CHILDREN'S DESCRIPTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD AFTER-DINNER LEARNING

EXPERIENCES: CONSTRUCTIVE ACTIVITIES VS. PASSIVE ACTIVITIES

by

Jaclyn Durkin

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the

Requirements for the degree of Master of Education

Wagner College

2013

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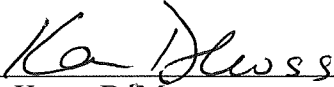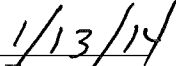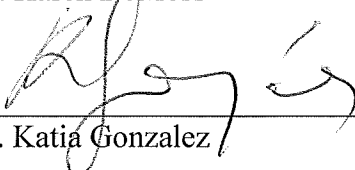
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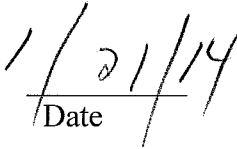
Master's Thesis

Author: Jaclyn Durkin

Title of thesis: CHILDREN'S DESCRIPTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD AFTER-DINNER

LEARNING EXPERIENCES: CONSTRUCTIVE ACTIVITIES VS. PASSIVE

ACTIVITIES

Degree: MSED Early Childhood Education (B-2)

Date of Graduation: December 2013

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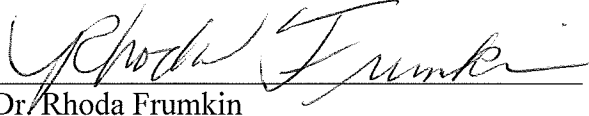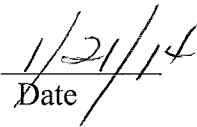## Graduate Thesis Copyright Release Form

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dr. DeMoss, Thank you for your continued support throughout this year. You have done an amazing job your first year in Wagner's Education Department, and I am sure you will do an even more excellent job in the years to come.

Dr. Gonzalez, You have been one of my favorite professors since my undergraduate years at Wagner. You always make class so instructive and enjoyable. Thank you for taking the time out to support my work as I come closer to a Master's Degree.

Dr. Frumkin, You have also supported me since my undergraduate career here at Wagner. My gratitude is ongoing for your help, especially when you gave me help for a class that you were not even in charge of. I will never forget how helpful you were.

The Faculty of the Early Childhood Center, I have learned so much from all the gifted teachers at this wonderful school. It truly is a wonderful place to work, and I am so grateful to have received an opportunity to work there. What I learned during my two years there, I will take with me forever.

Mom, Thank you for everything you have done for me the past 24 years, especially dealing with my craziness the past year.

ABSTRACT

This study explored the differences in how children experienced active and passive play in the late evenings in a daycare environment. Children were observed in ten- to thirty-minute activities, then asked questions about the activities ranging from whether they enjoyed the activity, such as playing with blocks or watching the television, to how they felt when participating in the activity. The researcher learned that students enjoy most of the activities provided, and they do feel that they learn from the specific activities. Analysis of the data shows that constructive activities do indeed provoke more language than the passive activities. Educators can use this information to improve their practice and help children, especially those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, maximize their learning.

CHAPTER 1 – CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Increasingly since the latter half of the 20th century, most parents, including both men and women, have found that both partners need to work. When these men and women become mothers and fathers, their children need to be taken care of during parents' working hours. In such situations, many families choose to send their child(ren) to child care centers. In fact, many children are enrolled in school settings at a very young age. According to the United States Census Bureau, in Spring 2011 over 20 million children under the age of 5 were enrolled in day care centers (Laughlin, 2013). These young minds are in critical developmental years; their experiences in day care could have lasting positive impacts if well designed (Barr, Lauricella, Zack, & Calvert, 2010).

Early childhood professionals should be well-versed in evidence-based practices that are derived from the key theorists and research on early childhood education. One of the benefits of study in postsecondary contexts is the opportunity to study these bodies of work, helping teachers form their own research and theory-based educational philosophies, which can influence their goals and instruction for their students.

When teachers become responsible for their own classrooms, their personalities, habits, passions, and philosophies will emerge. Some teachers may have a more relaxed approach to their work; some may be more structured. Some teachers may want to foster creativity and use holistic approaches; others may choose to follow a more traditional and academically-based philosophy. Philosophy plays a critical part in teachers' overall goals for their students, influencing how they plan and differentiate instruction to maximize student learning.

Empiricism/Nativism Spectrum

There are many different philosophies, approaches, and curricula in early childhood education. David Elkind (2003) breaks down three different orientations in his article, *Montessori and Constructivism.* He discusses two extremes, empiricism and nativism, and its medium, constructivism. He uses a camera metaphor to describe the ways in which the three perspectives work. Elkind says that empiricism looks at the world and mind existing completely independent from one another, asserting that we learn about our environment by "taking pictures of it with our senses" (p. 26). In this view, he compares our senses to a camera and our memory to unused film, stating there is "Nothing in the mind that was not first in our senses" (p. 26). Elkind then says that if this idea were transferred into the classroom, it would imply a teacher-directed approach.

At the other end of the spectrum, opposite of empiricism, is nativism. Nativism, as defined by Elkind, holds that we are born with everything we need to know, but that the knowledge is latent. Continuing with the camera metaphor, Elkind describes the nativist philosophy as believing humans have the equipment, but just need to watch the film in order to awaken their knowledge. He notes that in the nativist view, "Learning about the world is an active process of loading the film onto the projector and projecting the images onto the blank screen, which is the world" (p. 26). Using his camera metaphor, he explains that nativism would justify differences among individuals as arising from the fact that some have more extensive film libraries than others, or technical difficulties within the camera. Precisely opposite empiricism, he sums up nativism as, "There is nothing in the world that was not first in the mind" (p. 26). He then compares nativism to Plato and the Socratic Method, since the Socratic Method attempts to have students uncover what they already know by using directive questioning.

Elkind holds that neither of these philosophical extremes provides an ideal learning framework. Rather, taking some of both extremes and mixing them together is optimal, resulting in how Elkind defines *constructivism*: a blend of empiricism and nativism. Elkind says that there is most definitely a real world that lives separately from our senses, but we can only know the world that surrounds us through internal processes that organize the stimuli we receive from our senses. "We construct our knowledge of reality out of our experiences with the environment" (p. 26). Children have both real world experiences and prerequisite knowledge. Elkind's constructivism ideal strives to make the connection between these concepts and the learning that occurs in the classroom. For example, a child in New York City may have seen big buildings before, but when building smaller versions of the buildings seen in the City in the classroom, he or she can know that construction does not happen in a day, or that it may take many tries before done correctly. It can be very helpful for children to actually experience something through their senses for them to fully understand the concepts behind their teachers' lessons. When children make such connections, Elkind's definition of constructivist learning is taking place.

Within a constructivist framework, teachers should act as facilitators; they are encouraging and challenging, and not the center or the authority of the classroom. They give the children access to appropriate tools and resources and let them come up with their own activities and ideas to learn. "Each learner has a tool kit of concepts and skills with which he or she must construct knowledge to solve problems presented by the environment" (Ültanir, 2012, p. 196). When true constructivism takes place, students capitalize on their own learning and achievement.

Major Theorists and their Contributions to Early Childhood Education

There have been many theorists who have contributed to the research on developmentally appropriate practices and strategies that educators study and use today. Without their work, early

childhood education would not be as advanced as it is now. For the purposes of this project, three

key thinkers' work provided insights that drove the design and implementation of the project:

Jean Piaget, Maria Montessori, and Loris Malaguzzi.

Jean Piaget

Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist who concentrated on human development, proposed a

question that was fundamental to his research: *"What is the nature of knowledge?"* He wanted to

know where it comes from and how it develops and progresses; his inquiries led to his influential

theory of cognitive constructivism. It suggested that "humans cannot be given information,

which they immediately understand and use; instead humans must construct their own

knowledge" (Ültanir, 2012, p. 201-202). According to Piaget, humans experience true and

authentic learning when they construct their own knowledge rather than receiving information in

a passive manner. Piaget said that "the basis of learning is discovery" (Ültanir, 2012, p. 207).

Students uncover new concepts and adapt their understanding of those new concepts based on

their background knowledge. Piaget saw learning as a continuum: students learn x, then the way

they learn y is based on their knowledge of x, and so on. Such is the process of learning defined

through Piaget's theory of cognitive development. Therefore, what children learn first in their

early childhood years is important. If they learn something the wrong way it could affect their

learning in years to come.

