove useful to the teachers in the study.

When the decision was taken that the adapted instrument was not going to be used to code the collected data by single interaction, videotaped data were included in that decision. In addition, it would not have been possible to analyze tapes by single interactions as initially proposed. This is due to the fact that it was not possible to capture all verbal interactions or, sometimes, the most salient ones on tape at any given moment. To do so would have required several video cameras with advanced microphones, and more than one researcher to take notes while observing. All interactions that were clearly captured, though, can be considered as event sampling, and were all analyzed using the categories that emerged from the data itself. The events captured on tape helped triangulate the study. Triangulation means that a researcher uses multiple sources to collect data on the same study, which enhances the possibility of using the findings in other settings (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

Each classroom was visited several times before the start of the videotaping process, to form rapport with the teachers and the children who needed some time to get used to the presence of the researcher in their classroom. After that the process of

videotaping started. The first videotaped session in each classroom was not used by the researcher. The main purpose of videotaping a session that was not going to be used was to help the researcher get a sense of the natural setting of the classroom, because the teacher may have gotten nervous the first time his session was documented. Another consideration was that some children tend to act up for the camera the first time it is in use.

Each teacher was videotaped doing different activities during the morning session. The regular visits and the conducting of the videotaping did not take place on the same days of the week in each classroom. Visits to the schools were arranged so that data collection days were rotated around the week. This maximized the opportunities to observe the teachers and children at different times in their schedule.

#### Exit Interviews

Another source of data came from audio-taped, then transcribed, interviews with the teachers, which were conducted at the end of data collection. Each interview lasted forty-five minutes to one hour. Each teacher was asked the same set of primary questions (Appendix E), and in the same order. Each teacher was then asked a few questions that had to do with a specific incident or a situation that related directly to her, such as asking her to clarify certain episodes that involved her interacting with children, in order to help the researcher get a sense of what the teacher thought of certain interactions. These questions gave teachers the opportunity to clarify why certain things happened in their classroom, by giving the background or history with which the researcher was not familiar.



Even though training of teachers is beyond the scope of this study, and despite the attempt to design the study in the least intrusive way to the daily routine of the classroom, the researcher is aware that the process of data collection from the classrooms and the interviews are a form of intervention. This process might have helped teachers notice certain patterns in their behavior, or acknowledge the subtle differential treatment of girls and boys in the classroom. As a result, the teachers in the study may change part of their behavior on their own. At the same time, they may have been affected by their discussions with the researcher during the interviews.

### Categories of Gender Analysis

The instrument that was adapted by the researcher was used as a guide in organizing the coded data that was collected from the classrooms. That instrument was based mainly on Sadker and her colleagues' instrument INTERSECT (1982); Serbin's research (1972); and partially on other studies of gender issues in early childhood settings, such as the study of interruption patterns by Hendrick & Stange (1989). Categories in the adapted instrument (Appendix C) included: Who initiates the interaction, how does a child initiate the interaction, whether the interaction is verbal or non-verbal, whether the interaction takes place in public or privately, teacher's behavior during the interaction, helping a child, interruption by either the teacher or a child, and the child's sex. Examples explaining each category are included in Appendix D. Although these categories initially seemed promising, they proved less effective than anticipated and were not eventually used as planned, due to problems that are discussed in the data analysis section. As an alternative to using the instrument for coding the data,

the researcher analyzed the data looking at patterns of behaviors, that were coded and categorized to form the current categories for discussion. Full description of this process is discussed in the data analysis section.

### Data Management

Throughout the study, separate files were kept on the participants, who were given fictitious names. Each file contained the actual field notes from the setting, the researcher's initial thoughts and reactions, the analyzed data from videotapes, and the transcribed interview with the participant.

A journal was also kept regarding the research process, including the changes from the original plan that were found necessary to apply. It also included the researcher's initial thoughts and reactions, and any insights she had regarding the sites of the study.

Videotaped data from each site were gathered on a separate tape and was kept, along with the audiotape from that site, with the field notes file from the site. Back up copies of the video-and audiotapes were made to ensure the safety of the data in case of any damage to tapes, and these were kept separate from the rest of the gathered materials.

### Data Analysis

The analysis of data was an ongoing process, which started soon after the first field notes were taken. The adapted systematic observation instrument was merely used as a guideline for data analysis and not as a confining instrument. Throughout the data collection process, the researcher read the field notes as soon as possible after leaving the site. Observations were elaborated on as necessary, to fill the gaps while the observations

were still fresh. The researcher then read the field notes again looking for initial and emerging patterns of teacher-child interaction.

The initial categories for analysis were the ones listed in the instrument adapted by the researcher (Appendix C), in addition to the use of generic pronouns by the teacher. Soon after data collection was started, however, the researcher realized that new categories of content or of types of behavior were emerging as more salient than the original categories. According to Patton, "A qualitative design needs to remain sufficiently open and flexible to permit exploration of whatever the phenomenon under study offers for inquiry. Qualitative designs continue to be *emergent* even after data collection begins" (Patton, 1990, p. 196). The emergent categories in this study were directly related to classroom management. Issues of discipline, teacher expectations, teacher flexibility in running activities, supervising children, and managing the whole group proven to be the overarching content of teacher-child interaction, specially in the case of the one classroom where management styles of teachers had to be given the first priority over gender issues. Data from the videotapes was used to validate data collected through observations and was analyzed in the same manner field notes were analyzed. Due to the general nature of classroom activities at the preschool level, and due to the specific circumstances at the sites of the study, though, it was not possible to use an instrument to record interactions between teachers and children without missing details of the context of those interactions. The general flow of center-base preschool classroom where several activities took place at the same time, and where different gender-related behaviors were embedded in a context, made it difficult to capture complete events on

film when only one researcher was using a single camera. When the researcher did event sampling from small group interactions, there were interferences from other sides of the room that could not be captured on tape. Using the narrow angle of the camera caused the researcher to miss interactions between teachers and children away from him; and using the wide angle, caused missing small private interactions. However, all tapes were watched, and all clear and audible interactions that were part of the discussion categories were analyzed. Every interaction on videotape that was part of the analysis, was transcribed for accuracy.

Even though the main interest of the study was to look at interactions between the head teacher and the children, it was found that there was no hierarchy between teachers in all three classrooms under study; teachers in each classroom were lead teachers, and that is why they were all included in the study. Some observations included interactions between the children themselves, others included interactions between children and other adults in the classroom. These observations give a complete picture of the classroom. At the same time, all additional information that was collected informed the study and helped in understanding the dynamics of each classroom more realistically. Every time field notes were recorded, they were looked at interaction by interaction.

On a daily basis, the collected data was compared with what was recorded on previous dates from the same classroom to try to understand if it seemed that the teacher interacted consistently in the same way with a certain child or a group of children. If she did so, did it seem to be related to the gender of those children? Was there an interaction pattern that seemed to be related to certain factors in the classroom like the children's

ages, the degree of their acting up or calmness on certain days, the teacher's fatigue, the number of children the teacher had to manage at a given time, and so forth.

Every recorded interaction was initially coded in a descriptive way, such as “teacher helping a boy to tie his shoes upon the child’s request”, or “teacher asking a probing question to a girl”. Upon coding all interactions from field notes and the videotapes, the emergent categories were recorded. A list of 31 categories was initially recorded with subcategories for some. Classroom management was recorded in 10 of those categories. The list of initial categories included:

- Teacher engaging children in intellectual discussion
- Teacher playing a game with children
- Emergent curriculum and teacher flexibility
- Teaching children social skills: Sharing, negotiating, respect, manners, community involvement
- Social conversations
- Teacher response to comments on self-appearance
- Teacher’s use of language: Gender-neutral, gender-typed, animal pronouns
- On-task conversations; teacher-child, child-child
- Interruption
- Teacher responds to questions
- Teacher comments on child’s final product

- Teacher helping a child: Giving instructions, doing something for the child during a project time, helping a child to dress up
- Physical: Hug or a kiss, restrain, remove

All the following categories are related to classroom management:

- Teacher suggesting an activity for a wandering child
- Teacher redirecting a child to a different activity
- Teacher dealing with safety issues
- Teacher flexibility (other than curriculum)
- Teacher-teacher interaction; consistency issues among teachers
- Transition times
- Conflict resolution: Teacher initiated, child initiated
- Teacher following up on a situation
- Teacher ignoring behaviors
- Discipline issues: Who gets noticed or ignored, time-out, losing a privilege, criticizing conduct, re-mediating conduct, disciplining in public or in private, yelling
- General management skills:
  - Giving clear expectations
  - Physical presence to affect noise level in an area
  - Supervising the entire room versus what is in proximity only
  - Anticipating behaviors and preventing destructive behaviors from happening

Reminding of the rules

Teacher treating children with respect

Teacher requesting hand raising to participate

Teacher is not ready for the activity

Teacher leaves children unattended

Teacher admitting lack of control to the children

Teacher using positive reinforcers to redirect behavior

Teacher documenting children's behaviors

Teacher takes pictures to document children's projects

The following categories are children related:

- Gender-typed play versus gender non-typed play
- Gender differences in play area usage
- Same-gender versus cross-gender interactions
- Pretend play
- Children expressing awareness of gender issues
- Children crying to get teachers' attention
- Child-child interaction: Cooperation, negotiation, respect, control, teasing, noise

The next step after identifying these categories was to divide them into two major categories: Teacher behavior, and child behavior. A web of each type of behaviors was created to condense them into a smaller number of categories in order to enable the researcher to discuss interactions in depth. The number of occurrences of interactions was looked at, and all recorded behaviors that were recorded once or twice only were dropped

from the categories. An exception to this was any incident that was considered by the researcher as a key incident that required discussing. Some overlapping among interactions under different categories was found, and that caused some categories to be merged together. A final step was taken to compare the condensed categories and the initial instrument, and based on the number of occurrences of each interaction, and the importance of some others, the current categories that are presented and discussed in the next chapter were adopted for data analysis.

After each interview with the teachers, the interview was listened to, in order to understand what the teacher's analysis of her own interactions in the classroom were, and what were the issues of importance for each teacher to talk about.

A cumulative review of all data collected and analyzed has inform the study and helped the researcher to portray a realistic picture of each classroom and its interactions.

#### Role of the Researcher

Except for the exit interviews with the teachers, my role was a nonparticipant observer for most of the study. This does not negate the biases I have had about the study. The research on gender equity suggests that girls are not treated with the same quality boys are treated with in many western schools (e.g., Fagot, 84; Fisher-Thompson, 90; Leung, 90; Sadker & Sadker, 84,85,93,94). The research studies conducted at the preschool level suggest the same trend is true for that age group (e.g., Gelb, 1989; Hendrick & Stange, 1989; Lyons & Serbin, 1986; Serbin, et al. 1973). Having read all these studies, I entered the study sites with the bias that I was most probably going to get similar findings to what other researchers have found. I have managed, however, to let the



issue of gender to take a lesser priority when faced with serious classroom management issues in one specific site. As a researcher, I have realized early on in the process of data collection and initial analysis that when a teacher is having trouble with classroom management, it has a greater impact than gender and equity issues. In that case, gender had to be studied in the context to get a more realistic and complete picture of the classroom.

Another bias comes from the research tool, the researcher, and the fact that I, myself, am a female who believes that females and males ought to be treated equally, and be given equal chances at all levels, starting at birth. I believe that my social background has a lot to do with these strong feelings I have regarding this issue. Both my parents were educators. At a time many women my mother's age had minimum education, if any, my mother had a degree in Child Development. She had the advantage of growing up in Lebanon, before coming back to Palestine as a married woman. Both my parents believed in equity between sexes and treated us in the same manner. Growing up in such a home atmosphere when the rest of the society had very well-defined, and different roles for women and men, had great effects on my personality. I have had confidence and high self esteem. At the same time I was able to see what was happening to my female peers at school, whose whole future could be decided by a word of their father or older brothers. I felt their silent pain and had a strong urge to do something to contribute to the improvement of the situation of females in my society. Coming to the U.S. and finding so much apparent and subtle differential treatment of females and males at all levels strengthened my commitment to gender equity issues.

Another factor contributing to my bias is the fact that I have an eleven- year old son, and a two-year old daughter, who are growing in this society. I have watched my son being affected by differential treatment and expectations. He is supposed to like certain toys and colors because they are "boys'" stuff; he had to hide his doll because it was a "girl's" toy; and he often got teased for having female friends, until he quit playing with girls. This issue helped me become more aware of the fact that boys also get hurt in the process of biased socialization. Watching people's approach with my little girl; how often I am told how pretty she is, and noticing how most of her birthday gifts were clothes, instead of toys as I was used to with my son, add to my concern regarding differential treatment of boys and girls throughout the whole society. Having these strong feelings about equity issues meant that I was scrutinizing all classroom interactions through this lens.

Nevertheless, I believe that all researchers have biases regarding their studies, at least by choosing one aspect over others for studying. Being aware of my biases early in my research process, however, helped me become careful not to be blind to emerging patterns I had encountered. I believe that I managed to get realistic in my observations and tried not to let other aspects of interactions slip unnoticed.

### Ethical Considerations

During the data collection phase of the study, I spent extensive time in each of the classrooms being studied. Over time, the presence of a researcher in the classroom became close to "unnoticeable". This should enrich the study by giving the researcher an opportunity to observe the participants at their natural behaviors. At the same time, this

had another implication. The closer the researcher is to the natural setting, the more the teachers might feel they are exposed. More than once, teachers felt the need to justify something they did to the researcher, who was observing quietly. While being in the classroom taping or taking field notes about teacher- child interaction, the researcher could not block out other information received at the same time. The researcher had to witness the subtleties of the daily lives of these teachers, including their professional relationships with their supervisors, colleagues, and student teachers. The researcher has observed a whole array of situations that are not part of the study itself. Hence, having the obligation to protect the participants' privacy. As Erickson states "The basic ethical principle is to protect the particular interests of especially vulnerable participants in the setting" (Erickson, 1986, p.141).

Participants were asked to sign an informed consent form that will protect their anonymity, and were given the right to withdraw from the study at any point during the conduct of the study. Participants' identities are protected by changing their names, as well as all information that can help identify them or their schools.

I have another ethical question regarding the participants' rights. As participants, the teachers have the right to know as much as possible about the study. Knowing exactly what types of interactions the researcher was interested in, however, could have jeopardized the findings of the study. Throughout the study, the researcher was "honest . . . but . . . not . . . too specific or lengthy in explanations" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 123). The participants were told that teacher-child interactions were explored in this study, but were not told the exact aspects of interactions the researcher was interested in.

The teachers were told, though, that the findings of the study will be shared with them if they were interested in them, upon the completion of the study. At the same time, the researcher had the obligation to be an honest and sympathetic listener to the teachers during the study, and tried to understand the interactions from the teachers' point of view.

### Trustworthiness

In qualitative research studies, the main instrument used to collect the data is human; the researcher herself. Therefore, it is important to touch on the issue of trustworthiness in the study.

One way I have tried to establish trustworthiness is through triangulation (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Every time data was collected on videotape, the researcher spent time in the classroom, taking field notes. Member check (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988) was also done when the researcher met with the teachers to conduct interviews, and through casual talks with the teachers during the study.

Keeping a journal for the research process, and the progression of the researcher's thoughts and analysis, have helped to keep "checking and rechecking the data" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p.147), which will enhance the dependability of the study. At the same time, a colleague of mine has served as a peer debriefer throughout the study. He has carefully examined and questioned the journal discussions and data analysis. This process should enhance the "confirmability" of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

Also, the peer debriefer looked at and analyzed a videotaped segment, which was checked against the researcher's analysis, to get inter-coder reliability.

### Limitations of the Study

This study was designed to explore the complexity of teacher-child interaction, and whether preschool teachers interact differently with children based on their gender. Every consideration was made to ensure the quality of the study, both in designing and implementing it. There are some limitations to the study, though, that should be addressed:

1. The sample size used in the study is very small. The interaction patterns of Eight teachers and the children in their three classrooms were studied.
2. The location of the three schools chosen for the study is unique. They are located in a college community that is considered by many as one of the most liberal places in the United States.
3. Some limitation comes from the research methodology chosen for the study. The researcher visited three classrooms and interviewed their teachers. It is not claimed, though, that their views and behaviors reflect the wide range of preschool teachers, even in the same town where the study is conducted.
4. Videotapes could not be analyzed using an instrument as proposed, due to the complicated nature of interactions, and the design of activities at the sites chosen. While tapes were used to validate field notes, some of the analysis is based on the researcher's interpretations of the sites under study.
5. Some limitation might arise from the fact that the method of data analysis was revised midway through the study, resulting in major changes.

