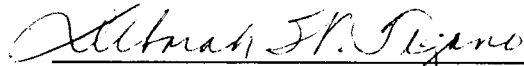
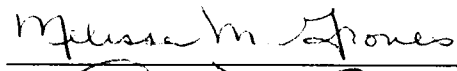
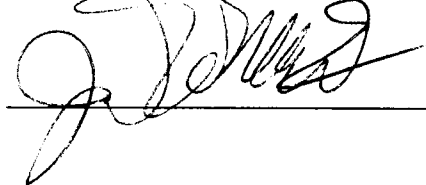


To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Kimberly Ann Taliano entitled "An Investigation of Children's Perceptions of The Emotional Climate of Their Schools." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Child and Family Studies.


Deborah W. Tegano, Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:


Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of The Graduate School

**AN INVESTIGATION OF CHILDREN'S
PERCEPTIONS OF THE EMOTIONAL
CLIMATE OF THEIR SCHOOLS**

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Science

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Kimberly Ann Taliano

May 1998

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mom and dad

Mercedes and Charles

And to my brother

Michael

for the support, guidance, and nurturance to help fulfill my dreams and the
ability to conquer any obstacle that comes before me.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the emotional climate of third and fourth grade classrooms from the child's perspective using the My Class Inventory, Polaroid pictures, and an open-ended interview developed by the investigator (Fraser, 1983). Twenty-four third and fourth graders from three afterschool programs participated in the study. Following the administration of the My Class Inventory, children took a picture of the place in his/her school: (a) where he/she was most likely to be creative; (b) where he/she was not likely to be creative; (c) where learning was easy for him/her; (d) where learning was most difficult for him/her; and (e) that was his/her very favorite place. Immediately after the picture-taking session, each child talked about the pictures he/she took and explained why he/she chose those particular places.

Children's interviews were analyzed using qualitative methods. Each interview was read and thematized. A second-level analysis was performed to compare similar themes across the five picture-taking categories. From these interviews, the following six concepts emerged as descriptors of children's conceptualization of school: (a) Freedom/Choice; (b) Teacher; (c) Concentration; (d) Activity Level; (e) Evaluation; and (f) Curriculum Content. This multidimensional model showed the child as the center and represented the interrelationships among the concepts. These results were interpreted with regard to psychological safety and developmentally appropriate practice. Implications for teaching and future research are presented.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Numerous studies have been conducted related to the psychological and emotional climate of the classroom. The psychological or emotional climate of the classroom is typically referred to as the psychosocial environment of the classroom or as the emotional climate of the classroom. These terms are used interchangeably to describe the classroom learning environment or classroom climate. Because students spend most of the day in school they undoubtedly have reactions to and perceptions of their experiences in school (Greer, 1993). Students' positive perceptions of the classroom environment are related to cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral outcomes (Greer, 1993). According to Haertal, Walberg, and Haertal (1981) the term cohesiveness was used to describe well-developed personal relationships among students in the classroom. These relationships were extremely important because how students act in the classroom can affect their perceptions of the classroom environment.

Much of the work done on classroom environments has focused on junior and senior high school students. Research conducted in the elementary schools has been limited in that it focuses on the teacher's perception of the classroom and not on the child's perception of the classroom environment. Research that does focus on the children's perception of their classroom environment relies primarily on the use of a variety of classroom environment inventories or direct observation techniques and not on direct interviews with the children. Fraser (1986) proposed several reasons why classroom environment inventories were superior to observational techniques when measuring the classroom environment. These are: (a) "quantitative measurement of perceptions does not require training observers, making it more economical"; (b) "perceptual techniques are based on experiences over time, whereas

observational data is restricted to relatively short time spans"; (c) "perceptual data allows one to pool students' reports or judgements"; (d) "in many, if not most cases students' perceptions are more important determinants of their behavior than is the competing objective reality"; and (e) "perceptual measures have frequently accounted for more variance in student learning outcomes than have interaction variables identified through observation" (Winston et al., 1994, p. 11).

Moos (1974) believed that the learning environment was the "personality" of the classroom formed by the interactions of its participants. For the purposes of this study, the classroom environment was viewed as the psychological and emotional climate (psychosocial atmosphere) of the classroom defined in terms of the perceptions of the students in that environment.

Classroom environment inventories are used in four areas of research with elementary school children. These four areas are: (a) investigating the associations between students' cognitive and affective learning outcomes and their perceptions of psychosocial characteristics of the classroom; (b) curriculum evaluation and practical attempts to improve the classroom environment; (c) research on person-environment fit which purpose was to see whether or not student outcomes were dependent upon the nature of the actual classroom environment and on the match between students' preferences and the actual environment; and (d) differences between students' and teachers' perceptions of actual and preferred classroom environment (Fraser & O'Brien, 1985).

Childrens' perceptions of their classroom environment are usually evaluated by averaging the perceptions of students within a class to obtain a class mean (Fraser & Fisher, 1986). Some determinants of the classroom environment include class size, teacher personality, grade level, school subject, gender of teacher, and type of school (Fraser, 1986). Walberg (1984) stated that "the classroom climate as part of the

environment in general, was found to be one of the major causal influences on learning" (p.3). Raviv, Raviv & Reisel (1990) believed that "climate as measured by students' perceptions of their classroom environment, is a useful construct in predicting achievement and school satisfaction, as well as contributing to the understanding of the social processes of the classroom" (p.142). Thus, in the present study, children's perceptions of their school environment were studied.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this research is to investigate the emotional climate of school for third and fourth grade children from their perspective using Polaroid pictures, and an open-ended interview. Specifically, the research will focus on how children perceive their school environment with regard to the tenets of psychological safety outlined by the humanistic psychology of Rogers (1954). Psychological safety is a critical component of the emotional climate of a classroom (Maslow; 1959; Rogers, 1954). The literature on psychological safety and classroom environments examines variables through observation of children's and teachers' behaviors. This research project uses the questionnaire format to determine the emotional climate of the classroom and school and then builds on this methodology by asking children to select particular classroom places or school environments and to talk about them in their own words.

DEFINITIONS

According to Rogers (1954), psychological safety was a necessary component of creativity. In order for creativity to emerge in an individual certain conditions must be present. These conditions fostered a psychologically safe environment in which creativity could emerge. Psychological safety was established when the following conditions were met: (a) accepting the individual as of unconditional worth; (b) providing a climate in which external evaluation is absent; and (c)

understanding empathically (Rogers, 1954). These conditions are discussed in chapter two.

Other researchers have expanded the term to include aspects of the classroom environment. Psychological safety in the classroom is defined as a place where students are valued and feel comfortable. They are given the freedom to develop socially, emotionally, and cognitively.

A psychologically safe classroom may be characterized by any of the following:

- (a) children are not ostracized or criticized by their peers or teachers and the teacher and children acknowledge and honor individual differences;
- (b) children are given the opportunity to ask open-ended questions, explore new ideas, and experiment with materials;
- (c) learning is student-sourced and not teacher-sourced which means that the teacher facilitates the learning process and is not the only authority figure with one right answer and the teacher emphasizes the process rather than only the product or solution by rewarding childrens' involvement in that process;
- (d) teachers give the students positive feedback through comments, praise, or encouragement;
- (e) teachers assign projects in which students are able to work collaboratively and students are given opportunities to give each other praise and feedback and help one another;
- (f) teachers focus on intrinsic motivation and de-emphasize grades and other extrinsic rewards; and
- (g) problems are resolved through discussion and compromise and teachers verbalize class rules and enforce them consistently (Adamson, 1985; Cabello & Terrell, 1991; Honig, 1990; Kennedy, 1995; Wallace, 1986).

Furthermore, some literature focuses on the "people" aspect of the

classroom environment. The psychosocial environment of the classroom includes the presence of responsive adults and children and the verbal and nonverbal social interactions that occur between the individuals in the classroom (Ostrosky & Kaiser, 1991). Moos (1974) believed that the psychosocial environment consisted of dimensions which: (a) "assessed the nature and intensity of personal relationships such as how involved the people are, how much they help each other, and how spontaneously they express their feelings in a setting"; (b) "tap the extent to which personal development in areas such as independence and achievement are encouraged or stifled"; and (c) "indicate system maintenance and system change aspects such as how orderly and organized the setting is; how clear expectations for behavior and outcomes are; how much control is maintained; and how responsive the system is to change" (p. 4).

One means for assessing students' perceptions of the classroom emotional climate is through the administration of various classroom environment inventories (e.g. The Learning Environment Inventory, The Individualized Classroom Environment Questionnaire, The Classroom Environment Scale, The My Class Inventory) (Fraser & O'Brien, 1985).¹

OVERVIEW OF STUDY

Children in an afterschool program took pictures of places in their school where they believed they were most and least creative, learn the easiest and have difficulty learning, and their favorite place. Following the picture taking session, children were interviewed individually and asked to talk about the reasons why they chose particular places in each category. The data were thematized and analyzed to help researchers better understand the emotional climate of the school from the child's perspective.

¹ My Class Inventory information is continued in Appendices A and B.

Chapter II

Literature Review

This chapter is a review of the literature relating to psychological safety and children's perceptions of their classroom environment. Topics include Rogers' (1954) and other's conception of psychological safety, students' attitudes toward school, students' perceptions of the classroom as it relates to gender, teachers' perceptions of the classroom, teacher training, student achievement, and student behavioral and learning outcomes. At the end, a list of research questions is presented.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Rogers (1954) discussed the relationship between creativity, psychological safety, and the classroom environment in the article, "Toward a Theory of Creativity." Rogers' (1954) definition of the creative process is "that it is the emergence in action of a novel relational product, growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people, or circumstances of his life on the other" (p. 250). According to Rogers, individuals have the urge to expand, extend, develop, or express their potentialities. When an individual is open to all of life's experiences, then his or her behavior will be considered to be creative and creativity will be constructive. When individuals are open to all aspects of their experiences and are aware of the various sensings (meanings) and perceivings which are taking place inside of themselves, the novel products of their interaction with their environment will be constructive for themselves and for others (Rogers, 1954).

Rogers (1954) presented three conditions which are associated with a constructive creative act. Constructive creativity only occurs when the following three conditions are present: (a) openness to experience or extensionality; (b) an internal locus of evaluation; and (c) the ability to toy with elements and concepts.

Openness to Experience: Extensionality

An openness to experience means that rigidity is not present and there is a lack of permeability of boundaries in concepts, beliefs, perceptions, and hypotheses. It means having a tolerance for ambiguity, where ambiguity exists (Rogers, 1954). Individuals who are tolerant of ambiguity have a "tendency to perceive ambiguous situations as desirable" (Tegano, Moran, & Sawyers. 1991, p. 97). Teachers who enjoy ambiguous situations are more likely to be flexible in the classroom, to allow time for children's ideas to be processed, and to be less directive and less evaluative in their interactions with children. These characteristics are likely to enhance creative expression in the classroom (Tegano et al., 1991). Openness to experience also means having the ability to sort through conflicting information without forcing closure upon the situation. The more an individual is aware of his or her openness to experiences the more sure we can be that creativity will be socially and personally constructive. Openness to experience is the opposite of psychological defensiveness, which is the suppression of certain experiences from coming into awareness, except in a distorted manner (Rogers, 1954).

An Internal Locus of Evaluation

The source or locus of evaluative judgment must be internal. The individual must value his or her own creative product and not rely on the praise or criticism of others. The individual must ask "Have I created something satisfying to me?" and "Does it express a part of me--my feelings or my thoughts, my pain or my ecstasy?" (Rogers, 1954, p. 255). The basis of evaluation lies within oneself, in one's reaction to, and appraisal of one's product. If the individual is truly satisfied with the creative product, external evaluation is not likely to change that opinion about his or her work (Rogers, 1954).

The Ability to Toy with Elements and Concepts

The ability to experiment spontaneously with ideas, colors, shapes, and relationships is the third condition for constructive creativity. Rogers (1954) asserted that if an individual has the ability to invent wild hypotheses, to make the given problematic, to express the ridiculous, and to translate ideas and thoughts from one form to another he or she is able to view life in a new and meaningful way, thus enhancing creativity (Rogers, 1954).

CONDITIONS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

These inner conditions of creativity cannot be forced, but must be given the opportunity to emerge. In order for constructive creativity to emerge, individuals must create conditions of psychological safety and freedom. Psychological safety is established by three related processes: (a) accepting the individual as of unconditional worth; (b) providing a climate in which external evaluation is absent; and (c) understanding empathically.

Accepting the Individual as of Unconditional Worth

Conditions of worth are "extraneous standards whose attainment ensures positive regard" (Bootzin, Bower, Crocker, & Hall, 1991, p. 527). If conditions of worth are strict, so that behavior is no longer flexible, emotional problems may arise. Unconditional positive regard is defined as total acceptance of an individual no matter what he or she says or does (Bootzin et al., 1991). A teacher is fostering creativity when he or she accepts his or her students unconditionally. This attitude is only genuine when the teacher acknowledges the student's potentialities and is able to show unconditional positive regard toward the student in all situations. Once a student feels accepted unconditionally by a teacher the student feels a sense of psychological safety. In a climate of psychological safety the student learns that he or she can be whatever he or she wants to be without fear of ridicule and rejection. In

a climate of psychological safety there is less rigidity. It is an environment where students can discover their own potentials.

Providing a Climate in Which External Evaluation is Absent

Related to unconditional worth is freedom from external evaluation. External evaluation is the process of being judged by others, whether being graded in a classroom or being criticized by a teacher, parents, or peers. The generation of creative ideas is more likely to occur when individuals refrain from judging one another. Rogers (1954) discusses an open classroom environment as one in which students are not evaluated or measured by some external standard. Rogers (1954) believed that "evaluation is always a threat, always creates a need for defensiveness, and always means that some portion of experience must be denied to awareness" (p.257). When judgments based on external standards cease to exist one can be more open to experience, can recognize their own likes and dislikes more profoundly than before. Eventually, one begins to internally evaluate oneself.

Refraining from evaluating someone does not mean withdrawing your reactions to that person, but it allows one to react. For example, the statement "I don't like your idea," is not an evaluation, but a reaction. It is distinctly different from a judgment which says "What you are doing is good or bad, and this quality is assigned to you from some external source" (Rogers, 1954, p. 257). The first statement allows the individual to keep his or her own locus of evaluation. It communicates to the individual that the idea is worthwhile but may not be appreciated by the external evaluator. The second statement, whether it praises or criticizes the person, places the person at the mercy of the external evaluator. He or she is being told that he must be concerned with what he or she believes to be a valuable expression of himself. When an individual is preoccupied with what others think, he or she is not moving toward thinking creatively (Rogers, 1954). This may be translated into the

elementary school classroom as the difference between praise and encouragement. Praise is a form of external evaluation while encouragement is often more in keeping with "I" messages. For example, an encouraging remark might be, "I see that you are working hard" (Hitz & Driscoll, 1988).

Understanding Empathically

Understanding empathically is another condition for psychological safety. Empathic understanding is the "ability to hear the individual at all levels of communication: words, thoughts, feelings, and unspoken cues for help" (Bootzin, 1991, p. 577). Psychological safety occurs when one understands another empathically, that is seeing the individual and what he or she is feeling and doing from his or her point of view. In a climate of psychological safety one is able to express oneself in varied and novel ways (Rogers, 1954). Psychological freedom is an integral part of psychological safety and must be present for creativity to emerge. An individual is unable to feel psychologically safe unless he or she experiences psychological freedom.

Psychological freedom is one's "complete freedom to think, to feel, and to be whatever is most inward within himself. It fosters the openness, and the playful and the spontaneous juggling of percepts, concepts, and meanings which is part of creativity" (Rogers, 1954, p. 258). Creativity is fostered when a teacher allows students complete freedom of symbolic expression. Expressing all feelings and impulses may not always be freeing. Society limits certain behaviors, but symbolic expression should not be limited. Attacking a hated object may create guilt and narrow the psychological freedom which is experienced. Individuals do not need permission to be free. Individuals are free to try new experiences and at the same time be afraid to venture into the unknown. Individuals are free to suffer the consequences of their mistakes as well as their achievements. The freedom to be

oneself fosters the development of a secure locus of evaluation within oneself and brings about the inner conditions of constructive creativity (Rogers, 1954).

DEFINITIONS AND RESEARCH ON PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Currently, there are several definitions of psychological safety and discussions about how it relates to the classroom environment. In a discussion of creativity in self-actualizing people, Maslow (1959) described a psychologically safe environment as one in which individuals are able to be more natural and less controlled and inhibited in their behavior, and so behavior seems to be able to flow out more easily and freely and with less blocking and self-criticism. Individuals in a psychologically safe environment are able to express ideas and impulses without strangulation and without fear of ridicule from others which is an essential aspect of fostering creativity (Maslow, 1959).

How might these ideas be seen in an elementary school classroom?

Psychological safety can be fostered in a classroom environment that enhances the students' self esteem, allows the students the freedom and safety for trying out new procedures and products and for exploring new ideas. In a warm, supportive classroom children will be inclined to take risks. They will experiment, share their ideas, reveal their feelings, and will permit themselves to make mistakes. This climate of psychological safety can be created by a teacher who serves as a facilitator instead of a director in learning, a facilitator who accentuates the process instead of only the product or solution by attending to the child's involvement in the process. Teachers in a psychologically safe classroom may give encouragement to students involved in creativity, curiosity, and independent thinking. Other literature suggests that positive feedback, in the form of patting the child on the back, smiling, and making positive comments such as "What a good idea I wish I thought of that." or "What a clever way of phrasing that idea" (Adamson, 1985, p. 12) be used. This idea

is somewhat contradictory to Rogers concept of freedom from evaluation. Other researchers talk about encouragement rather than praise: "You are working really hard." or "You have thought of many ways to solve this problem" (Hitz & Driscoll, 1988).

When fostering a psychologically safe classroom and encouraging creativity it is necessary to be deliberate in the way in which one presents the class material. Some teaching strategies include: (a) requiring less memorizing of facts and more researching and inquiring for facts; (b) reducing the number of convergent thinking tasks, i.e., coming up with one acceptable idea; (c) adding more divergent thinking tasks, i.e., searching for alternative, many, original and far-out ideas; and (d) asking open-ended questions such as "In what way...?", "For what reasons?" and "How?" instead of asking closed questions such as "Who?", "What?" and "When?" (Adamson, 1985, p. 12). These techniques are congruent with the precepts of psychological safety and naturally elicit opportunities for creativity. When children are engaged in creative processes, procedures, and thinking skills which can be applied throughout their lives, they will become responsible for their education and be in command of their lives (Adamson, 1985; Kamii, 1981).

Alice Honig's (1983) article about making kindergarten more effective for children, provides an example of what it means for a child to feel psychologically safe in the classroom. She stated that "teachers need to be aware that no bullying goes on, and no scapegoating is allowed to slip by" (Honig, 1983, p. 42). It is necessary for teachers to keep children safe from ridicule and threats to self-concept in order for them to learn in the best environment possible (Honig, 1983).