Piaget divided the way children learn into a set of four stages. The first stage he termed

sensorimotor, when children are birth to two years old, characterized by learning through the five

senses. Children who are in the sensorimotor stage are learning about the elements of the world

for the first time. The way they experience the world is through their senses. For example, a child

who puts a toy in his mouth is learning about texture, material density, and object qualities

through his senses of touch and taste, even while playing at the same time. The second stage, pre-operational, occurs when children are two to seven years old and is defined by symbolic function. Ültanir describes symbolic function in the following way: "Images in children's mind can be created and they start symbolically depicting one thing as another" (Ültanir, 2012, p. 203). Language begins to show itself here as well. Children begin to show verbal language. During this stage, children are often involved in dramatic play, in which they are pretending to be superheroes coming to save the world, or a mommy having a dinner party. The third stage, when children are seven to eleven years of age, is concrete operational. Logical reasoning begins to complement or even challenge their sensory experiences and inner thoughts and emotions. Child's play at this stage is defined by games with rules. If a child plays with a ball, in contrast to the earlier stages, the focus is shifted from the ball itself to the rules that revolve around playing with the ball. The last stage, formal operational, is eleven years old to adulthood, where higher order thinking starts to take over when solving problems. Children are fine-tuning their ability to think abstractly.

Maria Montessori

Maria Montessori, another influential educator committed to constructivist ideas, and the first woman to study medicine in Italy, worked with children with health disorders. Through her work, Montessori found that the passive teaching strategies most commonly being used were not effective with the children she served. She contested the standard teacher-centered model, instead emphasizing students becoming active and supporting their natural curiosity. In Montessori-inspired settings, children choose what to do and how long they want to continue with activities. Such changes in the practices in schools took most of the attention off of the teacher and put it on the child. As many followers of the Montessori method believe, "The great

sign of success for a teacher is to be able to say, 'the children are now working as if I didn't

exist'"(Ültanir, 2012, p. 204). She encouraged creativity and supported student self-regulation.

Elkind (2003) noted that Montessori took principles from the three epistemologies to construct

her theory of constructivism. He notes that this inclusive approach is likely the reason why her

philosophy of a child-centered approach has succeeded so well. For example, listening to

children and what they enjoy about their day care center allows educators to gain insight into the

mind of children. By taking children's perspectives into consideration when planning classroom

environments and curriculum, education can truly live up to its name.

An ideal constructivist learning environment defined by Montessori would have the child

being the center of learning, rather than the teacher. The learner would be learning from not only

the teacher necessarily, but from the environment as well, and therefore, learning about

him/herself. The student also becomes independent. "For constructivists, learners are not

passive receptors of knowledge provided by the instructor. Instead, students construct meanings

to relate to concepts" (Ültanir, 2012, p. 205). The Montessori environment supports

collaboration and active learning. Classroom activities provoke critical thinking and are

meaningful and learner centered. The teacher's role is to focus on the student and to act as a

"collaborator, facilitator, encourager, and community builder" (Ültanir, 2012, p. 205). The

student is to be active, constructive and self-regulating (Ültanir, 2012, p. 205).

Loris Malaguzzi's Reggio Emilia Approach

Another approach in early childhood is Reggio Emilia. Developed in the small town of

Reggio Emilia, Italy, it was founded by Loris Malaguzzi. Like Piaget, Reggio Emilia was

influenced by John Dewey, as well as Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and Jerome Bruner (Swarm,

2008). Reggio Emilia promotes a constructivist ideal where children create their knowledge by

interacting with people and the environment around them. It explores the "hundred languages" of

children, and Reggio puts emphasis on the communicative arts. In an article that was contributed

by the Reggio Children, a "mixed public-private company that the Municipality of Reggio

Emilia and other individuals that are interested in the education of children founded in order to

promote the Reggio Emilia approach" (Children, 2011). Reggio Emilia describes the "hundred

languages of children" as all the various ways children communicate with their peers as well as

adults. Just as adults have different ways of communicating (tweets, instant messaging, texting,

emailing), children communicate through many outlets, ranging from simply speaking, to

hugging and other forms of body language, to expressing themselves through artwork. Children

even express themselves through aggression. A child might hit the spoon away to indicate that he

or she is not hungry anymore. (Children, 2011; Ede & Ros-Voseles, 2010). Reggio Emilia uses

constructivist values, in the sensorimotor stage, by using children's bodies to construct the

relationships with the environment around them. Reggio Emilia emphasizes exploration, and

then through exploring, constructing relationships with the world.

Importance of Constructivism

Constructivism is important to early childhood education because it has been proved to

help students achieve more, in the short term and longitudinally (Agarwal & Gautam, 2011;

Karaduman & Gültekin, 2007). It can teach children not only concrete knowledge but a better

way to ultimately learn and live life. It teaches students to be active learners, not only in the

classroom, but outside the classroom as well. Theorists and educators today say that in order for

children to truly learn, they should be literally *constructing* their own knowledge. They should

be actively learning, not by being immobile in front of a teacher, who is lecturing about a certain

concept, or in front of the television or computer. There is ample evidence that confirms this

theory (Agarwal & Gautam, 2011; R. C. Clark & Mayer, 2008; Hmelo-Silver, 2004). People

learn through their memory system, which is comprised of two parts: working memory and long-

term memory. Working memory is an active place with limited capacity, whereas our long-term

memory can hold a large capacity of knowledge and skills. Since the working memory is limited

in space, educators should not bombard children with information; children may hear the words

but will not process and retain them (Agarwal & Gautam, 2011).

Clark and Mayer (2008) discuss active learning, which holds that learning occurs through

appropriate thinking processes during instruction. In order for effective learning to take place,

educators must "promote cognitive activity during learning while involving overt behavioral

activity" (Clark & Mayer, 2008, p. 9). When working with the early childhood population,

teachers have to balance their teaching. They must balance teaching content as well as

appropriate behaviors in places such as school and other public places. Clark and Mayer go on

to argue that students learn better when learning is direct and distractions are minimized, or

"Extraneous visuals, words and sounds are omitted" (R. C. Clark & Mayer, 2008). Graphic

organizers can help teachers accomplish this goal, as they organize information and help students

process the information effectively. They also suggest personalizing instruction, particularly for

students who are in the upper grades.

A Child's Work is Play

For students who have not yet reached the age of five and cannot sit still for more than

ten minutes or for those who cannot read and write yet, constructivism suggests that these

children learn best by playing (Clark & Mayer, 2008). In early childhood, play should provide

the majority of learning opportunities. Play not only teaches young children academic concepts,

but teachers social skills as well. Children learn to wait their turn and are forced to converse

with their peers. If teachers were to combine constructivist learning approach and developmentally appropriate play, students could maximize their learning experiences. "Constructive play is organized, goal-oriented play in which children use play materials to crate or build something" (Drew, Christie, Johnson, Meckley, & Nell, 2008, p. 9). While school age children build their knowledge through their studies, early childhood students build their knowledge through play. They build it through inquiry and by gathering information from hands-on experiences. Such knowledge is derived from play with materials, playing with ideas, and playing with others (Drew et al., 2008). Researchers have been able to make connections between learning standards in early years and how constructive play can support students' mastery of those standards. For example, Drew, et al. (2008) link vocabulary standards to particular conversations students engage in with peers and teachers. The authors relate a geometry and measurement standard to playing with blocks and building spatial awareness. Children work on problem solving skills through play, and they are simultaneously developing social skills by playing with others, corresponding with social emotional standards.

Under the umbrella of *constructive play,* there are two different ways to play. One can play actively, or one can play passively. Drew, et al., (2008) define playing actively as being mentally active and constructing meaning and knowledge out of play. The idea of play is not to be confused with being physically active, although physical activity does apply in some cases. Children should be walking around, deciding on the activity and by literally forming with their own hands, their knowledge. Passive play is characterized by playing non-constructive activities such as computer games or watching television (Drew et al., 2008).

Learning & Developing through Active Play

Play can be explained and experienced in several different ways. According to Mary Renck Jalongo and Laurie Nicholson Stamp (1997), one key style is *symbolic play*. Symbolic play fosters thinking in terms of "what if" and/or "as if." It encourages creativity and problem solving skills, even helping children develop new meanings. *Meaningful play* is another style, characterized by connecting and relating experiences. Meaningful play's defining quality is its authenticity for children. *Active play* is defined by participation. In active play, children are actively involved in playing, not just observing. *Pleasurable and voluntary play* is characterized by children simply being children, evidencing their natural curiosity about the world around them, which motivates them to actively learn about the world around them. *Rule-governed play* includes games with rules and regulations, mostly experienced by school-aged children. Finally, *episodic play* is characterized by changing goals and, as children often do, changing their minds about something. Children may, for example, take on family roles in a home-living center, changing roles and rules in the blink of an eye to act out a different story. Or similarly, how children view their artwork one moment can change in another (Jalongo & Stamp, 1997). All these qualities of constructivist play provide important experiences to children in their early years of cognitive, social, and emotional development.