6. Some limitation might arise from the fact that I, the researcher, am a middle class, woman of color, with a bi-cultural background, and hold strong views regarding equity issues. I view the world through these identities.

## CHAPTER 4

### DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE THREE SETTINGS

As the collection of data was in progress, data was continuously looked at, and emerging categories were noted on a daily basis. Upon the completion of data collection, final analysis started by categorizing all interactions observed and videotaped. As described in Chapter 3, instead of forcing the data onto the instrument that was initially adopted, the researcher allowed the data itself to provide categories for analysis. Several types of teacher-child interaction were identified as directly related to gender equity issues, and had numerous occurrences in the settings under study. Such interactions included discipline; conflict resolution; interruption; gender specific language; help; physical touch; appearance; praise; intellectual discussions; and teacher-differential behavior. Child-child interaction, and gender-related play were examined briefly, as they are part of the total interaction process in the classroom. The fact that the data was collected over a prolonged period of time, and that the classroom is a complex environment, led to a huge volume of recorded events and interactions. However, for the purpose of this study, only interactions that pertain to gender issues were analyzed and discussed in depth. All other kinds of observed interactions served as a base to help the researcher understand the complexity of the classroom environment, and facilitated the depiction of a holistic picture of each classroom.

Emerging categories were then compared to the adapted instrument that was intended to be used to analyze the data. Some categories from the original instrument proved not to be useful with preschool classroom settings, and were completely dropped.

For instance, the initiation of many interactions could not be identified whether it was done by the teacher or the child. Most interactions done by the children, whether initiated, or in response to a question by the teacher, were done by calling out. Teachers were rarely observed to require “hand raising” for participation in the discussion. Most interactions took place in front of the whole group. Categories like “Ancillary Teacher Behavior” were not appropriate to be used consistently for interactions at the preschool level. Such behaviors were still recorded whenever they occurred, but these could not be major elements in the data analysis.

An overview of the three preschools under study is presented in this chapter. Following that will be a description of teacher-child interaction in the three centers as it relates to gender. The categories that emerged from the data are presented and discussed, contrasting the three schools as appropriate. Some categories apply to one or two of the schools only, and that is mentioned in the discussion.

### Overview of the Three Day Care Centers

#### The Rural Day Care

##### Facility

The Rural Day Care is a private center located in a small building that is surrounded with a wooded backyard, and has a private pathway. Part of the backyard is fenced and set up with playground equipment for preschoolers, and another small playground is set up for toddlers on the other side. The building itself has a porch that has a couch and is used for hanging coats and winter gear and has slots for newsletters for parents. The porch leads to the toddler room on one side and to the preschool room on the



other. Each of the classrooms has an exit leading to its playground. Facing the entrance of the building is the office, and a small hallway leading to the bathroom and the kitchen, which is open to the classrooms.

### Staff

The center has two co-directors, a female and a male. There are two toddler teachers and three preschool teachers at school. There is also a cook who works at school, because lunch is cooked and served to the children by the center. During data collection teachers were floating back and forth between the toddler and the preschool classrooms. This movement resulted in having data collected on four different teachers in that setting; Tina, Bill, David, and Sue. Tina was the consistent teacher who dealt with the oldest group of children from the beginning to the end of the study. This means that in many areas reported, Tina might be the only teacher quoted or discussed.

### Enrollment

The school lies at the border between two adjacent towns and serves mostly children of those two communities, though enrollment is open to other communities as well. Parents have the choice of enrolling their children either in a full or part time slots. At the time of data collection there was an average of nine boys and eleven girls in the classroom, depending on the day of the week.

### Day Care Philosophy

The written philosophy of the school places the child as the center of attention. It also states the importance of cooperation between parents and the school, and calls for the active participation of parents in school's Board of Directors, Parent Council, or in

leading some activities in the classroom. The statement places clear importance on the role of both men and women in enriching the lives of the children. It also welcomes all families without discrimination whatsoever.

### Daily Schedule

Upon arrival, children have free play time. During this time children can choose from a variety of activities and centers set up around the room. At midmorning they clean up and gather for circle, where they sing, do the weather and the calendar, and do activities that vary from day to day. Towards the end of circle, children are sent in small numbers to the bathroom to wash their hands for snack. Children sit at three different tables for snack that are preassigned by teachers, based on children's ages. Snack is followed immediately by small group activities. As the school allowed part-time enrollment, the number of the children in the classroom varied during the week. There were days when fourteen children only were in the room. On such days only two teachers worked with the group and divided them into two groups only for snack and activity. On full days the number of children in the room could get up to twenty. After the small group activity, the children get ready to go outside for one hour to one and a half hours. Lunch is served after the children come back from outside. Lunch is followed with quiet play and nap time. Children have another period of free play, then they eat snack and go to play outside until they are picked up.

### Curriculum

When asked about curriculum for the preschool, the researcher was handed a curriculum calendar from the year before that was supposed to guide curriculum planning

for the current year. The calendar had certain themes and goals for each month of the year, along with sample activities corresponding to those themes. Major themes included positive self esteem and other social skills; nature and changes in seasons; multicultural awareness and holiday celebrations; science projects; music and movement.

The overall themes and goals reflected the components of an anti-bias curriculum. Pictures hung on the walls of the room reflected the same themes. During data collection period it was observed that many of the themes were touched on only casually. That was when children were asked to do an art project that usually was product oriented, consisting of making something simple, following certain steps and a prototype, with no much room for children's creativity.

An example of the type of fulfillment of that type of curriculum was observed during Black History Month, when a teacher was expected to tell the incident of Rosa Parks and the bus to the preschoolers at circle. She read the incident to the children and started to explain and respond to their questions. She started by saying that Rosa Parks was dead. She did not seem to have much information beyond what she had just read to them. There was one African American child in the group, and the teacher asked her about what she had learned from the story. It was not clear if the child was asked the question because she was African-American or because she had an older sister in the public school system, because the way the teacher followed up with the question indicated that might have been the possible reason she chose that specific child to respond to her question.

## The Community Day Care

### Facility

The school operates from a space that is rented from a religious facility. It is considered, though, a non-profit, non-sectarian organization. The school occupies a basement of a building, which consists of a 3-4 year old classroom, a 4-5 year old classroom, an extra room referred to as "the backroom", and the director's office, which is connected to the older preschool classroom from one side, and to the backroom from the other. The backroom is utilized by both classes at different times during the day, and is used for large muscle activities, large blocks, and dramatic play. It also serves as a space to give a chance for only half the children in one class to play and interact together, while the other half have the classroom for themselves.

### Staff

There are two teachers in the classroom, each takes charge of half the group at some point during the morning when the class is split into two groups and one of them takes half of the group to the backroom. The same teacher stays with the same group when the children switch from one room to the other. Sometimes, a student teacher is also present in the classroom.

### Enrollment

Children 3-5 years old are accepted to enroll. There is one requirement, though, which is that children have to be toilet trained before they can be enrolled at the day care. There are several options for parents to enroll their child; two part-time options or full time, morning or afternoon. The center states that it does not discriminate against any

member of any group in providing services. At the time of data collection there were ten girls and nine boys in the program distributed over the week.

### Day Care Philosophy

The administration sees the role of their preschool as a transition period between home and elementary school. The school's philosophy stresses the importance of individuality and uniqueness of each child, and promises to work on fostering children's developmental growth, each at their own pace. It also considers that play and social interactions are vital to healthy growth and development.

The school ascertains that it will not be biased in any way in providing services to any children and their families. Parents of children are invited to serve on an advisory board to direct school along with the teachers and the director.

### Daily Schedule

Children arrive in the morning to a free play period, with several activities set up. If the weather allows playing outside, the children usually spend the first forty minutes outside. They have circle time after that led by one of the teachers. At circle teachers sing with the children, read books, discuss themes of an ongoing unit, and introduce activities. At the end of circle the teachers randomly assign children to either go first to the backroom or stay in the classroom, to switch later. A child is assigned daily to ring a bell indicating the return of the second group from the backroom and clean up time. After clean up, snack is served. After snack is story time, then going out to the playground until the children are picked up. During the year the class goes on several field trips.

## Curriculum

Teachers at the Community Day Care follow a curriculum that is planned on a weekly basis. The weekly calender includes stories, songs, snacks, and special activities of the week. Most of the year the teachers plan a single theme for the week, with special activities, books and songs corresponding to the main theme as much as possible.

Occasionally they have a unit that would stretch over two or three week periods. Major curriculum themes at the time of data collection included: Science and math concepts; nature and changes in seasons; health; general knowledge, such as "transportation", "restaurants", "alike and different", and "holidays".

## Mountain View Day Care

### Facility

The center is located in a house building on a side street, and has a wooded backyard designed as a playground. Right at the entrance of the building is a small room occupied by the director of the center. The ground floor has also the infant and toddler rooms, with back doors leading to the playground. There are two sets of stairs leading to the second floor, where the two preschool classrooms are located. Each of the classrooms has its own bathroom for the children. There is a small area between the preschool classrooms used for the children's cubbies. There is an extra room upstairs used to store the TV/VCR set, some extra toys, and has a bookshelf and a couch.

### Staff

There are two teachers in the older preschool classroom. One of the teachers starts the day at 8 AM and leaves before the end of the day, the other teacher comes in at 10

AM and stays till the center closes. The two teachers rotate for opening and closing.

There is one or two student teachers at almost all times assisting the teachers.

### Enrollment

The older preschool classroom enrolls maximum of sixteen children at any time, usually eight girls and eight boys. At the time of data collection, only thirteen or fourteen children were in the classroom together at any given time. There are several enrollment options for parents to choose from, varying from half days to full time, with a minimum of three half days or two full time days per each child. Children can be enrolled for the academic year only, which runs September through late June, or enroll for the summer program as well which runs July and August.

Admission priority is given to the siblings of already enrolled children who are affiliated with the college, followed by children of employees and students of the college. Community children are given the last priority in enrollment.

### Day Care Philosophy

The center's philosophy stresses the importance of providing a loving, warm, safe and rich, home-like environment that promotes the growth of children's self awareness, and awareness of others. Helping children develop healthy self esteems regarding their physical, emotional, and intellectual abilities, is of central importance to the center's mission. The center also aims at fostering children's language acquisition skills as well as their critical appreciation of their world.

## Daily Schedule

The day at Mountain View Center starts with free play in different areas. Snack is served for most of the morning on an ongoing basis. Children are free to choose to eat or not, with three children allowed to snack at the same time. Before the group goes out to the play ground, or on a field trip, there is a last call to snack, and food is put away after that. There is a morning circle run by the teacher who starts the day. The children have preassigned seats during circle based on group and individual dynamics, according to teachers. Several times a week teachers start the circle with sharing time, which would be planned the day before and the children are clear on who has the right to share that day. If sharing seems to take longer than what teachers had anticipated, some of the kids sharing would have to wait to the afternoon circle to get their turn. After sharing the group distributes day jobs. There are eight chores that children can do during the day, starting with the weather, then doing a bank activity, which is basically counting coins and placing them in a jar. The third job is the calender, other jobs are assigned during circle and children get to do them as needed during the day. Those jobs include putting lunch boxes out, bringing nap matts, feeding the fish and crabs, serving as a line leader when children are leaving the room, or being the last person in line. To choose children to do these jobs teachers hold tags with last names on them and start sounding the first letters to help children guess which child is being called. Name tags are usually picked up randomly. After the day jobs are distributed teachers explain the day's activities to children, and pick up name tags and have children get their names and decide which activities they want to start with. It seemed that children who did not get a day job got to



choose their activity first. During circles that seemed to go on for a long time due to a lengthy discussion of a certain project, or to sharing time, teachers tended to have a movement song or a quick exercise with the children to help reduce their restlessness and manage to go on with circle without management problems. After circle children have free play time, during which teachers can get some children to work individually on certain projects that might be going on. Clean up time and toilet usage follow. Children who are done with their chores go to circle area with a book to look at. Sometimes a teacher reads a book to a group of children while they are waiting. Following is outside time, when children either go to the play ground, to a nearby football field, or on a field trip. Children get back in time for lunch, which is followed with toilet usage and nap. A similar schedule is followed in the afternoon.

### Curriculum

Curriculum is planned at several levels in Mountain View Day Care. A web of possibilities is sketched for every corner used in the room, along with a specific goal for its usage. There are monthly plans detailing daily activities. An average of three main topics are planned for a period of eight weeks; some topics are planned for two weeks only, others could take up to four weeks. For every topic in the curriculum, teachers plan a web of possibilities and concepts, and state the goal for that topic. Topics studied during data collection included: Japan (there was a child in the classroom who spent an extended period of time in Japan and had just returned to the States), super heroes, body works, gardening, animals, things that go, games, Native American Indian stories, and witches and ghosts. Some topics were chosen because teachers felt they were important to teach

the children about, and they had planned them for several years. Other topics were new every year and stemmed from children's requests and interests. Curriculum at Mountain View can be described as inquiry-based. For each topic under investigation the children had a chance to work on an extended project individually. Teachers gave their attention to one child at a time when doing projects like the human body. Each child was provided with illustrated books that the teacher took the time to go over with her, reading and showing pictures, as well as asking probing questions and having some hands-on activities that were planned to enhance the children's understanding of the concept. After the child demonstrated understanding of the concept, the teachers helped him work on creating that part of the body. In addition to theme studies in the classroom, teachers took the effort to foster incidental learning, and plan mini topics as needed. Field trips were used as part of the curriculum. During data collection the children took a field trip to the Salvation Army once to donate food they had collected. Another trip was to a local business that was vandalized earlier that year and the incident was believed to be racially motivated. The children donated their "bank" collection to that store.

Throughout the data collection, teachers were observed to take notes on the children on a daily basis. A teacher would follow one child for a period of time and take notes on him. Other times teachers would record group discussions on certain topics, writing down individual responses. Those observations were taken into consideration when planning curriculum.

## Teacher-Child Interaction

The major part of the descriptive analysis of this study is divided into several teacher-child interaction categories that were identified through their numerous occurrences in the three observed classrooms. Some categories may apply to one or two of the settings, their occurrence or the lack of it is presented and discussed, comparing and contrasting the three settings as appropriate.

### Classroom Management and Discipline

According to Lyons and Serbin (1986), adults tend to notice aggressive behavior among boys more than that among girls. Streitmatter (1994) also found that teachers, including those who try to provide an equitable environment in their classrooms, still have gender bias in the area of discipline. As data was being collected for this study, discipline was the most recurring category in all three day care centers. The way it was dealt with differed from center to center.

### The Rural Day Care

Teachers at this center moved back and forth between toddler and preschool classrooms during data collection. Four different teachers were observed throughout the course of study, with three of them dealing with preschoolers most of the time. Some days only two of them were present at the room. On days when the entire group of children was attending the day care, three teachers were in the room. During snack time and small group activity, the class was divided into two or three groups, by age, and depending on how many teachers were present in the classroom on a given day. One teacher dealt primarily with her group during these two activities. Throughout the rest of

the day, teachers interacted with all children all over the room regardless of their age. Differences in management styles among teachers were apparent, mostly in discipline styles. Sometimes two teachers were observed to deal differently with the same child at the same time. Tina was the only teacher who spent the entire period of the study in the classroom. David was there at the beginning of the study, then came back toward the end of the study when he switched places with Sue. Bill was hired a while after the beginning of the study. For all teachers in the classroom, transition was the most challenging time. Small group activity was observed to be difficult to deal with by Tina who had difficulty having children focused on task, and was forced to cut many activities shorter than planned. As teachers differed among their styles, it is worthwhile to present each teacher separate from the others.

David was observed to give the children clear expectations that he followed through with the children most of the time. For example, he asked the children to raise their hands if they had anything to contribute during circle. When some of them tried to call out, David reminded them of the rule and insisted on having it followed. When Jackie refused to hold hands with the child next to her during a song, and wanted to choose who to hold hands with, David asked her to conform to the rule of holding the neighbor's hand. When she refused to follow, David asked her to leave the circle. One time David noticed Lee pushing Dan, he walked over and stopped her from doing that. Another time he heard Chris yell at Diane. David walked over and physically removed Chris from the area. Chris was one of a few boys who were watched closely by all teachers in the classroom. He often answered back and yelled at teachers and other children as well.

Chris refused to follow instructions many times. His behavior, however, seemed to be noticed by all teachers all the time, who would discipline him more often than others. One time during circle Chris noticed something stuck on Trevor's hair, when he reached to take it off, David called on him "Chris, sit on your bottom, please!" Another teacher who was present came over and sat next to Chris to "help you keep your hands to yourself!" Another time when children were getting ready to go outside, David had asked the children to come to him to get bug repellent sprayed on. Diane, Isaac, and Chris were still playing around and not getting ready. David called on Diane once only, yet kept calling both Isaac and Chris. On other occasions, more than once during free play time, several girls would be very loud, either singing or talking. Girls were reminded to keep their voices lower only once, while Chris was constantly reminded to lower his voice. This is consistent with research on discipline (Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Serbin, et al., 1973; Streitmatter, 1994).