In an article about creating a gifted-friendly classroom, Kennedy (1995) discussed psychological safety as it pertained to the teacher's treatment of gifted children in a regular classroom environment. Her definition can be expanded to

include all children in the classroom environment. A psychologically safe classroom is one in which "a child feels valued and comfortable, and is free to develop socially, emotionally, and intellectually" (p. 232). In a psychologically safe classroom children are encouraged to ask and answer challenging questions. In this environment children are expected to learn a variety of new things every day and to enjoy that learning. This is a classroom in which individual differences are welcomed and no child is ostracized. Psychological safety also means that "no child will cringe, inwardly or outwardly, when she enters the classroom. The child will be free from abuse, verbal, and physical, subtle as well as overt, and teacher-sourced as well as student-sourced. It also means freedom from name calling" (p. 233).

Kennedy (1995) presented eight ways in which teachers can foster psychological safety in the classroom environment. The first is to resist policies requiring more work from those who finish assignments quickly and easily. The teacher should examine ways to assign different work, which may be more challenging and abstract. The second is to seek out supplemental materials and ideas which extend, not merely reinforce, the curriculum. The teacher should create learning centers in the classroom that require higher level thinking skills. Teachers should develop activities that encourage children to analyze, synthesize, and think critically. The third is to de-emphasize grades and other extrinsic rewards. Children need to be encouraged to enjoy learning and formulate realistic goals and priorities. Children should be reassured that their self-esteem is not fully dependent upon their products and achievements. The fourth is to encourage intellectual and academic risk-taking. The completion of worksheets and dittos does not expand the child's learning experience, but challenging open-ended questions provide opportunities for children to develop critical thinking skills. The fifth is to help all children develop social skills to relate well to one another. This may be accomplished by having the children see things

from another person's viewpoint. Teachers can teach children ways to interact with others and send other children accurate verbal and nonverbal messages. Teachers can also teach children acceptance of individual differences. The sixth is to take time to listen to responses that may at first appear to be off-target. Teachers should listen to the children's ideas and help them elaborate and expand their ideas. The seventh is to provide opportunities for independent investigation in areas of interest. Children are usually intensely, even passionately, curious about various topics. Their interest in such topics should not be ignored, but explored by teaching children skills to conduct research and providing them with materials related to their field of interest. Teachers should direct them to resource information and provide encouragement as they plan and complete projects of interest. The eighth is to be aware of the special needs of girls. Girls should be encouraged to create for themselves high-level educational and career goals. They should also be given the opportunity to pursue the subjects of math and science if they choose to (Kennedy, 1995).

According to Wallace (1986) the teacher is a facilitator of learning, not an authority figure who has all the right answers, and he or she is the "guide, the prompter, and the change-agent." (p. 72). In a classroom where psychological safety is not present the teacher is "authoritarian, rigid, dominated by time, insensitive to pupil's emotional needs, unwilling to give of herself, and preoccupied with discipline and the giving of information" (p. 72). These are also characteristics of a non-creative classroom. Wallace (1986) proposed eight factors that are necessary to fostering a creative classroom and ensuring that it is psychologically safe:

- (a) The teacher uses the child's interest as a starting point.
- (b) The teacher arranges that the student experiences success and continually rewards with praise and encouragement. The teacher develops activities that require problem solving and encourages the children to explore ideas.

- (c) The quality of the teacher's questioning determines the quality of the student's responses and the most important factor is the quality of the relationship between the teacher and the student.
- (d) The teacher treats unusual answers with curiosity and regards it as quite normal that the students ask unanswerable questions.
- (e) Students decide on the basis of agreed criteria the most affective solution, strategy, performance, or product. Constant negative evaluation hinders creativity. Constructive criticism by the teacher when it is linked with the student's own evaluation should be based on the ability to integrate and apply principles, rather than on memory, and some assignments should not be formally evaluated at all.
- (f) The use of humor may result in creative thinking. Humor provides a relaxing atmosphere by reducing tension. Through the use of humor, students can make unusual or even bizarre connections more easily, they can toy with ideas, and they are able to venture into the unknown because the atmosphere is non-threatening. Teachers should use fun games, puzzles, and riddles as part of their lesson plans. Children learn through the experience of play.
- (g) Creative people are particularly open to sensory experiences. Highly creative people are particularly responsive and have a fine filtering mechanism and the ability to combine and re-combine stimuli in unconventional ways.
- (h) Brainstorming also stimulates creative thinking. Through brainstorming techniques, ideas are accepted without critical comment. Ideas are sorted and evaluated after the brainstorming process is concluded (Wallace, 1986, p. 72-73).

Dodge (1992) suggests various ways in which teachers can promote a comfortable classroom climate. According to Dodge (1992) teachers can provide a psychologically safe classroom by: (a) helping children learn to trust the teacher and other students and providing ways to encourage children to get along with others; (b)

fostering the development of independence by allowing students to make choices and take responsibility for those choices; (c) supporting children's involvement in activities that challenge them to explore, to solve problems, to relate positively to others and to think for themselves; and (d) providing ways for children to develop new skills and concepts. In order for students to get along with others, a sense of trust needs to be established in their classroom. The classroom should communicate to the children that is a safe and comfortable place where everyone is respected. A classroom that is well-organized teaches children to trust and get along with others (Dodge, 1992).

In summary, according to Rogers (1954) the three components of psychological safety are: (a) accepting the individual as of unconditional worth; (b) providing a climate in which external evaluation is absent; and (c) understanding empathically. Teachers that accept children unconditionally, refrain from criticism and constant external evaluation, and are able to understand the students' point of view provide a psychologically safe classroom. A psychologically safe classroom has the following characteristics: (a) children are able to express their ideas freely without fear of ridicule or criticism from the teacher or other students; (b) children are given the opportunity to take risks (experiment, explore, create); (c) teachers give students positive feedback; (d) teachers ask open-ended questions; and (e) teachers develop lesson plans that require problem solving (Adamson, 1985; Dodge, 1992; Honig, 1983; Kennedy, 1995; Maslow, 1959; Wallace, 1986).

Dodge (1992), Kennedy (1995) Rogers (1954) and Wallace (1986) agree that the teacher is primarily responsible for providing a psychologically safe classroom. Students also contribute to making a classroom psychologically safe. Teachers are instrumental in teaching students how to assist, praise, and give feedback to one another. Teachers help students learn ways to resolve conflicts verbally rather than

through physical aggression. Teachers also encourage students to be knowledgeable of and tolerant to individual differences. Teachers can also foster psychological safety by assigning projects in which students work collaboratively instead of competing against one another (Cabello & Terrell, 1991).

STUDIES OF CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENTS

Getzels & Thelen (1960) developed a theoretical framework for the study of classroom environments. This model of the class as a social system maintains that "each class has a unique character based on the peculiar combination of specific characteristics. These characteristics are determined by curriculum expectations, the compulsory social interaction of the classroom group, the control of the classroom by the teacher, and the network of out-of-class groups to which the students and teachers belong" (p. 55). In this way, the classroom environment is not solely defined by the teacher. Classroom environments encompass a broad spectrum of variables. In this section several studies of classroom environments are reviewed. These studies illustrate the diverse variables associated with research in this area.

As this literature will show, psychosocial variables are salient to the research on classroom environments, though the psychosocial environment is operationalized in many ways focusing on the teacher and on the student. Studies reviewed in the following section illustrate the many other variables that form the complexity of the classroom. It is difficult to separate these studies into discrete categories because their foci overlap. Student achievement may be one topic, while students' perceptions of their preferred and actual classroom environment are other topics. However, within each of these topics there is overlap, e.g., student perceptions may be studied in terms of psychosocial variables. Likewise, the studies reviewed represent a diverse spectrum of grade levels. Elementary school level studies are reviewed while older children are included because the methodologies are relevant to the purpose of the

present study.

Students' Attitudes Toward School

The psychosocial environment and attitudes toward school subjects may be components of the classroom environment. Haladyna, Shaughnessy, and Redsun (1982) proposed that attitudes toward school subjects were dependent upon three factors: teacher characteristics, student characteristics, and the learning environment. The classroom environment is an ideal place to implement changes in new teaching strategies (Fouts & Myers, 1992).

According to Fouts and Myers (1992), there are three pertinent reasons why it is necessary for educators to help children develop positive attitudes toward school and their coursework. These reasons are: (a) attitude is usually associated with achievement and may influence it in a positive direction; (b) a positive attitude toward a subject may result in the continuation of future study in that field; and (c) attitude is transmitted to others throughout life and influences societal support for certain fields of study (Fouts & Myers, 1992).

Fout's (1989) study examined the relationship between classroom environments and student attitudes toward social studies. Fout's (1989) administered the Classroom Environment Scale (CES) to 491 students in three junior high schools. Fout's study was based on Murray's needs-press theory. This theory states that in order to understand an individual's behavior it is crucial to understand the individual's perception of his or her environment (Fouts, 1989). Twenty junior high school social studies classrooms were broken down into three clusters based on the class mean on each scale of the CES. The CES is composed of the following nine subscales: (a) Involvement; (b) Affiliation; (c) Teacher Support; (d) Task Orientation; (e) Competition; (f) Order and Organization; (g) Rule Clarity; (h) Teacher Control; and (i) Innovation. Low mean scores on the Order and Organization, Involvement,

theory states

Teacher Control, and Rule Clarity scales were found for selected classrooms from Cluster I. Cluster I was indicative of a classroom environment in which the students did not behave in an orderly or polite manner, and showed little interest in class activities or the subjects being taught. The teacher was inconsistent when enforcing discipline strategies and classroom rules were not clearly stated or followed.

The Cluster III classrooms were classes in which the students were well-behaved, usually remained calm and quiet in teacher organized activities, engaged in class discussions, and completed extra credit assignments in addition to daily classwork. The teachers in these classes verbalized classroom expectations and consistently enforced the rules (Fouts, 1989).

When comparing Cluster I with Cluster III classrooms, students in Cluster III had a higher degree of connection with their classmates (Affiliation) while still competing for good grades (Competition). They perceived their teacher as emphasizing the importance of learning and as being on task (Task Orientation). They also perceived their teacher to be more helpful and interested in their well-being, both in and out of class. Students in Cluster I classrooms had a more negative view toward social studies than did students in Cluster III. This was supported by the finding that over 35% of the students in Cluster I classrooms identified social studies as their least favorite subject (Fouts, 1989).

Another study by Fouts & Myers (1992) addressed the following research questions: (a) What types of science classroom environments are found in grades 7 and 8?; and (b) Which types of classroom environments are most closely related to positive student attitudes toward science and the study of science? Junior high school students were administered the Classroom Environment Scale (CES), to assess the classroom environment and The Estes Attitude Scale (EAS) which was used to measure students' attitudes toward science. Thirty-six science classrooms were

broken down into clusters based on the mean responses of children in each classroom. All the children in Cluster I classrooms had similar scores on the CES and EAS and all the children in Cluster III classrooms had similar scores on the CES and EAS. When Clusters I and III were compared, two diverse classroom environments appeared. Students from Cluster I indicated that they were involved in class activities and received a lot of personal support from the teacher on both an academic and personal level. The teacher incorporated various teaching strategies and often included new techniques and varied the daily routines. The classrooms were organized and orderly, and expectations and rules were clearly communicated to the students. Discipline problems were infrequent and the teachers rarely had to enforce the rules. The classrooms were also task oriented and fairly competitive, yet the students felt that their relationships with other students in the class were strong and positive. Students in Cluster III classrooms perceived their classes to be opposite of those in Cluster I. Cluster III students were in classes in which there was little or no student involvement in the learning process, and overall the classes were more disorganized and disorderly, the students received minimal support from the teacher and the teacher was not flexible in regard to altering the method of instruction or the classroom routine. Cluster II classrooms shared similar characteristics of both Cluster I and Cluster III classrooms. Results of the EAS revealed a difference in students' attitude toward science depending on the cluster. Positive attitudes were found in classroom environments characterized by higher degrees of student involvement, teacher support, order and organization, rule clarity, affiliation, and teacher innovation (Fouts & Myers, 1992).

Students' Perception by Gender

Another study looked at students' perceptions using the My Class Inventory and the Learning Environment Inventory. Lawrenz (1987) compared the classroom

environments of fourth, seventh, and high school boys and girls in classes taught by males and females. Data was collected from 149 fourth graders, 184 seventh graders, and 58 high school students. High school students were administered the Learning Environment Inventory (LEI) and elementary and junior high students were administered the My Class Inventory (MCI). Results indicated that fourth grade boys and girls had similar perceptions of their class whether they were taught by males or females. Seventh graders taught by female teachers perceived their classrooms as having more friction than those taught by male teachers. High school students also had different perceptions of the classroom environment based on the gender of the teacher and the gender of the student. The girls viewed their classroom as more cohesive than the boys. Cohesiveness was highest for girls who had male teachers. High school classes taught by female teachers were perceived as more difficult than those taught by male teachers. Girls taught by female teachers perceived their classroom as more competitive, while boys taught by female teachers perceived their class as less competitive. High school girls with female teachers, and boys with male teachers perceived their classes as more competitive and as having more friction. These results indicated that the perceived classroom environment may be associated with teacher and student gender and that these perceived differences become more recognizable with grade level.

Teachers' Perceptions

A study by Grady, Fisher, & Fraser (1995) explored how elementary school teachers' mental images of their schools as revealed by metaphor was related to the psychosocial environment. Data was collected using 1,923 students and teachers in 162 classes in grades 5-8. Teachers' perceptions of their school were assessed using the Images of Schools through Metaphor (ISM), a questionnaire designed for this study that presented a variety of metaphors such as "My school is a Mental Straight-

Jacket, My school is an Orchestra, and My school is an Artist's Palette" (Grady et al., 1995, p.7). Students' perceptions of their psychosocial environment were assessed through the My Class Environment (MCE), an inventory that measures the actual and preferred classroom environment from the student's perspective (Grady et al., 1995). The MCE contains the following six scales: (a) cohesiveness or the "extent to which students know, help, and are friendly toward each other"; (b) satisfaction or "the extent of enjoyment of classwork"; (c) speed or "the extent to which classwork is covered quickly"; (d) difficulty or "the extent to which students find difficulty with class work"; (e) formality or the "extent to which behavior within the class is guided by formal rules"; and (f) democracy or "the extent to which students share equally in decision-making related to the class" (Grady et al., p. 10). Results indicated that nearly every metaphor was associated with at least one scale of the MCE. For example, "School as Family" and "School as Olympic Games" were associated with cohesiveness, satisfaction, and democracy in a positive direction and with speed and difficulty in a negative direction (Grady et al., 1995).

Moos (1974) believed that the psychosocial environment of the classroom was composed of the following three dimensions: (a) personal relationship dimensions such as how involved the teachers and students are, the extent to which they help each other and how spontaneously they express their feelings in the classroom; (b) personal development dimensions which assess the extent to which independence and achievement are encouraged or stifled; and (c) system maintenance and system change dimensions which assess the orderliness and organization of the classroom, the extent to which expectations and rules are clearly conveyed to the students, the level of control the teacher has over the class, and how responsive the teacher and students are to change.

Teachers' Classrooms and Students' Outcomes

In another configuration of variables related to classroom environment, Cabello and Terrell (1991) looked to factors related to emotional security. Cabello and Terrell (1991) stated that there were numerous factors that contributed to the development of the classroom climate. These factors included daily activities and routines, the social organization of the classroom, the pedagogical and social interaction between teachers and students, social and academic interactions among students, students' views of the teacher's social and academic behaviors, and the effects of cultural and other social differences on social interaction within the classroom. When students perceived the teacher or task as threatening they are likely to engage in ego-protecting strategies such as failing, coping (or trying with partial success) and dissembling (pretending to try or to do work). Teachers who succeed in helping underachievers increase their effort level are those who recognize ego-protecting strategies and continually encourage students by offering verbal support, guidance, or by showing students that they care about them. Students who feel emotionally secure with teachers and classmates are more likely to actively participate in class activities and to put forth more effort into their schoolwork which leads to increased academic achievement. Related to this, a central part of a positive classroom environment is supportive peer interaction. In order to develop supportive peer interactions teachers must teach students how to engage in positive social interactions inside the classroom (Cabello & Terrell, 1991).

The purpose of the Cabello and Terrell (1991) study was to investigate the ways in which ten teachers, working in two inner-city elementary schools created a classroom climate that was filled with social and emotional support. Ten teachers in two inner-city elementary schools composed of African-American and Latino students were identified as exemplary, through the use of a clinical supervision

model checklist. A sample of teachers used the clinical supervision model checklist to assess: (a) the extent of student involvement in academic tasks; (b) the frequency of disciplinary referrals; and (c) teaching style and classroom management techniques (Cabello & Terrell, 1991). The teachers represented grades K-6. The ten exemplary teachers and their students were observed periodically for three months. Five other classrooms that did not have exemplary teachers were also observed for three months. Two observers took field notes and video-taped one lesson in each classroom. Teachers were administered a questionnaire concerning their beliefs and attitudes about teaching in culturally diverse classrooms. A random sample of 30 students from grades 3-6 completed a structured interview at the end of the school year concerning the characteristics of good teachers at their school. Seven of these students were in the exemplary classrooms (Cabello & Terrell, 1991).

Data were analyzed to: (a) describe specific ways in which the teachers developed a "warm" classroom climate; (b) determine whether there was any difference in the supportive behavior of students in exemplary and other classrooms; (c) document students' perceptions regarding good teaching; and (d) arrive at a definition of what is meant by a "warm and caring classroom" (Cabello & Terrell, 1991). Exemplary teachers implemented a variety of strategies to teach interdependence between students.

The teachers incorporated team, group, or collaborative activities into the curriculum daily. Teachers taught students how to work effectively with other students by allowing students to work in small groups. These teachers discussed, modeled, and reinforced appropriate methods or techniques for students to provide mutual assistance, feedback, and praise. They practiced conflict resolution techniques and taught students ways to negotiate. These teachers encouraged students to resolve independently academic and social conflicts within their peer

groups. Teachers acted as facilitators when problems arose among the students instead of resolving the students' problems themselves and they also emphasized different approaches to solving problems. Exemplary teachers showed students how to assist, praise, and give feedback to one another by stressing the importance of working collaboratively and providing mutual support.

These teachers allowed students to incorporate personal experiences into class content which evolved into discussions on cultural diversity and racism. They emphasized the importance of increasing student's awareness of the contributions of African-Americans, Latinos, and others to the United States and the rest of the world. These teachers taught students to take pride in their own heritage and to appreciate others. These teachers consistently communicated the message "yes you can" to their students through their emphasis on mutual support and collaboration. In addition, teachers displayed various communication styles. For example, some teachers were humorous, demonstrative, or dramatic while other teachers were business-like and reserved. When teaching, some teachers included themselves or their students in examples and used personal anecdotes in lessons. Despite the differences in communication styles, both extroverted and introverted teachers displayed a sense of caring for their students by emphasizing collaboration, support, respect, and pride (Cabello & Terrell, 1991).