There are also stages of play, which relate back to Piaget's theory of development: Infants begin play by experiencing the world through their senses in the sensorimotor stage. Thus, babies put thing in their mouth, feeling the difference between something soft and something hard, or they hear music and other sounds around them. As children get older, around 3 years of age, they begin symbolic play and cast themselves as the mommy or baby or as a

fireman saving the house from a blazing fire. And then as children get older and progress into adulthood they begin playing games that are governed by rules and structure (Ültanir, 2012).

Building Blocks

Different types of activities can foster different types of development and skills. Blocks can nurture abstract thinking, for example, when children use a long block as a phone. Blocks also promote spatial awareness. A block area in an early childhood setting can improve children's development over many different domains: physical, social emotional, language, math and art. For example, Kevin Clark (2012) wrote an article explaining what occurred when he gave his four and five year old students blocks. He realized that although his students had an interest in the block area, they were deficient in their background knowledge of playing with blocks (Clark, 2012). He facilitated the children in their play by providing them with different materials to encourage their efforts. The materials he included helped children increase their experiences with language and other academic disciplines and pro-social skills.

Using building blocks can also introduce mathematical skills. Eugene Geist, a professor at the University of Ohio, discusses that even infants can begin to learn mathematics by using blocks. Categorizing blocks by size, shape, number or any other feature qualifies as math and is simple enough for infants to do. Students who play with blocks can also better understand a teacher's use of preliminary mathematical terms, such as *longer, round, bigger,* or *all*. Children can even begin to make patterns with the blocks. Blocks can help in establishing a foundation for mathematics and the other content areas (Geist, 2009).

Sociodramatic Play

In sociodramatic play, children participate in play that is creative and voluntary. They cast themselves as different people, animals, etc., and employ their imaginations abundantly.

Nicki McCullough Calabrese, who is the author of the article "*Developing Quality*

Sociodramatic Play for Young Children", suggests an interesting characteristic of sociodramatic

play: "It is an expressive world of make-believe yet is reality bound" (Calabrese, 2003, p. 607).

The author goes on to say that endorsing this kind of play would be of great advantage to early

childhood educators. It helps advance the development of cognitive, physical, and socio-

emotional domains.

The Arts

Implementing the arts into classrooms can help students at any age learn. Art can help

children develop language and literacy skills, as well as making learning real for children. Art

can also access different modalities and can even differentiate instruction. Teachers' experiences

with the arts confirm and make concrete what theory holds: arts can allow students to construct

knowledge and promote active play: "…created their works of art, they were permitted to stand,

sit, or move around the room as needed. This sense of freedom and responsibility for their own

learning helped sustain their attention and encouraged perseverance with the task" (Lynch, 2007,

p. 36). The arts can also provide constructive pedagogies by having children use arts to build on

other disciplines.

Picture Books

Early childhood educators can also use books to inspire constructivist learning and play.

An article written by Jodi G. Welsch (2008) discusses the way children and play are influenced

by books. Children construct their learning through play associated with the books they read or

listen to, enhancing learning and development. This sort of play lets children take on different

roles, which is a complex form of play. Welsch describes pretend play as a context for learning.

Pretend play, influenced by books read in the classroom, forces students to make representations

and attribute meaning to actions and objects from the story, transferring those meanings and representations to their lives.

Lev Vygotsky referred to play as the center of early childhood students' zone of proximal development (Harland, 2003). As Vygotsky followers note, "The pretend world can assist students in developing their understandings of the real world" (Welsch, 2008, p. 138). These researchers also hold that pretend play improves on children's comprehension. Thematic fantasy play, often based in narratives from books, allows the children to actually take on roles from stories, permitting them to make the meanings more authentic for them, therefore promoting retention and understanding. When situations such as these happen in the early childhood classroom, children are doing what they do best: playing. So children are enjoying themselves, but learning simultaneously.

In a 2008 study, the props from several books were made available to youngsters during free play, after an introduction to all the props and the stories from which they were derived (Welsch). Information was collected through observation and interviews from teachers. Some children were seen playing "within the text," whereas some were playing "beyond the text." Within the text was described as the students reenacting the story almost directly. Playing beyond the text was described as similar to the story but without the character and plot references. Results showed that students' comprehension improved; additionally, using this technique allowed teachers to reflect on their practice, opening their eyes to different ways to watch and analyze how children play.

Passive Play

In contrast to these constructive activities listed above, there are more passive activities that children participate in as well, such as watching television or playing video games on either

the computer or on a video game console (X-Box, Wii, or iPad). Because of the increasing

amount of time children spend in such passive activities, researchers have begun intensive study

into the effects of passive play on children's development. One recent study considers the

amount of television exposure children have and the effect on children's executive functioning

and school readiness. Authors Rachel Barr, Alexis Lauricella, Elizabeth Zack, and Sandra L.

Calvert (2010) define executive functioning in the following way:

> [Executive functioning is] the product of a complex cognitive regulatory system
>
> that helps guide behavior in a goal- directed manner. It encompasses a range of
>
> processes, including (1) inhibition (the ability to refrain from performing an
>
> action), (2) working memory (the ability to hold information in mind in order to
>
> complete a task), (3) the ability to shift attention between two competing tasks,
>
> and (4) emotion regulation (the ability to monitor and respond to changes in
>
> emotional state). (Barr et al., 2010).

Executive functioning is critical for children's life in many ways and for their success in school

in particular. Executive functioning develops quickly during the first 5 years of life. Educators

should make sure children are developing appropriately and refrain from activities that can

inhibit the progression of a child's executive function development, especially since this

developmental time is so critical (Barr et al., 2010). Prior research has suggested that exposure

to television may interfere with the growth of executive functioning. Also over exposure to

television has been associated with attention and behavior problems, which become prevalent

from age 7 to adolescence (Barr et al., 2010).

These researchers presented two hypotheses: They hypothesized that only exposure to

adult-directed television would cause attention deficits and cognitive skills lacking by age 7, and

they predicted that children who were exposed to high amounts of television would suffer poor

cognitive skills by age 4. Six children and their parents participated, with infants averaging the

age of 15 months and several years later the same children aged at 49 months (4 years, 1 month).

Children were mostly from middle class families, with 75% of the children in a child care center

before the age of 2 and 85% enrollment in child care by age 4. Parents filled out a log of how

many hours the children watched television. When children reached age 4, research assistants

administered a series of tests and assessments that measured executive functioning at a time of

day designated by the parents. Television was split into two categories: adult directed, which was

programs designed for adults and adolescents, and child-directed, which were children's

programs. Various statistical tests were conducted, including covariance tests and *t* tests.

The study yielded the following results: "High levels of exposure to programs designed

for adults during both infancy and at age 4, and high levels of household television use at age 4,

were all associated with poorer executive functioning at age 4. High exposure to television

programs designed for adults during the preschool years was also associated with poorer

cognitive outcomes at age 4. In contrast, exposure to television programs designed for young

children at either time point was not associated with any outcome measure at age 4'" (Barr et al.,

2010). This study suggests that child-oriented passive activities might not harm children's

development.

Listening to Children

There is a remarkable number of students enrolled in child care centers throughout the

United States (Laughlin, 2013). If educators and/or researchers look at children's experiences,

they can make day care centers better and more enjoyable for children. Happy children usually

translates into happy teachers. It can also aid in children becoming more interested in school

early on. This should be one aspect of the job of early childhood educators: getting children to love school. Implanting the idea that school can be fun and rewarding can make learners keen on going to school. Educators can also gain insight into their students' interests, and by utilizing this information to the greatest of the teachers' advantage they can stimulate intrinsic motivation within their students. Curricula that allows children to work freely and independently and using practices that are developmentally appropriate are positively correlated with increased motivation and engagement (Hyson & Taylor, 2011).

Application to Child Care Settings

In early childhood, there can be two different types of 'school' settings for children to be in: a childcare facility, or a formal preschool. These settings can affect each child differently, and each setting has different philosophies. Schools recognized as strictly preschools or early childhood centers have a more purposeful and intentional curriculum. However, some child care centers are seen as a babysitting service; with children there for anywhere between 7-12 hours a day, programs are not as formal or intentional. Although, there may be structure for a good portion of the day, children and teachers may be more lax about reaching certain developmental goals than would occur in more formal preschools or early childhood centers. However, since the time before kindergarten is so critical for children (Barr et al., 2010), educators in all settings should make the most of children's time, whether they find themselves in formal preschools or child care centers.

For educators to not take advantage of the access they have to children in child care centers would be a tragedy. Life often presents itself as a cycle where poorer families must place children in lower-quality child care, resulting in a poor educational foundation. Educational opportunities for working, middle and upper class families improve as parents climb the

socioeconomic ladder, providing children of wealthier families more opportunity to prepare for the best jobs, reinforcing the vicious cycle of class-based constraints or opportunity. Faculties and staff in day care could help break this cycle with quality instruction in child care centers.