At the beginning of data collection there was a teacher who was overseeing the entire classroom, and was going on maternity leave and then resigning. Tina expressed her concern that she and David may not be able to run the classroom as smoothly as that teacher did. Tina seemed to have that uncertainty stay with her for the rest of data collection time. She had voiced her frustration with the children more than once, letting them know how frustrated she was. The children had heard her say "I don't know what to do!" more than once. Often, after a confrontation with children, especially Chris, she would turn to the researcher and ask for advice on how to deal with the situation. Tina seemed to have trouble balancing between dealing with a disciplinary situation with one

child, and supervising the rest of the group while doing so. On the other hand, she tended sometimes to ignore disruptive behavior by the children until it either got out of hand, or she got very frustrated. One time during snack, Tina left the group to get an extra banana from the kitchen. Chris got upset that Jason turned to Emily and said something to her, interrupting him. Chris started yelling at Jason. Meanwhile, Tina came back to the room and ignored Chris's yelling completely. A few moments later, he started talking loud and jumping around. Tina called his name five times before he acknowledged her calling.

Tina: "Do you want to finish your snack at another table?" "No!" Chris yelled back. Tina: "Then eat your snack!" When he continued doing what he was doing before, she followed up and removed him to another table. He directed his anger at Diane, who was sitting across from him before he was removed, and they both exchanged accusations. Tina: "You are giving me your bad attitude!" She removed him to a farther table, while he yelled: "I'm not bad, stupid!" Tina: "You are not bad, but you need to finish your snack here." At that point Chris decided he was finished with snack, and went to sit at the rug, where children were supposed to be if they were waiting for others. Ben followed Chris and they both started to play wrestling. Jason and Joseph tried to follow the other two. Tina noticed them half way through the room and called them to come back. She then called Chris and Ben. Meanwhile, several children got up and started wandering around and were very noisy. It took Tina a few minutes to get the group back to the table to start their activity that was planned to start right after snack. When Tina's group left the table, Mary Beth, who was at Bill's table tried to follow those children to the rug. Bill called her back saying it was "an inappropriate behavior for snack." She came back to the table

and ran to the rug again. At that point, Bill went to the rug, picked her up and brought her to the table. His group, including Mary Beth, stayed focused throughout the rest of their activity. Tina tried to start her activity while the group was still loud. She stopped and said: "Forget it! I'm not doing this! Let's sit and do nothing!" All the children said "No!" Tina started the activity and Chris kept interrupting her. She physically removed him for a time-out, while he was yelling: "Bad teacher, bad teacher!" Then he cried and threw a chair on the floor. Tina ignored his behavior, and Bill talked to him saying that maybe if he calmed down Tina would allow him to come back. Chris moved closer to the book area where Jane and Jackie were reading quietly and started teasing them. Tina moved him again. The rest of her group was restless, and Ben ignored Tina's instructions completely, but responded to the researcher when she talked to him. Tina's activity lasted under ten minutes from beginning to end. She asked the children to get ready to go outside and went to talk to Chris about his behavior earlier. While doing so, she left her group unsupervised for more than five minutes. Ben grabbed Diane's boots and took them out of the room. Diane went to look for them in the hallway and ended up in the toddler classroom, where a teacher brought her back. When Tina went to talk to Ben, he yelled at her: "Get your hands off of me! Help! Somebody help!" Tina removed him to the hallway and Bill came to help her with her group.

Many times teachers in the classroom seemed to supervise only those children who were in their proximity. During free play time, several times a few girls engaged in running inside the room, climbing on furniture, or singing loudly and were always left without being redirected or disciplined. Tina and Sue tended to notice boys, especially

Chris for any disruptive behavior more than other children in the classroom. One time during snack, Tina was explaining the activity that was to follow. Emily came closer to Chris and said something to him, and both laughed. Tina disciplined Chris only and did not say anything to Emily. Another time three girls were singing loudly during free play. Tina said nothing to them, but as soon as Chris started to get loud, she noticed him and reprimanded him. This is also consistent with research findings on discipline (Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Serbin, et al., 1973; Streitmatter, 1994). When the whole group was acting up, it was Chris only who was being talked to; even when Brian threw away a rolling pin, Tina picked it up and went on talking to Chris, who was being reprimanded for something else, without trying to find out who did that. Chris's behavior was noticed more than others even when the other child involved was another boy. One time Ben tried to leave snack table and was not noticed. As soon as Chris tried to move away he was noticed and dealt with. It was difficult to tell if Chris was the center of attention for being a boy who disrupted activities more often than others, or if he disrupted more because he was the center of negative attention.

Sue on the other hand, had a totally different style from Tina's when it came to discipline. Many times she used a commanding voice with the children that was close to yelling. She seemed to be the one who gave most time-out in the classroom. Sue often sent the children for time-out and left them there for a long time. During transition once, she sent one of the younger children to the book area for a time-out and left him there for more than ten minutes, when the director walked into the room and noticed him. She asked her if he could go back to the group and get ready to go outside, and Sue said she



was ready for him. Several times Sue was observed to give specific expectations to the children with clear consequences of their actions, without her following up on that. As with the other teachers, sometimes Sue noticed children only when they were in her proximity. On one occasion Brian threw his shoes, both Sue and Tina ignored that behavior. Several times a girl and a boy engaged in a behavior that was not accepted by the teachers. In all those incidents, and in agreement with research and the other teachers' behaviors, it was observed that Sue disciplined the boy and said nothing to the girl involved. One time Kevin and Carmen were running in the room. Sue talked to Kevin alone about that. Another time during circle, Jackie leaned toward Jason and quietly interacted with him. He was the one to be reprimanded. Another time Jackie and Brian were wrestling during circle. Sue asked them both to stop. When they did not comply after a few reminders, Sue got upset: "These two children!" She went to them and picked up Brian and told him with a firm voice "You are to leave my circle now!" She put him in the book area and came back to circle without saying anything to Jackie, who got a turn to participate just moments later. While Brian was in time-out, Tina offered him a choice to help her clean up the tables, which he did. While he was cleaning up, Brian went to where Sally-- one of the younger children who often refused to participate in circle and was left alone by all teachers-- was eating breakfast and squeezed his sponge in front of her. He later went to play with the water table after Tina left the room and left him unsupervised. A little later Sue started to read a book to the few children who remained in the circle. Brian was still wandering around. He went to snack table and leaned over as if he was going to lick the crackers. Tina noticed him and Sue gave him

another time-out. Brian got upset and started screaming after a minute, then he jumped on the couch. Sue told him to sit down until he was quiet. He complied right away, but Sue left him there without asking him to join snack. She gave snack to the children at her table, drank juice herself, talked to Tina, then left to the kitchen. After a few minutes of being quiet, Brian started calling "Hey! Hey!" He called for about two minutes before Tina noticed him and asked him to join snack. Another time during transition, when Brian was not getting ready, he was left alone with no reminders or clear expectations. After more than ten minutes, Sue went to him and gave him time-out for not being ready. Many times in this classroom a teacher would tell the children in their proximity that clean up time was about to start. Children who might be playing away from the teacher would have no warning regarding clean up, and always were surprised that they had to abandon their activities without transition, or a chance to wrap up whatever they were doing.

Bill was observed to give the children clear expectations that he held them up to most of the time. He also made the children pay consequences to their actions. When Jackie pulled his sleeve and caused him to spill juice on the floor, he made her go get a paper towel and wipe it up, even though she tried to argue her way out of it. Bill had a gentle way of telling the children his expectations, yet making it clear they had to conform. He saw Sally once ignoring instructions that she had to get ready to go out. Bill told her she had to put her snow gear on. She refused initially, and he talked to her until she agreed. That same day Jackie screamed and announced she did not want to go outside and that she hated her jacket. Bill told her she had no choice but to go out and that he

could be nice enough to bring her gear himself into the room. He left her with her stuff until he finished helping other children. He then went and picked her up and brought her to the rug area and started putting her snow pants on while she was still on his lap. She refused to stand up for him to pull the pants up, and he initially played with her "You are being silly today! The queen of being silly!" When he tried to put her jacket on she screamed again and ran to the corner of the room. Bill followed her there with her boots and jacket and gave her one minute only to either put them on herself, or he would be back to put them on her. He went to help Sally and went back to Jackie who resisted his help. Bill finished dressing her up and carried her outside while she was still crying. On other occasions Bill allowed children to get away without serving their time-out. For instance, one time Jackie ran across the room during a game and Bill called her back. She listened to him, but almost immediately ran away again. Bill had to call her twice, and told her she got out of the game for not following the rules. Jackie got upset and ignored what Bill had just said, going back to her spot. Bill did not say anything, but stayed close by to monitor the game. In general, Bill seemed to have less confrontations with the children than other teachers, and the children in his group were often observed to stay on task more than the older group who was supervised by Tina.

### The Community Day Care

Most discipline observed at the Community Day Care had to do with either breaking safety rules in the classroom, being disruptive, or showing verbal or physical aggression toward others. Both teachers were observed to be generally gentle and fair to both girls and boys when disciplining them. Most of the time the same rules were applied

to boys and girls. One time children were building structures as “obstacle courses” to climb on. Paula decided to build her structure in the middle of the room. Amy: “Paula, there are a lot of kids going through here, do you think it’s a good place to put your structure?” Paula: “Yes!” Amy: “I think the other kids will disagree with you!” Amy made sure Paula moved her structure to the side. Another time Amy was with her group at the back room. She peeked into the classroom, where Beth was supervising the rest of the group, to find Danny and Walter playing with cars in the middle of the room. The rule in the classroom was to keep cars on the rug area that is used for circle. A few minutes earlier Beth had talked to the two boys about their loud voices and about keeping the cars on the rug. When Amy came in and saw them in the middle, “What are you doing outside the rug with cars in the middle of the room?” Beth noticed that and came to them, “I have to ask you move from this activity and choose another activity!” Removing the children from one area to another after being warned and not having responded, was a consistent discipline strategy used by both Amy and Beth. Sometimes teachers made the alternate choice for the children. One time two boys were loud and playing rough with each other during clean up time. Amy “I’m gonna make a choice for you!” She sent each one to a different area and gave them specific instructions on cleaning up. Another time Beth noticed Danny and Bob chasing each other and climbing a table during free play. She directed them to the play dough table and reminded them the area they were chasing in was the dress- up area. When Beth noticed Monica climb on the cot in the hospital area, while another child was lying down on it, “What’s the rule on the cot?” Monica climbed

down right away; teachers had said only one child at a time could be on the cot so it would not tip over.

Being gentle to each other was another value that was observed in this classroom. Sometimes gentle, positive reinforcement was used to achieve that. Nancy and Alana were talking together, Beth: "Alana and Nancy, are you helping each other listen this morning?" Another time Bonnie complained about Martha who had said that her mother told her she could tease anybody she wanted. Beth moved in and told Martha that if that behavior was accepted at home, it was not at school.

Even though Amy and Beth were observed to be fair to both boys and girls, very rarely a differential treatment was observed. After the incident when Martha announced she could tease others, later that day she was coming back from the back room. As soon as she entered the classroom she pushed Paula. Amy was looking at the girls and appeared to have seen the pushing and said nothing to Martha. Right after, Carl jumped as he came in, Amy stopped him right away saying it was not acceptable to do so in the classroom. This finding concurs with research on aggression (Lyons and Serbin, 1986).

#### Mountain View Day Care

Dawn and Jenny were in complete agreement on their management styles. They both tried to be consistent in their interactions with the children, as well as consistent with each other. Every day one of them started the day and the other closed up. This meant that each was with the children for about two hours without the other being present. Whenever a child asked for a permission to do something that the teacher thought might had been dealt with earlier by the other teacher, she would ask the child to

wait until the other teacher got in, to ask her what she had told the children about that request. They also were in the habit of filling each other in on the happenings of that morning, so neither of them would override the other's decision.

Most of discipline issues in their classroom were about safety, rules and regulations, and being gentle to each other or the school property. The teachers used various tactics when disciplining the children. Whenever they were at circle with the children they tried to be soft voiced and talked to the child involved very softly, and sometimes they used gestures to convey a message to that child. Most of discipline done during free play took place in public, and was audible to the whole group. This might have been due to the fact that teachers mostly supervised the entire room and managed situations from afar. It also could be because teachers showed respect to children while disciplining them. Teachers never lost their temper or used more than a firm voice sometimes, but mostly their voice stayed as kind as it was with other interactions. When teachers had to remove a child from an activity they still preserved her work to a later time. One morning Neal, who was the most disciplined child in the room and seemed to be under constant watch, needed frequent reminders about his behavior. He chased Jade several times and was reminded that he could run when they got to the gym. After a few reminders Dawn asked him to go stay next to her for clean up, and when he picked up a piece of cut up paper food that was extra he asked if he could use it for his project. Dawn said he could write his initials on it and save it. Later on when he was called to do the job he had picked to do during the morning circle, Dawn said that he lost that privilege due to what he had been doing that morning, and that he should ask Jenny if he could get that

job for the next day. When another situation turned to be embarrassing to Neal, Dawn told the children who came to watch the interaction "We don't need an audience here!" Teachers mostly used positive language to remind children of their expectations. A few examples of that: When Dawn noticed Mike talking while chewing she said: "You are not talking with food in your mouth, I know, because you could choke!" Another time to two other children: "Brandon, is there fighting over there?" Brandon: "No!" Dawn: "Not at Mountain View!" Jenny heard Anita use a loud voice, "Anita use an inside voice, please!" Dawn saw Neal kick something in the gardening area, "You weren't kicking that Neal, were you?" Neal: "No." Dawn: "Do me a favor, can you go set it up for me?" Neal went and fixed it.

Teachers usually used gentle reminders to children before they asked them to leave the area and direct them to a different activity. One time Dawn asked Neal and Carol not to put Lego pieces on their heads. Carol kept doing that and Dawn asked her to be done with Legos, "I'll save what you built so no one could take it apart, but you need to be done for now!" Teachers also reasoned with children and explained why they were disciplining them. One time Jenny saw Neal standing on a cot "Neal, you are sitting or standing on the ground, right?" He got down right away and she thanked him. But when he kept standing on it, she walked to him: "If I see you standing on that again, you are done with dress up area for the morning!" When she looked up again and saw him standing on it, "Neal sweetie, I'm sorry you need to leave the dress up area!" Neal "No, no, noo!" Jenny walked over to him "You've done a good job there, but for your own safety, you can't stand on that. Do you want to come sit with me for a minute?" She took

him and sat him on her lap until he cooled down and went off to play with something else.

Teachers had a strict rule that children could not run in the classroom. Many times they reminded them with "You wouldn't run in the room, would you?" Or, "You are walking!" Other times they made the children go back and walk. This rule was observed to be applied equally to girls and boys most of the time. Nonetheless, one time Jade, who was wearing shoes that made loud noise, was skipping back and forth throughout the room without being noticed by Jenny. As soon as Neal skipped, without making any noise, he was stopped and made to go walk. The same thing happened with John, who was made to go back and walk, while Valerie, Jade, and Anita got away with skipping and running around the room with neither teacher saying anything about that. Such a reaction by teachers to notice boys' behavior and ignore the girls' was observed several times.

Another disciplining strategy that was used, was asking the offender to think how she thought the affected child would feel. Other times the affected child was asked to talk about his feelings. Many times a child would be asked to go fix whatever they knocked down for other children. Teachers were usually keen on children being nice to each other. They also used distractions to draw children's attention to an accepted behavior with a toy or an object. They were also observed to anticipate and stop some disruptive behaviors before they happened. Craig came out of the bathroom once with wet hands and seemed heading toward Sam. Dawn: "You are not gonna shake those wet hands over Sam's head!" Craig shook his head and went to dry them up.



Both teachers tried to be fair with the children regardless of their gender. At the same time, many children got away with unacceptable behaviors occasionally except for Neal, who seemed to be caught every time he tried to break the rules. One time he knocked down a tower that Tim and Anita had built earlier. Jenny made him go and put it up after talking to him about it. A few minutes later, several children were knocking down the tower. Jenny noticed Neal only "Gentle, Neal!" This is consistent with Lyons and Serbin's study (1986). Another incident took place at the beginning of data collection when Neal was still new to the classroom and the teachers were working on behavior modification with him. During circle children were singing while standing up in a circle and shaking their legs. Neal kept kicking a toy box behind him despite numerous reminders. Dawn stopped the activity and asked him to go get his lunch box and put it on the floor. When he did, she told him "Every time you are going to kick Mountain View box, I'll kick your lunch box!" Neal said nothing but looked sad. Dawn: "You don't want me to kick your box, do you?" He shook his head. Dawn: "Would you then stop kicking Mountain View box?" Neal: "Yes!" The activity went on without further reminders.