Analysis of the student data showed that students from exemplary classrooms were more likely to assist their peers in academic work or to give feedback or support during classroom assignments. When students were asked to describe the attributes of a good teacher, they noted exemplary teachers as having a good sense of humor, relating personal experiences, having the ability to solve conflicts fairly, and listening to students. Students liked teachers who maintained clear rules for academic work and social behavior, and who consistently enforced the rules. When

asked what the perfect teacher was like students used the following descriptors: happy, fair, easy to talk to, explains things clearly, likes kids, and is kind but strict (Cabello & Terrell, 1991). From these descriptors the researchers formed a definition of a supportive classroom environment.

A common finding in the classrooms of exemplary teachers was that they encouraged students to be supportive of each other and promoted group cohesion by teaching students ways to collaborate and give each other feedback, praise, and other types of support. Teachers also taught their students how to appreciate diversity by incorporating the contributions of a variety of individuals into the curriculum and lesson materials. Exemplary teachers communicated the following messages to their students which increased students' feelings of relatedness or belonging in the classroom: (a) students are part of a group; (b) as part of that group students have a mutual responsibility to help each other; and (c) a major goal of the group is to engage in social interaction which facilitates the completion of academic work (Cabello & Terrell, 1991). Cabello and Terrell (1991) defined a warm and caring classroom as "an environment in which both the teacher and student provide emotional and academic support on a daily basis and as an integral part of the curriculum" (Cabello & Terrell, 1991. p. 22).

Court and Riecken (1991) investigated classroom climate in three elementary and one junior secondary classrooms. Data were collected by observing and interviewing students and teachers, and by participating in classroom activities. The four teachers in this study displayed similar characteristics that contributed to a positive classroom environment despite differences in personality, teaching style, and grade level taught. Researchers found that the four teachers displayed similar characteristics in the areas of active engagement, shared enjoyment, and guided independence. "Shared enjoyment expresses the idea that each classroom is a

comfortable, warm, place for students to be. Guided independence means that in each classroom students are encouraged to think for themselves and make decisions, and with teacher's guidance, to make choices that are socially and academically fruitfully. Active engagement refers to active intellectual engagement, a constant factor in each of the classrooms" (Court & Riecken, 1991, p. 44).

Students were observed to be actively engaged in learning in all four classrooms. This contributed to the amount of work the teacher spent on lesson planning and the teacher's high energy level. These teachers were flexible and adjusted their teaching to accommodate for interruptions and changes in the class schedule. Each teacher was committed to the teaching profession and looked for ways to enhance their personal and professional development.

Active intellectual engagement was defined along four dimensions: (a) teachers engaged with students (more often than not, engagement was teacher-initiated); (b) students engaged with other students (to a somewhat lesser extent than teacher-student engagement); (c) students with content and ideas; and (d) teachers with content and ideas (Court & Riecken, 1991). These teachers showed a genuine concern and caring for the well-being of students in and out of the classroom which was imperative to the students academic and social development. This genuine concern for the students welfare helps establish a comfortable, friendly, and psychologically safe classroom. These teachers incorporated humor into the curriculum, and maintained a pleasurable and sometimes amusing tone in the classroom. The teachers praised the students often, offered encouragement, and implemented activities that allowed students to interact with one another (Court & Riecken, 1991).

Teachers taught the students self-respect and self-discipline through modeling and specific teaching methods. Teachers taught students how to think independently

about one's actions and how to take responsibility for those actions. Through class lessons, teachers gave students opportunities for problem-solving in academic, personal, and social situations. These classrooms were considered psychologically safe because they were environments where "students personal development flourished, because of the encouragement, warmth, and individual recognition necessary for the building of positive self-esteem" (Court & Riecken, 1991, p. 45).

Preferred and Actual Environment/Perceptions & Performance

Watkins & Akande (1992) studied the science classroom psychosocial environment of 323 secondary school students in Nigeria. The study focused on answering the following research questions: (a) What are the students preferred and actual learning environments, and what are the discrepancies between them?; and (b) What relationship exists between preferred and actual environments and their approaches to learning science? Researchers administered the Learning Process Questionnaire which assesses approaches to learning science. Students also responded to the actual and preferred forms of the CES. The actual form measures what the science classroom is really like and the preferred form measures how they would prefer the classroom to be. The nine scales of the CES measure the following three dimensions: (a) Relationship (Involvement, Affiliation, and Teacher Support) subscales; (b) Personal Growth or Goal Orientation (Task Orientation and Competition) subscales; and (c) System Maintenance and System Change (Order and Organization, Rule Clarity, Teacher Control, and Innovation) subscales (Watkins & Akande, 1992). The secondary school students in Nigeria perceived their science classroom as being teacher-controlled, as having rules that were enforced through punishment, and as being competitive but not at the expense of their friendships. The students preferred a less competitive atmosphere with little emphasis on maintaining friendships with those in the class, an atmosphere that focused less on maintaining

order, and an atmosphere that allowed the students to take part in planning class activities.

These results showed that deep-level processing in Nigerian schools was fostered in classrooms where the teacher enforced strict standards of behavior that forced students to focus on class assignments. The deep-approach to learning was also present in classrooms where teachers were interested in the well-being of students and incorporated a variety of instructional techniques intended to stimulate their curiosity. The deep approach to learning was defined as a classroom that "offered supportive teaching, coherent structure, emphasis on autonomy and understanding, and moderate stress on achievement" (Watkins & Akande, 1992, p. 105). The surface approach to learning focused on rote memorization. Researchers found significant negative correlations between the following approaches to learning and CES subscales: deep approach and actual Rule Clarity and Task Orientation, deep approach and preferred Teacher Support, Task Orientation, and Rule Clarity. A positive correlation was found between the surface approach to learning and actual Innovation and a negative correlation was found between the surface approach to learning and Rule Clarity and preferred Teacher Support subscales.

In summary, on the actual form of the CES students scored lowest on the Rule Clarity, Affiliation, Competition, and Teacher Control subscales. The students' preferred scores were significantly different than their actual scores on the CES. Students preferred a classroom environment in which there was less emphasis on competition, maintaining class friendships, and strict enforcement of class rules (Watkins & Akande, 1992). Teachers who incorporated a deep-approach to learning into the curriculum created a more enjoyable learning environment for their students.

Ryan, Li, Morris, and Hung-Yeh (1992) studied how classroom practices supported by advocates of educational redesign correlated with teachers' and

students' preferred and ideal classroom environment. Previous classroom environment research showed that there are differences in perception between students' and teachers' actual and ideal classroom environment. Educational redesigner Reigeluth (1988) maintained that "in a redesigned classroom, learning and learners would be the focus of activity"(p.4). Ryan et al. (1992) examined how changes in the focus of the classroom correspond to changes in differences of perception. The classroom psychosocial environment is one of the major causal influences on learning (Ryan et al., 1992). According to Ryan et al. (1992) the psychological morale or climate of the classroom, strongly predicts end-of-course measures of affective, behavioral, and cognitive learning. The climate, as measured by students' perceptions of their classroom environment, is a useful construct in predicting achievement and school satisfaction, as well as contributing to the understanding of the social processes of the classroom.

Prior research has demonstrated that students and teachers preferred a more favorable classroom than was actually present. Teachers perceived their classroom environment to be more favorable than did their students. In accordance with the scales of the MCI, an ideal classroom should be high in satisfaction, high in cohesiveness, low in friction, and low in competitiveness and difficulty (Fraser & O'Brien, 1985). Results of this study indicated that students preferred a more favorable classroom environment than was perceived as actually present on four of the five scales assessed by the MCI. Students preferred their classrooms to have more cohesion, more satisfaction, less friction, and less competition. The level of difficulty perceived by students on the actual form was similar to their preferred scores. When comparing the teacher-actual with the teacher-preferred scores, teachers preferred more cohesion, more satisfaction, less friction, less competition, and less difficulty. When comparing the scores on the student-actual and teacher

actual forms, teachers perceived a more favorable actual environment in terms of more satisfaction, less friction, and less competitiveness (Fraser & O'Brien, 1985). The amount of actual cohesiveness and difficulty perceived by teachers and students was similar. The MCI can be used as an aide to help teachers find ways to alter their classroom environment.

Research on classroom environments has focused on the differences between the perceptions of students' and teachers' actual and ideal classroom climate. In the majority of studies, the difference between their ideal classroom environment was smaller than that of their actual classroom. The ideal classroom is one in which "the teacher and students would prefer the students to be more involved and taking greater initiative in class activities, have the teachers introduce new ideas and techniques, and have the class function in a calmer and more orderly fashion" (Ryan et al., 1992, p. 6). The students perceived the teachers not only as supportive, but also as responsible for clarifying the rules for the class and would emphasize both aspects in their ideal classroom. The students differentiated between rule clarification and enforcement and would prefer a lower degree of the latter. When referring to the ideal classroom, both teachers and students opted for a lower degree of the following dimensions: competition, teacher control, and task orientation (Ryan et al., 1992).

A study by Ryan et al. (1992) examined the relationship between learning-centeredness and students' perceptions of their classroom environment. A learning-centered classroom had the following four characteristics: (a) less teacher talk (teacher presentation and teacher-initiated questioning); (b) more student-group interaction (small or large group activity which engages the majority of students simultaneously); (c) more student-resource interaction (student-initiated interaction with human and nonhuman resources); and (d) more student-student-interaction (any kind of public interaction relevant to class activity between two students, at one time,

with other students observing them). The amount of learning-centeredness is dependent upon the occurrence of the four types of behaviors and the duration of each behavior. For each of the four types of classroom behaviors, the longer the class time devoted to it, the more the class is geared toward following those patterns regularly (Ryan, et al., 1992).

Classroom environment was defined as the teacher's and student's perceptions of the following dimensions from the Classroom Environment Scale (CES): Teacher Support, Task Orientation, Rule Clarity, Order and Organization, Affiliation, and Involvement (Ryan et al., 1992). Four levels of perception of the classroom environment were identified: the teacher's perception of actual classroom environment (TA); teacher's perception of the ideal classroom environment (TI), students' perception of the actual classroom environment (SA), and students' perception of the ideal classroom environment (SI). The difference between teacher's and students' perception scores of their ideal classroom environment was small. There was a significant difference found between teacher's perception of their actual classroom environment and students' perception of their actual classroom environment. In regards to the difference between teacher's perception of their actual classroom and students' perception of their actual classroom, it was found that differences in perception decreased along the learning-centeredness continuum with the smallest difference at Class A, which was a 100% learning-centered class. The greater the percentage of learning-centeredness in the classroom, the smaller the difference between the student's perception of their ideal and their actual classroom environment. In summary, teacher's and students' perceived their actual classroom environment as being different from their ideal classroom. When comparing the students to one another, they had similar perceptions on what their ideal classroom would be like, but their perceptions of their actual classroom were very different.

Students' perceptions of their classroom and their teacher's capabilities differ greatly. Teachers interact with all the students, yet students interact with their teacher and observe the ways other students interact with the teacher. A study by Heroman (1990) investigated the relationship between elementary school childrens' perceptions of their classroom environment and teacher performance. Teacher performance was measured using The System for Teaching and Learning Assessment and Review (STAR). STAR is a comprehensive assessment process used to identify and examine effective teaching strategies (Heroman, 1990). Heroman's (1990) study was based on the following research questions: (a) "Is there a relationship between student perceptions of the classroom environment and how a teacher performs in the teaching and learning setting?"; and (b) "Are there differences between student engagement rate and how the student perceives the learning environment?" (p.5). Heroman's (1990) sample was comprised of twenty-four teachers in kindergarten through fifth grade. Students' perceptions of the classroom were assessed using the My Class Inventory (MCI). The MCI assesses the following dimensions of the classroom environment: cohesiveness, friction, satisfaction, difficulty, and competitiveness. Satisfaction measures how a student feels about his or her class. Competitiveness measures how students feel about their classwork in comparison to the entire class. Difficulty was defined as the students' perception of how difficult their classwork was. Friction measures interpersonal relationships between students in the class. Cohesiveness measures the extent to which students get along with one another. Significant correlations were found when comparing the relationships between the teaching and learning components assessed by the STAR and the dimensions of the MCI (Heroman, 1990).

Results indicated that students had a more positive perception of their classroom when they were given clear expectations, and when the teacher made effective use of

time during classroom routines. Students rated their teacher more positively when teachers provided them with specific feedback on their daily class assignments. Students who received suggestions for improving their academic performance in the class and received daily encouragement were more satisfied with their teacher. Teachers that incorporated methods that increased student involvement and actively engaged students in the class lesson also had students who competed among each other. Students given the opportunity to learn at different cognitive levels, as well as those who had a teacher who stressed the importance and value of certain topics and activities were also more competitive. Classrooms that had higher rates of student engagement also had more students that were satisfied with their teacher (Heroman, 1990).

In an article that compared perceptions across two cultures, Shaw, Partridge, and Gorrell (1990) investigated college students' perceptions of their elementary and secondary school teachers using a sample of undergraduate education majors in The United States and Sri Lanka. Students were administered an open-ended questionnaire which asked them to recall teachers who influenced their attitudes and learning. Students were asked to list those teachers that affected them significantly and the grade level and subject taught. They were also asked to identify the things the teachers did to influence their thinking and the influence the teacher had on their thinking about subjects other than the one they taught.

Students described personal and social influences of teachers that were recalled as being special. A comparison of Sri-Lankan and U.S. students demonstrated that there were many similarities between their perceptions of a good teacher. There were also some significant differences. Students in both countries mentioned factors, behaviors, and traits of their most memorable teachers which were grouped into the following six categories: (a) personal characteristics; (b) professional characteristics;

(c) classroom atmosphere; (d) teaching methods; (e) extra effort; and (f) influences on their attitudes, thinking, and lives (Shaw et al., 1990). When the Sri Lankan and American students described teachers that influenced their lives they mentioned the following traits most frequently: a caring attitude; kindness, and friendliness. Other students mentioned personality traits such as fairness, positive attitudes, and a sense of humor. None of the American students described the physical appearance of their teachers. Most of the Sri Lankans described their teacher's appearance as being influential.

Both groups stated that being knowledgeable was a necessary and important professional characteristic. The American students admired teachers that were well-organized and well-prepared. Sri Lankan students mentioned punctuality and dedication to work as the most important components of professionalism (Shaw et al., 1990). A comfortable learning atmosphere included the following characteristics: absences of favoritism, presence of positive feedback, and voice levels that were not too loud or too quiet. A variety of different teaching methods were described by the students, but some common themes emerged. Both groups of students valued the real-life and practical examples their teachers used in lessons, as well as daily reviews of the previous lesson. The Sri Lankan students were influenced by the clarity of their teachers' explanations. Students from both countries stressed the amount of extra time these teachers committed to students in class, between classes, after school and during vacations (Shaw et al., 1990).

All students gave examples of how their favorite teachers either influenced their attitude about the subject they were learning, their thinking about themselves, and life in general, or their aspirations about the future. Many students felt that these teachers had strengthened their character and self-confidence. Students from both groups also indicated that their favorite teachers expanded their views of the world

and life.

In conclusion, when discussing these memorable teachers, students from both countries recalled positive attributes of their teachers. Students discussed ways in which their teachers produced a safe and enjoyable classroom environment. For example, one student said, "My teacher had a very open atmosphere in her class", while another student commented, "She made learning fun" (Shaw et al., 1990, p.3). The majority of students felt that their teacher's positive attributes created a comfortable learning environment and played a pivotal role in contributing to their learning of the subject matter taught by that teacher.

Another cross cultural study by Wright, Gallagher, and Lombardi (1991) investigated the classroom psychosocial environment using the My Class Inventory in 246 British school children, ages eight to twelve. Children were selected from 10 classrooms in seven urban and rural schools. Results from the MCI were compared to a previous study by Fisher and Fraser (1981) involving a sample of Australian children. Results showed that British children perceived their classroom to be less cohesive and to have less friction compared to their Australian counterparts. The British children were significantly more satisfied with their classroom, but perceived their classwork as being more difficult (Wright et al., 1991).

Teachers' perception of the usefulness of the MCI was also investigated. Teachers indicated that the MCI was a useful tool in recognizing their own teaching style and in examining their particular means of organizing the classroom. The MCI was viewed as a useful tool in looking at the perceptions of the entire class instead of individual children. It was also helpful because modifications were made to improve individual classrooms (Wright et al., 1991).

Richardson (1990) investigated perceptions of the classroom psychosocial environment of 211 6th grade children, in three elementary schools in Barbados.

Children were selected from a class of either "all girls", "all boys", or "coeducational". Previous research suggested that an ideal learning environment would include high satisfaction and cohesiveness, and would be low in friction, competitiveness, and difficulty. The psychosocial environment of the "all girls" school was significantly more satisfying than that of the "all boys" and "coeducational" school. Less friction was also present in the "all girls" schools compared to the "all boys" and "coeducational" school (Richardson, 1990).

Teacher Training

A study by Barrett and Kepler (1991) investigated the impact of an on-going, theoretical-based, three-year in-service training program for classroom teachers. The overall purpose of the study was to examine the effect that teacher knowledge of teaching and learning styles, classroom environments, and feedback from classroom observations through extensive in-service training, had on teaching effectiveness (Barrett & Kepler, 1991). Combs and McGregor (1965) defined effective teachers as people who: (a) "understand how things seem to students"; (b) "orient themselves to people rather than to things"; (c) "deal with both subjective and objective experiences"; (d) "trust people and believe in them"; (e) "assume that people are friendly and cooperative"; (f) "believe that people are worthy rather than unworthy"; and (g) assume that people are active and motivated, rather than passive and uninterested" (p. 2-3). According to Barrett & Kepler (1991) there are several ways for teachers to learn to become more effective. Obtaining knowledge about individual students' learning styles can help teachers develop a greater understanding of individual differences in the classroom. Another way for teachers to increase their effectiveness in the classroom is through in-service training and staff development workshops. Erickson & Rose (1976) demonstrated that educational opportunities promote growth and change.

In Barrett and Kepler's (1991) study, teachers were randomly selected into two groups. The treatment group consisted of teachers that received two days of in-service training prior to the beginning of the school year for three years. The control group was comprised of teachers that received no in-service training prior to the beginning of the school year. The Classroom Observation Keyed For Effectiveness Research (COKER) was used to measure teacher effectiveness. The COKER consists of twenty-four teaching effectiveness competencies. The COKER is scored by observing teacher's behaviors in the classroom. Some of these competencies include: (a) demonstrates enthusiasm; (b) maintains an action learning environment; (c) encourages students to ask questions; (d) provides positive feedback; (e) demonstrates patience and empathy; and (f) effective classroom management. Teachers who received two days of in-service training prior to each school year scored significantly higher on eleven of the twenty-four competencies, indicating that in-service training workshops had a positive impact on teaching effectiveness.