Although *all* early child care, including centers that are paid for privately, need to be high quality, programs that are free for low income families are most challenged in providing high quality care. Often, these centers suffer from low quality because of funding and budget issues. A study conducted by a group of researchers examined how the socio-emotional development of children was affected in child care centers in low socioeconomic areas. Staff members reported that lack of money had an effect on the school as a whole because they could rarely offer variety and new activities to the children. Other inhibitions included lack of training in faculty and staff, as well as little to no communication and/or support from parents and families (Davis et al., 2010). However, these are the sites in the most need of dedicated professionals and high caliber instruction and curriculum.

Another difference between childcare centers and preschools is the student population. Students in the more formal preschools, which only run for 3-5 hours a day, often have socioeconomically advantaged children enrolled, as one of the parents or another caregiver must have the privilege of staying home when the child is not in the preschool. However, child care centers are populated by the children of the working class parents enrolled in their centers. As a result of resources, a stronger curriculum might be at the more distinguished preschools, with less intentional programs at the child care centers, giving upper class children a better education, and predicting better success for them in the future. Preschool and child care educators need to ultimately stop this cycle, and close the achievement gap between the upper and working classes.

Closing the Achievement Gaps

In an article written by Robert Slaby, Sharon Loucks, and Patricia Stelwagon in 2005, they discuss why it is essential for early childhood educators and education reformists to close the achievement gap in our society. The evidence presented is overwhelming. Many studies conducted all produce the same results. Students who have lower socio-economic status perform lower academically than those with a higher socio-economic status. "Children in professional families heard nearly eleven million words, children in working-class families heard six million words, and children in welfare families heard three million words" (Slaby, Loucks, & Stelwagon, 2005).

Slaby and colleagues (2005), go on to report that "the performance gap for minority students could be lessened with regular attendance in a preschool program" (Slaby et al., 2005, p. 49). America can make the standard higher for academic performances nationally by simply upgrading the quality of preschool programs, both private and government funded. An issue that predetermines most success is funding. Just because some families cannot afford high quality preschool programs does not mean they should be deprived of high quality education during their critical years. This is where child care centers, come into play. These programs, the ones geared toward the working class and welfare families, are the ones that should be focused on when increasing the quality in centers across the country. This is the population that deserves and needs the attention.

RAND Corporation conducted a study analyzing reports on all high quality preschool programs and disadvantaged children. The results yielded that both enrolling low income students in highly valued preschool programs and providing early intervention services could lead to major government and financial benefits. Giving children early intervention services and

higher quality instruction during early childhood can put anywhere from $1 to $17 per child back

into our economy, a reduction of future social service needs. Also, these interventions can

produce more successful students (Karoly, Kilburn, & Cannon, 2005). Closing the achievement

gap between low and high socioeconomic students should be one of the major goals in future

nation-wide educational reform, and the RAND Corp. suggests that the preschool experience is a

mechanism to level the playing field and fully prepare students to succeed in kindergarten"

(Slaby et al., 2005, p. 48). Collapsing these performance gaps will make for a more enjoyable

and successful education for students, families and teachers, and what could be a great financial

return. Reading this goal starts with ensuring high quality child care in the early childhood

setting.

  Indeed, teachers can make such difference. Pam Schiller (2007) chronicles the efforts of a

teacher in a child care center who is trying to make her time with the children more purposeful.

Schiller discusses Ms. Rose, who is talking to her nine-month-old student who is waking from

her nap. She says, "Hi, Audrey! You had a long nap. I think you are ready to play for a while.

But first, let's get you a dry diaper" (Schiller, 2007, p. 10). Audrey then replies with babbling.

By simply talking to the children Ms. Rose is optimizing her time with Audrey and the other

students. One of the most important things she is doing is modeling linguistic skills that children

are picking up on (p. 10). Children pick up on both good and bad habits of their teachers, an

important fact to keep in mind when working with children of any age. Schiller goes on to argue

that all children, no matter the time of delivery of the child (premature, developmental delays or

born on time) or the place of birth, have a window of opportunity for learning (p. 10), and

referring back to the article written by Drew, et al. (2008) executive functioning develops during

these years as well. Infant and toddler caregivers have access to children during the neural

development period, what Schiller calls "wiring" opportunities; these days and months can be key for children's futures. The foundations for thinking skills, motor development, language, emotional intelligence and social development are planted during this time: "All future wiring will be based on this foundation" (Schiller, 2007, p. 11). Infant and toddler caregivers play a critical role in the future of our society. Taking advantage of any school or daycare time with these youngsters is a vital part of children's future successes.

The Need for This Study

Children as young as 2 years old are in local care centers on Staten Island until sometimes as late as 8:00 at night. Although the bulk of learning happens during the morning and afternoon, staff members still try provide intentional learning substance throughout children's entire stay. According to an article written by James Hartley and Lisa Nicholls, teachers and learners alike function differently at different times of day (2008). In many day care settings, educators "wind down" by evening. However, it might be beneficial for students' to still be actively learning at this time (Hartley & Nicholls, 2008).

This study explores whether it might be beneficial to continue providing active learning through the evenings. The specific research questions are

- What activities do children enjoy?
- Do children report more learning when participating in constructive or passive activities?

Exploring these questions will help day care providers ensure evening curricular opportunities are designed to fully support children's development.

CHAPTER 2 – METHODS

This study was designed using qualitative methods that value children's voice. Asking

students their opinion about their experiences can provide important insights for educators.

Valuing Student Perspectives

A study was conducted by Sara Day (2010) exploring children's own experiences in day

care settings. Day refers to the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education Project , who had a

study that examined several questions to ask young children in early childhood school settings.

It asked how children experienced day care in the centers what children enjoyed, and how they

could improve care (Day, 2010, p. 47).

The study showed researchers what children found important in their school lives.

Children valued their friends in the center, how familiar the students were with their teachers and

adults in their lives at the center, and parent relationships (which were often discussed at the

center). Parents added that the routines implemented at the center were imperative. Children,

especially those with special needs, have a great need for routines. They offer children security

and stability. Usually if these routines were interrupted for any reason, confusion, discomfort,

and in extreme situations, tantrums or unmanageable behaviors occured (Parlakian, 2012, p. 69).

Children showed enjoyment playing both outside and inside; some children enjoyed sitting and

looking at books in the quiet corner; and all children showed special attachment to at least one

adult (Day, 2010).

The study suggested implementing several procedures in child care centers, the first

being "fostering positive relationships between teacher(s) and student(s)" (Day, 2010, p. 53).

Such relationships can promote social, emotional and even cognitive development. It also

recommends differentiating instruction for children with special needs, whether it be developmental, emotional, behavioral or cognitive needs..

Accordingly, this study was designed to explore students' self-report of their experiences in both passive and active activities in the early evening.

Participants

Participants were selected for this exploratory study by a sample of convenience. The author holds a position at a local child care center, and has worked there for almost four years and is familiar with the students, families and staff. The center is part of a major research hospital and is available exclusively for the children of the employees of the hospital.

Students were selected based on their daily and weekly schedules. If students did not stay past dinnertime, or if students were unable to hold conversations, or speak in more complex sentences, they also did not fit the requirements of the study.

Five students between the ages of 3 and 5 participated after their families received, read and signed informed consent forms. Ideally, more than 5 students would have participated, but extenuating circumstances prevented many from participating. Students were chosen from two different classes in the center: the preschool classroom and the pre-kindergarten classroom. All the students had been enrolled in the school for at a least a year. Three of the five had been enrolled since infancy. One child had been enrolled since the age of 18 months, and the other since the age of 3. The population included three girls, two boys. The children's cultural backgrounds included Indian, African American, Korean, and Caucasian. Only one student received special services: speech. Her cognition was not affected however.

Student Routines

Students were very accustomed to being at the center. The center offered structure as well as a free range of play for students. The students were on a routine throughout their days at

the center. If students arrived before 8am they eat breakfast and after that had free play. At 9am,

they were given a breakfast snack, such as cereal or waffles. They then had morning circle time

in which they discussed the calendar, the content for the day and today' activities. They then

broke off into centers such as the block center, computer, kitchen center, or manipulative center.

The teacher set a timer for approximately 15 minutes and students chose to switch or stay in a

center. The teacher would work simultaneously with students to complete a craft and/or practice

a particular skill, such as fine motor or pre-writing skills. The students then had gym time, or go

outside (weather permitting). Students then had lunch and then settled down for a nap/rest time

for approximately 90 – 120 minutes. When students wake up, they use the bathroom and rolled

up their nappers (mats they sleep on). Students had an afternoon snack, such as apples or

goldfish, and then proceeded to an afternoon circle time consisting of reading a story and playing

several different finger plays and/or educational games. Students then again broke off into

centers and students individually completed a second craft, worksheet or practiced more fine

motor skills with the teacher. Students began to go home at this time (4:30 p.m.), while other

students stayed until later hours. Children may have gone outside again (weather permitting),

until approximately 5:30 p.m.. Children then went inside and washed up for dinner. Dinner is

served for the children who have it, and then children moved to the gym, where a movie or

television show on DVD was usually put on for the children until they went home. This was a

typical day at the center.