### Conflict Resolution

Teachers across centers were observed to deal differently with conflict. The data was analyzed to find out how their ways were different, and if their different ways of dealing with conflict were based on the gender of the children involved in the conflict. The data revealed that the quality and quantity of conflict resolution practiced across the centers, differed from class to class. Nonetheless, the data contained no evidence that gender played a role in how teachers treated conflict.

## The Rural Day Care

Very few incidents of conflict resolution were observed at this center, and all were managed by Tina. The children seemed to get in conflict with teachers more than with each other. In addition, teachers had a trend of supervising the children who were in their immediate proximity. Many conflicts among the children went unnoticed. Several times the researcher had to interfere when the safety of a child seemed to be at stake. Sometimes Tina intervened herself on behalf of the affected child. One time Ben yelled at Henry "Stop!" Tina: "Can you tell him nicely?" Ben: "He's kicking my chair!" Tina: "Then you need to tell him nicely!" Ben responded to her. Another time during clean up Ben wanted to take a chair back where it belonged, while Jackie felt she still needed it at the art table. They started pulling it in two directions. Teachers did not notice what was happening, and both children got rough such that the researcher had to intervene. Ben seemed to respond and asked Jackie nicely if he could take it back, but she refused. At that point Tina noticed and came to deal with the conflict. As soon as she started talking to them, Ben changed his attitude and sat down in the chair refusing to move until Tina picked him up and moved him herself. Other times Tina tried to get children to listen to each other. When Mary Beth apologized several times to Jackie for taking a toy from her and asked her what else she could have done, Tina looked at Jackie "Jackie, I hear Mary Beth apologize." Another time when Chris was not listening to Diane, Tina interfered: "Do you need to work alone on a different table?" Chris: "No!" Tina: "Then please listen to Diane, she's asking you to stop!"

### The Community Day Care

Both Amy and Beth dealt often with children in conflict. They would give the children a chance to talk about their feelings. They also tried to engage the children in finding a solution to the problem. When Carl complained he didn't have enough goop, Beth asked the children to solve that situation. Jack said "I don't know!" Beth: "We are good detectives, we can solve this." The children at the table decided to give him each some of their goop. Another time Hilda complained to Amy that she and Martha were having a hard time playing together, but she still wanted to stay in the area. Amy tried to give suggestions to Hilda, and when she felt that Hilda needed her involvement, she asked if she wanted her to talk to Martha before she did that. A little later Kevin complained that the girls in that area would not let him be the nurse because "nurses were only girls," so Amy said: "Tell them about Isaac the nurse at the elementary school," referring to what she had told the children a week ago when Hilda, whose mother is a nurse, had told other children that nurses were only females.

### Mountain View Day Care

Whenever children got involved in a conflict, Jenny and Dawn facilitated the discussion in a way to make sure the solution was acceptable to both parties, without voicing their own opinions as teachers. One time Craig and Sam had a dispute. Jenny asked them both to go next to her and talk it out. When Craig tried to walk away soon after saying he was fine, Jenny asked Sam if it was all right with him as well. Craig said no, and Jenny made Sam come back until they both had an agreement. They got in another dispute later that morning and Dawn had them talk about it and they went back to

playing together but were rough for indoor play. Dawn took both to the cubby area right outside the classroom and talked to them privately over there. When children got in a dispute over an item, teachers always took the item until both children agreed on a solution. Carol and Neal screamed together "I have it!" referring to a shovel in the sand box. Jenny took it away and listened to both of them, while rephrasing what each was saying to make sure they both were clear on what was being said and agree on a solution. Jenny caught Neal doing something to Julie once. She asked him to talk to her and he responded that he already said he was sorry. Jenny said that was not enough because Julie needed to tell him how she felt.

#### Interruption

Hendrick and Stange (1989), found that female teachers interrupted girls more than they interrupted boys, and allowed themselves to be interrupted by boys more than girls. This study looked at interruption patterns in the three different settings. In one of the classrooms under study, interruption by the children to each other and to their teachers happened on a daily basis such as it was recorded only when teachers took note of it and reacted to the interruption.

#### The Rural Day Care

During circle time a girl tried to say something while David was talking to the group. He stopped her and said that he was talking. Another time Tina was helping a girl. Another girl interrupted with a question, and Tina went briefly to the second girl and came back to help the first one she was dealing with. These were the only two recorded interruption incidents that were dealt with in this classroom. Tina's circle time and small

group activities seemed to have multiple interruptions, by the children, to her and to each other that went unnoticed among the noise level, and children being inattentive to the activity. It was a common scene that circle would be going on and Tina would have four children only paying attention and participating in the activities.

### The Community Day Care

When children tried to interrupt during circle while the teacher was discussing a topic with children, teachers seemed to have several ways of dealing with the interruption. If she was explaining something for the children and chose to finish her explanation without interruption, she would gently ask the child, whether a boy or a girl, to hold onto the thought they had until she was done. Teachers usually remembered to ask that child, as soon as they were done, for their contribution. Other times teachers allowed girls and boys to ask questions while the discussion was going on. At the same time, if a child tried to say something that was unrelated to the discussion when teachers were dealing with a specific topic, that child was asked to wait until after the circle. One time during a discussion on animals, Amy asked questions and gave a chance to several children to respond. She also allowed them to comment on their own pets. Bonnie wanted to go on talking about her dog, so Amy asked her: "Does what you want to say have anything with what we are talking about?" Bonnie said it was not related, and Amy told her she needed to finish what she was saying and could not keep allowing interrupting the circle for unrelated topics. During free play one time, Henry was telling Amy something when Hilda tried to interrupt. Amy: "Just a minute Hilda, I need to finish listening to Henry!"

### Mountain View Day Care

Most incidents regarding interruption at this center were recorded about Dawn, who seemed to notice and react to interruption whenever it happened. Dawn was observed to deal with interruption with one way regardless of the child's gender. There were several incidents when both teachers did not allow boys to interrupt girls, nor girls to interrupt boys. One time a teacher from another class came in to say something while Melissa was talking. Dawn signaled with her hand to the other teacher to wait until Melissa finished talking before she went to find out what that teacher wanted. Whenever interruption happened Dawn would acknowledge it and apologize for its happening. One time during circle, Melissa was sharing something about a Kayaking trip her father had taken. Dawn stopped her to explain to children what kayaking meant. A moment later, Ellen tried to say something. Dawn stopped her: "I already interrupted Melissa, I don't want other people to interrupt her." On another occasion Dawn was having a social conversation with two girls when Craig came to say something. Upon responding to him, she turned to the girls and said "I'm sorry he's interrupting us!" At the same time, Dawn did not allow children to interrupt her when she was talking, especially when she was discussing a topic or giving instructions.

### Gender Specific Language

Researchers have found that children do not understand that the male pronoun is used as a generic one. That use of language confuses the children, who would think that maleness is the general case, which in turn contributes to the invisibility of women in society (Gelb, 1989; McCormick, 1994). This study looked at the teachers' use of

language whenever they referred to animals or birds, and when they used generic pronouns.

### The Rural Day Care

David and Tina were observed to use the plural addressing the whole group of children. Sue used "boys and girls" several times to address the group. During a cookie making activity, Tina was helping the children with cutters, "The people [cookie cutters] don't work very well." One time David was teaching the children how to raise their hands and be quiet when someone else talked. He showed them a drawing of heads with a hand raised next to them and asked the children what they think the drawing was. Someone said "a boy!" David: "It could be a boy and it could be a girl. Nobody is having hair on!" Another time David was getting his group to get ready for snack and was holding a banana and pretending to talk over the phone "Usually, Mr. and Mrs. Banana talk on this phone, would you like to say good bye to Mrs. Grape?" Even though David had shown sensitivity to pronouns when talking to the children, when he once picked up a book with drawings of a black cat, he referred to it as "he" even though the author did not use gender specific pronouns. Bill was observed more than once during a session addressing the group with a statement starting with: "When Mom comes...", assuming that mothers were the ones who picked up from the preschool.

### The Community Day Care

Amy and Beth used the plural consistently to address the group. When the group got noisy they avoided calling on individual children, Beth always used "boys and girls", and Amy mostly used "my friends", sometimes she said "preschoolers". One time Amy

needed some children to help move the water table, she asked for “helpers” and picked girls and boys equally for the job. Another time she was baking something for snack and wanted to give the children a chance to use a hand mixer. She addressed the group “I wonder if my friends came to school with their muscles today. I need some friends with major muscles to help!” She picked four girls and a boy for the job. Did she do that to prove to them that girls can have strong muscles, or did she pick more girls because the job required was cooking, and she followed the traditional assumption that females do the cooking?

As part of their curriculum, Beth and Amy were teaching a Native American unit. Beth read a book about the subject to the children and the language of it was completely gender free. When Paula was working on a related project, Beth was suggesting to her that she might like to make “a Native American man or woman”. During the hospital unit, Beth was conversing with children in that area “there are male nurses and female nurses. There are male doctors and female doctors.” Beth was not present in the room when Amy had a similar discussion with the children a few days earlier. The songs both teachers sang with the children were a mixture of traditional songs where the animals were referred to as “he”, and innovative ones where the doctor, for instance, was a female, departing from tradition.

At the same time, both Amy and Beth used the male pronoun as a generic one on many occasions, specially with animals, which is consistent with Gelb’s (1989) finding. Beth was at the play dough table, “Can I see how the turtle footprints look like? I haven’t tried him yet.” She pushed the feet into the rolled dough and said “Look at his feet!” Only



once during that session she referred to an animal as "it". One time there was a bee in the classroom that scared some children. Amy tried to ease their fear, "He's not bothering us!" On Ground Hog Day, Amy was teaching the children about that day and about ground hogs and their homes in the ground. She used charts showing ground hogs and their holes. Amy consistently used the pronoun "he" to explain the topic to children, even though the explanation on the chart used "it" as a pronoun. That lesson was followed with a song where the ground hog was a "he". When a child came into the room from the back room wearing a cow's outfit, Beth greeted the child "Hello Mr. Cow! Or is this Mr. or Mrs. Cow?" Another time Nancy was tracing a human skull when she referred to it as "he" and Amy did not react to the possibility of it being a female.

There was a box of wooden people that could be stacked on top of each other. The people were yellow, blue, and red, with one person only in the color white. The box was labeled by teachers as "the stacking men". They also considered that the white one was "a leader to the group". Rick was stacking some of those wooden humans. Martha walked there and knocked down whatever he had built, and grabbed the white one away from him. Rick reacted by "It's not the captain! It's not the captain!" Martha had a satisfied look on her face and kept holding on to it even though she was not playing with those pieces. When she got bored from doing nothing and wanted to move to another area to play, she gave it to Alicia "Here, you have it Alicia!" As soon as Martha left, Rick whispered to Alicia "Give it to me! Give it to me!" She did, and they both went on playing. A few minutes later Rick announced "I got the captain." When Kevin joined in, Beth was talking to him and said the "white one is kind of a leader to the group." When

Beth was asked about that incident in the interview she admitted that she was not sure why she referred to those people as “men” and why she considered the white one to be the leader. Her explanation was that those pieces were more than twenty years old, and she thought they “kind of looked masculine.” She also thought that because the white one had a label on it that said “Building”, it might have led her to call it a captain. She said that bringing that question up in the interview was helpful in making her realize that there were race and gender issues involved that she never noticed before, and that she must have played a role in the children’s perceptions of those play pieces, and should have been more careful.

#### Mountain View Day Care

Jenny and Dawn were conscientious about the use of neutral language. They always addressed the group with “people”, or “children”. They both consistently referred to animals with gender free language. When they were creating a super hero dog for their unit, they asked the children if they wanted it to be “a boy dog or a girl dog”. All girls asked for a girl and all the boys asked for a boy. Teachers suggested they had it as “a boy and a girl” and all the children agreed, and they named it BG, for Boy-Girl. Later during the year Jenny was sitting next to Lisa who was decorating a person and talking about another character the group made the day before. Lisa announced that “Jackson is a girl.” Jenny said that after Lisa had left yesterday they decided that it was going to be a “chia bird.” Lisa: “It’s a chia girl!” Jenny: “Actually, we did not decide if it was going to be a girl or a boy.” Anita yelled “A boy!” The rest of the girls in the room yelled back “a girl!” And all the boys responded “A boy!” Jenny: “Then would you like it to be like BG the

dog, a boy and a girl?" All the children agreed. A student teacher was observed once talking to a child and started using "he" referring to an animal. She stopped herself and corrected to "he or she."

### Help

Serbin (1972) found that when children solicited attention from teachers, the teachers gave more to boys who also received more directions on their tasks, as well as extended conversations with the teachers. The current study looked at teachers' helping behavior with children to find out if there were any differences in the way teachers responded to calls for help. The data revealed some differences among different day care centers in how teachers responded to help calls from children. There were no differences observed within each classroom that were based on gender.

### The Rural Day Care

The most help Tina was observed to offer to the children was in spelling. Whenever a child asked her to help spell something, Tina would either spell the words letter by letter if the child knew how to write them, or she would dot the words down for him and ask him to trace them. She was observed to use the same methods with girls and boys alike. Tina always tried to give the children instructions on how to do things themselves, and would not do things for them unless the child had tried and did not manage to do it herself. Gina asked for help once "Could you help me make a face?" Tina: "Sure!" She gave her instructions and encouraged her to try. When Gina could not draw it on her own, Tina helped her with it. Another time Diane was putting a puzzle together and asked Tina about where to put a certain piece. Tina pointed to the foot of the

animal and said: "Can you think where this piece goes? What looks like this side?" When Tina was making cookies with the children and cut out the first cookie for Khadija instead of showing her how to do it, she did the same thing with Ben.

### The Community Day Care

Amy and Beth offered help in a similar way to girls and boys alike. They encouraged them to do things for themselves, and offered help when children really needed it. One time Lesley asked Amy how to put a hole in the bottom of her cup during an art project. Amy went next to her and said "This is very hard to do. It's the only work for teachers in this project. Everything else is yours." Another time Hilda called Beth over "The string is REALLY stuck! I tried!" Beth went over and cut a piece out to fix the string for her. Other times help was offered in putting up paper for drawing in response to a child's request, adding more water to the cornstarch, or finding an extra toy for a child. Spelling was another big area of need for help. Teachers dealt with this based on the child's amount of knowledge. When Monica wanted to write "Mom, Happy Birthday!" on a painting she did and asked for help, Beth said: "I'll spell it for you, and you try to write it yourself." Monica wrote it down herself. But when Alicia who is younger than Monica wanted to write "Is it beating?" Beth wrote it down sounding every letter and asked her if she wanted to copy it. Kevin needed some help with words and Beth sounded each one giving him a chance to figure out what the letters were. At the art table Paula and Rick needed help in pushing a string through some beads. Beth went there and she helped both exactly the same way, by modeling the first bead and giving instructions and watching how each started the project. Amy was once observed responding to a call for

help with a puzzle. She looked at the piece and suggested to the girl where she might put it. Sometimes when children asked questions on how to do something, teachers asked another child if she could explain to the child who asked.

### Mountain View Day Care

Each child had a book to write stories in. Whenever they wanted to write, teachers sat next to them and asked them how much help they needed, regardless of their gender. Kathryn wanted to write in her book once and Dawn asked her if she wanted to write the words herself and Kathryn said yes. Dawn asked her if she needed other help and she said she would like Dawn to sound the letters for her. When Kathryn was done Tim, who was younger, came over to write in his book and sat down dictating to Dawn who wrote down his story. Whenever children needed other kinds of help teachers tried to give instructions as much as possible instead of doing things for the children. Anita and Emily were working at the computer when they complained that something was wrong. Without moving closer to them, Jenny gave them instructions on how to fix the problem. When three boys were having trouble keeping a train on its tracks, Jenny gave them instructions the same way without fixing it for them. Emily asked Jenny what matzah was and Jenny turned to Ellen asking her if she knew what that was. Ellen did not know so Jenny explained it to both of them. Whenever teachers felt that a child could do something himself, they restrained from doing things for him and said: "You can do it." They would help if the child tried and did not succeed. Many times children asked for help in tying their shoes. Teachers complied with that, but when Lesley put her shoes on the wrong feet and asked Jenny to fix them for her, Jenny said: "I'll let you put them on."