Through the in-service and training workshops teachers learned ways to modify the curriculum to accommodate a variety of learning styles and to develop new and diversified teaching strategies. Teachers were taught techniques that encouraged children to ask questions and discuss ideas and thoughts without fear of rejection or ridicule. Teachers were also taught methods to stimulate student interest in a subject, help students recognize their progress and accomplishments, and teach students how to work effectively in small groups. This in-service training program proved valuable in helping teachers improve their classroom environment. Teachers were able to apply what they learned in the training workshops directly into the classroom which resulted in becoming a more effective teacher and creating a more positive classroom environment (Barrett & Kepler, 1991).

Knight, Owens, and Waxman (1991) compared students' perceptions of their

classroom environment in classes of traditionally and alternatively certified teachers. Teachers certified through alternative certification programs may not receive formal pedagogic training such as courses in education and child development, as well as not having practicum experience in the classroom before they are certified. Teachers that receive formal training through an educational institution complete a variety of coursework in child development and education, and gain experience by student teaching. Teachers without this formal experience may not have the skills and knowledge needed to become an effective teacher. Alternatively certified teachers that do not have a background based on theory and research may use common sense tactics in guiding classroom decision making and may rely on using outdated teaching methods. Haberman (1985) believed that "these practices may not be beneficial to students and may actually prevent the establishment of a positive classroom learning environment for pupil learning" (p.34). The researchers believed that students' perceptions of their classroom environment would differ between the two groups.

The sample consisted of 576 elementary and middle school students and their classroom teachers. All the students were administered an adaptation of the My Class Inventory. The adaptation of the My Class Inventory was composed of ten scales. The following five scales were added for this study: (a) Cooperation or the extent to which students in the class cooperate and work together; (b) Lower-level thought processes or students' perceptions of instruction at the lower levels of Bloom's taxonomy; (c) Higher-level thought processes or students' perceptions of instruction at the upper levels of Bloom's taxonomy; (d) Pacing or the extent to which classwork is presented at an appropriate pace and difficulty level; and (e) Parent Involvement or the extent to which parents are interested and involved in what their children are doing in class (Knight et al., 1991).

Results indicated that higher means were found in the lower-thought processes and higher-thought processes scales while difficulty of classwork and homework displayed the lowest means for students in classes of traditionally certified teachers. Students in classes of alternatively certified teachers scored highest on the lower-thought processes and pacing scale which indicated that schoolwork was not presented at an appropriate pace. Students in alternatively certified classrooms scored low on the difficulty scale. Students of traditionally certified teachers perceived considerably more instruction and opportunities to become involved in higher-thought processes than students in alternatively certified classes. Students of traditionally certified teachers perceived that their teacher guided them through classwork at a significantly more appropriate pace than students of alternatively certified teachers. Students in classes of traditionally certified teachers reported significantly more group cohesiveness and cooperation among students than did students in classes of alternatively certified teachers. Students of alternatively certified teachers reported significantly more friction than did students of traditionally certified teachers. Students in classes of traditionally certified teachers perceived their classwork to be more challenging and felt that classwork was presented at an appropriate pace compared to their counterparts in alternative certification classes. Students in traditional certification classes perceived a more cooperative, cohesive classroom which was conducive to meeting the academic demands placed on the students. Students in classes of alternatively certified teachers perceived that they were not given the opportunity to engage in higher-level thinking and perceived their classroom as being less cohesive, less cooperative, and as having more friction among classmates.

In conclusion, students in classes of traditionally certified teachers perceived their classroom to be low in difficulty, high in group cohesiveness, and cooperation,

and they also reported that classwork was introduced at an appropriate pace. Students in classes of alternatively certified teachers perceived their classroom to be high in difficulty, high in friction, low in group cohesiveness and low in cooperation. They also reported that classwork was presented at an inappropriate pace. These results indicated that students of traditionally certified teachers perceived their classroom environment to be more positive than students of alternatively certified teachers.

Student Achievement

Fraser & O'Brien (1985) studied the relationship between the elementary school classroom environment and student achievement in 758 third grade students in thirty-two classes. Students were administered the short version of the MCI as well as a word knowledge and a comprehension test to measure student achievement. When the class mean was used as the unit of statistical analysis there was a strong association between the achievement measures and classroom environment dimensions. There were statistically significant correlations for both word knowledge and comprehension outcomes for all the classroom environment scales except competitiveness. Student perceptions of their classroom accounted for 77% of the variance in word knowledge and 72% of the variance in comprehension. Higher scores on the word knowledge and comprehension tests were found in students who perceived their classroom as being high in satisfaction, low in friction, low in difficulty, and low in cohesion (Fraser & O'Brien, 1985).

These results showed that student achievement, measured by a word knowledge and comprehension test was positively correlated with students' perceptions of their classroom environment. Students are more likely to achieve better in school when: (a) they are more satisfied with their class; (b) friction between students and students and the teacher are low; and (c) they perceive their classwork as not being difficult.

The present study uses a questionnaire, Polaroid pictures, and an open-ended interview to examine the emotional climate of third and fourth grade classrooms from the child's perspective. This is the first study of its kind to examine the classroom psychosocial environment through the use of pictures. Through the use of pictures, children were able to identify the places in their school where: (a) they were most likely to be creative; (b) they were not likely to be creative; (c) learning is easy; (d) learning is difficult; and (e) their very favorite place was. Most of the classroom environment literature focuses on using a classroom environment instrument and not on interviewing the children directly. The majority of studies that incorporate interviews, use them to talk with the teacher without interviewing the children. The open-ended interview used in this study was intended to elicit information from the child about why they chose to take pictures of those particular places and how those places contributed to their perceptions of the classroom and school environment.

Synthesis

Research involving the classroom emotional climate is often used as a tool in evaluating classrooms in an effort to improve specific aspects of the classroom. This is accomplished by first, administering the preferred and actual form of a classroom environment inventory to children; second, by identifying differences between children's actual and preferred classroom environment, third, by implementing classroom strategies designed to reduce the discrepancy between children's actual and preferred classroom environment; and fourth, by readministering the classroom environment scale in order to determine if the changes implemented were successful in improving the classroom climate. The following strategies were used to improve the classroom environment: (a) attempts for the teacher to be more sympathetic and helpful to students; (b) talking privately to students about problems; (c) avoiding criticism of students in front of the class; (d) encouraging students to help other

students who are experiencing academic difficulties; and (e) giving special assistance to students who aren't well-liked by their classmates (Fraser & O'Brien, 1985).

Questionnaires are economical, and compared to observations, using a questionnaire involves the judgments of many students during the academic year. Students are an important source of information about the classroom, but they are a source often neglected. Questionnaires are limited in that it is assumed that children are able to make accurate judgments about their classrooms. It is also assumed that children can read and understand the statements (Fraser & O'Brien, 1985). But, students are able to make accurate judgments about their classroom because they have encountered various learning environments throughout the years in different classes and with different teachers, and they have spent enough time in the class to form accurate impressions (Fraser, 1986).

Analyzing the emotional climate of elementary school classrooms through the eyes of students is one way of assessing students' perceptions of their classroom environment. In contrast to direct observation, questionnaires and interviews have the dual advantage of characterizing the classroom psychosocial environment from the child's perspective and recording of data which an observer could miss or consider irrelevant (Fraser, 1986).

An ideal learning environment follows a learning-focused model, instead of a conventional teaching-focused model. This means that "when instruction is in focus, the teacher is the actor on the instructional scene and the students, as a class, are the audience. When learning is the focus, the learner is the actor and the teacher becomes the manager of learning resources" (Ryan et al., 1992, p.6). According to Roger's nondirective approach, teachers in a student-centered classroom are less of an expert and authority figure and more of a facilitator of student learning. The

student-centered approach focuses on frequent interaction between the students and the teacher, as well as allowing the students to participate in making decisions about what and how they learn. The goal of student-centered learning is to increase student's level of motivation, expand their awareness of opposing opinions, and help them develop a deeper understanding of class material (Ryan et al., 1992).

The majority of classroom environment research has focused on student and teacher perceptions of environmental dimensions as independent variables in studying classroom environment effects on student outcomes. Research in this area has demonstrated that there is a strong correlation between the nature of classroom environments and students' achievement of both cognitive and attitudinal outcomes (Fraser, 1986).

Various classroom environment instruments have been used to investigate the differences in student and teacher perceptions of the same classroom and differences between their perceptions of actual and preferred classroom environments. The My Class Inventory is widely used with elementary school children aged 8 to 12 because of its easy readability and understandability. (Fraser & Fisher, 1983). Research using the MCI that compared student and teachers' actual and preferred classroom environment demonstrated that both students and teachers preferred a more favorable classroom environment than what was actually present. Teachers perceived their actual classroom environment as being more favorable than did their students (Fraser, 1986).

Another area of research involving classroom environments has focused on the relationship between the classroom psychosocial environment and students' views toward certain school subjects (Fouts, 1989; Fouts & Meyers, 1992). In a study about students' perceptions of social studies, Fouts (1989) found that students' who scored high on the involvement, teacher support, innovation, and affiliation scales of the

CES exhibited more positive views of social studies than children who scored low on these scales. In another study about students' perceptions of their science classroom, results indicated that student attitudes toward science were highest in classrooms with high levels of innovation, group affiliation, order and organization, teacher support and student involvement. Students that had low scores on the aforementioned scales generally had negative attitudes toward their science class. The implications of these findings suggest that teachers directly and indirectly affect student attitudes toward a subject. Teachers may inadvertently create the negative attitudes students have toward school subjects by using inappropriate teaching methods and classroom techniques. Teachers can improve the classroom environment by instituting diverse learning activities that foster cooperation among students, as well as fostering positive interpersonal relationships with students.

Research by Cabello & Terrell (1991), Court & Riecken (1991), and Shaw, Partridge, & Gorrell (1990), centered around the influence of teacher characteristics in the classroom psychosocial environment. Results indicated that certain personality traits and teaching styles influenced students' attitudes and their learning of school subjects.

Shaw et al. (1990) studied college students' perceptions of their former teachers and the ways in which these teachers influenced their students' attitudes and learning. Results indicated that there were many similarities in the students' perceptions of a "good" teacher. Cabello & Terrell (1991) investigated the ways in which ten exemplary teachers: (a) allowed students to work collaboratively on assignments; (b) taught students conflict resolution techniques and ways to negotiate; (c) stressed the importance of giving assistance, praise, and feedback to one another; (d) allowed students the opportunity to discuss personal experiences in relation to the subject matter; and (e) were happy, fair, easy to talk to, explained things clearly, and kind.

These characteristics and teaching methods were influential in contributing to a positive classroom learning atmosphere.

Court & Riecken (1991) examined the emotional climate of four classrooms through observation of, and interviews with students and teachers. By observing and interviewing these individuals researchers identified several features of the classroom emotional climate that were "important, critical, and relevant" (Court & Riecken, 1991, p.43). All four teachers in this study shared similar characteristics that contributed to a positive classroom emotional climate. The teachers encouraged students to think for themselves, cared about the well-being of their students, frequently offered praise and encouragement to their students and taught students self-respect and self-discipline.

Prior studies which used student perceptions of their classroom environment as dependent variables revealed significant differences between classes following different curriculum guidelines and interesting variations in classroom environments according to grade level, class size, school type, teacher gender, and subject matter (Fraser, 1984). In a study by Watkins & Akande (1992) that investigated Nigerian students' perceptions of their actual and preferred classroom environment, results showed that students' preferred less affiliation, less order and organization, less competition, and more innovation than was actually present in the classroom. In a related study, Ryan et al. (1992) investigated the differences between teachers' and students' actual and ideal classroom environment using the CES. Results from the CES indicated that teachers and students have similar perceptions about what their ideal classroom would be like. When comparing students' and teachers' actual scores on the CES, teachers rated their classroom as being significantly more positive than did their students. A study by Heroman (1990) investigated the relationship between student perceptions and teacher performance. Results showed that students held a

more positive perception of their classroom environment when expectations were clearly defined, when the teacher made efficient use of class time, when the teacher gave them specific suggestions on how to improve their academic performance, and when they received feedback on assignments (Heroman, 1990).

Students' perceptions of their classroom environment influences their achievement, self-esteem, motivation and social interactions. It is important for educators to take notice of the classroom environment as a major influence on students because the classroom environment can be altered to improve motivation, attitudes toward a subject, and achievement (Greer, 1993).

Children's perceptions of their classroom and school environment were investigated in this study using the following research question: What are third and fourth grade children's perceptions of their school emotional climate?

Chapter III

Method

SUBJECTS

Twenty-four third and fourth grade children, in three YMCA afterschool programs in a Southeastern city participated in the study. Eleven children were male and thirteen were female. The director of the YMCA program designated the three schools that had the most third and fourth grade children in the afterschool program. Letters to the parent (s) or guardian(s) and informed consent forms were distributed to all third and fourth grade parent(s) or guardian(s) by the YMCA afterschool teacher at each school. A total of forty letters and informed consent forms were distributed. Two weeks after the initial distribution date, the researcher went back to each school and distributed a second letter and informed consent form to each family who had not responded to the initial request. All the children who returned a parental consent form participated in the study. Fourteen third graders and ten fourth graders participated in the study. Demographics are reported in Table 1. The children were from predominately middle class schools.

School and Classroom Composition

Seven children (29.2%) attended Elementary School A, ten children (41.7%) attended Elementary School B, and seven children (29.2%) attended Elementary School C. The children came from seventeen different classrooms in the three schools. A total of twelve children shared classrooms with other children in the study. Within Elementary School A, two children came from each of three classrooms, for a total of six children. Within Elementary School C, two children were from the same classroom and four were from another classroom for a total of six children. The remaining twelve children were the only ones to participate from each of their classrooms.

Demographic Characteristics of Twenty-four Student Participants

Characteristic	Frequency
<u>Age</u>	
8	3
9	14
10	6
11	1
Range 8.5 to 11.0 years	
Mean = 9.5 years	
<u>Grade and Sex</u>	
3 rd	14 (7 male, 7 female)
4 th	10 (4 male, 6 female)
<u>Race</u>	
Caucasian	21
African-American	1
Hispanic	1
Indian	1
<u>School</u>	
School A	7
School B	10
School C	7

POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS OF THE SAMPLE

The sample size for this study was small and limited to a specific region. Three afterschool programs in the Southeastern United States were included in this study. The sample allows for results of the study to be generalized only to these children. Children were from predominately white middle-class suburban schools. Children from urban or rural schools may have a very different perception of the classroom emotional climate. Children were self-selected to participate in the study in that every child who returned a signed consent form from a parent or guardian was a participant.

PROCEDURE

Children were given instructions about how to use a Polaroid Captiva© 95 camera and asked to take five pictures of places anywhere on the school grounds. This was done individually. The pictures were taken under the supervision of the researcher. The children were asked to take a picture of the place in his/her school: (a) where he/she were most likely to be creative; (b) where he/she was not likely to be creative; (c) where learning was easy for him/her; (d) where learning was most difficult for him/her; (e) that was his/her very favorite place.

Immediately after the picture-taking session, children talked about the pictures taken and explained why that place was chosen. The photos served as stimuli for the open-ended interviews. The children decided the order in which to talk about the pictures they had taken. The children's pictures were placed on the table. Children looked at the pictures they took and the researcher stated the following: "Please choose a picture and we will talk about it." Then, the children chose a picture and read the label on the back (e.g., most creative, not creative, learning is easy, learning is difficult, very favorite place). The researcher said, "Please tell me about that place." This was repeated for all five pictures. The length of each of the interviews

depended on the children's willingness to talk about the photographs. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed.

SETTINGS

The picture-taking session took place inside the school, as well as outside on school grounds at the children's discretion. The questionnaire and interview session were administered in familiar settings in the school where children would not feel inhibited.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Children were asked to come with the researcher individually. The researcher placed the labeled pictures on the table in front of each child. Each child looked at the pictures they took. The children decided the order in which to talk about their pictures. The researcher said, "You took five pictures today. Please choose one of them and we will talk about it." After the child chose a picture and read the label on the back, the researcher said, "Please tell me about that place."

The following prompts were used to elicit more information:

1. Tell me more about that.
2. What happened when...?
3. How does/did that make you feel?
4. I need to know a little more.
5. What else can you tell me?

Childrens' responses were audiotaped and later transcribed and a qualitative analysis answered the following research question:

- (a) What are third and fourth grade children's perceptions of their school emotional climate?

Chapter IV

Results

The interview data was analyzed using the Non-Numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing (NUDIST) Statistical Package. In this way, all the children's responses to each question were placed under one of the following five categories: (a) Most Creative; (b) Not Likely to be Creative; (c) Learning is Easy; (d) Learning is Difficult; and (e) Very Favorite Place. For example, all the children's responses to the question "Where are you most likely to be creative?" were grouped together. This was done for each category. A qualitative research group comprised of Child & Family Studies faculty and graduate students read each interview in the following three categories: (a) Most Creative; (b) Not Likely to be Creative; and (c) Learning is Difficult and thematized these data. Interviews from the remaining two categories were read and thematized by the researcher and her advisor. Under the section titled "Qualitative Descriptions of Childrens' Interviews" are themes that emerged from the interviews along with the childrens' quotes that support the theme.

A second-level analysis was performed to compare similar themes across the five picture-taking categories. This was accomplished by comparing and contrasting the themes from each category and looking for qualitative differences in childrens' responses. This information can be found in the section titled "Conceptualizations of Themes Across Categories and Between Themes." At a third level, themes were combined into conceptual areas. An interrelated, multidimensional model of children's perceptions of their classroom environment was developed.

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTIONS OF CHILDRENS' INTERVIEWS

Question (a): What are third and fourth grade children's perceptions of their school emotional climate? In the first level of analysis themes that emerged in each picture-taking category are reported.

Picture of The Place in the School Where Children are Most Creative

Active

Most children referred to an active participation when they talked about a creative place whether the activity was a game; making or performing music, or writing; or using the computer. Michelle, Tom, Abby, and Matt spoke about games.

Michelle: I think I can be very creative there because we play games and learn about famous people. There is a game called "Set". You try to find three cards that are the same. It's really fun. (Talented and Gifted Room)

Tom: I like to sing there. I like to play music games in the music room. In one of them we pass a rock around, and sticks around. When the classical music stops we have to name the composer. We sing "Alleluia". I like to make music on the drums and xylophone. (Music Room)

Abby: We also play games in there like reading and math games. We will dress up like characters in the book and act out the story. We do math games. Like, she'll give us play money and help us multiply numbers and divide them. (Resource Room)

Matt: I love to draw pictures of people that used to be very strong and stuff like John Henry. I like to play games on the computer. I play spelling games. I'm pretty good at spelling games on the computer and math games. I play "The Magic Garden." You have to guess where the hole is. There's this hand that goes over the fence and drops the seeds. You have to drop it in the right numbered hole. Another math game is "Three Digit Subtracting" and "Three Digit Adding." (Classroom)

Projects and games sometimes were connected to learning as work for Tom and Michelle above and Kameron below:

Kameron: This is where I'm most likely to be creative, in the classroom. We do projects and we do "Measurement Monsters". We do lots of projects but I can't think of any right now except "Measurement Monsters". (Classroom)

In many protocols, activity through art was associated with creativity.