Children were very accustomed to this routine, and if something changed they become

confused or uneasy. However, the children were very comfortable with the teachers at the

center, and were open to new experiences with the proper introduction to it.

There was more focus on students #3 and #5 because these students stayed the latest during the evening. These students are picked up between 7:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. Whereas other students left around 6:30 p.m.

Materials

The materials required in this study were wooden building blocks, lego's, art supplies, such as paint, crayons, markers, scissors, glue and construction paper, dress-up clothes, dolls, the kitchen center and all the playthings that were in the home-living center (table and chairs, toy silverware and toy food, etc.), storybooks, a television with age appropriate videos (such as Dora the Explorer on video), and age appropriate computer games (Bailey's Book House, Sammy's Science House, Dora the Explorer video game). Also required for this study was the Informed Consent form for parents. Additionally, paper and pencil to record children's conversations and responses were needed to collect data. Something also needed in this study was the cooperation of the children, their families and other staff members.

Procedure

Two or three times a week for each participant, he or she worked with the researcher on one of two activities: constructive activities or passive activities. The constructive activities included building blocks, art, playing dress-up, playing in the home center and reading. The passive activities included watching television or playing games on the computer. There are several children who stayed until 7:30 pm on some days at the center. The activity occurred after the children had dinner. Children's conversation that occurred while they are playing was manually recorded, as well as the questions they were asked while and after they played. The questions asked post play included:

1. "Did you enjoy playing with _____?"

2. "How do you feel when playing with _____?"

3. "Would you rather play with _____ or _____?"

4. "Do you learn when you play with _____?"

5. "Do you like playing with _____?"

6. "What is the difference between playing with _____ or _____?"

7. "Did you have fun while you were playing with _____?"

8. "What makes it fun?"

And of course, the question of "Why?" was asked as well. If any other questions had come about spontaneously, they were added to the list of questions. Answers were recorded, and pictures were taken of any end products the students produced.

Data Analysis

Conversations were analyzed by the researcher for overall themes and for individual children's responses across different activities. The demeanor in which children approach their play situations, and their behavior and thoughts and words were also analyzed for positive and negative behaviors. Conversations were analyzed for the more obvious themes, as well as underlying themes.

CHAPTER 3 – RESULTS

The participants of the study were typical of the center.

Participant Description

Student #1

The first participant was a 4 years and 3 months old boy. He was at the center five days a week for ten hours a day. He was in the three and four year olds' room, with about ten students in his class. He was a hard-working child with high verbal skills. He had been at the center since he was 12 months old. He was very comfortable there and had good social skills as well. This participant was very involved in imaginative play. He made up fictional situations even inventing words as he played. For example, created the word 'gallor', whose meaning remains a mystery to adults, though it clearly held meaning for him. This participant also had some confidence issues. He often noted that he could not do things, such as write his name, yet he actually could.

Student #2

This student was a 3 years and 10 months old girl. She had been at the center for a little less than a year. She received speech services but her intellectual skills were normally developing. She also was at the center for five days a week for 9 hours a day. She exhibited a quick wit and an orientation toward adults in addition to being highly sociable.

Student #3

This female student was 3 years and 9 months old. She had been at the center since she was only 4 months old. She was very comfortable at the center, as she had an older sibling there. Student #3 came in for only two days a week but stayed for almost 13 hours. She had excellent

verbal and social skills. Her emotional skills were still developing, and she often exhibited

sensitive behavior. For example, even small questions about whether she might act appropriately

could result in her going to a corner, and closing herself off.

Student #4

This male student was 5 years and 1 month old. He had been at the center since 12

months old and was in the universal pre-kindergarten room at the center and came for five days a

week for nine hours a day. His intellectual development was advanced, but his socio-emotional

skills often reflected an orientation towards wanting everything his own way. Although

scheduled until later hours, this child often left before dinner, which limited opportunities to

work with him during the study. He often did not exhibit the emotional skills other peers had.

For example, he would typically participate in parallel play, sporadically interacting with the

children playing next to him, then returning to his own preoccupation with his own play and

tuning out his surroundings.

Student #5

This child had been at the center since infancy. She, like Student #3, came on rotating

days, only 2 or 3 days a week but for 12-13 hours a day. She was very comfortable at the center.

She was very aware of her surroundings and exhibited strong intellectual development; however,

her emotional skills were less developed than those of her peers. She could also become nervous

and stubborn quickly, and often become absorbed in her play, ignoring the attempts of her peers

to play with her. She did also exhibit creativity in her styles of play.

A total of 18 instances of student feedback on active and passive activities occurred. In some cases, student's participated in pairs. For example, student's 1, 2, and 3 often played together in active experiences. As a result, there are 11 note sets for the 18 activity events (See Table 1 and Appendices A-K). Appendices are listed and titled in chronological order.

The following is a table designed to give insight as to which conversations correspond with what sort of activity, and with which child they were had.

Students and the Activities they were Exposed To

	Active Activity #1	Active Activity #2	Active Activity #3	Passive Activity #1	Passive Activity #2
Student #1	Appendix A	Appendix E	Appendix F	Appendix G	Appendix I
Student #2	Appendix A	Appendix E	Appendix F	Appendix G	Appendix J
Student #3	Appendix B	Appendix E	Appendix F	Appendix H	Absent
Student #4	Appendix C	Absent	Absent	Absent	Absent
Student #5	Appendix D	Absent	Absent	Appendix H	Appendix K

Analysis of Participants' Responses

After analyzing the conversations through qualitative software, a theme of language was found repeatedly. Children's responses were analyzed for word count, response count, complete sentences, and filler words (such as "um" and "uh"). The researcher observed differences in productive and expressive language between constructive and passive activities, with more advanced linguistic use presented in the constructive activity responses.

Word & Response Count per Activities

	Avg. Word Count/Constructive Activities	Avg. Word Count/Passive Activities	Avg. Response Count/Constructive Activities	Avg. Response Count/Passive Activities
Student #1	60 words per activity	13 words per activity	13 responses per activity	5 responses per activity
Student #2	45 words per activity	21 words per activity	12 responses per activity	6 responses per activity
Student #3	68 words per activity	12 words per activity	14 responses per activity	4 responses per activity
Student #4	20 words per activity	0 words per activity	6 responses per activity	0 responses per activity
Student #5	54 words per activity	25 words per activity	6 responses per activity	7 responses per activity

Number of Complete Sentences in Participants' Responses

	Avg. # of Complete Sentences in Constructive Activity Conversations		Avg. # of Complete Sentences in Passive Activity Conversations	
	Simple	Compound	Simple	Compound
Student #1	8	2 (across 3 activities)	4	0
Student #2	7	1 (across 3 activities)	6	0
Student #3	8	2 (across 3 activities)	4	0
Student #4	3	0	0	0
Student #5	6	0	5	0

Number of Filler Words

The conversations were analyzed for filler words, such as "um" and "uh". It was found that filler words were used 3 times among all 591 words spoken in all the conversations during and post constructive activities. This means that a filler words was used once per every 197 words. It was also discovered that filler words were used 2 times among the 140 words yielded in the conversation post passive activities. Further analysis states that a filler word was used 1 time per every 70 words.

CHAPTER 4 – DISCUSSION

What Do Children Enjoy?

All of the participants in all the instances reported enjoying the activity. One participant in one activity reported that they did not like the activity. In Conversation #8, Student #2 reports that reading a book makes her mad because she would rather be playing. All participants, except the student just mentioned, reported feeling happy when participating in the activities designed for this study.

Do Children Believe They Learn Through These Activities?

Children reported that they believed they learned from all activities, including television. Student #5 reported that she learned from watching television, without being asked. She volunteered this information. When asked a few minutes later, she again said that she learns from watching television.

Language Emergence

Use of language was a theme that was surprisingly revealed through the designated constructive activities. Participants spoke more and when they spoke used higher quality language during post constructive activity conversations versus post passive activity conversations. During the critical years of development, it is important to have children participate in the activities that provoke language as much as possible. It is also important to promote language in the home as well. This is where parents come into play.

Parents' Role

However, it may be difficult and stressful for some parents to reinforce academics at home and work with their child, especially if parents work a lot. Research shows that by age 4,

children in low socioeconomic homes have 13 million words less than children in a working

class family, and 30 million words less than a child in a home with high socioeconomic status

(Hart & Risley, 1995). Research also says that high risk demographics have an effect on

language outcomes for the child. Elizabeth Pungello, et al., (2009) says that when are aged 18-

36 months, their adaptive and maladaptive development begins. Children should almost always

be exposed to positive and constructive experiences. Enhancing children's practices during this

time can lead to higher academic achievement in school years in the future (Pungello, Iruka,

Dotterer, Mills-Koonce, & Reznick, 2009). Educators and parents also need to work as a team

and parents need to reinforce at home in order to optimize student achievement.