You can do that.” After Lesley put them the correct way Jenny went and tied them for her.

### Physical Touch

Serbin (1972) found that teachers in her study gave more hugs to boys than they gave to girls. Lewis (1991) on the other hand, found that giving hugs and smiling to children were equally distributed between girls and boys in her study. Teachers at the three centers under study were observed for the use of physical touch, whether it was used in the form of hugs and kisses to the children, or used as a refraining measure for the purpose of disciplining a child.

#### The Rural Day Care

The most common physical touch observed at this center was when a teacher carried one of the children to their time-out spot, or to take them to put their snow suits on to go outside after refusing to do it on their own. Several times teachers were observed to pick up a child upon falling down and hurting herself. A few times Bill and Sue were observed to have children sitting on their laps during circle. One time Tina was giving a warning to three children to join her circle. She said that by the count to three she expected them to find a spot in the circle. Ben wanted to comply and went to sit on her lap. She said to him: “Not in my lap please!” So he got up and moved away. At the same time Bill was sitting in the circle having one girl on his lap and another leaning on him.

#### The Community Day Care

Both Amy and Beth were observed to give occasional hugs and kisses to girls and boys alike. Many times those were initiated by the children themselves. Other times

teachers patted children on the head. One time a child from a different classroom came in with a Birthday card he had made for Beth. She kneeled down and gave him a hug and a kiss. Teachers were not observed to physically restrain any of the children during the study.

### Mountain View Day Care

Hugs and kisses were a daily scene at this site. Children did not need a reason to be given a hug or a kiss by a teacher. During the study the children were observed to often sit on Jenny's or Dawn's laps either to listen to a book being read, play a board game, during circle or just for a social conversation, which served mostly as a transition time between activities for the child. Almost every day Jade arrived late with her mother. Whenever the mother was ready to leave, she would hand her to a teacher who would carry her for a brief moment while telling her about the choices of the day. Jade would usually pick an activity right away and the teacher would drop her off there. Lisa came in late once and received the same treatment. Most often the children, boys and girls alike, got hugged and kissed by their teachers. Julie was once sick, so Jenny went to check on her and felt her forehead to see if she was warm, and asked her if she needed a tissue. Another time during clean up Lisa came to Dawn and asked her what she could do next. Dawn: "You can give me a big hug!" After Lisa did, Dawn asked her to help clean up the Lego area. Another time Dawn was telling Jenny that Craig was so happy because he came up with several suggestions for the Super Hero project. Craig said: "I'm loaded with activity!" Dawn: "Yes, you're loaded with activity!" while she gave him a hug. Very

rarely teachers were observed to use a pat on the shoulder or ask a child to sit on their lap as a form of restraint.

### Appearance

In her pilot study, the researcher found that teachers reacted differently to girls' and boys' comments on their own appearance. Teachers were observed to tell the girl that her dress was pretty, and immediately respond to a boy that his shirt had a certain drawing on it. In this study, teachers were observed in order to find out if they commented on children's clothing and appearance, and if so, if there were differences in teachers' comments based on the child's gender. It was found that most of the comments on appearance were initiated by the children about themselves or others.

#### The Rural Day Care

All comments recorded at this site were made to the researcher. Diane wanted to see if the researcher liked her "pretty dress." Then she pulled up her jumper to show the t-shirt underneath. Isaac followed and showed off his overalls. Diane came back and showed off her tights. Chris on another day approached the researcher to ask if she liked his shirt. Then he said: "It's only blue and it has a pocket!" Valerie came over once and told the researcher "I like those earrings!"

#### The Community Day Care

Beth looked at a headband Hilda was wearing: "Those are gorgeous headbands!" Paula showed her once her new Barbie and another doll: "Those are very fancy!" When Bonnie approached Amy and asked her if she liked her dress, Amy said "Good for you!" Bonnie insisted on her question so Amy said "I like it. It's beautiful!" Carl followed and



asked if Amy liked his hat. Amy responded: "Is this expressive wardrobe day?" She, however, gave each a hug when they came up to her. Amy then made it clear to all that she wanted to start circle instead of looking at children's clothes. Another day Hilda came up to Amy asking: "Do I look like a queen?" Amy: "A queen?" Hilda: "A Hawaiian queen!" Amy: "Does Hawaii have a queen?" Then laughing: "It does now!" Hilda liked that answer and went back to play. Paula once was gluing something and folded her sleeve so it would not get glue on it. She smiled and said that she was wearing a French cuff. Amy laughed and said something to her in French.

### Mountain View Day Care

Ellen called Dawn over to look at her pin. Dawn: "You told me you needed to go to the bathroom badly, there isn't time for me to look at your pin!" As soon as Ellen came back from the bathroom, she went to Dawn and showed her the pin. Dawn: "A giraffe pin! Reminds me of my dog pin I lost!" Another day Lisa told her teachers that she had a new coat, then brought it over to show it to every body. Dawn: "You always have the flashiest clothes!" Sometimes children commented on each other's clothes. Mike once told Neal: "I like your shirt!" Another time Melissa asked the student teacher about her nail polish while she was helping her with snack.

### Praise

Sadker and Sadker (1994), identified four kinds of teacher feedback to children, which included praise. They found that boys received most of praise comments by their teachers. In this study, children were found to be praised frequently at two of the sites.

Their end product was mostly praised by teachers. Sometimes a child's behavior or intellectual ability got praised.

#### The Rural Day Care

Sometimes Tina showed mere acceptance to a child's product or ability. Once Uche commented on her own spelling abilities: "I know how to spell my last name!" Tina: "Yes." Other times Tina would praise their abilities or behavior. "Everyone is doing just fine! Good Job!" One time children were cutting pieces of board, Tina stopped by Lee and told her what kind of a board that was, and praised the way she was cutting. She also praised the way Chris was cutting closer to the line. When Brian followed her instructions once, Tina said: "Well, good listening Brian!"

#### The Community Day Care

Teachers praised children's mental abilities, behaviors, as well as their end products. Sometimes the tone of their voices sounded enthusiastic, yet their words seemed to be chosen carefully to comment on the child's work or ability and give them meaningful feedback. Amy and Beth seemed to praise girls and boys alike. Hilda was looking at a real nest through a magnifying glass and commented on what she saw. Amy: "Excellent observation! We should make a list of all the things we notice in this nest." She went and wrote down what Hilda had said. Beth looked at a design Carl had made out of blocks and said: "It's dimensional! It's dimensional! I've never seen anyone do this in this class!" Another time Alicia commented that the water in the water table was not as deep as it was the day before. Beth: "Good observation Alicia! You compared the level of water today to its depth yesterday!" During a discussion on eyeballs, Amy commented: "I

like how you explained that Barbara!” In a discussion on bones: “Good guessing Monica and Nancy!” When Bonnie made up a cleaning song, and was followed by another song by Hilda, Amy said: “I like how your song is different from Monica’s and that you didn’t copy her!” Another time she commented on Danny’s “smart way of building the bridge.” She also described his building as “an impressive obstacle course.” Other times teachers showed acceptance. Beth to Danny: “I see you worked hard on this design. Which section did you start with first?” Hilda made a worm for the garden, and Amy said: “That’s one worm all right!” Amy commented on some clay Hilda had made: “That’s a fine colorful job!” Beth told Kevin about his drawing: “That is a colorful picture!”

Other times teachers commented on children’s behaviors or manners. Beth commented to the group: “What polite children today!” Hilda made a pair of binoculars for herself then started on another pair for her little brother. Amy saw that and said: “You know Hilda, you always think of your brother when you are here. You are a very thoughtful sister!” When Amy gave directions and George followed them without extra reminders, she thanked him for “a good job of listening and following directions upon being said once only.”

#### Mountain View Day Care

Teachers at this center were concerned with the process more than the end product. Courtesy words were always exchanged with the children. Teachers had a high rate of probing questions and engaging the children in intellectual challenge more than praising their work or behavior. When a child built a structure with blocks or Legos, for example, teachers usually took its picture to show the child their appreciation of her

accomplishment, and to make it easier for the child to knock it down, so other children could use the pieces to build other things.

### Intellectual Discussion

Sadker and Sadker (1986, 1994), have reported in their extensive research that boys get better opportunities to interact with their teacher, and are given better quality feedback from their teacher. During the data analysis, the category of engaging the children in intellectual discussion emerged in two of the sites; It was so prevalent that it had to be studied and discussed in terms of its quality, quantity, and differences based on gender if they occurred.

### The Rural Day Care

Most of the conversations observed at this center were of the nature of discipline, instructions to clean up and get ready to go outside, or instructions on simple projects such as coloring and cutting. The first social conversation between a teacher and the children was observed during a snack time after Bill was added to the staff. In terms of the category of engaging children in intellectual discussion, it did not seem to apply to this day care. One time David was observed to show his group the paint he was mixing "Look what happens when yellow and blue are mixed together, green!" David answered to his own comment and the children said nothing. Another time Bill was doing an activity with the children that consisted of mixing bird seeds and peanut butter, and filling them in pine cones. Bill was explaining to the children the nutrients in that mixture and their significance to birds. On another occasion, Bill was conversing with his group

during snack and the children had some questions and comments about having babies.

Bill answered their questions.

### The Community Day Care

Teachers usually introduced the day's activities during circle. They often used part of it to introduce new topics or expand on one that was under study. Many times they read books related to the theme under discussion during circle. Teachers seemed to engage children in discussions equally, regardless of their gender. They both were observed to distribute their questions to girls and boys, and encourage the participation of quiet ones. Beth was reading a book on animal prints once and was asking the group to guess different prints. She asked an equal number of boys and girls. The same kind of treatment was observed by Amy when she read a book on space, talked about the five senses, and when she asked the group to tell her what they learned about coconuts the day before, when she was away. During the health unit, Amy did an experiment on bones with the children. They put bones in different containers, some in water and some in vinegar. The children formed hypotheses on what would happen to the bones, they were all asked to predict and were engaged in the activity and taught words like "hypothesis" and "prediction". In addition to circle time, teachers used special projects time to ask individual children probing questions and encourage their critical thinking. During a bone painting activity, Amy was asking Toby questions and giving her time to think and answer. When children were working on the garden unit, Amy was talking to a small group at a table about various plants and where they thought each one grew. She followed up with questions like how they knew, and later she showed them three books to

use when they were drawing and cutting their plants. Teachers also stopped by various areas during free play and asked children questions. Beth once had a discussion with George about IVs and their function. Another time Amy stopped by Paula who was working on a bird's nest and asked her questions about eggs with different sizes, and which belonged to what kind of birds. When children needed help, teachers encouraged them to think of a solution before they helped them out. Alana made a crown once and was too big for her head. Beth asked her: "What do you think we should do to fix this?" Another time she stopped by Carl and Danny who were building a tower that kept falling down. Beth asked them to think why Paula's tower was staying up while their's could not. She spent a few minutes with them and talked about different ways of building with blocks "Some people like to build up, Paula is building out."

#### Mountain View Day Care

Teachers at this center seemed to use every opportunity to encourage children's critical thinking. During circle they used probing questions to girls and boys alike whenever they had a discussion. Dawn was discussing "super heroes" and the rules of their play before children started creating their own. She asked them for their suggestions and encouraged them to think about them first. Dawn wrote down the children's ideas giving opportunity to everyone to participate, telling them: "I want to hear all what you have to say!" Whenever a child did sharing, teachers gave her the choice if she wanted to be interrupted with questions or wanted them to hold off until the end. When children were at free play, Jenny and Dawn seemed to seize every teachable moment to enhance children's critical thinking. One time Jenny noticed Julie looking at some plants, she

asked her if she noticed anything growing in the soil. In addition, each child got individual attention when he wrote in his book, or worked on an individualized project like the "Body Works". Jenny asked Anita once, "Anita, what does your brain do to you?" Anita: "I don't know!" Jenny: "Come here and let's see!" Jenny pointed to Anita's spinal cord and the nerves there and asked her "How would you know if I touch here? How would you know if you bump your knee?" Jenny went on explaining, asking questions, and showing her books. After that Anita sat down to make a brain for her body. Another time Anita was writing a story and asked Dawn how to spell "Alexa". Dawn told her it was close to "Alex" and asked her if she knew how to spell that. Anita said "No," and Dawn asked her to go find it in the room. She led Anita through the spelling and when she got to the last letter and could not guess, Dawn told her it was the same as the first letter. Anita guessed what it was. Another time Valerie made a "world" in the sand box. Jenny took its picture and asked Valerie to write about it. Jenny sat down and Valerie dictated to her. One morning Dawn stayed inside with Jade, Craig and Mike to work on their body painting. She was observed to distribute her time equally among the three children, and use the same strategy of questioning and probing to get them to think about color shades and what they were doing. When Lisa shared a trick that used index fingers with the children, Jenny asked her if she wanted them to think about it or if she would like to explain. She wanted to explain, but when Jenny asked her some more advanced questions about the trick she could not understand that. Jenny told the group that if they went to the library that week they could look it up in a book. Another time Valerie drew a picture and Dawn asked her what it was. She said she did not know.

Dawn: "You drew it, didn't you?" On another occasion Carol wanted Dawn to decide for her what to draw. Dawn: "You are the one who needs to decide what to do. It's all yours!" When John was making his mother's body for the project, one day he was cutting up food for the stomach. By clean up time he decided he was not done with the food. Dawn said he did not need to rush with it and could work on it later. A moment later he came to Dawn and said he was done. Dawn: "You need to make a decision. Whatever you make is fine, but you have to decide and you'll need to live with whatever decisions you make."

### Summary of Teacher Behavior

Different teachers at the three centers showed a tendency to distribute their attention equally to girls and boys. Some, however, occasionally slipped into stereotyped treatment or reactions. For instance, Tina was observed to give Chris most of the turns during some activities. This may have had to do with the fact that he seemed to be under constant watch, and that Tina wanted to use the opportunity when he was attentive to include him. It could also be because she wanted to avoid having to discipline him if she did not give him as many turns as he wanted. Sometimes during transition times teachers tended to give reminders to boys only when girls were doing the same things. Another example was when Beth was having a conversation with children and asked Bob if he had good breakfast that morning. She felt his muscle and said she agreed that had good breakfast. She did the same thing with Jack. When Monica said what she had, Beth said: "You really like those blueberry bagels. I remember you having them at lunch sometimes." Bonnie said she had yogurt and Beth reacted by: "Oh, you're making me



hungry!” There was no mention of muscles to either girl. On the other hand, when Nancy showed her what she did in the office play area one day, Beth said: “Yeah, I see. It takes big muscles to use some of those stamps!” Another time Henry complained about getting glue on his shirt. Beth said that it would get off when his mother washed the shirt, knowing that Henry’s father lived at home.

At both the Community and Mountain View day care centers teachers insisted on children showing respect to each other, and tried to intervene if one child seemed to be pushed around by others. They would also apologize to children if they accidentally skipped their turn or made a mistake on their behalf. They also encouraged cooperation among the children. Whenever a child asked for help and the teacher thought another child could offer help, or if others volunteered, teachers encouraged them to do so. Teachers were observed on a few occasions to have emergent curriculum based on children’s requests and interests.

Teachers at the three centers were observed to react neutrally to children assuming reverse stereotyped gender roles, like boys dressed up in dresses, or a boy having nail polish on. Teachers also were observed to sometimes react to stereotyped comments by children, like when Danny made fun of boys wearing Hawaiian necklaces, Amy explained to him that they are worn by men, women, boys and girls in Hawaii. Also, when Walter commented on something as being “boy stuff,” Amy asked him what he meant by that. On another occasion Hilda, whose mother is a nurse, announced that nurses were always females. Amy had a long discussion with the group on women’s and men’s roles of being nurses and doctors. At the same time, same teachers were observed

not to react to various comments by the children that were of the same nature. For instance, Martha one day wanted Jack to play the role of a father. Amy made sure that he was not pushed into it, and when he said he was not interested, Martha asked another boy if he wanted to be the father. Lesley had protested earlier that she wanted to be the father, and later asked: "Why can't there be two fathers?" Martha: "No! You can be the baby." Amy was around for that whole discussion and did not react to Martha's commands to Lesley. Jenny once read a Jewish holiday book that had traditional male and female roles. She talked about the holiday without challenging the stereotyped roles depicted in the book.

At the Community Day Care there was a boy who always played alone. He seemed to enjoy himself playing, and welcomed socializing with teachers, but was never seen involved with other children in play. Beth was often observed to spend some time with him, either socializing, or playing with him, or discussing whatever he was doing.