Randy: I like to draw. I got these leaves. I press the leaves and papers together and I make a shadow of what it looked like. I like drawing jets. (Art Room)

Leona: I like to make animal masks like a lion or a frog or a bear. I liked it when we made stuff like ornaments out of foil or funny faces out of paper. (Art Room)

Damien: I like making origami wolves, bunnies, and giraffes. (Classroom)

Janie: We did water colors and landscaping. I like doing that. (Art Room)

Activity seemed to predominate for thirteen of the twenty-four participants including Chris whose discussion shows the variety of activity perceived by one child.

Chris: It's the gym because I like to play basketball there and kick the soccerball. I also like to roller-skate and use the scooterboard. We bowl and play football. During Pryme Time I can draw and read, and play games in that part of the gym. Most of the time we play sports during gym class. It is fun. (Gym)

And finally Carla's version of activity is loaded with affect for the classroom pets.

Carla: I can talk to and feed our pets. We have two hermit crabs, two fishes, a gerbil, and a rabbit. I like to pick them up and pet them. (Classroom)

Activity seemed to denote involvement, perhaps even immersion for some children. Creativity for these children meant being actively involved.

Freedom/Choice

Creativity was related to the children's freedom to choose what they wanted to do within an assignment or an activity.

Michelle: Sometimes, we write stories about whatever we want. (TAG Room)

Tara: We had an African man named Mustafa come to our school and he brought all these neat African instruments. Our music teacher brought him to the music room and she couldn't bear to part with them so she bought some instruments. The other instruments she's had for a really long time. They are all just fun instruments. You don't have to take lessons. (Music Room)

Leona: I can be very creative in art class because I can usually do anything I want to or do it anyway I want. One time we painted a picture. She let us use either brushes or sponges. (Art Room)

Abby: The teacher in there let's us draw what we want like draw people, animals, and stuff. I would say the art room but sometimes she'll tell us what we will make that day. (Resource Room)

Carla: I'm creative in my classroom because we have a table where we do art. There is glue on it, paper, glitter, stencils, and colored paper. When we get done with our work we can draw there and make pictures. We can also paint at the easel. That is lots of fun. (Art table in classroom)

Janie: I can be creative there because I can draw whatever I want. The teacher doesn't give us assignments where she tells us what to draw. She lets us draw whatever we want. She assigns us projects but you can draw whatever you want on the projects. (Art Room)

Michelle was given the opportunity to write stories in which she was able to choose her topic. Tara mentioned that the instruments were fun and she did not have to take lessons. Her statement suggests that she was able to play these instruments for fun without being evaluated on her ability to play an instrument. There is a sense of freedom in her ability to choose and play the instruments just for fun. Carla mentioned that drawing and painting were fun. Leona, Abby, and Janie had the freedom to draw or paint what they wanted. Leona's teacher let her choose between using brushes or sponges. Although Janie's teacher assigns projects, her teacher gives her the freedom to do what she wants within that assignment. Implicit in the word creativity seemed to be a sense of creating what you want to create, not what you have to do. For example, "you don't have to take lessons", "draw what we want", or "draw whatever I want". This denotes a sense of freedom and choice.

Teacher as Guide/Praise

In the place where they were most likely to be creative, children perceived their teacher as a person whose focus was to give them direction and guidance and help them learn. These children suggested that their teacher made learning easier for them.

Tammy: It is easy for me to learn there because there is a teacher to help you there and she helps me understand what I'm supposed to be doing and if you do the wrong thing they tell you to do the right thing and it's much easier with a teacher there. (Art Room)

Rob: It's a lot easier in the classroom because the worksheets show us how to do

stuff step by step so it's a lot easier. The worksheets are really easy because they show you what to do. The teacher puts directions on the overhead. (Classroom)

Interviewer: What kinds of stuff does she teach you?

Tom: Music stuff like composers, conductors, orchestras, instruments. She also teaches us about tone and rhythm. (Music Room)

Abby: She also helps us read words by helping us pronounce them. She also helps me understand math. We do math games. Like, she'll give us play money and help us multiply numbers and divide them. (Resource Room)

In addition to a guidance role, children talked about their sense of pride based on teacher and parent praise.

Kristen: This is art and I'm creative there I guess because whenever we draw a picture the teachers are always "Oh, that is so good. You are so creative and da, da, da, da," and I guess that's why. It makes me proud when they say that. Really, really proud. Sometimes, I'm surprised at myself that I can do good work. (Art Room)

Leona: I like to make stuff to take home for my parents to see. They say, "That's beautiful. I'm proud of you." It makes me feel good. (Art Room)

Four children perceived that they were most creative when there was a teacher who guided them and helped them "understand", "step by step". It is interesting that in the category of most creative only two children mentioned a sense of pride. In both cases, it was an extrinsic sense of pride where an adult had told them they were good at something.

Distractions

Several children mentioned that they were able to be creative in a particular place because it was quiet.

Cheyenne: I can be creative there because it is quiet in there. It is different from the playground because it is quiet and that is where I can write poetry and stuff. (Classroom)

Randy: It's really quiet there so you can like do creative stuff, like drawing. (Art Room)

Roxanne: This is the place where I am most likely to be creative because I like to draw and paint at the art center and it doesn't have any other kids around it that

could be like talking right up in my face so I can just think and be creative there. (Art center in classroom)

Some of the children seemed to be looking for solitude in their activities. They discussed activities that they did by themselves. Jennifer interpreted quiet in a different way.

Jennifer: It is where I'm most likely to be creative because some places are quiet. I like to swing and slide and be on the tire swing. I do creative stuff like do flips on the bird cage and go real fast on the tire swing. (Playground)

For Jennifer, the swings, the slide and the tire swing (solitary activities) were connected to the playground being quiet. It is difficult to say if quiet might mean solitary for Jennifer. Roxanne talked about no distractions as being alone: "doesn't have any other kids around."

Tyler on the other hand, said that creativity had to do with being able to express his feelings to his friends privately.

Tyler: Well, sometimes I express my feelings with friends outside because it's the only place I can express my feelings cause there are a lot of people outside mostly, and I can be creative by pretending to be things. Today, I was a score keeper, pretended to be a score keeper for basketball. What I do outside mostly is talk. I can talk about private stuff. I talk to my friends. I can't talk in the classroom. My teacher tells us to be quiet. (Outside)

Both Jennifer and Tyler talked about pretending in places where it was presumed that there may be other people present, though for Jennifer there was a solitary activity and for Tyler friends were important. Thus, places to be creative were free from distractions though not necessarily free from people.

Arts and Performing

Children viewed creativity as being related to music, creative movement, using one's imagination, writing, and doing art activities. For instance, three children talked about the music room:

Timeka: I picked the music classroom to be very creative because I love to sing. Like,

music is very creative because we sing at programs and stuff. (Music Room)

Tom: I like to sing there. I like to make music on the drums and xylophone. (Music Room)

Tara: We sing different songs. A few weeks ago we had our spring program. We sang "Take Me Out to the Ballgame", "This is a Song for the Children", and "Put a Little Love in Your Heart." (Music Room)

Writing

Cheyenne: It is different from the playground because I can write poetry and stuff. I also get to read a lot. The reading I think is part of the reason the books I read, some of them are the "Babysitter's Club" books. That may not sound that it is very very very very educational reading but one of them has a sister named Vanessa and she talks in rhyme and poetry and that helps me because I get to read a lot in the classroom. (Classroom)

Victor: It is the place where I am most likely to be creative because I like to write and I like to make up stories when I write. I make up science fiction mostly. (Classroom)

Art

Conner: This is a picture of the art room. It is the place where I am most likely to be creative. I draw and I paint and I color. (Art Room)

Abby: I can be very creative when I'm drawing. The teacher in there lets us draw what we want like draw people, animals and stuff. (Resource Room)

Matt: I can be creative there because we are allowed to do art, and I can draw pretty good but most schools let you paint in art and stuff but this school don't. Other creative stuff I do she lets us trace things. Like at the round table she lets us trace things, and color them with markers. I love to draw pictures of people that used to be very strong and stuff like John Henry. (Classroom)

Carla: I'm creative in my classroom because we have a table where we do art. There is glue on it, paper glitter, stencils, and colored paper. When we get done with our work we can draw there and make pictures. We can also paint at the easel. (Classroom)

Damien: I like making origami wolves, bunnies, and giraffes. (Classroom)

Janie: I can be creative there because I can draw whatever I want. The teacher doesn't give us assignments where she tells us what to draw. She lets us draw whatever we want. She assigns us projects but you can draw whatever you want on

the projects. We did water colors and landscaping. (Art Room)

Several children mentioned that in art they can do what they wanted to do. This theme dovetails with the theme of freedom/choice. Likewise, some of the children talked about creative movement activities where they had the freedom to do different things with their bodies.

Kevin: I am most likely to be creative on the playground because I think about more things, like I think in pretend things so that's why I think I'm most likely to be creative. I create different moves because we play tag a lot and I create different plans and different ways to run and make me faster. And sometimes we play kickball and I make different score strategies. I also climb the monkey bars and love to hang upside-down on them. (Playground)

Tyler: Well, sometimes I express my feelings with friends outside because it's the only place I can express my feelings cause there are a lot of people outside mostly, and I can be creative by pretending to be things. Today I was a score keeper, pretended to be a score keeper for basketball. (Outside)

Jennifer: I like to swing and slide and be on the tire swing. I do creative stuff like do flips on the birdcage and go real fast on the tire swing. (Playground)

In these protocols imagination seemed to be salient. Some children mentioned that they enjoyed singing in class, performing in a program, or playing musical instruments. Three children engaged in creative movement activities involving pretend play. For two children, creativity came in the form of writing poetry or science fiction stories. For many children, creativity was associated with drawing, painting, or being involved in art projects like origami.

SECTION SUMMARY

In the category where children were most likely to be creative, children's descriptions fell into five principle themes:

- (a) Active
- (b) Freedom/Choice
- (c) Teacher as Guide/Praise
- (d) Distractions

(e) Arts and Performing

When talking about the place where children are most likely to be creative it appeared that children liked having the freedom to choose what they wanted to do or how they wanted to do it. Children referred to a creative place as free of distractions, as a quiet location where one could find solitude or as a place where he could talk meaningfully with friends. Children viewed their teacher as a guide and helper. They commented that their teacher made learning easier for them. Two children talked about feeling “good” and “proud” when they received praise from a parent or teacher. For some children, learning was active process involving games, writing, making music, doing projects, and various kinds of art activities. For many children, creativity was related to music, art, and writing activities, as well as having the opportunity to use their imagination.

Picture of the Place in the School Where Children Were Not Creative

Not Active/Bored

For the place where they were not creative children described the places where they were bored or not challenged.

Jennifer: It doesn't have anything but books and shelves, and tables and chairs. I don't like to read. It's boring. (Library)

Rob: Because all we do is draw simple pictures on the chalkboard and it's really easy. Things that kids put up there. Kids draw pictures of little animals. The worksheets show you step by step so it is really easy. (Classroom)

Kevin: I am not very likely to be creative here because when I'm there I'm not thinking very much about anything except why she called me here or what I need her to do and for her to explain for me and it's also because I don't think very much about other things which means I don't daydream a lot. (Teacher's office in classroom)

Tom: I'm not creative in the library because you don't learn anything in the library. I don't do anything in the library. I go to the library to read but I don't learn stuff when I read cause it's just stuff I know already. I like to read thin books because they are faster. (Library)

Tara: Ms. Henry, the library teacher usually reads...They're funny stories and she puts in different voices for all the characters so that makes it fun. I'm not creative there because we don't really do any projects in there. We just sit there, read books, check-out books and read some more and then it's time to go. (Library)

A few children indicated that certain subjects and activities were boring for them, and thus did not present a challenge. Rob associated "easy" with a place where he was not creative. He stated that the pictures he drew were easy because the worksheets showed him how to draw animals step-by-step. In Jennifer's opinion the library offered limited choices because it was only a place where boring reading occurred.

Hard/Do Not Like It/Not Good at It

Places children chose as a place where they were not creative were associated with their affinity toward a particular subject. Several children talked specifically about not liking a particular subject or activity. They stated that they were not good at a specific subject or task.

Timeka: The librarian tells us what to do. We can draw pictures but not of things we want to draw. They have to be pictures of characters in the books. I don't like that because I want to draw what I want to. Most of the time the characters are hard to draw. (Library)

Jennifer: I don't like to read. (Library)

Tom: I'm not creative there because I don't like to read. (Library)

Janie: Like in gym I can't be too creative because some of the kids are kind of bossy in kickball. If you don't catch the ball they get really, really, mad. They yell, "Why didn't you catch the ball?" When they say that, I say "So what!" The only thing I like about the gym is that we play four-square. I love it. That's the only fun thing we do. Well, we play one more fun game called "Jurassic Park." (Gym)

Kathy: Music is the place where I'm not very likely to be creative because in music we have to know the notes which is kind of hard like the eighth notes and all that stuff. We learn them on the board for about a day or something and she'll play it for us. Then she'll have us play it. I don't really like music. (Music Room)

Carla: Sometimes, we get picked to play the hard stuff by ourselves and I can't play it cause I'm not good at playing songs. (Music Room)

These children used words to describe subject matter as being "hard". They clearly express the fact that they "don't like" the subject matter. One fourth grader felt that she was not a proficient writer. During a project involving both first and fourth graders she allowed the younger child to write all of the story.

Kristen: Right now we're writing a story together and we're doing all of it on the computer. It's called "The Storybook Weaver" and it's on the computer. I'm letting my first grader do all the writing and stuff because I'm not good at writing stories. (English class in classroom)

Freedom/Choice/Teacher as Confining

Many children described the place where they were not likely to be creative as one in which there was a strict set of rules and their choices were limited. They also commented that there were only certain activities that they could do in that place such as read, sing, and do reports. These activities were initiated by the teacher and the children were unable to choose what they wanted to do.

Michelle: It is where I think I cannot be very creative because when we go in there we like run laps and do sit ups, and do things like that. We have to go by the teacher's rules. She tells us what we are going to do that day. At least outside I can do what I want to. (Gym)

Timeka: I can't be very creative there because mostly we come in and get books to read for reports, not fun books that I want to read. The librarian tells us what to do. We can draw pictures but not of things we want to draw. They have to be pictures of characters in the books. I don't like that because I want to draw what I want to. (Library)

Randy: I don't get to draw that much because everybody's asking me to play with them and so I can't be creative that much because my teacher always has something for us to do like worksheets. (Classroom)

Janie: Not very likely to be creative in the gym because Ms. Collins tells us what to do so we can't do anything else. That's why I can't be really creative. She tells us we have to play kickball, jump roping. She tells us a specific kind of jump roping. (Gym)

Leona: I can't be creative in the library because there's not much to do there. All we

do is read and check-out books. I can't do anything creative there like paint or draw. I enjoy writing stories but in the library I have to do work like write about a famous person or something like that. (Library)

Abby: The library is where I'm not really creative because all you do is read there. I don't get ideas there but mostly just information like about the planets or the states when I have to do a report. I get some ideas from books like The Babysitter's Club. Those give me ideas when I write stories for myself... We aren't allowed to go to the library and take books outside to read them. They might get lost or wet or muddy. (Library)

Matt: Well, there are teachers there to make sure we don't talk too loud. I can't do any work in the cafeteria because that is only where we eat. Sometimes, we go in there and get our trays and stuff and then...we sometimes go back to our classrooms and eat. I like it when we eat in the cafeteria because I can sit next to my friends but in my classroom we have to sit at our desks and my friends don't always sit near me. If my teacher is there she doesn't let us talk too much during lunch. (Cafeteria)

Damien: I can't be creative there because there is too much open space. I play with my friends. Sometimes, we play freeze tag and stuff. But, all the games we play, the teacher starts them. We can't pick which games to play. I can't make up games to play. (Gym)

Roxanne: Because I like to draw at my desk and we aren't allowed to draw there. We are only allowed to do our work and read at our desk. (Classroom)

Children seemed to dislike the fact that the activities were teacher-directed and they did not allow the students any freedom to choose an activity. Several children also associated creativity with drawing or painting and thus not being creative was not being allowed to draw. Timeka mentioned that she was allowed to draw in the library but the librarian placed restrictions on what she could draw. Several children perceived reading as a limitation in their choice of activities, saying that in the library there was not much to do except read.

Distractions

Children mentioned noise distractions and distractions from peers as reasons for choosing that place as the place where they were not very likely to be creative. They commented that it was too loud and it was difficult to concentrate.

Tammy: It is where I can't be creative because it's loud up there and everybody is running around and I can't sit still because everybody runs past me and I'm like "Uh Oh. Where's my pencil?" or something. It's harder to do any art outside because the pencils or markers get knocked over. It's easier to do art in the art room.
(Playground)

Cheyenne: The reason I'm not very likely to be creative there is because it is loud out there when people are playing and everything...because sometimes I try to sit out there and write poetry but I can't because it's loud and hard to concentrate.
(Playground)

Kameron: It is the most fun place but I can't be creative there because it's too loud and I can't concentrate. (Gym)

Roxanne: I'm not very likely to be creative there because I'm around other people and there are kids talking and so I can't concentrate on what I'm doing. (Classroom)

Randy: Because people are doing centers so it's really hard to be creative because people are like playing battleship and playing on the computer. People like pass notes and throw them across the room. People come up to me and ask me if I'll play with them but I'm trying to do my work. That's annoying. I don't get to draw that much because everybody's asking me to play with them and so I can't be creative that much because my teacher always has something for us to do like worksheets.
(Classroom)

Three children spoke about the absence of any distractions and the inability to communicate with friends.

Abby: We are not allowed to run, scream, or be loud there. We can't even get some friends together and talk about a book because the librarian yells "Be quiet or you'll go back to your classroom!" (Library)

Matt: Well, there are teachers there to make sure we don't talk too loud. If we get too loud they turn on the red light. That means no talking. (Cafeteria)

Tyler: The reason why I can't be creative there is because I cannot talk in class, usually, and all I can do is be silent and sit in my chair and do work or listen to the teacher. (Classroom)

These children believed that there was too much activity going on in the environment for them to be creative. Competing demands made it difficult for children to be creative. Randy's protocol exemplifies a state of chaos, even in his lack of focus as he tries to explain why he cannot be creative in his classroom. In

contrast to high noise level, Abby and Matt mentioned they could not be creative there because they were unable to talk. For some, creativity appeared to be associated with having the opportunity to discuss one's ideas with another peer. Perhaps what these data say is that there is a balance in terms of the optimal amount of order and structure necessary for creativity or perhaps the amount of optimal structure depends on the individual's needs. Some children clearly described distraction as noise, such as children running, playing, and talking; while others wanted to share ideas.

Arts is Synonymous with Creativity

Children associated creativity with the fine arts.