Educators' Practices

If early language emergence is associated with later academic achievement, shouldn't

early childhood educators continue to practice the activities that provoke language? Such as the

constructive activities performed in the current study: some kind of art activity or reading and/or

listening to books. Other studies suggest facilitating conversations between children and asking

open ended questions to force children to speak with one another, and by modelling language for

children. Another way for teachers to help children's language is by allowing children to finish

their sentences and complete their thoughts (Bouchard et al., 2010). All of these practices can

help promote language development. That last strategy also supports the researcher's original

idea of listening to children and taking their interests and thoughts into account.

It is also important for educators to employ constructive techniques with their youngest

students, including the type of feedback a teacher gives the child. Having encouraging feedback

from a teacher can improve students' dispositions (Hart & Risley, 1995). Responsive and

sensitive environments both at school and home can also improve student autonomy and

confidence. Positive environments result in positive student outcomes, and the opposite goes for

the negative environment (Pungello et al., 2009).

Limitations

There were several limitations for this study. The first was that children left early or

were absent on the day the researcher planned to have the child participate in an activity. This

was the biggest limitation for this study. Parents have children scheduled for more days than

they actually work. Therefore, if a child is scheduled to attend school, and the parent is off that

day the child does not always attend school. Or the student may spend the day with a

grandparent, or, the most common reason for an absence, the child is sick; which does happen

frequently.

Another limitation for this study is that the researcher's job got in the way. The

researcher does hold a job at the center and all activities needed to be done while the researcher

was working. Therefore, actually working and tending to the needs of sometimes sixteen

students at once got in the way of research.

The last limitation for this study was children's behavior. Some students displayed poor

and/or negative behavior. This threw off the routine of things and did not allow the researcher to

collect more data for this study.

Improving the Design

The researcher should have definitely designed the structure of questions for the

participants better. Children's perspectives was a key part of this exploratory study and the

questions asked were of poor quality and should have been focused on more. Two specific sets

of questions, one for constructive activities and one for passive activities, with some questions in

common should have been created and established to question all of the participants.

Next Steps in Research

Something for researchers to think about is a longitudinal study of children who are exposed to these different types of play. Observing students well into their teens and adulthood to see if different types of play have an impact on students' lives in the future. Perhaps a study where children are subjected to only one type of play during a period of their early childhood, or majority of a single type of play, and very minimal exposure to the opposing type of play. A longitudinal study can reveal how important play is to the field of early childhood education. It is also important for educators to understand how vital it is to scaffold play during different stages of development throughout their early childhood.

Educators Could Improve their Practice

Although there were several limitations, there is still much to learn from this exploratory study. Taking children's perspectives into account when creating curriculum and planning lessons can be of much value to teachers and administrators nowadays. Research has shown that using students' standpoints can improve student performance. Taking children's perspectives into account can do one of several things. One, it can promote caring and significant relationships between teacher and student and teacher and parent. Using the child's perspectives shows that teachers do care what children think, and perhaps even taking parental and familial perspectives into account as well. Second, it can foster intrinsic motivation and engagement within students. What better way to get children interested in the content by making something children are actually interested in? And lastly, it can instill confidence in children. Letting children know that they do have a voice in the classroom, and it also lets children know that the teacher does care about them as a person and student. It is important for children to realize that

the relationship between teacher and student is one that goes both ways. Student learns from

teacher but teacher can also listen to and learn from student (Kragh-Müller & Isbell, 2011).

It is also important for early childhood educators to realize that they should, if not must,

teach with intent. It is way too common in child care centers, especially those with children of a

very young age, to evolve from being a babysitter to a teacher or teacher's assistant. Turning on

the television is an easy solution especially late in the afternoon. Turning the television on is

okay some of the time, but educators should take advantage of the numerous hours they have

with children enrolled in child care centers. Educators are given a golden opportunity to

influence children's early experiences with school settings and can make a positive impact on

their students prematurely (Schiller, 2007).

However, unintentional teaching in child care centers can be beneficial too. Children

observe their teacher's behaviors and learn from the model that a teacher serves as. Children can

pick up on nonverbal behavior as well as verbal behavior. Children can also take notice of body

language. Children are always aware of teacher's feelings, even if the teacher is trying to keep

them hidden. Even babies can tell if the caretaker is not comfortable or nervous, which makes

the baby nervous. Teachers serve as role models, so even if their teaching is unintentional, their

behavior must be intentional at all times.

Computer games can also prove effective for student learning. The participants who

partook in computer games said that they learn from playing on the computer. And even if

children are not getting subject matter learning from computers that they say they are, they are

improving on skills that are critical in society today. Computers and technology are inevitable in

schools and the workplace, and will only continue to become more prevalent in the future.

Computer skills are necessary for children to possess.

I have learned much from conducting this exploratory study. My professionalism has improved as well as learning much from designing and executing this study. I learned different ways to structure questions. As well as, I learned to adapt to sudden changes in routine. I planned, and sometimes things did not go according to plan. This forced me to cope with these unexpected deviations and keep a cool head and not become nervous. This taught me to think on my feet.

Conclusion

"So much is happening to children during their first three years at home, at a time when they are especially malleable and uniquely dependent on the family for virtually all their experience, that by age 3, an intervention must address not just a lack of knowledge or skill, but an entire general approach to experience." (Hart & Risley 1995) Hart & Risley summarize here that children's experiences during their first three years of life can dictate their academic achievement in the future, and parents and educators should both be doing all they can to maximize their child/student's potential and learning.

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Appendix A: Active Activity, Student #1 and #2

Students #1 and #2 playing with animals with letters on them (Flamingo has an F on it), with a coordinating mat that has homes for the animals, as well as letters to match to the animals. Student #5 is playing next to us.

Student #1: We need all the friends to come...Mommy, Mommy?

Student #2: You gotta get the bird!

J: What kind of bird is this?

Student #2: A flamingo?!

Student #5: But they don't fly.

Student #2: Them got wings?

Student #1: Mommy...Mommy...

J: What kind of bird is this? It has an O on its chest…

Student #1: A peacock?!

J: No.

Student #1: A running bird.

Student #2: He flies.

Student #1: Mommy….., this has to be the mommy of the dolphin.

J: Ok, but what do you know what kind of bird this is?

Student #2: A flamingo?

J: The flamingo is pink, it's an ostrich.

Student #1: Ostrich runs fast.

J: I think they do.

Student #1: This has to be the mommy, and the dolphin is going

to be the kid.

Student #2: Time for a new game!

Student #1: You have to be the mommy

Student #2 it's time to go!.

Student #1: But wait what about the kids?

Student #2: Them coming too.

Student #1: What's his name?

Student #2: A camel.

Student #1: But what's his name?

Student #2: He's the husband.

Student #1: What's the dolphins name?

J: Do you guys like to build with blocks in school?

Student #1: yeah.

J: Do you think that you learn when playing with these toys?

Student #1: Yes!

J: What do you think you learn?

Student #1: We learn what animals do.

Student #2: Yeah, and we learn how animals hear.

Appendix B: Active Activity, Student #3

Student #3 playing with blocks and animals by herself

J: What is this?

Student #3: A block.

J: but what are you pretending it is?

Student #3: a bridge.

J: for which animal?

Student #3: a lamb.

J: What are you building?

Student #3: im building a building.

More playing...

Student #3: Let's build a farm, this is my mom and this is me.

J: what are you building now k?

Student #3: I told you! A bridge!

J: Oh! But I thought a bridge was supposed to be up in the air?

Student #3: (shakes her head)

J: Is yours is not up in the air? Where does that bridge go to?

Student #3: To the animals.

J: To the barn?

Student #3: We're making a bridge for the animals.

J: Why do they need a bridge?

Student #3: For the animals to get to their home.

J: Where are they now?

Student #3: They're home.

J: Where are they going to go when they cross the bridge?

Student #3 Ignores the question

J: DO you like playing with blocks?

Student #3: Becausec I like to.Because I build so much stuff.

J: What do you build when you play with blocks?

Student #3: Bridges.

J: Do you think we can build a really big bridge?

Student #3: No

J: Why not?

Student #3: Because

J: Maybe we can build one like this.

Student #3: Don't take my bridge.

J: I won't.

Student #3: If you do, I'm going to take your bridge.

J: Do you cross a bridge to go to your house?

Student #3: No

J: I thought you live in New Jersey?

Student #3: I do, but I don't cross a bridge.

J: I think you do.