#### Children's Interactions

Children mostly played with members of the same gender at the three day care centers. They were observed to be involved with children of the other sex fewer times. When children played with others of the same sex, their play was mostly gender-typed. Several times a group of girls and boys would be present in the same area. Their play, however, was observed to be dramatically different from each other. One time five children were in the block area. Jade and Carol were making stories using little people. Atiq, Craig, and John were playing with trucks, slopes, and large blocks. Julie, who mostly preferred playing with boys, tried to join the boys. She drove a truck up the slope,

and Craig pushed it down with his truck, not allowing her to join. A similar usage of the block area was observed at the three centers, where girls often used pretend play in that area, while boys built and drove cars. A similar kind of play was observed often at the dramatic play area, where girls mostly did pretend play, and boys were seen to play in a gender-typed way. For instance, Neal once went to the doctor's area and picked up a baby from its leg and held it high announcing to Valerie that he was going to "kill the baby." When Sam and Craig played at the sand table that had elbow noodles and many toys, they chose snakes to play with. Occasionally, a boy would choose to join a group of girls in their play, or a girl would join boys. In most of these situations, the child of the other sex had to be told what to do and how to play by one of the group who assumed leadership over the new comer, and sometimes over the entire group. On one occasion of pretend play with Disney characters, Ellen, Melissa, and Mike were talking about Beauty and Beast being "boyfriend and girlfriend" and moved to talk about marriage of some characters, then started talking about killing some of them. Carl was once at pretend play area and took a woman, who had a mask on her face, and made her walk over a wooden bridge that he assumed had a broken piece of it. He dropped the woman through his pretend crack "She's dead! The bad girl is dead!" This could be a bias Carl had against people who seemed different.

At the same time girls and boys were seen playing with each other, both in a gender-typed and non-gender typed play. Other times boys would play in the dress up area wearing dresses, or being patients and doctors, and girls would build towers and use manipulative games. It was worth noting, though, that when girls and boys were seen in

areas that normally were thought of as utilized by members of the other gender, their play in it may still had been gender-typed.

Children made gender related comments often. Henry: "There are mostly boys here and less girls!" Carl wanted to go to the back room with the first group: "You need more boys there, you have mostly girls." One time Paula, Martha, and Monica did not allow Nancy to sit next to them. As Beth was trying to resolve the conflict, Walter said "They never sit with boys!" Amy said: "I like sitting with boys!" After that the girls distributed themselves. Other times children would make a comment like "mothers are girls", or "only cow girls make milk." At Mountain View, whenever the children wrote a story or created a creature, each one always determined what sex she wanted her character to be.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

In this detailed thick, descriptive study of teacher-child interaction at the preschool level in three centers, various interactions between teachers and girls and boys were observed and videotaped. The purpose was to understand if teachers interacted differently with boys and girls, as well as to understand how teachers integrated gender as a value into their other values through curriculum, classroom management and discipline, conflict resolution, their use of language, discussions with children, and the rest of their daily interactions with the children.

The three sites that were chosen for the study are located in a college community, where awareness about gender and other multicultural components is considered to be high in comparison to other communities. At the same time, it could not be assumed that when teachers live in such a community, and if they are exposed to equity concepts through readings, or in-service training, that they would be able to apply such concepts to their curriculum planning and daily interactions with the children. Thick description was used as a method to help understand the complex environment of each classroom.

Preschool level was chosen for this study because children at this stage are going through forming their own gender identities, as part of their social development in general. It is a stage when young children are trying to understand the world around them and how they fit into it. Carolyn Edwards states that "Young children use interaction to comprehend people's identities, predict behavior, and gain a sense of competence and control in social interaction" (Edwards & Ramsey, 1986, p.3). Children's social

knowledge, which teachers play an important role in promoting or hindering, help them understand who they are as individuals, as well as members of a group. Teachers' ways of dealing with gender equity as a value differed among the centers in the study. At the same time, it was seen as a component of a larger framework of how teachers' varying ways would help the children see themselves as social beings, learners, and problem solvers.

### Gender and Classroom Management

When looking at the current study, "classroom management and discipline" was found to be the most occurring category among the three schools. Discipline patterns observed were in agreement with research on this subject. Researchers have found that boys received more negative attention by teachers than girls did (Fagot & Hagan, 1985; Jones, 1989; Sadker & Sadker, 1986 & 1994; Stake & Katz, 1982; Streitmatter, 1994). The boys in this study were the target of most of the discipline, even when a boy and a girl committed the same offence. Teachers at the three sites tended to discipline the boy and ignore the girl's behavior. This finding concurs with Lyons and Serbin's findings (1986) that adults tended to notice the aggressive behavior among boys more than that among girls. It was also found that at two of the studied sites, teachers tended to notice one boy all the time. It was always the same boy who received the most attention in discipline. Nonetheless, the way those two boys were disciplined differed between the two sites. At the first site, teachers would show frustration with the child, use a harsh tone of voice, and give him time-out as he would be protesting and yelling at them. At the other center, in contrast, teachers would still remain warm with the child during and after

the disciplining took place. They used a gentle tone of voice, making it clear that it was his behavior that they did not approve on, and they did not reject him as a person. He was observed to be given a hug right after he was reprimanded one time, and his intellectual comment was praised another time. When he was removed from an activity one time, the teacher saved whatever he had built so he could work on it later. These two boys would have different experiences with the ways they were disciplined, and their social learning, consequently, would be affected differently. The first might feel rejected, and his social adjustment would be affected negatively. The second boy might learn that certain behaviors he was demonstrating were rejected by teachers, and he had to do certain changes in order to fit better in the group. At the same time, both boys might learn that sometimes they were targets for discipline because they were boys, and that the girls who were involved in the same acts were not disciplined by teachers.

At the site where discipline events occurred the most, the researcher noticed that this could be attributed to three different factors: Many times teachers did not prepare for their activities in advance, and the children were left without any supervision for a few minutes while the teacher prepared for the activity. Whenever the teacher did not have a clear idea in advance about what activity she wanted to do with the children, it usually took longer to start the activity. In that case, it was noticed that the children's voices got loud, some of them would start running around the room, and more discipline was needed at the start of the activity. Another reason could be attributed to the nature of small group activities. Most of those activities were of a simple nature, requiring cutting, coloring or pasting, and the children may have been reacting in boredom to the repetitiveness of the

activities. The third reason could be that teachers at that site did not enforce the rules most of the time. Very few times, teachers were observed to follow through on their reminders to children, or apply the disciplinary actions they told the children they would apply. One teacher was observed to ignore dealing with situations until she got angry or the children's behavior seemed to have gotten out of hand for her.

### Gender and Conflict Resolution

Whenever teachers across the different sites got involved in conflict resolution, they were observed to use the same strategies with boys and girls. It was noted, though, that most conflicts involved either a girl and a boy or two boys. Fewer times conflicts included only girls, and also then teachers' strategies were the same. What was found to be different, was individual teacher's strategies in dealing with conflict. Complete consensus between teachers was found only at Mountain View Day Care. Teachers at this center took the role of facilitators during the conflict. They always gave an opportunity to each party involved in the conflict to voice his side of the story. They would rephrase what each child had said, then give them both a chance to work out an acceptable solution to both. Throughout the whole process, the teachers would acknowledge each child's feelings and needs, and serve as facilitators to help both children understand what the other child was trying to say. Their way of dealing with conflict promotes a sense with the children that they can be problem solvers, without the need for adults to construct a solution for their problem. According to Levin (1994) dealing with conflicts in such a way by teachers helps children feel safe, as well as trusting that both of their perspectives are valid, a feeling that will promote respect for each other. They also feel capable of and



responsible for making decisions that are acceptable to both and take into consideration both of their needs. Levin states that teachers who go through this process with children help them gain skills that are needed for participation in a “democratic community” (Levin, 1994, p. 62). It was noted at this center that children tended to be respectful to each other during and after the conflict.

### Gender and Interruption

Hendrick and Stange (1989), studied two female teachers and found them to be equitable in distributing roles among girls and boys. Those two teachers, however, applied different rules regarding interruption. They both interrupted girls more than boys, and allowed themselves to be interrupted more by boys than girls. The researchers concluded that those teachers were modeling the submissive female behavior to the children.

Most interruption that was acknowledged and dealt with in this study came from one teacher, and did not support the evidence in Hendrick and Stange study. The teacher in this study dealt with interruption in the same way whether the involved child was a boy or a girl. She mostly did not allow herself or other children to be interrupted by other children, nor did she interrupt either gender more than the other. Whenever interruption took place, she seemed to acknowledge it and apologize for it.

Only one of the three sites under study had female and male teachers in the classroom. It was not possible to attribute any interruption patterns to the teacher's gender due to the scarcity of recorded incidents that the teachers dealt with. A general pattern, though, was observed that a female teacher was the target of numerous interruptions by

girls and boys, and children talked together during her activities interrupting each other, without her dealing with the situation. Many times interruptions took place and were ignored to be recorded due to the amount of chaos going on at the time. It is not possible to attribute this to teacher's gender, since both male teachers in the classroom demonstrated better management skills in general, and the children responded to them more positively.

### Gender and the Use of Language

Gelb (1989), found that teachers in two early childhood settings used male pronouns three times as often as they used female pronouns. Gelb contends that children do not understand that such a use of pronouns is considered generic by teachers. Instead, they get confused and think that teachers literally mean males when they use such pronouns. Gelb also found that most of the use of male generic pronouns in his study was during story time, specially when animals were the subject. The findings in two of the sites in this study concur with Gelb's findings in terms of the use of male pronouns with animals. The teachers at the three centers were careful in their general use of generic pronouns. They all tried to use both female and male pronouns most of the time when they talked to the children. At the same time, only teachers at Mountain View used gender neutral pronouns with animals. Teachers at the other two centers were consistently observed to use male pronouns with animals. Sometimes teachers used books with neutral pronouns, and still used the male attributes with the children. As Gelb states, that usage adds to the invisibility of females in the society. In another part of Gelb's study, children were asked to tell stories about drawings of a baby, a rabbit and a dinosaur. Most

children in the study chose male characters for their stories, with a higher percentage among boys. Children's attributions were not investigated in this study; though at the center where teachers used gender free language with children it was noted that girls asked for the imaginary dog they were creating to be a female, while boys asked for it to be a male. In response, the teachers suggested that the dog be a male and a female at the same time, which seemed to satisfy all the children in the class. When a professor donated two crabs to the center, her daughter decided that they were a female and a male, and the group set off to choose names for them. This incident would support Gelb's argument that children internalize the use of language to affect the presence of what they see as male and female in the society. The equity that was practiced most of the time at this specific center might have contributed to more equitable representations among the children.

#### Help, Intellectual Discussion, and Gender

Serbin (1972), found that boys in her study received more help from their teachers than girls did. Lewis (1991) reported that boys in her study of five early childhood settings, received adult attention that was better in quality and quantity than attention that was given to girls. Greenberg (1978) reports that in early childhood settings, boys receive step-by-step instructions eight times more than girls do. The findings of this study did not, for the most part, concur with these reports in terms of helping the children or engaging them in intellectual discussions. There was a difference among centers in their approach to these two areas of interaction. All teachers in the study seemed to offer boys and girls the same kind of help when it was requested. At one center, though, it was noted

several times that the boy who received the most criticism in the classroom, was given more attention when he needed help, as well as more opportunities to participate than other children. This could be, as Sadker and Sadker (1994) report, in response to his loud way of demanding attention from the teacher. The quality of help that was offered to the children, and the process of engaging them in higher thinking process differed among the three centers. At The Rural Day Care teachers offered help similarly to girls and boys, but did not seem to challenge their thought process as much as the other two centers. Their projects were of a simple nature, and there was a lack of intellectual discussions with boys and girls alike. At The Community Day Care teachers were equitable as well in their responses to calls for help by girls and boys. They tried to get the children to think about a solution on their own before they offered their help. They often challenged the children's thought process and encouraged some creativity in their projects. They also often engaged the children in discussions and seemed to value boys' and girls' inputs into the discussion. At Mountain View Day Care teachers offered the most amount of instructional help among the three centers. Teachers avoided doing anything themselves for girls and boys, unless the child tried and could not do it. When a teacher gave verbal instructions to two girls at the computer on how to fix the problem themselves, that behavior served several purposes. It intellectually challenged the girls, the way researchers describe as reserved for boys in the classroom (Lewis, 1991; Sadker and Sadker, 1994; Serbin, 1972). Giving the girls verbal instructions only, would encourage them to try to solve the problem themselves, and would help them feel more competent than if the teacher fixed the problem herself. In addition, it serves another purpose of

helping expose girls to computer usage at an early age when girls still have not formed the stereotypical belief that computers are for males; and if girls continue to be exposed to computers the same way that might positively affect their career future in the long run (Williams and Ogletree, 1992). Teachers at this center seemed to use every opportunity to intellectually challenge the children. They also demonstrated interest in the children's opinions by commenting on them, writing them down, and implementing them; a process that Levin (1994) considers to help children feel they have autonomy in the class.

In contrasting the three centers in the area of helping and intellectual engagement of children, there are differences in quality that affect girls and boys of each classroom. By looking at gender differences alone in teachers' treatments of children in this area, one can conclude that there is equity in the three centers. By contrasting boys' and girls' experiences among the three centers, there are big differences. The classroom that challenges the children the most is more likely to be the one promoting individual creativity, independence, and positive self esteem among girls and boys. Sadker and Sadker (1994) describe this kind of interaction to take place with boys only in their study and state that it affects children's future achievement and self esteem.

#### Gender and Praise

Brophy (1981) contends that teacher praise may not be intended as a reinforcer, and might be used because teachers believe it encourages students, and positively affects their self esteem. Brophy states that the use of praise depends on several factors including the student's behavior and the teacher's personality and style. He also presents opposing arguments by educators against the value of using praise in the classroom. Brophy's

discussion of praise might explain the scarcity of its usage at Mountain View, where teachers' styles can be described as effective. Sadker and Sadker (1986) found that male students received precise feedback from their teachers. An incident observed at The Rural Day Care is consistent with this finding. A teacher praised the way a girl was cutting her piece of board. During the same activity, she praised a boy for cutting close to the line, which gave him a precise feedback on his work, while her comment to the girl was more general.

#### Gender and Appearance

Teachers' comments on children's appearance were generally few, neutral, and in response to children's initiations about their own appearance. This finding is not consistent with Sadker and Sadker (1994), and the researcher's pilot study, that found that girls received more stereotypical comments on their appearance from their teachers than boys did. The scarcity of comments on appearance in this study might be attributed to the fact that most of the children got to the centers earlier than the researcher, and that if teachers tended to comment on children's appearance they would have likely done so as soon as the children came into the room.

#### Gender and Physical Touch

Serbin, et.al. (1973), found that boys received more hugs than girls did. Lewis (1991), on the other hand, found that physical touch and smiles by adults were the only areas of equity in her study. This study found no gender differences in children receiving hugs and kisses from their teachers. The amount of such physical touch, though, differed among the centers. Teachers at one center were observed to give hugs and kisses to the

children only when they got injured. The most physical touch observed at that center was related to discipline; either when a teacher physically carried a child to get a time-out, or to force a child to wear her snow gear upon refusing to do that on her own. Only one teacher at that center was observed a few times to have children sitting on his lap during circle. At the second center, teachers gave occasional hugs and kisses to the children. Girls and boys at the third center, in contrast, received hugs and kisses equally, and on a daily bases. They also seemed free to sit in teachers' laps during circle or as they were playing games. This contrasts to the first center where a teacher did not allow a boy once to sit in her lap during circle, when her colleague had a girl on his lap and another leaning on him.

#### Gender and Community Building in the Classroom: A Contrast

The study looked at how teachers at the different centers integrated gender as a value into their other values. It was found that for most of the time teachers managed to incorporate equity into their daily interactions with the children. At the same time, all teachers had a tendency to differential treatment of boys and girls in the area of discipline, even at the center where teachers interacted equitably with girls and boys in other areas. Teachers' usage of language referring to animals, proved to be stereotyped in two of the centers. Teachers did not seem to notice what messages they might be conveying to the children by using gender biased language to describe animals.

There are several factors that play a role in how a teacher constructs her classroom, and where gender as a value fits in the whole frame work of building a classroom community. Gender equity "is deeply connected to a teacher's ability to

empower all students during their time in the classroom” (Streitmatter, 1994, p. ix). That is one reason why it should not be examined in isolation. During the data collection it was clear how teachers’ backgrounds, their philosophies, their classroom management skills, curriculum planning, and various ways of interacting with children affected the way each classroom was constructed and how that affected the children in the classroom.