Tammy: It's harder to do any art outside because the pencils or markers get knocked over. It's easier to do art in the art room. (Outside)

Cheyenne: I'm creative at stuff like playing games like "kitty-cat" and stuff but it's not very creative in terms of poetry and stuff. (Playground)

Randy: I don't get to draw that much because everybody's asking me to play with them...(Classroom)

Roxanne: Because I like to draw at my desk and we aren't allowed to draw there. We are only allowed to do our work and read at our desk. (Classroom)

Leona: I can't do anything creative there like paint or draw. I enjoy writing stories but in the library I have to work like write about a famous person or something like that. (Library)

Chris: I get some how to draw books, and draw things out of that and get snake books and get fiction and non-fiction books of airplanes and cars and stuff. I sort of can and can't be creative there. Mostly I can't because most of the books are non-fiction so I can't be creative and make my own stories up from them. The fiction I can. (Library)

Children linked creativity with the act of drawing, writing stories or poetry, and painting. Children remarked that they were unable to do these activities in the library or in their classroom. Chris made the comment that he could not be creative in the

library because most of the books were non-fiction which meant he could not create his own stories from them. Cheyanne was the only child to differentiate two kinds of creativity: arts, like "poetry and stuff" and imaginative play, like playing games like "kitty-cat".

SECTION SUMMARY

In the category of places where you are not creative, children's descriptions fell into five main themes:

- (a) Not Active/Bored;
- (b) Hard/Do Not Like It/Not Good at It;
- (c) Freedom/Choice/Teacher as Confining;
- (d) Distractions;
- (e) Arts is Synonymous with Creativity

Imagine a noisy room, with a directive teacher engaging children in a subject that they do not like! All three of these themes are not prevalent in every interview and so this is an exaggerated picture. Still, it is easy to see why children perceive this as a place where they are not likely to be creative.

Picture of the Place in the School That is Children's Favorite Place

Adept at Subject

Good at Activity/Subject

Children indicated that they or their friends were skilled at a particular activity. This activity was completed in their favorite place.

Timeka: I used to take gymnastics so when I go do flips and stuff it's lots of fun...When we do the gymnastics unit I'm really good. (Gym)

Tara: We draw like our own cartoons and my friends have drawn an already made cartoons and I think they are pretty good at it. (Outside on the track)

Abby: I'm just good at art. I love it. (Art Room)

Timeka felt that she was adept at gymnastics, whereas Abby thought of herself as artistic. Although Tara does not mention that she is good at drawing she praised her friends for their ability to draw. It is interesting that only three children mentioned their perceived competence or skill when talking about their favorite place.

Fun/Love for Activity

Children described their favorite place as being fun because they were able to do certain activities that they enjoyed. Many children liked particular school subjects.

Kameron: This is my favorite place, the couch in the classroom where she sits and teaches us lessons, fun lessons. It is neat cause we always do fun stuff. We do creative fun stuff like measurement monsters. It's fun because it shows you how much measurement is. We learn it for fun. There is four quarts in a gallon. We don't have homework. We do fun stuff. The only time we have homework is fun stuff like Big Foot Dottie and Little Foot Dinah. So we measured our mom's and dad's foots (sic). We saw who had the biggest foot and they won the prize. That's the funnest part of school to me. (Classroom)

Timeka: Well, I used to take gymnastics so when I go do flips and stuff it's a lot of fun. I love that unit. That's why gym class is my favorite place. We do different types of units like basketball, and soccer which is really fun. When we do the gymnastics unit I'm really good. The gym is just fun. We get to hula-hoop and jump-rope. We do obstacle courses and we do stations. We have a certain amount of time to complete the obstacle course. All these things are fun. (Gym)

Tara: It's where we have the most fun. We draw stuff there. I made a beautiful sketch the other day and I was looking at that place and it inspired me. We draw like our own cartoons and my friends have drawn an already made cartoons and I think they are pretty good at it. (Outside on the track)

Kristen: I love to sing in there and we always sing in music. (Music Room)

Chris: This is a picture of the computers and the window behind them. I like to play "Kid Pix" on them and "Turbo Math Facts". My teacher might let us use "Spellbound" and that's mostly all I do on them. They have some cool earphones so I can hear the sounds from it. (Classroom)

Kevin: This is most likely the tag base and stuff and you can sit down there and tie your shoe and it's really fun. I pretend it's a spaceship, a house, a cave, or just climb it and pretend it's a mountain. I just like it because you can pretend a lot. I like

pretending a lot. (Climber on the playground)

Randy: I like it outside because we get extra playtime and it's really, really, fun. I like swinging. I like playing on the bars and I like the playground. I like playing tag and I like playing basketball. And I like playing hide-and-go-seek and I like playing The Lost World and that's all I like. (Playground)

Janie: It's very cool. I like to read Dear America, Sweet Valley High, and The Babysitter's Club. I couldn't take a picture of the Sweet Valley High or The Babysitter's Club. books because people were blocking it. I like to play "My Own Stories", "Accelerated Reader", "Mario Teaches Typing", "The Magic School Bus" and this dole fruit thing and a lot of other things. I like the library because I like to read. (Library)

Kathy: Well, it's the library and I like to go there after I'm done with my work. I like to read. That's my favorite subject, reading. I like to read classic books (names books), all those kinds of books. (Library)

Leona: I like to play hide-and-seek with my friends and make fun of boys out there. I like that we have a big playground and it has a bunch of slides and ladders and stuff. My friends and I like to play tag. It's neat because there are obstacles to go over. Like there's this bar and you have to jump over it to get across it. It's a fun place. (Playground)

Carla: It is my favorite place because I like to read and I like to look at books I haven't even read before. I like the books we have in the library. We have fiction, non-fiction, and books about people in there. I like to read some fiction and some non-fiction books. (Library)

Roxanne: It is my very favorite place because it is in the fiction center of the library and I like to read a lot. I like to read chapter books and I like fiction a lot. (Library)

Several children enjoyed doing physical activities. Timeka liked to play basketball, soccer, and gymnastics, which was the sport she considered herself good at. Randy found swinging, playing tag, basketball, and hide-and-go-seek fun. Leona enjoyed playing hide-and-go-seek and tag with her friends. Tara liked to draw outside with her friends. She felt that her friends were good at drawing cartoons. Chris and Janie liked to play computer games. Janie, Carla, and Roxanne enjoyed being in the library because they liked to read. Kevin was given the opportunity to engage in pretend play outside. For Kameron, the best part of school was playing

games like "Measurement Monsters". This game made learning fun for him.

When the children described their activities as fun it seemed apparent that they liked the activity or the subject. A favorite place seemed to have something to do with sheer enjoyment whether that be in active games and sports or more sedimentary activities of drawing or reading.

There was one more protocol that fit under the heading of fun/love of activity, though it is clearly of a non-sports and non-academic nature.

Tom: It's my favorite place because it has the girl's potty in it. I like to spy on the girls. I get to spy on them every time we use the restroom. (Girls Bathroom)

Active

Children indicated that they enjoyed doing hands-on learning activities that involved games, sports, writing, and music. Some of these activities were initiated by a teacher while others were chosen by the students.

Jennifer: It's my favorite place because we learn music. I get to sing. We get to play instruments like the flute, the drum, and the piano. (Music Room)

Chris: I also get to type on them. I type stories on them and stuff like that. (Computers in classroom)

Kameron: We do creative fun stuff like "Measurement Monsters". It's fun because it shows you how much measurement is. (Classroom)

Cheyenne: Well, we are doing airplane companies and the people that were in a certain airplane companies made certain airplanes and we sold, chartered, and bartered, and we rented them. We learned how to do stuff like that and we were selling materials and stuff and renting them that we needed to use to make the airplanes like paperclips and markers and stuff. (TAG Room)

Timeka: We get to do hula-hoop and jump-rope. We do obstacle courses and we do stations. We have a certain amount of time to complete the obstacle course. (Gym)

Leona: I like that we have a big playground and it has a bunch of slides and ladders and stuff...It is neat because there are obstacles to go over. Like, there's this bar and you have to jump over it to get across it. (Playground)

Children were given the opportunity to do activities such as play instruments, write stories on the computer, and learning about math using a game. Many children associated their favorite place with physical activity such as running, football, jumping rope, and doing an obstacle course. Both Timeka and Leona enjoyed the obstacle courses. Leona thought the obstacle courses were "neat" and presented her with a challenge.

Socialization and Freedom to talk with Friends

For some children a favorite place was one in which they were given the opportunity to talk to and play with their friends.

Rob: My favorite place is the swings because that is where I do all my stunts and backflips and stuff...I do these stunts with four of my friends. (Swings on the playground)

Cheyenne: I get to be with my best friend and we get to talk. (TAG Room)

Leona: I like to play hide-and-seek with my friends and make fun of boys out there...My friends and I like to play tag. (Playground)

Matt: The reason I like it is that we get to talk there, we get to eat, and we get to sit wherever we want. Instead, in our classroom we have to sit in a certain place. I like that we can talk about stuff. We can talk about how good we've been doing our work, talk about some people we don't like. (Cafeteria)

Victor: Like, during school I play dodgeball and run around with my friends. (Playground)

Damien: Sometimes my friends and I play dodgeball. (Playground)

When talking about their favorite place children mentioned the playground where they played tag, dodgeball, hide-and-go-seek and performed tricks on the swings with their friends. Children also chose places where they were able to talk to their friends.

One child referred to her class as a safe place.

Tammy: My classroom is the safest place I feel because I don't really exactly know

every single person but I know a lot of people and they make fun of me and stuff but in my classroom we have to sit down and do our work and no one can get up while we are working or while the teacher is talking. But I feel safer there because it's easier to be around others in my class more so than people in the school that I really don't know. In my class everyone is nicer here than out of my classroom because a lot of people like to talk and they don't think about what they are saying before they say it and they are mean kind of. In my classroom it is so great not to be teased because everybody knows what I do, what I wear, and what I bring to school, so it is easier. (Classroom)

Tammy found comfort in being with people she knew. She perceived her classroom as a familiar environment. Tammy contrasted her classmates with other children in her school. She referred to her classmates as "nicer" than other children in the school who were "mean". She was able to express herself in her classroom because she was not teased and her classmates accepted her.

Quiet Time

Three children chose a quiet location as their favorite place. Two children talked about their favorite place as being a place where their teacher was not present.

Tara: It's real shady and quiet there. My friends and I always go over there and fight over it and sit in the shade under the tree. It is where we found our very special inch worm which laid a billion eggs at my house when I took it home. It's where we have the most fun. We draw stuff there. I made a beautiful sketch the other day and I was looking at that place and it inspired me. We draw like our own cartoons and my friends have drawn an already made cartoons and I think they are pretty good at it. (Outside on the track)

Tyler: I chose the library to be my very favorite place because I get off of school. I can be away from school and sometimes I can read in the library without the teacher being around for twenty minutes or so. That's why that is my favorite place. My teacher lets us go there when we finish our work at the end of the day. (Library)

Kathy: Well, it's the library and I like to go there after I'm done with my work...I like it because it is quiet, and I like to read. (Library)

Quiet time means different things for these children. Tara and her friends were able to go to the track and be creative. The track served as a place where she escaped from school to be by herself or with her friends. Her statement about the inch worm suggests a sense of wonder and excitement about the experience of finding it. The

tree by the track inspired her to draw a sketch. Both Kathy and Tyler give a sense that quiet time is a place to be "away" and to read.

Reward

Two children were given rewards prizes and stickers by their teacher in their favorite place.

Jennifer: This is a picture of the music room and it's a chart. If you are good the whole class time you get a sticker. The music teacher puts a sticker by your name. You get a sticker when you sit quietly and listen. (Music Room)

Kameron: ...So we measured our mom's and dad's foots (sic). We saw who had the biggest foot and they won the prize. (Classroom)

Although Kameron mentioned this prize in his interview, it seemed to be added as an embellishment to his description of his favorite place, not his main reason for choosing his classroom. Thus, only two children out of twenty-four mentioned an extrinsic reward when asked about their favorite place.

Teacher Characteristics

In four other categories, teachers were very prominent, whereas in "favorite place" only two children mentioned their teacher.

Michelle: For my favorite place I took a picture of my teacher's desk because I enjoy my teacher this year. She is nice. When there is a problem she tries to fix it. Like, if two kids are fighting she will have them talk about what is wrong instead of just yelling at them. (Classroom)

Kristen: I really like Ms. Barton, the music teacher because she's really nice. (Music Room)

Favorite place, then seemed not to be focused on teacher characteristics as was the case for other categories.

Freedom/Choice

Two children chose places where they were given the freedom to do certain activities. One child chose a place where she had the freedom to do what she wanted

without being under the control of her teacher.

Kristen: When we go to music we have music from 2 to 2:30 in my classroom and we can sing whatever we want to and sometimes we can bring CD's and play...Sometimes, if we know how to play a song we can play it on the piano...(Music Room)

Chris: I like to play "Kid Pix" and "Turbo Math Facts". My teacher might let us use "Spellbound"...When I order some computer games from the library my teacher lets us see if it will work. Make sure nothing is wrong with it. (Classroom)

Leona: My very favorite place is outside on the playground because I can do anything I want and I don't have to follow any directions because the teachers are busy talking to each other. I can roam around and be free. (Playground)

Kristen's music teacher gave her the freedom to choose what songs to sing during class. Chris' classroom teacher allowed him to play computer games in the classroom. Leona experienced freedom on the playground because her teachers were not present and she did not have to follow her teacher's directions. Again, this theme has sparse support with only three protocols to support it.

Children's Use of Imagination

Interestingly, there were only two children who engaged in pretend play on the playground.

Rob: ...I climb up to the top and be monkey brothers. Hang on my one arm...We play "Top Gun" on them and we twist around like we are shooting at other airplanes. (Swings on the playground)

Kevin: This is my very favorite place because I like to see upside-down and this is where I do it...I pretend it's a spaceship, a house, a cave, or just climb it and pretend it's a mountain. I just like it because you can pretend a lot. I like pretending a lot. I pretend I'm a different person like a submarine person or an airplane person or just people you like to watch, maybe watch on tv. (Climber on the playground)

Rob pretended to be a monkey. He also transformed the swing into an airplane and pretended to shoot other airplanes. Kevin turned the climber into a variety of objects. He also used his imagination by pretending to be different kinds of people.

SECTION SUMMARY

In the category very favorite place, three prominent themes emerged:

- (a) Fun/Love for Activity
- (b) Active
- (c) Socialization and Freedom to Talk with Friends

Six areas were noted by three or four children in the following categories:

- (a) Good at Activity
- (b) Quiet Time
- (c) Reward
- (d) Teacher Characteristics
- (e) Freedom/Choice
- (f) Children's Use of Imagination

It seems that, in determining a favorite place it is more important to love the activity and to perceive it as fun than it is to be good at it. Only Timeka mentioned both in her interview.

The teacher seems to be fairly benign to these children's experience of a favorite place compared to the other categories. Likewise, reward systems are also mentioned only twice (one time as a big foot activity contest winner and once related to good behavior).

Thus, the children's experience of a favorite place in school has to do with their friends, with active rather than passive occasions and clearly shows a sense of enjoyment and fun.

Picture of the Place in the School Where Learning is Easy

Focus on Teacher

In this section children discussed the ways in which their teachers helped them, as well as reasons why they liked their teachers.

Teaching and Helping

Children viewed their teacher as someone who helped them learn class material by showing them how to do it and/or by giving them verbal instructions. Teachers' behaviors were described as "teaching" and providing children with explanations when needed.

Michelle: I love that she teaches us to play all the instruments. (Music Room)

Chris: Learning is easy there because she helps us do work easily. She tells us how to do the work and gives us secrets, like hints to it. (Classroom)

Rob: I chose the gym for learning to be easy because she just teaches us how to play basketball and stuff and it's really easy to learn and skate backwards and stuff. She taught us how to play kickball and basketball. (Gym)

Kevin: Ms. Wipple, my teacher, well she teaches us and she doesn't give us so much homework and she explains it to us and we can ask if we didn't listen or we didn't hear it clearly enough or we need another explanation. (Classroom)

Kathy: It's more easy to learn because she'll draw something on the chalkboard or take a piece of paper and do it. She helps us draw it. (Art Room)

Victor: It's all active stuff. Like the gym teacher teaches us about tennis skills, and like fitness skills. (Gym)

All the teachers in this category taught their students how to do something such as draw, play an instrument, or play sports. Two teachers offered helpful hints or explanations to the students when they asked.

Teacher Characteristics

When talking about why learning is easy in a particular place children stated that their teacher was nice and that they liked her. They gave various explanations as to why they liked their teacher.

Michelle: My teacher is nice because like on your birthday she lets you have pieces of candy and she lets you play any instrument you want to. She usually lets us play instruments. (Music Room)

Tara: My teacher's great too. We had an intern with us and she was very fun to be

with. We learned most about science with her and she made everything fun. (Classroom)

Chris: My teacher is really nice. She lets us play games and go outside a lot. She lets us read and draw. (Classroom)

Cheyenne: It is where we have music class and Ms. Regiold is our music teacher and I like her. She's nice. (Music Room)

Randy: She's the nicest teacher in third grade and she does a bunch of projects that I love. She lets us stay after school and help her erase the boards or put things away. She lets us have extra playtime outside when we are good and get all our work done...My teacher is nice. She gives us treats. (Classroom)

These children liked their teacher because she gave them the opportunity to engage in activities that were related to the child's interests. For example, Michelle enjoyed music and her teacher permitted her to play instruments. Both Randy and Michelle focused on obtaining a reward such as candy from their teacher on special occasions or after their work was completed. Tara liked the intern in her classroom because she was able to make learning fun. According to these students, a nice teacher was someone that rewarded them for good behavior or finishing their work and granted them the opportunity to engage in enjoyable activities such as reading, drawing, and playing outside.

Freedom/Choice

Children stated that teachers made learning easy because there was freedom to do certain activities or to be presented with choices.

Abby: The art room is the easiest place for me to learn because Mrs. Gibbons gives us ideas and lets us decide what to do with them. Sometimes, when we go in there she'll ask us what we want to do and we can draw or paint or glue things. We decide what we want to do. Sometimes, she'll ask us for ideas on what to make and she'll write them on the board. We can pick like if we want to make a boat or a flower. (Art Room)

Michelle: She lets you play any instrument you want to. She usually lets us play instruments. (Music Room)

Chris: She lets us play games and go outside a lot. She lets us read and draw. (Classroom)

Leona: The gym is the easiest place for me to learn because the teacher tells us what to do but we can still be creative with it and we get to pick what we want to do sometimes. We don't have a choice of what to do in the library cause we just draw. In gym class we like jump-rope, ride on the scooters, or play basketball. We get to choose what we want to do when we are inside. (Gym)

All these teachers gave their students some freedom and choice by allowing them to choose among certain activities such as playing musical instruments and choosing what activities to do when playing inside the gym. Choice is highlighted by Abby's comment that her teacher asked the students for their input about what should be made that day.