Student #3: oh yeah, I do.

J: Do you know which bridge you cross?

Student #3: no.

J: Maybe we can make the bridge you cross?

Student #3: I made the bridge I cross! Because you're not allowed.

J: I don't know what it looks like?

Student #3: No, because you don't come to my house.

J: What's this bridge then? Which bridge is this?

Student #3: No ones. (knocks it down)

J: That's not nice.

Student #3: But that is not a bridge. I don't like your bridge.

J: K, Do you think that you learn from playing with blocks?

Student #3: Yeah...

J: What do you learn?

Student #3: I learn how to build things.

Appendix C: Active Activity, Student #4

Student #4 building with Legos

J: A, what do you like to build?

Student #4: I like to build a fire thing. It's all breaking off.

J: Why don't you hold it there, and then put it on? There ya go!

Is that a slide?

Student #4: Yea!

J: What's your favorite thing to do in school?

Student #4: Play.

J: Play with what?

Student #4: Toys

J: What kind of toys?

Student #4: fire toys.

J: What a fire toy?

Student #4: C, you're breaking it!

(ignores question, goes on playing)

Student gets very upset when other children break his

'creation'. - He is very intent with his playing and with every

maneuver and placement of the blocks.

Appendix D: Active Activity, Student #5

Student #5 with blocks.

J: Tell me what you're building?

Student #5: Wanna see your cake? You ordered it all by yourself

J: Is it my birthday?

Student #5: No.

J: Then why did you make me a cake?

Student #5: It's actually a worm cake, but it doesn't have any worms in it.

J: Tell me about this cake.

Student #5: It's actually a worm cake that I made all by myself and she made those cakes.

J: is there a worm in it?

Student #5: No, but the icing has things that look like worms.

J: Tell me about this cake.

Student #5: It has worm icing.

Appendix E: Active Activity, Students #1, #2, #3

Student #1, #2 and #3 drawing together

Student #2: I want to color!

J: Okay.

Student #1: Can I come too?

J: Of course.

Student #2: Yes.

J: Student #2, What's your favorite thing to do in school?

Student #2: Draw my mema. (referring to the her grandmother)

J: What about you s?

Student #1: Draw my daddy, and my favorite color is green. Can I have green?

Student #1: Sav, are you gonna share with that crayon in your hand?

Student #2: Yes.

J: What are you drawing Sav?

Student #2: Me and my mema, and my pop-pop.

Student #3: I'm making a birdhouse.

J: A birdhouse? I love that!

J: S, what are you drawing?

Student #1: My daddy

Student #2: That is my pop-pop, that is me and those are my sisters.

Student #1: I'm done now. Jackie, how nice is this?

J: It's beautiful. Do you want me to write your name? Try and write it like I'm writing it.

(K is intently coloring this whole time)

Student #1: I don't know my name.

J: Yes you do! What is your name?

Student #1: S____

J: See! You know it. Now try and copy it.

Student #1: Ok, im done with it.

J: that's beautiful (student's name), I love the way you're drawing. You should draw some birds.

Student #3: I did draw some birds.

J: What is this s?

Student #3: Its for my daddy.

J: But what is it?

Student #1: its sprinkles and green, and its uh uh its a big humongous thing for my daddy! It's a gallor for my daddy.

J: a gallor?

Student #1: yes!

J: But can you tell me what that is?

Student #1: It's for my daddy.

J: But what is it?

Student #1: It's for my gate.

J: But what does it do?

Student #1: It does actions.

J: What kind of actions?

Student #1: Super duper actions.

Student #2: My papa knows spiderman!

J: That's a beautiful (student's name) ! What is that now?

Student #3: A birdhouse, that's the house and that's the bird,

that's the sky and that's the grass, and that's the rainbow. Now

I'm gonna do the back

J: Ok, that's a good idea! I'll do the back too.

Student #2: I need the sparkly green.

J: Is there a sparkly pink?

Student #3: I have it!

Student #2: this is black. Purple! I want purple. Is it pretty?

J: Oh! Its beautiful! What is it?

Student #2: A spaceship!

J: And what does a space ship do?

Student #2: It flies!

J: S k, what is that now?

Student #3: A camera, no, this is the birdie

J: A birdie? Oh!

Student #3: Can I have more paper miss Jackie?

J: Sure! What color do you want?

Student #3: Um...purple!
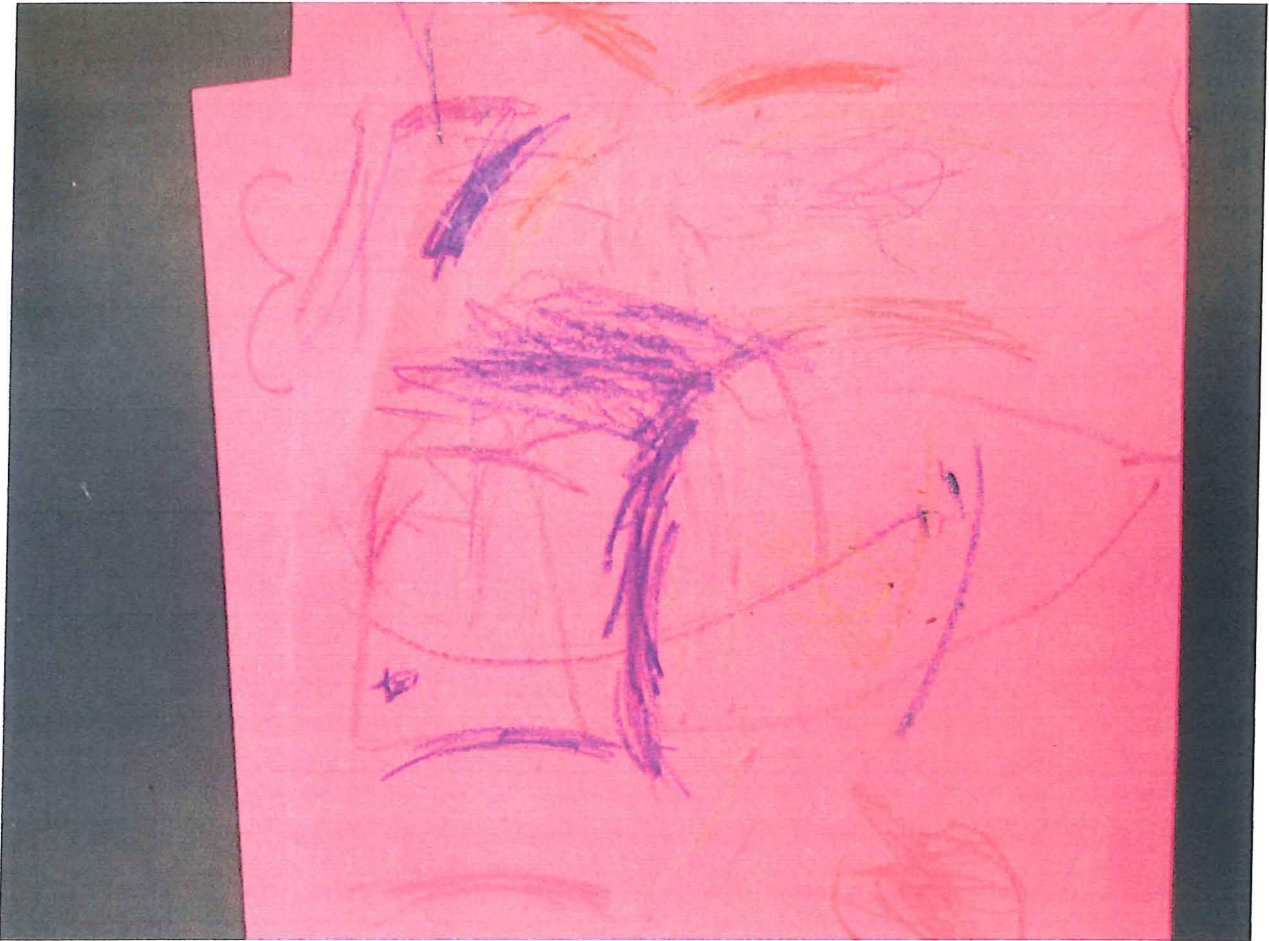
J: DO you think that you learn from drawing?
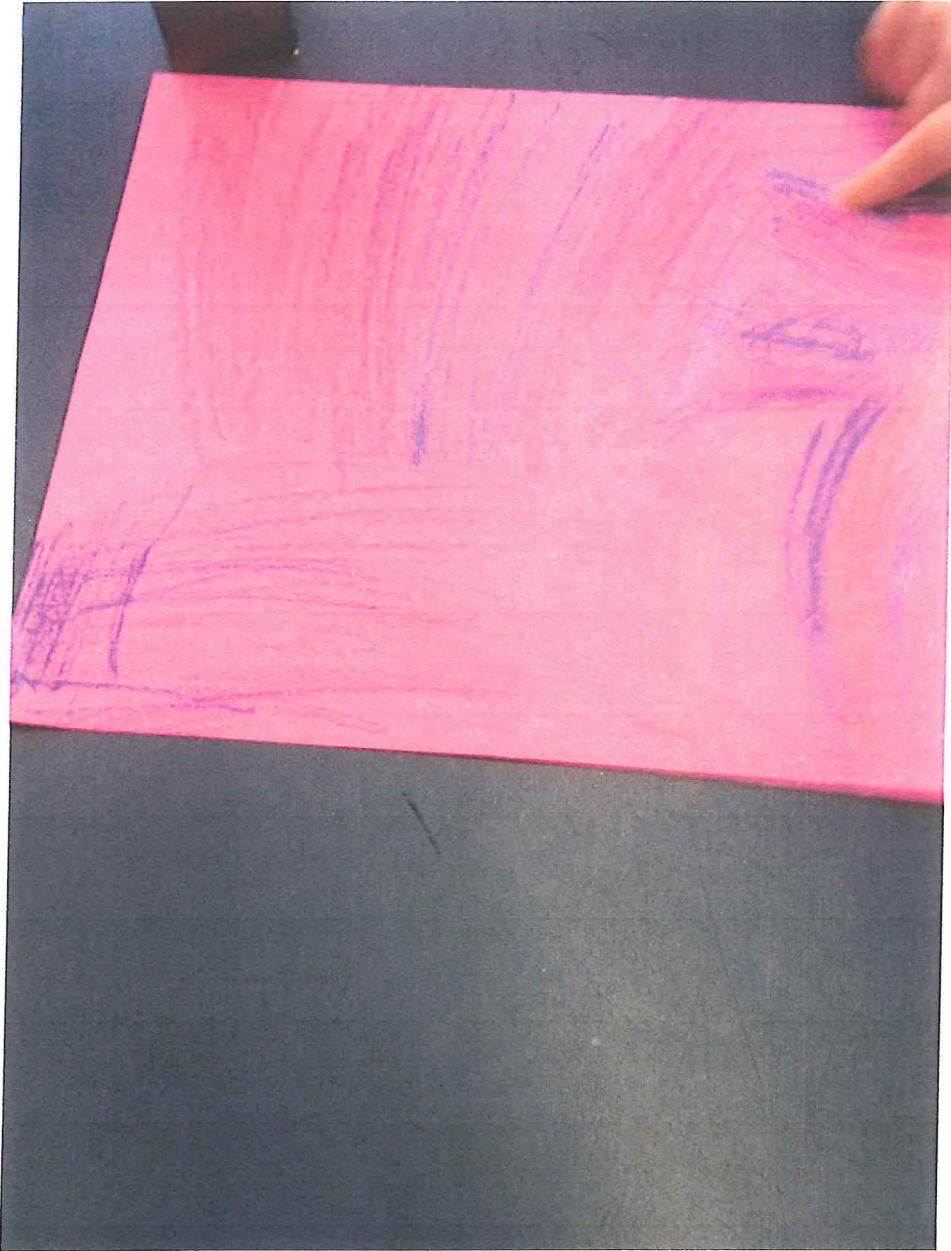
Student #2: Yeah