When the three preschool settings were compared, it was clear that when teachers had clear goals of how they wanted to construct their classrooms, and what social values were important for them to promote among the children, this resulted in careful planning of purposeful curriculum on their part. On the other hand, when teachers did not seem to be able to translate their theoretical philosophies into practical ways of planning and implementing curriculum in their classroom, their curriculum planning was minimal, incoherent, and lacking purpose. In return, the children in that environment suffered from teachers’ lack of organization, and lack of a planned curriculum that was developmentally appropriate, and had the ability to enhance their learning at various levels. Both boys’ and girls’ involvement in classroom activities seemed to be directly related to teachers’ curriculum planning and classroom management, as well as to teachers’ values as they relate to community building in their classroom. In two of the classrooms in the study the environment was well planned to foster children’s construction of social knowledge, and their ability to express themselves as individuals as well as members of the group. According to Hendrick (1992), transferring power to children is an important element in helping them become citizens. Hendrick suggests three ways to empower young children: Giving them the power to choose; the power to try; and the power to do (Hendrick, 1992,



p. 51). These three ways were consistently observed at Mountain View, and to a lesser extent at the Community Day Care. Teachers were giving children the ability to make decisions of what they wanted to play and when; how they wanted to construct their individual projects; and if they wanted to eat snack and when to do so (Seefeldt, 1993). Teachers at these two centers demonstrated respect for children's abilities to take independent actions and be responsible for their own choices. Children at these two centers were given opportunities to try to do things on their own and helping them mostly by giving verbal instructions and not doing things for them. This encourages children's sense of autonomy. Encouraging children to try to do things and create unique designs, as well as fostering their abilities to negotiate and resolve conflicts on their own encourages their sense of competency (Hendrick, 1992). At the same time, empowering children to resolve conflicts helps them to see and respect others points of view, and enhances their sense of who each of them is as an individual, and how she fits as a member in the group. In addition, creating individual projects helps children to value themselves and others as individuals (Hendrick, 1992). When children created their own worlds in the sand box at Mountain View, they were encouraged to share their productions with others and were expected to write about them in their books. Such activities foster children's abilities to become reflective in their thinking (Seefeldt, 1993). Teachers' consistency, for most of the time, in managing their classrooms at these two centers would help children trust authority. Taking group decisions regarding projects and the gender of the characters they create at Mountain View fosters children's respect for group decisions and encourages them to follow them. Trusting authority and abiding by group decisions are considered

key elements by Hendrick to achieve balance between individual and group needs. The above described curricula had gender equity embedded in them, and they encourage the forming of the foundations of healthy self esteems among girls and boys alike, which is an important value that the people who work towards achieving gender equity in society strive for.

### The Rural Day Care

At the Rural Day Care teachers had educational backgrounds that varied from Music to Communication. Two teachers moved back and forth between the toddler and the preschool classrooms, and a new teacher joined the preschool upon the resignation of another one. Only one of the four teacher, who mostly dealt with the oldest group in the classroom, was the stable figure in the classroom throughout the course of study. That teacher left the center a few months after the study was ended. Teachers did not seem to coordinate much together, and there was no consistency in their classroom management practices. Teachers mentioned that part of the reasons for moving teachers back and forth between the two classrooms had to do with dynamics and personality differences among them. In terms of curriculum planning, teachers at this center mentioned that they had "some kind of plans" from previous years that they tried to follow. Tina said that the three teachers discussed themes they would follow, either "at the spur of the moment, or a day or two in advance." She felt there was a need for better coordination and communication among them that should happen on a monthly basis. Teachers mentioned that their curriculum was based on holidays and seasonal changes. They also said that they tried to base their activities on children's interests, as well as the different abilities of

the mixed age group they had in the room. Careful study of the classroom setting did not support the claim that children's interests or abilities were taken into consideration. Teachers did use holidays and seasons as a base for their activities; however those activities, many times, were not planned ahead of time, were repetitive and product oriented, did not call for much creativity on the part of the children, and did not take their input into consideration. This lack of preparation on the part of teachers seemed to contribute to children's boredom with many activities. They reacted by either acting up, refusing to participate in the activity, or finishing the activity in under five minutes and having to wait for others to be done. When one child started moving away from the activity, that encouraged others to follow, and many times the teacher lost control over her group and resorted to time-out. Teachers had mixed feelings about the use of time-out and its effectiveness in changing behavior, and said they were trying to break away from using it in the classroom. They felt they used it mostly with harmful behaviors, and it was the last resort for other behaviors. The data revealed that two teachers used it more often, and one of them tended to forget about the child in time-out for a prolonged period of time. The book area was used for giving time-out to the children. The connotation between books and time out must leave negative feelings with the children regarding books, instead of fostering their passion for reading. It was also noted that some of the behaviors that called for giving time-out to a child could have been avoided if the activities were planned in advance and the children did not have to wait for teachers to discuss what they needed to do. One time a mother brought cup cakes for the birthday of her child, which the children ate for snack. After snack, the teachers usually started their

small group activities. That day the teachers were not sure what their activities were going to be, and spent about ten minutes discussing what they were going to do, leaving the children with minimum supervision. When the children's voices got very loud and they started running around the room, Sue turned to the researcher and said: "See what sugar does to the children?" In addition, if activities were meaningful, challenging, and interesting to the children, more participation on the side of the children might have taken place, and consequently, some discipline would have been avoided. Teachers were observed more than once to try to implement curriculum that was presented in isolation and did not seem to mean anything to the children. One time a teacher told the Rosa Parks bus story to the children. She did not seem to know about that period of history more than what she had just read, and thought that Parks was already dead. She could not answer the children's questions, and the story was merely read with no other connections that would make it meaningful to the children. Another time, the same teacher told the children as they were getting ready to go outside that teachers were going to measure their shadows that day. Several children asked her why they were doing that. The teacher: "It's part of the winter solstice!" Her comment did not seem to answer their question, nor did the activity seem to be meaningful to the children. No other discussions or activities regarding the winter solstice were observed in the classroom.

Teachers at this center professed philosophies that coincided with the center's in terms of providing a calm, relaxed environment where the children could socialize and be allowed to make mistakes and learn from them, as well as to learn about differences among the children and learn to accept them. The in-depth study of the classroom

environment did not support that teachers were working toward either goal. There was no evidence to support that teachers used well planned, purposeful curriculum in that classroom. In addition, children did not seem to get the needed help in socializing. The classroom was loud most of the time. Children yelled at each other and at their teachers, they got in arguments without receiving the proper help in conflict resolution, instead they received numerous time-outs. There was not enough evidence to support that children were being helped to learn how to negotiate, build friendships, or respect each other and the adults in the room. The lack of consistency among teachers and the absence of supervision of the far ends of the room would not help the sense of trust, safety and security among the children, nor would it help to build a sense of a community.

In addition to all that, teachers at this center were under paid in comparison to the other two centers. Children came from various socioeconomic backgrounds, and there were a few children who came from single family homes. One of these children was having problems with repeatedly broken promises by her father who lived away, and at times she threw tantrums for no apparent reason, like refusing to wear her jacket that she used all winter, claiming she hated it. All these different factors affected the entire classroom atmosphere, as well as how the children viewed themselves as individuals, and as members of the group. Under circumstances like this, other elements become as important as gender as a value, and sometimes take precedent. If children can not feel safe and supported in their classroom environment, is it enough to teach them about equity?

## The Community Day Care

Teachers at the Community Day Care had comparable philosophies regarding interactions with children and curriculum planning. Both teachers believed that they had the role of facilitators who needed to guide the children and help them in the development of their social skills. Amy is a strong believer in the developmental approach to teaching young children. She stated the importance of accepting where the children are developmentally, and providing a rich learning environment that can offer learning and growth for all children in the various areas of cognitive, language, social, and motor development. She also stressed the importance of using music and movement in the classroom. The development of social skills among the children were of special importance to both teachers. They believed that children should be able to trust, and feel safe, loved and valued, and see themselves reflected in the room. Both teachers stressed the importance of helping children develop negotiating skills, and form friendships in the classroom. They felt that their approach of interacting passionately with children and their modeling of respect to each other and the children would have positive effects on the children. The data reflects that teachers were interacting with children the way they described.

During the study there was evidence of well planned curriculum, where the researcher could know through observations what the theme of the week was. Activities offered during any given week were coherent, directly related to the topic under study, and complemented each other. Some of the planned activities were open ended, but many consisted of making things that followed a prototype. During such activities teachers

always verbally stressed that what each child was making was entirely his, and he could make it any way he desired. Nonetheless, children's products looked similar to one another most of the time. It was observed, though, that a boy once chose to use the materials to make something entirely different from the suggested project and his creativity was encouraged by Beth. The discrepancy between what was said about creativity, and the product oriented activities was somehow explained by teachers in the interviews. The center had a history of planning product-oriented activities, and themes that were repeated year after year. When Amy joined the staff a few months earlier she felt the need to move curriculum planning into a different level. She believed that curriculum had to be planned based on the abilities and interests of the children in the classroom, as well as the interests of the teachers. She also believed that the process was more important than the end product, and wanted to move to more open-ended, hands-on activities. Amy valued the idea of emergent curriculum, and felt that certain units could be repeated from one year to another if they proved to be of interest to the children. She liked to achieve a balance between teacher-directed and child-directed activities. Beth was in complete agreement with Amy, but these were new ideas to some of the staff, and the changes were felt to be somehow risky. During the period of study, Amy and Beth were trying to slowly incorporate changes into their classroom, hoping that in time they would reach their goal in planning the curriculum they agreed on. They managed to utilize emergent curriculum by following the children's interest in "space", which turned into an interactive unit that the children enjoyed. Teachers were also trying to depart from the traditional weekly calendars that they gave to parents. In order to follow those

preplanned calendars, teachers found themselves forced at times to abandon a unit that the children had high interest in, and the teachers would have liked to expand on its activities. Teachers were trying to find ways where parents would still be informed of what was going on in the classroom, at the same time would give them the flexibility to expand or cut short a certain unit.

The children in the classroom were of mixed socioeconomic backgrounds. Three of the children were bi-racial. The teachers' gentle, respectful ways of treating the children seemed to have left a positive effect on the children's interactions among each other, and on their social adjustment in general. At the beginning of that year the teachers had planned a unit called "About Us", where children shared pictures and information about themselves with each other. Teachers noticed that this unit was very helpful to one child who was bi-racial, and expressed comfort in knowing there were other children in his classroom who came from bi-racial families. Teachers demonstrated interest in children as individuals, and had daily communications with parents regarding their children. They worked on individual needs of children. For example, there were two girls in the classroom who were the youngest of three brothers at home. One of them was aggressive at times with other children, and teachers worked on her behavior taking into consideration that background. The other girl was always dressed in fancy clothes that did not encourage her to play outside, and often tried to control other children playing with her. Teachers worked with the child on her attitude and behavior, and reached out to the mother, who once got angry at her daughter for messing up her clothes playing in the sand box, persuading her that the daughter was entitled to having fun and being a child.



Such care for individual needs was observed in the classroom throughout the study, and the teachers seemed to be successfully working on their goal to provide a safe, loving environment that promoted healthy emotional and cognitive growth among the children.

#### Mountain View Day Care

Teachers at Mountain View were in complete agreement on their philosophy even though they had different temperaments, which they felt was an advantage for the children. They both believed that children come first, and that they should be offered an environment where they feel loved and supported, and where they can learn at their own pace. Teachers stressed the importance of children being kind and respectful to each other, as well as the importance of treating the children with the respect they deserve, and respecting their boundaries. Dawn and Jenny believed children benefit from being hugged and patted. At the same time, they acknowledged that some children would prefer not to be hugged, but would welcome a pat on the head or the shoulder. Both teachers believed that children's interest should come first when planning curriculum, and that is why they valued emergent curriculum. They mentioned that there were topics that emerged every year, but it was important to them that they were built on the interests of the children. Teachers also tended to introduce topics that were of special importance or interest to them as teachers, knowing what typical preschoolers would be interested in, and incorporating the group's interest into their planning. They felt that curriculum was somewhat different from year to year depending on the children in the class. Teachers believed that children should be having fun while learning, and they planned as many hands-on activities as possible. They both did not like the holiday curriculum, and

preferred to plan curriculum that encouraged experimentation and creativity. Teachers also encouraged children's community involvement by planning activities like visits to the Survival Center in town, as well as giving money from their classroom bank to somebody who needed it. That money consisted of change coins that came from teachers' pockets, and the children used it to learn how to count. At the same time, the teachers' way of involving the children in giving out the money helps them think of the community and the group. One time after Christmas, a child came to class and said she was given money during the holiday, and she did not need it all and wanted to donate a few dollars to the classroom bank. Teachers also planned numerous outside activities, believing that children nowadays do not have the same opportunities of playing outside because of safety concerns on the part of parents. When teachers planned a unit on heroes, they discussed people like Rosa Parks and Harriet Tubman with the children.

All children in the classroom came from two-parent families. Many children had one or both parents working as professors in one of the colleges in the area, including the only child whose parents came from a different ethnic background. The child himself was born in the States. Some children have traveled abroad while one of their parents was on sabbatical in another country. Most of the children had been together in a classroom setting since they were toddlers, and knew each other very well. That was one of the reasons for some discipline that was needed in the classroom according to Jenny "They know which buttons to push with each other." Teachers were aware that Neal was often redirected and watched, but did not see that their behavior had anything to do with his gender. Observations revealed that other than a few and infrequent incidents of

differential treatment, especially in discipline, Dawn and Jenny were conscientious about the choices they made during the day, and they offered the environment they desired, promoting children's sense of safety and support, and fostering their cognitive, social, emotional, language, and motor skills development. Jenny and Dawn were the only teachers who were careful with the language they used with the children all the time throughout the study.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS

This study has looked at interaction patterns between preschool teachers and the children in their classrooms, in three different day care centers. The purpose of the study was to find out if teachers interacted differently with boys and girls. The study utilized qualitative methods, and the researcher spent over seven months in each classroom under study collecting field notes, videotaping, and interviewing teachers by the end of the study. This process allowed for a better understanding of the complex classroom environment, and the ability to use thick description that contributed to portraying a holistic picture of each of the classrooms.

Several categories were identified and analyzed. These categories included classroom management and discipline, conflict resolution, interruption patterns, language use, helping children, engaging children in intellectual discussions, praising the children, commenting on their appearance, and physical touch. In addition to discussing interactions in these areas, the data revealed how the different teachers planned and implemented curriculum in their classrooms. The children's interactions and their play in different areas were also touched on in the analysis.

The study has found that teachers across the different schools interacted in a similar manner with girls and boys most of the time. Teachers' ways of dealing with different issues differed from center to center. There were two areas, though, where teachers used differential treatment between boys and girls. Teachers from all the centers used discipline more often with boys. This finding is consistent with research on this

subject (Sadker and Sadker, 1986 & 1994; Streitmatter, 1994). In two of the centers, two boys were the center of negative attention by their teachers. One of these two centers had teachers who incorporated gender equity in almost all other aspects of interactions in their classroom. The use of male pronoun as generic to refer to animals by teachers, was found to be in agreement with research in this area. All teachers in the study were consistent in using non-biased language when they talked to the children. At the same time, teachers in two classrooms had consistently used the male pronoun as a generic one whenever they referred to animals. This is consistent with Gelb's finding (1989)."

In other areas of interaction teachers tried to be fair to both sexes in the classroom. Their ways of planning and implementing curriculum in general seemed to have a greater impact sometimes than applying gender equity in interactions. Classrooms were described in terms of the curriculum used in each of them, as well as children's involvement in the various activities in the classrooms as a result of certain planning. Children also were found to often play in a stereotyped manner, even when they used areas that are thought of as belonging to the other sex. For example, boys were observed to play rough, pretend killing toys, or drive trucks in the fantasy play area. On the other hand, girls were observed to use pretend play with characters in the block area.

The findings of this study were discussed in terms of how teachers integrated gender equity as a value into their other values through curriculum planning and implementation, and how they incorporated gender into community building in the classroom. The study has found complex relationships between teachers' goals and curriculum planning, and the level of involvement of both girls and boys in the activities

in the classroom. The findings confirm that teachers' behaviors as they relate to gender, are not isolated behaviors, and that in order for us to understand how gender equity works in the preschool settings, and consequently, incorporate it into early childhood education, we need to look at the whole picture of the complex classroom environment, and at all the elements that play major roles in building a unique community in each classroom.

### The Validity of the Study

This study utilized qualitative methods to study three centers in depth. The use of a small sample called for careful planning to ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

Upon the completion of this study, the researcher believes she fulfilled the goal of trustworthiness. There are several factors that support the validity of this study:

1. The researcher had spent an extensive amount of time in each classroom. This helped participants to get used to her presence in the room after a while, which ensured that the classroom atmosphere was the closest to its natural setting. Another advantage for the length of time at each site is that it helped the researcher to better understand the complexity of each setting, and that contributed to the thorough description of each setting that was based on a realistic understanding and not on a few isolated visits to each setting.
2. The categories of findings emerged from the data itself and were not imposed by using the pre-set categories to collect data that corresponded to them.
3. The researcher's videotapes served as a means to triangulate the conclusions reached through observations.