Adept at Subject

Work is Easy/Learn a Lot/Like the Subject

Children spoke about how easy some academic subjects were for them. They discussed having the opportunity to learn a great deal about various subjects. Children said that the projects, worksheets, and games made learning easy for them, and they perceived doing less work as learning that is easy.

Cheyenne: Learning is easy there because it is easy to learn the songs and stuff. Cause when we learn the songs, I like to learn the songs and it's kind of easy for me and stuff. (Music Room)

Michelle: I just enjoy music because I like to sing. (Music Room)

Timeka: We learn a lot about Social Studies and Science. Those are the subjects I'm really good at. We do a lot of art activities...My classroom is neat because I get to learn about different subjects. (Classroom)

Rob: I chose the gym for learning to be easy because she just teaches us how to play basketball and stuff and it's real easy to learn and skate backwards and stuff. (Gym)

Conner: Learning is easy there because I do the same thing everyday. I put in the word that fits in the blank in the sentence on the worksheet. Math is easy for me because we have easy worksheets (Classroom)

Randy: Like, my teacher, she gives us projects to do instead of like worksheets and she doesn't give us much math or stuff and she doesn't make us use our science book a bunch or social studies or English, or spelling book a whole lot...I like the projects and games because they are fun and make learning easier. (Classroom)

Tom: We learn lots of stuff. We learn one times a thousand, one times a hundred, one times a million. You know the times tables. Learning the times tables is easy because you memorize numbers. Division is easy. We also do centers that are easy like reading. We listen to a recorder that you put a tape in. (Classroom)

Kathy: Art is easy because they are realistic pictures like portraits of people or drawings of some things around you but it's real. It's easy to draw things and I'm not exactly a real artist. I draw it with a paint brush. (Art room)

Damien: We learn easy stuff there. Like spelling bees. She gives us easy words to spell. (Classroom)

Conner and Matt talked about how easy the worksheets were. A sense of boredom is detected in Conner's response. He said that learning was easy because he did the same thing everyday which leads one to think that he may not be challenged enough in his classroom. Timeka's teacher teaches her a lot about different subjects, whereas Rob's gym teacher teaches him to play various sports. Overall, children found that a variety of school subjects were easy. School subjects that were considered easy were music, art, reading, science, math, and spelling.

Good at It/Learning is Fun

Children mentioned that they were good at particular school subjects and that contributed to making learning easy for them. They also talked about how fun and neat their classroom was because they either learned a lot or they were able to do art projects.

Timeka: I like my classroom because it is sort of neat. We learn a lot about Social Studies and Science. Those are the subjects I'm really good at. (Classroom)

Tara: My classroom is like the music room in a way. They are both flattops. They are both fun places to be in school. The reason my class is fun is we get to do all these neat projects. (Classroom)

Kathy: We make pictures, colorful pictures. Art is easy because they are realistic

pictures like portraits of people or drawings of some things around you but it's real. It's easy to draw things and I'm not exactly a real artist. I draw it with a paint brush. I like to draw it, then paint it and that's what we're supposed to do. (Art Room)

Kristen: ...Basically, it is easy because in English if we do stuff out of the book, sometimes we do stuff out of the book, it's mostly new things to learn so is math and music and everything else. Reading is basically things we know how to do. I mean I don't know it's just easy learning for me. (Reading table in classroom)

Randy: She's the nicest teacher in third grade and she like does a bunch of projects that I love...I like the projects and games because they are fun and make learning easier. (Classroom)

Janie: I'm really good at being creative and artistic. I like to color and make pictures and abstract art and stuff. We make pictures of animals and shapes and stuff...I'm really good at drawing so that's why it's very easy. (Art Room)

Carla: It is easy for me to learn in the gym because we have, go over lots of stuff like basketball, baseball, softball, gymnastics, and jump-rope, and tennis. It's easy for me to learn sports. I'm good at them. (Gym)

Learning seemed to be seen as fun and enjoyable because the children perceived themselves as competent at the subject matter.

Active

For these children learning was an active process. Active learning involved doing art, making projects, playing games, and participating in sports. Children's responses centered around doing hands-on type of activities.

Victor: Learning is easy for me there. Well, there is not like a whole lot of work or anything. It's all active stuff. Like the gym teacher teaches us about tennis skills, and like fitness skills. (Gym)

Timeka: We do a lot of art activities. (Classroom)

Tara: The reason my class is fun is we get to do all these neat projects. We got to do one in our Tennessee fourth grade book. It's only for fourth graders in Knox County and we mixed salt, flour, and water together. A mixture and we drew pictures of Tennessee on cardboard with markers. We put the mixture in there and we drew on it to show the different rivers, mountains, and located Knoxville. (Classroom)

Tammy: ...and you have to sit down and read a book or do reports and most of the

time I am doing reports in there because they have encyclopedias and it's quiet...(Classroom)

Chris: She lets us play games and go outside a lot. She lets us read and draw. (Classroom)

Rob: I chose the gym for learning to be easy because she just teaches us how to play basketball and stuff and it's real easy to learn and skate backwards and stuff. She taught us how to play kickball and basketball. (Gym)

Conner: I put in the word that fits in the blank in the sentence on the worksheet. My favorite subject is gym and gym is easy because we just run around. (Classroom)

Randy: She's the nicest teacher in third grade and she like does a bunch of projects that I love...We had a bug-ball. We had a giddy-up round-up. We had an under-the-sea project. We did a neat museum. We did the space unit. We did the human body and my teacher had this model of the human body. We had a lock-in where we stayed until 10:00 and we did in-the-dark bingo. We played hot potato. We had sundaes and we danced. We played outside and we ate pizza. Then we had some popcorn and then we watched three movies. I like the projects and games because they are fun and make learning easier. (Classroom)

Janie: We make pictures of animals and shapes and stuff. (Art Room)

Abby: Sometimes when we go in there she'll ask us what we want to do and we can draw or paint or glue things. We decide what we want to do. Sometimes she'll ask us for ideas on what to make and she'll write them on the board. We can pick like if we want to make a boat or a flower. I like to glue little wooden things together and draw animals. (Art Room)

Matt: We learn to play special games. We play these word games where you close your eyes and you have to guess who you are pointing at and then if you guess who you are pointing at they have to go in the middle then they turn around, close their eyes and guess again who they are pointing at...(Resource Room)

Carla: It is easy for me to learn in the gym because we have, we go over lots of stuff like basketball, baseball, softball, gymnastics, and jump-rope, and tennis. It's easy for me to learn sports. I'm good at them. (Gym)

Leona: In gym class we can like jump-rope, ride on the scooters, or play basketball. We get to choose what we want to do when we are inside. We don't have any tests on paper there. We don't do any hard work there. We just run around and get tired. (Gym)

Tyler: Gym is easy because I really don't have any work and all I do is learn about, all I do is push-ups, and stuff that is easy because I don't have to write anything

down and it's like having no work but you do like sit-ups and games. We do twelve minute runs once a week. We play games like tag and dodgeball, baseball, basketball, and golf. (Gym)

Children spoke about specific active projects they did and various active games they played that made learning easy for them. Some of these projects involved making things during art class. Classroom games, projects, and games in gym were often mentioned. Tyler and Leona framed active as being other than writing or paper and pencil activities.

Distractions

For some children learning was easy for them because there were not any distractions. They said that the place was quiet and they were able to concentrate.

Tammy: The library is the quietest place to work because you are not allowed to talk loudly pretty much and you have to sit down and read a book or do reports and most of the time I am doing reports in there because they have encyclopedias and it's quiet, quieter than my classroom because every time we have a report to do everyone gets up and starts playing. (Library)

Jennifer: That is where learning is easy for me, in the library. It's quiet, and it's quiet to read when I have to. No one interrupts me. (Library)

Matt: It is easy to learn there because there are only but four people and there are a lot of people in my classroom and it is noisy. I can learn easy there in the learning lab cause it's quiet... We learn about listening positions where if you like sit in a particular place you can listen better and learn better. I can learn better if I sit where it is quiet. (Resource Room)

Kameron: I can concentrate there because there's no talking in there or the kids who are talking get in time-out and they get a conduct mark. (Music Room)

Tammy contrasted the loudness of her classroom with the quietness of the library. Her classmates that were playing in her classroom distracted her from doing her work. Matt was also distracted by the noise in his classroom and was able to learn in the Resource room because it was quiet.

Roxanne's response was slightly different from the other four in this category.

In her response the issue of feeling safe from other children in her classroom was mentioned.

Roxanne: In my assigned seat in the library and it is easy for me because we are allowed to read. So it is quiet and I can learn vocabulary and learn new words by asking the librarian and not asking my teacher out loud because it makes me mad when I ask my teacher a word out loud and the kids laugh at me if they know what it means and I don't. (Library)

Roxanne found reading easy for her in the library where it was quiet. She found comfort in asking the librarian a question instead of her classroom teacher because she knows she will not be ridiculed by her classmates because she does not know the correct answer. She is afraid to speak out in class because her peers may make fun of her.

Likewise, Tara's response is unique in that she enjoys the steady noise.

Tara: I think because it's the first outside classroom I've been in besides music and when it rains it is very wonderful cause it's a tin roof. (Classroom)

It is difficult to say whether she sees the rain on the tin roof as a distraction or as a natural form of white noise that may, in fact, be calming.

Discipline

Two children spoke about the ways their teacher disciplined students in the classroom when they were asked to talk about the place where learning is easy.

Tom: I get in trouble. When I get in trouble I get more work and it gets me more smarter. I don't like to do more work but it makes me smarter. When I do get in trouble my teacher says, "Stop getting in trouble or I'll suspend you or send you to the principal's office." When I get in trouble she yells at me and says, "Quit it, Quit it!" I don't listen to her. Ha, ha. I cover my ears and ignore her. (Classroom)

Kameron: I can concentrate there because there's no talking in there or the kids who are talking get in time-out and they get a conduct mark. She gives those for bad behavior and if you get more than 10 you get a bad music grade at the end of a few weeks. (Music Room)

In Tom's view getting into trouble benefits him because he receives more work, which in his opinion will make him smarter even though he does not like the extra

assignments. Tom's teacher threatens to send him to the principal's office for bad behavior, whereas Kameron's teacher puts the children in "time-out" or lowers their grade after they accumulate a certain amount of conduct marks. Tom does not appear to care if he gets in trouble because he ignores his teacher's remarks. Kameron seems to follow the rules in order to avoid receiving a conduct mark.

Reward

Two children spoke about the ways their teacher disciplined students in the classroom and its implications for receiving a reward. A few children talked about receiving a reward for doing their work well or for good behavior. These rewards came in the form of candy, extra playtime, and free homework passes.

Tom: I get in trouble. When I get in trouble I get more work and it gets me more smarter. I don't like to do more work but it makes me smarter. When I do get in trouble my teacher says "Stop getting in trouble or I'll suspend you or send you to the principal's office." When I get in trouble she yells at me and says "Quit it, Quit it!" I don't listen to her. Ha, ha. I cover my ears and ignore her. (Classroom)

Kameron: I can concentrate there because there's no talking in there or the kids who are talking get in time-out and they get a conduct mark. She gives those for bad behavior and if you get more than ten you get a bad music grade at the end of a few weeks. (Music Room)

Michelle: My teacher is nice because like on your birthday she lets you have pieces of candy and she lets you play any instrument you want to. (Music Room)

Timeka: We get treats a lot. I like that we get candy when we get a right answer when she calls on us sometimes. It makes me try harder. Mostly all we get is candy or we get free homework passes. We get treats when we finish our work and when we are quiet. (Classroom)

Randy: She lets us have extra playtime outside when we are good and get all our work done...She gives us treats, She gives us tickets and if we get five tickets for being good she gives us bubblegum and when it's our birthday she'll give us a piece of candy and if we get ten stickers for doing our work well we get a piece of candy from a big jar that has a bunch of stuff that is really big candy. And she gives us tattoos and she when we get fifteen stickers we get this silly string. She calls it slime and puts it on our hair. (Classroom)

Discipline systems and rewards were evident in five of twenty-four protocols when children were asked about a place where learning is easy. Only two children, however, explained how discipline and rewards made learning easy. For Tom, it was the inadvertent advantage of "getting smarter" because of more work. Kameron's response to learning is easy may really be a function of the absence of distractions so he can concentrate. Michelle, Timeka, and Randy do not articulate how the discipline and reward system are connected to learning being easy.

SECTION SUMMARY

In the category learning is easy six predominant themes emerged:

- (a) Focus on Teacher
- (b) Freedom/Choice
- (c) Adept at Subject
- (d) Active
- (e) Distractions
- (f) Reward/Discipline

The following four sub-categories also emerged:

- (a) Teaching and Helping
- (b) Teacher Characteristics
- (c) Work is Easy/Like the Subject
- (d) Good at It/Learning is Fun

For these children, learning was easy in a place where they had the freedom to do certain activities such as play games or instruments, or read or draw. Choice was also prevalent in their responses. Children described the place where learning is easy as a quiet place where they were able to concentrate. One child mentioned feeling safe in her classroom. In this category, children talked a great deal about their teacher. Children viewed their teacher as a helper and stated that their

“teacher was nice” and they “liked her.” Active learning for these children

involved making projects, doing art, and playing games and sports. Children spoke about a subject as being easy for them, they were good at it, or they enjoyed it. Only two children mentioned how their teacher disciplined students in the classroom.

Picture of the Place in the School Where Learning is Difficult

Too Hard/Do Not Like It

Children described the place where learning was difficult as one in which particular subjects or tasks were difficult to learn. Three children also mentioned that they found a place difficult because they did not like a particular subject.

Tara: I wrote a speech Monday and Wednesday. They are hard. (Speech Room)

Kristen: Math, I guess it is the hardest for me because right now we are learning to do what are they called. It's like feet, inches, milliliters, right now we are learning, we've learned about those. (Classroom)

Jennifer: Learning is difficult there because we have lots of hard work. The math sometimes is pretty hard. The times tables are hard. Story problems are hard to do. Spelling is easy. Language is easy and a little hard and that's about all. (Classroom)

Tyler: It is most difficult to learn there because my teacher gives me work and I have to sit at my desk and do my work and sometimes my work is difficult and that is why I chose this place. I have to do work and sometimes it's hard. Sometimes she gives us too much work. (Classroom)

Rob: I think our work is too hard.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about that?

Rob: Well, the work is just hard. (Classroom)

Conner: This is a picture of the playground where it is hard to learn because it's hard to go across these rope things. (Playground)

Kathy: I'm really hard at exercising. We always have to exercise before anything. We do toe touches, jumping jacks, and stretches. I don't like playing four-square...The only subject I really like is kickball. Sometimes soccer. (Gym)

Abby: Sometimes, the work is hard like in reading because she asks us detailed questions about the books. In math, she gives us lots of story problems. Those are hard...I don't like English cause we have these worksheets where we fill in the words

and I put the wrong word in sometimes. They are hard. I'm not a good reader. I have trouble reading big words. (Classroom)

Victor: Well, it's not really that I don't like music, but it's more like I have trouble with the rhythm and melody and stuff. (Music Room)

Matt: Spelling is difficult because I don't really like very good. English, I can't copy things good out of the book like copy sentences, like write words down from the book in cursive and reading. I don't really like reading because I don't like to read. It's not one of my favorite subjects. (Classroom)

For some of these children a certain academic subject or subjects made learning difficult for them. For others, it was a specific task that was difficult like exercising or climbing over the ropes on the jungle gym. Abby and Matt were the only ones to state that they were not good at a particular subject. Tyler, Jennifer, and Rob used the terms "I have to", "Too much work", and "The work is too hard." This sets up an expectation that they feel obligated to do the work and that it is a chore. Kathy, Abby, and Matt felt that the place was difficult because they did not like the subject or the task. There were individual definitions of what was a difficult environment. Children described the activities that were difficult (content, subjects) and not the physical environment.

A subtheme of Testing and Evaluation emerged under this category. Some children identified a place as being difficult in terms of the testing and evaluation of a subject.

Michelle: Math is hard for me to learn. It's my hardest subject because I have to learn all the fractions. She gives us quizzes on paper and three page tests with problems where we have to write the answers down. (Classroom)

Tom: We have language tests, math tests, and reading tests. We have to fill in the answers on the tests. I usually don't know the answers. That's what makes it hard. (Resource Room)

Janie: My most difficult place is music. It is difficult because I had a test on it. It had multiple-choice and essays on it. It was very hard. That's all I know. I don't know why it was hard. It was just hard. I understood what was on the test. (Music Room)

Matt: We get hard spelling tests where we have to write seven sentences and we have to study our spelling words real good. On the reading test we had really hard questions like on one test it said, "What if you were a Pilgrim, what would you do to catch a turkey?" I can't really remember that fast so it was really hard for me to choose. Sometimes, I get through with the test, and barely pass. (Classroom)

Carla: We have like lots of tests that we haven't gone over a whole bunch. We have like tests on like groups of instruments that we don't learn about in class. Well, like we listen to pieces of classical music, real short pieces and have to guess the composer. Classical music sounds all the same to me. We write down the name on the test. Sometimes, she'll play a note and we have to guess which one it is. That is hard too. (Music Room)

Dominique: Well, the teacher in there gives us really hard tests...They are just hard because I don't like music. (Music Room)

In reading these excerpts, there is a feeling of frustration and of being unskilled in the topic in which they are being evaluated. Some children discussed the pressure placed on them to perform well. The teachers used some kind of a reward system that put pressure on the child to succeed.

Matt: We are allowed to ask questions and I raise my hand a lot but I don't get picked. Sometimes, when I answer I get them wrong. Sometimes, when we get them right we get a treat. That's why learning is difficult for me. I get the answers wrong. (Library)

Kathy: I don't like jump-roping. I only do the jump rope club cause you get a trophy. (Gym)

Matt: We have some kids that are loud and when they get in trouble she makes us write our name on the board and put a check beside it. When no one gets their name on the board we all get treats. One treat was we got to bring board games and play them, two times. Another time it was we got cokes and cupcakes...If they disobey the teacher's first request and if they don't do that. Like if the teacher says, "Clean off your desk!" in the morning and they keep working they'll have to put their name on the board. Another rule is, "Keep hands and feet and unkind words to yourself!" If you call somebody a name, kick them, or hit them or something with your fist you have to put your name on the board. (Classroom)

Children generally seemed not to like the subject and have difficulty saying anything except "It is hard", although in these protocols testing was specifically mentioned as were reward systems.

Distractions

Several children mentioned noise as a factor in making learning difficult for them. Rob focused on being distracted by friends who sat close by. Matt, Roxanne, and Leona stated that learning was difficult because some children in their class were loud. Kameron, Kevin, Tammy, and Randy seemed to be bothered by the noise from people talking in that particular place.