J: What do you learn?

Student #2: You learn colors

Student #3: And you can learn shapes.

The following are the pictures that Student's #1 and #2 drew.

Appendix G: Passive Activity, Students #1 and #2

Computer games... (Student #1 and #2)

J: Do you enjoy playing on the computer?

Student #2: Yes

J: What game do you like to play?

Student #2: Ummmmm...something else?

J: Something else? What game is that?

Student #2: Umm......hey! What got on here?

Session Interuppted: Sav's grandma comes to pick her up....

Appendix K: Passive Activity, Student #5

Student #5 - Computer Games

J: J, what are you doing?

Student #5: Trying to get that

J: Which one? You can't hit it?

Student #5: Playing the feathered friend

J: What are these animals?

Student #5: Birds

J: What did he drop?

Student #5: An egg

J: And what came out of the egg?

Student #5: A bird

J: He has something missing

Student #5: Oh, a color!

J: What are you gonna do now Jill?

Student #5: I'm making....a ....

J: Do you like playing computer games?

Student #5: Yeah I like playing this.

J: What do you like about it?

Student #5: Cause it changes colors.

J: Ooooo! What do you hear?

Student #5: Music

J: Did you put that music in there?

Student #5: Yes

Appendix F: Active Activity, Students #1, #2, #3

Students #1, 2 and 3 - Read-aloud and questions

J: Where do you think the bugs were all this time?

Student #2: Tent

J; Not a tent, but they were outside, you're right about that, but where were they outside?

Student #1: In dirty blocks

J: Where are the bugs? Where do you usually find bugs?

Student #3: In the ground

J: That's right!

Student #1: Yeah!

J: That's where you think they stay all winter?

Student #1: Yes!

J: Why do you think they stay there?

Student #1: Because its cold

J: Right, and they need to be.

Student #1: Warm.

J: And why do you think they are coming out of the ground.

Student #2: Cause they're not tired.

J: Why else?

Student #2: Because it's warm.

J: Continues reading a book about bugs.

"How do you think the bug feels?"

Student #3: Sad.

J: How about scared??

Student #3: No.

J: What would happen if someone who is ten times the size of you was throwing you around?

All: Sad.

J: Wouldn't you feel scared?

Student #1: No, were brave!

J: Continues reading...

J: Do you like to read books?

All: Yes!

Student #3: But I don't have books in my room.

J: How does a book make you feel?

Student #1:H! And quiet.

J: Do you like to listen to books?

Student #1: Yes, it makes me feel happy.

J: How about you K?

Student #3: Quiet.

J: Quiet is not a feeling. Does it make you feel happy, sad, mad?

Student #3 Happy!

J: How about you Savannah?

Student #2: Makes me angry!

J: Why?

Student #2: Because I want to play.

J: That's a fair answer.

J: Do you learn from books?

Student #1: Yes.

J: What do you learn?

Student #2: We learn about bugs.

J: That's right, but what about when you listen to other books?

Student #3: We learn about different people.

Student #2: Yeah, or we learn about the flowers.

(Student have recently listened to books with these as the subjects.)

Appendix J: Passive Activity, Student #2

J: What did you do?

Student #2: I put the shoes on.

J: What color is that?

Student #2: Black.

J: That's not black.

Student #2: Oh, brown (keeps playing...) I can't do it.

J: Click it.

Student #2: I did it!

J: How does playing computers make you feel?

Student #2: Happy!

J: How do you feel when you can't do it?

Student #2: Mad.

J: How come it makes you feel mad?

Student #2: Cause I can't do it.

J: Do you know what that's called?

Student #2: What?

J: Frustration; do you think that you learned from playing this?

Student #2: Yeah, I learned how to dress the little bug.

Appendix I: Passive Activity, Student #1

Student #1 - computer game

J: S, what are you doing?

Student #1: Dora..

J: What are you doing with Dora?

Student #1: jumping.

J: Showing Shawn how to play and to use the keys, Shawn is getting excited when he succeeds.

J: Do you like playing computer games?

Student #1: I like swimming and dora, and wally,

J: Whats your favorite part of computer games?

Student #1: I did it!

J: Good job!

Student #1: It's my dora!

J: How does it make you feel?

Student #1: Good - happy

J: Why does it make you feel happy

Student #1: Because I like it

(Continues playing and getting excited when he does it right)

J: What does Dora say?

Student #1: Muy bien!

J: Do you know what that means?

Student #1: No

J: Very good!

J: Do you think that you learned from the computer?

Student #1: Yes.

Appendix H: Passive Activity, Students #3 and #5

After watching a TV show, was asked these questions

J: Do you like watching TV?

Student #5: Yes.

J: Why?

Student #5: I like to learn Team Oomie Zoomie.

J: How does watching TV make you feel?

Student #5: Makes me want to learn.

J: Why do you want to learn?

Student #5: Cause I want to learn Team Oomie Zoomie.

J: It's measuring, counting and shapes.

J: Do you like watching TV?

Student #3: Nods head.

J: What do you like about watching TV?

Student #3: Cause I want to learn.

J: How does it make you feel?

Student #3: Happy.

J: Why does it make you happy?

Student #3: Cause I like it.

J: If you had to choose between playing or watching TV, what

would you rather do?

Student #3: Watch TV.

J: Why?

Student #3: Cause I want to learn.

J: Couldn't you learn from playing?

Student #3: I do play,

J: Do you think learn from playing?

Student #3: Yea.

J: Do you think you learn from watching TV?

Student #3: Yea.

J: What's your favorite thing to watch on TV?

Student #3: Mickey mouse!

J: Thank you... high five!