4. The interviews with the teachers were used to understand teachers' backgrounds and beliefs, as well as to clarify any ambiguous situation that was observed in order to avoid giving inaccurate interpretations by the researcher.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

As it was discussed in Chapter 5, when teachers carefully planned and implemented curricula in their classrooms, and when they demonstrated competency in their management skills, gender equity was embedded in their curriculum, and teachers were effective in achieving their goals in their classrooms. In addition, the way the curricula in those two classrooms were built, it fostered children's social development and promoted their acquisition of healthy self esteems. Given the complexity of this study, and in light of the above discussed findings, two suggestions for further research emerge from this:

First, a new study can examine management styles and curricula at several early childhood settings that are built around fostering self and social knowledge among the children. The study will look at what factors teachers take into consideration when they plan their curriculum; and what values are important to teachers to integrate into their classroom atmosphere, in order to study children's development in social knowledge. The study can also look at gender equity as part of community building in those settings to find out if a well planned and implemented social curriculum will foster gender equity in the classroom, as it was the case in the current study. The study can also investigate the emergent curriculum, whenever it takes place in the classrooms to find out how teachers

incorporate children's interests into their curriculum, and how the children benefit from that.

Careful analysis of the observations and videotapes revealed that all of the teachers in this study tried to use gender appropriate language when they talked to the children, and when they tried to pretend play with them. Nonetheless, most of the same teachers demonstrated a tendency to use the male pronoun as a generic one whenever they talked about animals, birds, and insects. Sometimes teachers used books that had gender-free language, and gave it their own attributions of using male pronouns.

Teachers at one center used non biased language with the children at all times, including pronouns describing animals. Nevertheless, one of these teachers was observed once to read a book that depicted women and men in traditional roles. The teacher explained the contents of the book and answered some of the children's questions without any reference to gender roles. This incident poses a question of how teachers choose the books for their classroom, and if teachers view books as material they have no control over.

A second study is suggested to examine the books and materials that early childhood teachers choose to include on their shelves in the classroom in terms of gender equity. The researcher can investigate the roles given to females in those books, and the ratio of male to female in the books. She can also study illustrations used in those books depicting females and males, in addition to analyzing the language of the books. The study can also investigate the ratio of male to female writers and illustrators of the books



chosen by teachers. This kind of systematic studies of children's literature and text books has been done at the elementary school level, but not as much at the preschool level.

#### Implications of the Study for Professional Practice

All the teachers in this study, with the exception of one, indicated they had no courses during their college years to prepare them to plan anti-bias curriculum. The one teacher who indicated she had a course in "Multicultural Education", said that it was an introductory course, and did not deal with many issues in depth. She did not think of it as being helpful to her at the time, what was helpful to her, though, were the courses she took at the Women's Studies Department. Those courses were not required for her degree but she took them out of personal interest. The teacher said those courses opened her eyes on many social issues, including gender inequity in the society, and that many of her ways of planning curriculum, or dealing with children were affected by those courses. She mentioned that many students graduate to become teachers without having the exposure she had, and the knowledge she gained at that other department. Another teacher mentioned that she had personal experiences with gender inequity that made her more aware and sensitive to the issue. A third teacher said that building social curriculum stemmed from her personal beliefs, and not through formal training. All these teachers who managed to incorporate social curriculum in their classrooms have lived in this area for a long time, and may have been affected by the general atmosphere of this college community. Teachers' responses regarding their previous training imply the need to incorporate required courses in early childhood programs that will prepare future teachers to deal effectively with these issues. The teachers in this study who demonstrated

effective teaching strategies had gender equity embedded in their interactions. Future teachers can benefit from courses that consider equity and excellence as mutual educational goals. Students can also learn effective classroom management skills that will prepare them to foster children's social learning while being equitable in their practice of discipline. The courses can be designed to help future teachers to plan curriculum that takes all learners into consideration, and incorporates gender equity in all aspects of curriculum and classroom interactions. Such training will contribute to the overall effectiveness of the future teachers.

A teacher in the study indicated that whenever she went to a workshop as part of her in-service training, such workshops dealt with some diversity issues, or classroom management techniques. The teacher said she attended no workshops that dealt with preparing teachers to build social curriculum, or took gender equity into account, neither as a topic, or incorporated it into the discussion. This calls for offering workshops to teachers already practicing in the field. These workshops will address the importance of preparing children to become responsible members of the society. They will also include the issue of gender equity in the classroom at several levels. Some workshops can be planned to increase teachers' awareness about the inequity that is already under practice, and about the fact that when teachers do not notice girls' destructive behaviors, that implies that girls are seemingly not as important as boys are, and that adds to them being marginalized in the classroom. These workshops will be planned to help teachers make the connection between gender equity, and the overall effective practices in the classroom. They can offer practical advice to teachers on how to evaluate their own

practices, and how to take gender into consideration when they are planning their curriculum, when they are instructing and responding to the children, when they are initiating social conversations, as well as when they are dealing with every detail of their classroom management.

In addition, early childhood and elementary coordinators in town can set up optional partnerships; teachers who are aware of social justice issues, and are committed to building explicit social curricula, that include gender equity, in their classrooms can serve as mentors to those who are interested and need for some direction. Mentors can offer insights that can help their partner assess their own practices. Mentors can also offer suggestions for reading materials, and tips on how to create social curricula and how teachers can start altering their own behaviors as they pertains to classroom management and interactions.

APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

A Study of Teacher-Child Interaction at the Preschool Level

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in this study on teacher-child interaction at the preschool level. I understand and agree that:

- The researcher will spend time in my classroom observing, taking notes, and videotaping
- I will be interviewed by the researcher during an audio-taped session, while looking at, and discussing some videotaped sessions from my class.
- The videotapes, audiotapes, transcript, and all gathered data will be confidential.
- My name will not be used, and my identity and the school's will be protected at all times.
- Upon the completion of the study, the researcher agrees to come back to school and summarize the findings of the study.
- I am free to participate or not to participate in this study without prejudice.
- I may withdraw from part or all of this study at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX B

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

A Study of Teacher-Child Interaction at the Preschool Level

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

I am a doctoral student in the Early Childhood Department at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. As part of my graduation requirements, I am conducting a study on teacher-child interaction in the preschool classroom. I am interested in verbal and non verbal communication between teacher and children. I will be spending time in your child's classroom, observing and videotaping. Children will be videotaped during normal classroom activities such as circle time, small group activities, and transition periods between activities. The study will not disrupt the normal schedule of the classroom, nor will it require any participation on the part of children in any new activities.

Confidentiality of the study will be protected; the names of the children will not be used. Participation in the study is voluntary, and you can withdraw your child from the study at any time. If you agree to your child being videotaped during normal classroom activities, please sign the bottom portion of this letter and return it to your child's teacher. If you have any questions please feel free to call me at 546-4567.

Sincerely,

Hind R. Mari

-----  
I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to let my child, \_\_\_\_\_, be videotaped as part of the above described research project. I understand I can withdraw her/him at any time during the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX C

ADAPTED INSTRUMENT

Teacher Initiates To: MF GR # BWHAO	Chld Initiates To: MF GR # BWHAO	By Hand Move Call-Out	Verbal (Not Feedback) Q D--Sh--L C--Sh--L	Feed Back				Helping In	Non Verbal	Interruption	Ancillary Behavior	COMMENTS
				Praise P__I P__C P__App /W P__O	Accept A__I A__C A__App /W A__O	Remediate R__I R__C R__App /W R__O	Criticise C__I C__C C__App /W C__O					
MF GR # BWHAO	MF GR # BWHAO	Hand Move Call-Out	Q D--Sh--L C--Sh--L	P__I P__C P__App /W P__O	A__I A__C A__App /W A__O	R__I R__C R__App /W R__O	C__I C__C C__App /W C__O	Private	Touching-Enc.-Warn Hugging Restraint Removing	Attribution A: Eff: X Short Circuit Physical Verbal		
MF GR # BWHAO	MF GR # BWHAO	Hand Move Call-Out	Q D--Sh--L C--Sh--L	P__I P__C P__App /W P__O	A__I A__C A__App /W A__O	R__I R__C R__App /W R__O	C__I C__C C__App /W C__O	Private	Touching-Enc.-Warn Hugging Restraint Removing	Attribution A: Eff: X Short Circuit Physical Verbal		
MF GR # BWHAO	MF GR # BWHAO	Hand Move Call-Out	Q D--Sh--L C--Sh--L	P__I P__C P__App /W P__O	A__I A__C A__App /W A__O	R__I R__C R__App /W R__O	C__I C__C C__App /W C__O	Private	Touching-Enc.-Warn Hugging Restraint Removing	Attribution A: Eff: X Short Circuit Physical Verbal		
MF GR # BWHAO	MF GR # BWHAO	Hand Move Call-Out	Q D--Sh--L C--Sh--L	P__I P__C P__App /W P__O	A__I A__C A__App /W A__O	R__I R__C R__App /W R__O	C__I C__C C__App /W C__O	Private	Touching-Enc.-Warn Hugging Restraint Removing	Attribution A: Eff: X Short Circuit Physical Verbal		
MF GR # BWHAO	MF GR # BWHAO	Hand Move Call-Out	Q D--Sh--L C--Sh--L	P__I P__C P__App /W P__O	A__I A__C A__App /W A__O	R__I R__C R__App /W R__O	C__I C__C C__App /W C__O	Private	Touching-Enc.-Warn Hugging Restraint Removing	Attribution A: Eff: X Short Circuit Physical Verbal		
MF GR # BWHAO	MF GR # BWHAO	Hand Move Call-Out	Q D--Sh--L C--Sh--L	P__I P__C P__App /W P__O	A__I A__C A__App /W A__O	R__I R__C R__App /W R__O	C__I C__C C__App /W C__O	Private	Touching-Enc.-Warn Hugging Restraint Removing	Attribution A: Eff: X Short Circuit Physical Verbal		
MF GR # BWHAO	MF GR # BWHAO	Hand Move Call-Out	Q D--Sh--L C--Sh--L	P__I P__C P__App /W P__O	A__I A__C A__App /W A__O	R__I R__C R__App /W R__O	C__I C__C C__App /W C__O	Private	Touching-Enc.-Warn Hugging Restraint Removing	Attribution A: Eff: X Short Circuit Physical Verbal		

## APPENDIX D

### EXPLANATIONS OF INSTRUMENT CATEGORIES

The following is an explanation of the categories used in the data- collection instrument that was adopted prior to the study (Appendix C):

- **Teacher Initiates To:**

The observer records with whom the teacher initiates the interaction; an individual or a group. When interacting with one child, the sex of the child, her/his ethnic background, and the number of the child on the seating diagram, that the observer draws whenever possible, should be recorded.

- **Child Initiates To:**

If a child initiates the interaction, the same background information on the child is collected.

- **By:**

The means by which the child initiates or responds to an interaction is recorded. The child can raise hand, move out of the seat, or call out.

- **Verbal (not feedback):**

Verbal interactions that are not feedback by the teacher are recorded by circling the letter that corresponds to the situation: Q for asking a question, D for giving directions, and C for the child and teacher having a conversation. In the cases of both directions and conversation, the length of the interaction is noted by circling "Sh" for short, or "L" for long. The interaction is considered long if it takes more than one sentence, and the child gets full attention during the interaction (Serbin, 1972).

Examples:

"Can you tell me what letter comes first, F or L?" (Q)

"Fold the paper at the line." (Sh D)

"If you are done eating, clean up your lunch and wash your hands. When you are done go use the bathroom then bring your blanket and go strait to your matt."  
(L D)

"Me and my mother and my little brother are going to California." (Sh C)

- **Teacher's feedback:**

The feedback column has four subcategories. For each one of them the content of the feedback is assessed whether it is addressing the intellectual quality of the child's answer or work "I", the child's conduct "C", the appearance of the child herself/himself "App", or their work "App/W", or is recorded as "other" if the feedback is not addressing any of these variables "O" (INTERSECT manual, 1982, p.10-22). The four subcategories are:

- i. Praise: This is chosen if the content of the teacher's comment as well as the intonation of her/his voice constitute positive praise.

Examples:

"Good thinking Elena, you figured out how to solve the puzzle!" (P I)

"Good job remembering to use your words to get back the toy from Bob!" (P C)

"I like your new sneakers." (P App)

"You've written these letters so neatly." (P App/W)

ii. Accept: If the teacher's comments as well as nonverbal communication imply acceptance, but not as enthusiastic as in praise, this category is chosen.

Examples:

"This is one way to connect the pieces together. Can you think of another way?"

(A I)

"You are waiting patiently for a turn." (A C)

"You didn't use too much glue this time. That saved your paper from getting sticky all over." (A App W)

"The book you brought from home is interesting." (A O)

"Your sweater has the colors of spring." (A App)

iii. Re-mediate: If the teacher's comments imply the need for correcting a child's behavior or work, this category is chosen.

Examples:

"Can you count your beads again and tell me how many do you have?" (R I)

"I'd like to see you giving more room to Alex to sit next to you." (R C)

"I can barely see where you traced on this sheet, get another color and go over it again." (R App W)

"You are putting your sweater on backwards." (R App)

iv. Criticize: If the teacher's comments or other nonverbal expressions clearly denote strong disapproval, and might involve reference to warnings or penalties, the feedback is considered as criticism. In this category, the teacher's criticism of the child's conduct is recorded whether it is soft or loud reprimand, or yelling (Serbin, 1972, p.14).

Examples:

"No, five is not the answer. Who knows how many two plus two equals?" (C I)

"You spilled milk all over your shirt, go change it please." (C App)

"You colored the whole page. You were supposed to color inside the lines only." (C App W)

"Janet! Stop pushing the other children!" (C C, could be S Rep. or L Rep. based on the context and the teacher's tone of voice.)

The teacher is across the room: "John, stop it right now and come over here!"

(C C Yelling)

In many cases the words the teacher uses may be interpreted to fit more than one subcategory. The observer needs to take into consideration the teacher's tone of voice, the intonation, and the whole circumstances surrounding the interaction in order to decide which subcategory the interaction falls under.

- **Helping:**

This column is checked if the teacher is merely helping an injured child, or fixing something for the child upon request (Serbin, 1972).



- **In:**  
This column is checked only if the interaction between the teacher and child takes place in private, meaning that it is audible only to the child involved in the interaction.
- **Nonverbal:**  
In this column, the type of nonverbal interaction that takes place is recorded. Categories under this column are: Touching, either for encouragement or as a means of warning; hugging; restraining; and removing the child from place (Serbin, 1972).
- **Interruption:**  
This column is used to denote whether the interaction being recorded is an interruption by one to the other (Hendrick & Stange, 1989).
- **Ancillary Teacher Behavior:**  
This column has two categories: Teacher Attribution, and Short Circuit (INTERSECT manual, 1982, pp.23-26). Teacher attribution of the child's work is checked when the teacher's statement attributes the end product of a child to ability (A), effort (Eff), or external factors (X).  
Short Circuit is checked to document the teacher's behavior when s/he does to the child what s/he is trying to do instead of giving instructions (Physical), or when the teacher tells a child the answer, or finishes her/his sentence instead of giving the child the opportunity to say it themselves (Verbal).
- **Comments:**  
This column is used to write a quick comment on any interaction, or refer the reader to a more detailed description of certain interactions.

## APPENDIX E

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The exit interviews with teachers was audio-taped, then transcribed into hard copy. Each interview lasted forty five minutes to one hour. Each teacher was asked the following questions in the same order. In addition, each teacher was asked follow up questions regarding specific incidents observed involving her/him.

1. What was your degree in. Where did you get it and how long ago?
2. How long have you been at this position? What did you do before that?
3. Can you tell me about your philosophy, specially as it pertains to your interactions with children? Does it coincide with the center's philosophy?
4. Can you think of any positive or negative experiences as a little girl/boy that you had during your schooling? Do you think any of these have affected the way you teach today?
5. Was there anything in your training to prepare you for planning anti-bias curriculum?
6. What are the factors you take into consideration when planning your curriculum?
7. Do you think you interact more or less with certain children? If so, why is that?
8. Do you find that certain areas in the room trigger more or less interaction with children, or different types of interaction?
9. Who do you think seem to have more discipline or behavioral problems, girls or boys?
10. Do you use time out with children? If so, how and when?

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