Tammy: Outside is an annoying place because everybody is playing kickball and hanging on the monkey bars. There is a lot of noise. I don't really like it because it's loud and I'm not used to that very much. It's just real loud to have people talking and fighting when I'm playing. (Outside)

Rob: I chose the classroom where I took a picture of where my friends sit because I'm always talking to them so it's hard to do my work there. (Classroom)

Kameron: The cafeteria. It is most difficult because you can't concentrate, cause that light and all the people talking in there...In lunch if you get too loud the red light goes off. The green light means that you can talk. We can talk during lunch when the red light isn't on. That means there is a certain amount of time to talk when the green light is on. We can talk quietly when it goes to orange. Also, when the dryer goes on and the washer goes on. (Cafeteria)

Kevin: It is hard for me to learn and explain things because you know how people are always loud and talking to other people and it's hard for me to concentrate. There are helpers that tell the kids to be quiet. Well, when I'm eating sometimes the kids are too loud. (Cafeteria)

Randy: Learning is most difficult for me on the playground because when I bring out my work and people are playing on the playground and it's really hard to do my work because it's really loud. Everybody is yelling and the teachers are up there talking and the kids are around the teachers talking really loud so it is really difficult to concentrate. (Playground)

Roxanne: That's at my desk because I sit in a row with two other girls and they really like to talk. That makes it hard for me to learn and also because I got kids in my class that make outbursts and so my teacher Miss Smith has to yell and it makes it harder for me to learn. These outbursts happen when Miss Smith asks one kid to answer a question and another kid knows the answer. Then they'll yell it out. (Classroom)

Leona: But it's hard to read and understand a book when I sit there cause the

librarian talks to the teacher. The boys like get crazy. They run around and the teachers send them to the principal's office. It's too loud in there. (Library)

Matt: Learning is difficult cause kids get in trouble when we are working and it makes me lose concentration. (Classroom)

All these children expressed the idea that learning was difficult because it was too loud to do their work. Children were unable to concentrate in these places because of high noise level. The salient features of this theme are perceptions of "loudness" in the form of talking or yelling.

No Relevance/No Guidance from Teacher/Frustration

Children seemed to want to see the relevance to their learning a subject. Tara wondered about the importance of math and how she would use it in the future. Rob, Leona, and Abby seemed to be frustrated because their teacher did not explain things well or was unavailable for help.

Kevin: Math, I guess it is the hardest for me because right now we are learning to do what are they called. We don't use them in life. It's like feet, inches, milliliters. Right now we are learning, we've learned about those. But we are doing everything we've done the whole year because it's after T-CAPS and everything and we have to do more of those and that is really hard because I don't use it in life so it is harder for me. (Math crate in classroom)

Rob: I think our work is too hard. Like, we have questions in English that we don't even know what they mean. (Classroom)

Leona: If we need help the librarian doesn't help us that much. If we want her to help us she takes forever and we have to wait because lots of kids need her help. Some of the books in there are hard to read because I think they are for older kids. (Library)

Abby: Learning is most difficult in my classroom because Mrs. Sammons just hands out the papers but doesn't show us what to do and some of the work is hard to do. Sometimes, she doesn't tell us the directions and me and my friends do not understand the directions. We have to ask her and I feel stupid for being the only one to ask sometimes. (Classroom)

Carla: We have lots of tests that we haven't gone over a whole bunch. We have like tests on like groups of instruments that we don't learn about in class. (Music Room)

Tara: We do all these games but I don't see why. When she makes us learn stuff she doesn't make it real clear and she never tells us why we have to learn that.
(Speech Room)

Both Carla and Abby seemed to want some form of guidance from their teacher.

Carla's concern was that she was tested on material that was not learned in class.

Abby's concern was that her teacher did not give her examples of what to do.

According to these children, a difficult place is one where there is no relevance put on learning, the student is frustrated with the teacher, and there is not enough guidance from the teacher in teaching certain material. Some children perceived that the level of work expected did not match their skills.

Play

A few children mentioned play as a positive or negative factor when describing a place where learning is difficult.

Chris: We have a little tree down by the part where the nature trail is by the swings where we put our things that are really valuable to us. Me and my friends put valuable stuff in the tree like money. We don't do much learning on the playground. We just walk and play and get energy out of us. We don't think. We just do things.
(Playground)

Randy: Learning is most difficult for me on the playground because when I bring out my work and people are playing on the playground and it's really hard to do my work because it is really loud. (Playground)

Tom: It's difficult cause I'm bored cause I know the stuff they teach us. But, after we get all our work completed we get to play on the computer and play "Video Safari". I always get my work done so I can play on the computer. (Resource Room)

These children seemed to be able to discriminate between play and work. For Chris and Randy, playing was not associated with learning. For Tom, who was bored with regular assignments, playing meant being able to "play on the computer", giving the idea that in play he could create his own challenge and thereby escape the difficulty of learning in a boring environment. Tara also drew a comparison between "something fun" (playful?) and studying.

Tara: When she makes us learn stuff she doesn't make it real clear and she never tells us why we have to learn that. I know it is to help our speech but she says that we're going to do something fun but we always end up studying. (Speech Room)

Play was mentioned by only a few children and it's meaning varied across contexts.

SECTION SUMMARY

In the category of places where learning is difficult four predominant themes emerged:

- (a) Too Hard/Do Not Like It;
- (b) Distractions;
- (c) No Relevance/No Guidance from Teacher/Frustration;
- (d) Play;

Testing/Evaluation was a sub-category of the theme Too Hard/Do Not Like It. Children perceived certain academic as difficult and many children did not like particular subjects. Children made it clear that they received "hard tests." Children spoke about a difficult place as being "too loud" because people were talking. Some children wanted to see the relevance of a subject. Others, seemed to want guidance from their teacher. Children contrasted play with work. It was difficult to work on the playground because children were busy playing. One child mentioned that after he finished his work he was allowed to play on the computer.

CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF THEMES ACROSS CATEGORIES AND BETWEEN THEMES

In the previous section, the themes were reviewed as they emerged within each category (see Table 2 and 3). At the next level of analysis the themes were examined across categories and six main concepts emerged (see Table 4):

- (a) Freedom/Choice
- (b) Teacher

Table 2

Valence of Themes That Emerged From the Children's Interviews

Themes	Most Creative	Not Creative	Learning is Easy	Learning is Difficult	Very Favorite Place
Freedom/Choice	+	-	+	(-)	+
Teacher	+	-	+	-	+
Concentration	+	+ -	+	-	+
Active/Not Active	+	-	+		+
Reward/Discipline/ Evaluation			+	-	(+)
Too Hard/ Do Not Like It		+		+	
Adept at subject			+		+

*(+), (-), not a major theme, but appears in some protocols

Table 3

Valence of Themes That Emerged in Only One or Two Categories

Themes	Most Creative	Not Creative	Learning is Easy	Learning is Difficult	Very Favorite Place
Art as Creativity	+	+			
Socialization and Freedom to talk with Friends					+
Children's Use of Imagination					+
Play				-	

Table 4

Concepts That Emerged Across Categories

Concepts	Most Creative	Not Creative	Learning is Easy	Learning is Difficult	Very Favorite Place
Freedom/ Choice	+	+	+	(+)	+
Teacher	+	+	+	+	+
Concentration	+	+	+	+	+
Active Level	+	+	+		+
Evaluation			+	+	+
Curriculum Content		+	+	+	+

*(yes) not a major concept, but appears in some protocols

- (c) Concentration
- (d) Activity Level
- (e) Evaluation
- (f) Curriculum Content

Concepts were derived from the following themes and were defined as follows:

- (a) Freedom/Choice-The concept freedom/choice was present in all five categories.
Freedom/choice was the presence or absence of choices presented by the teacher to the students. Teachers allowed students to choose between certain activities and were somewhat flexible regarding the content of assignments. Freedom also included having the ability to communicate with friends during class time. In the categories not likely to be creative and learning is difficult children were not given the freedom to choose what they wanted to do. They were also prohibited from talking to their friends.
- (b) Teacher- This was derived from the theme teacher that appeared in all five categories and included teacher characteristics, teacher as helper or facilitator, and teacher as someone who teaches. "Teacher" was someone who restricted children's choices by not allowing them to do certain activities, did not give clear explanations, and did not make learning particular subjects relevant to students. Teacher was also someone who rewarded children for good work or good behavior, helped them learn, gave them choices about their learning, and cared about the student's well-being.
- (c) Concentration- The concept concentration was found in all five categories and was derived from the two main themes of distraction and quiet time. Concentration was children's tolerance for the amount of noise or distractions required for them to be able to learn or to be creative. Some children preferred no noise or distractions, whereas some children felt that the presence of noise and distractions helped their learning and creativity. Distractions included the talking, play, and disruptive

behaviors of classmates, as well as noise from washers, dryers, and the cafeteria lights.

- (d) Activity Level-The themes Active/Not Active were combined. Activity level was used to describe student's involvement with projects, sports, games such as tag, four-square, and hide-and-go-seek, art projects, and academic-oriented games initiated by the teacher. In the category not likely to be creative these activities were nonexistent and children were not actively engaged in learning.
- (e) Evaluation- The themes Reward/Discipline and the sub-category Evaluation were combined. Rewards included treats such as candy or gum, free homework passes, and extra playtime given to children for appropriate behavior and for academic accomplishments. Discipline came in the form of threats and conduct marks. Evaluation was mentioned as the amount and difficulty of the tests students received.
- (f) Curriculum Content- The themes Too Hard/Do Not Like It and Adept at Subject were combined. Curriculum content was defined as the difficulty level of classwork, the amount of assignments, and student's interest in the subjects taught. It was also children's perception of whether or not they were adept at particular subjects.

A MULTIDIMENSIONAL, INTERRELATED MODEL OF CHILDREN'S CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SCHOOL

Children perceived the classroom emotional climate in terms of the aforementioned six concepts. These concepts formed their conceptualization of school (see Figure 1). This model shows the child as the center, a third dimensional element. The six concepts interconnect with each other and the child is the center. Each of these concepts, except for concentration are connected to all the other concepts. Concentration was not found to have any relationship to the concept of freedom and choice when analyzing the children's interviews. These six concepts were found to have an impact on children's perceptions of their classroom

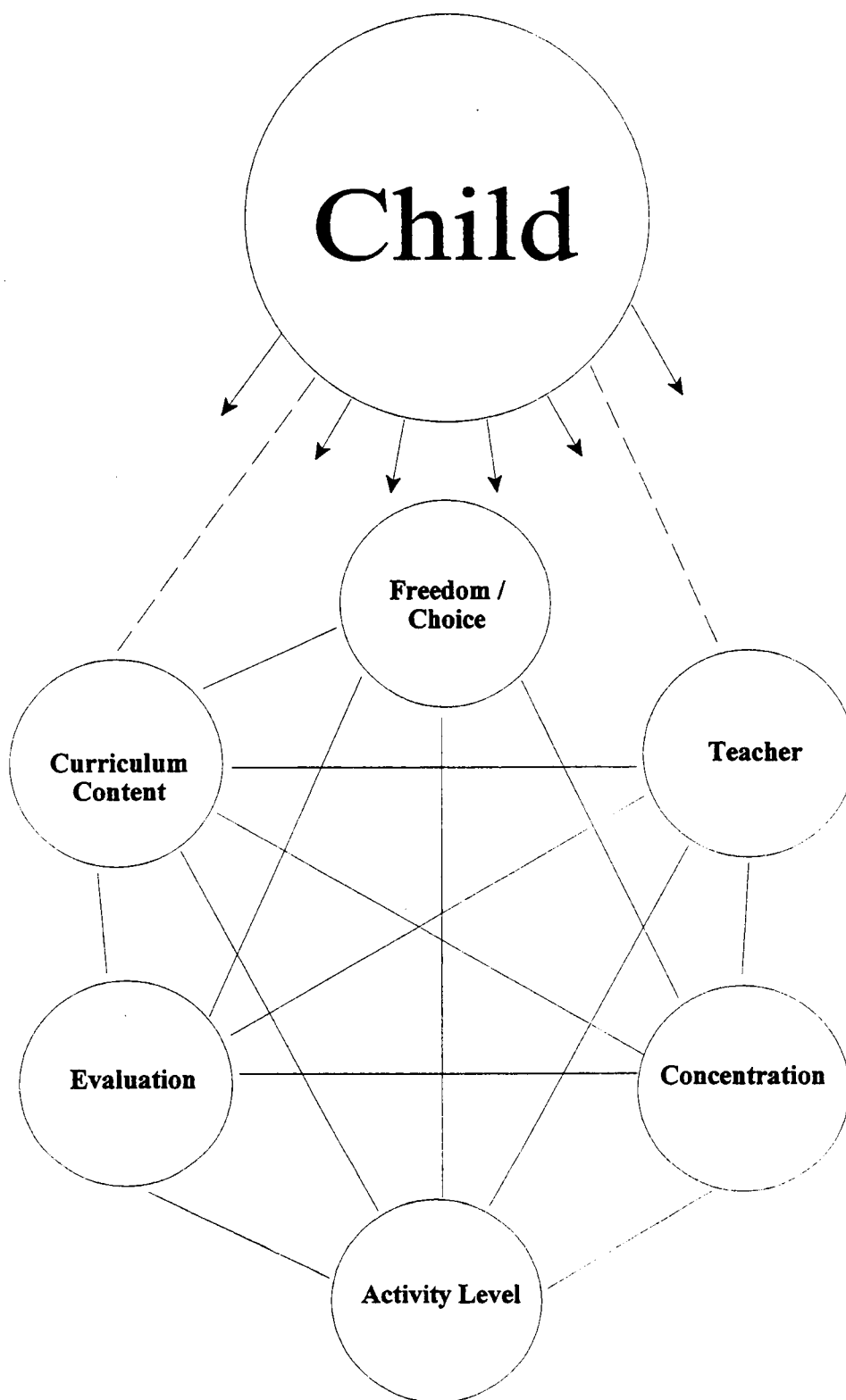


Figure 1. Children's Conceptualization of School as Place

emotional climate. The teacher plays a pivotal role because she plans the curriculum, allows for freedom and choice with regard to activities and assignments, controls the kinds of activities implemented in the classroom and these, whether quiet or noisy, in turn affect children's ability to concentrate.

Freedom/Choice

The concept of freedom and choice appeared in all five categories and it was interrelated to all of the concepts except concentration. In the category most likely to be creative, all the children discussed having the freedom to write stories, play musical instruments, draw, paint, or glue things together. In this place, teachers allowed them to do "whatever we want" within an art assignment. In the category not likely to be creative, children were not given choices about assignments. They commented that their teacher "told them what to do." In the category very favorite place, children focused their responses on having the freedom to sing, play various games on the computer, or play games with friends outside where a teacher was not present. Thus, freedom went beyond having the opportunity to do an artistic activity such as drawing or painting. But, only three children talked about freedom and choice in the category of very favorite place, though it was still supported as a theme. In the category learning is easy, freedom and choice was also associated with having the choice to draw, paint, glue things, as well as playing "any instrument you wanted to." One child stated that his teacher gave him the opportunity to play games and go outside, whereas, another child was able to choose, on occasion, the sport he wanted to play during gym class. Thus, the concepts of teacher and activity level were interwoven in many protocols within freedom and choice. This is not surprising because for elementary school children especially, teachers do dictate choice- how much, when, and even if.

In the category most likely to be creative, freedom and choice for all the

children was related to an artistic activity such as writing stories, playing a musical instrument, drawing, and painting. For all of these children it was important to have some freedom when doing an artistic activity.

In the category not likely to be creative, children stated that their teacher "tells them what to do." The inability to choose what activity to do was prevalent. Leona and Abby conveyed a sense of boredom because their choices were limited in the library. They both stated that all they could do there was read.

Although freedom and choice does not appear as a separate theme in learning is difficult, it is somewhat apparent under the theme of too hard/do not like it and the sub-category of evaluation and testing. In this category, children talked about "having to do the work" and that "it was too hard" and "too much work." Thus, freedom and choice connects to the concept of curriculum content. It seems as if the children do not have any choices about what they are learning or how they could learn it. Likewise, freedom and choice is connected to the concept of evaluation. The tests were difficult and some children felt unprepared when taking them.

In the categories most likely to be creative, learning is easy, and very favorite place, it is evident that the freedom to choose certain activities was important to the children. In the categories not likely to be creative and learning is difficult, children seemed to dislike having restrictions placed on them and being told what to do. Thus, children seemed to be cognizant of their freedom to choose and it emerged as a concept in all five categories.

Freedom and choice was associated with all the major concepts except concentration. Children's ability to choose between certain activities or their freedom to be creative within an assignment was unrelated to the concept of concentration. These responses appeared unrelated to the need for an optimal level of noise depending on the individual for learning or creativity to occur.

Teacher

The concept of teacher was present in all five categories. In the categories of most likely to be creative and learning is easy, children viewed their teacher as either: (a) a helper; (b) someone who teaches; or (c) someone who helps and teaches. Teacher as “nice” was only present in the categories of learning is easy and very favorite place. Having a nice teacher was associated with general positive affect for that teacher. In the categories of not likely to be creative and learning is difficult, children held a negative perception of their teacher.

In the category most likely to be creative, many children perceived their teacher as someone who helped them with work. Most likely to be creative was the only category in which one child talked about teacher praise and another discussed praise from her parents. This teacher praise is also related to the concept of evaluation. Kristen’s teacher rewarded her for her academic achievement in art by telling her that she did a wonderful job on an art project.

In the category not likely to be creative, children perceived their teacher as confining. Two children mentioned that they had to follow the teacher’s rules. Many children talked about not being able to do what they wanted to do. Children seemed bothered by the fact that their teacher “tells them what to do” and chooses the activities they could do. This is connected to the concept of freedom and choice. As mentioned earlier, it was often the teacher who dictated the amount of freedom. Children’s activities were limited to those initiated by the teacher. Children mentioned that they could not be creative there because they were not given the opportunity (implicitly by the teacher) to choose what sports or games to play during gym class, to draw pictures or paint, or what books they could read in the library.

Teachers also restricted children’s ability to talk with friends. This is related to the concept of concentration. A few children discussed the importance of being

able to talk to friends about ideas. For some, the discussion of ideas helped them become more creative. For many children across all the categories, the teacher was associated with the potential for finding a quiet place without distractions from classmates' talking, playing, and disruptive behavior; and this was considered imperative for learning and being creative.

The concept of teacher was very prevalent when children discussed the place where learning is easy. Children in this category perceived their teacher as a helper and as someone who teaches them how to do things. For example, teachers taught children how to play basketball, musical instruments, or draw.

In the category learning is difficult, some teachers did not make learning a subject relevant to the children. For example, one child stated that, "We don't use them in life", whereas another child commented "She never tells us why we have to learn that." In this category it was lack of teacher direction, unavailability for help, and lack of adequate explanations that frustrated children. These aforementioned teacher behaviors are related to the concept of curriculum content and activity level. Teachers made class material easier to learn by offering help and explanations. This may contribute to increased liking for a particular subject. On the other hand, children may find a subject difficult or not like it when the teacher does not stress the importance of a subject or the teacher does not explain class material clearly. The concept of activity level was demonstrated by teachers who actively engaged students in learning by teaching them how to play sports, musical instruments, or how to draw. It is apparent that teacher is a very salient concept throughout the protocols.

To summarize the concept of teacher, in the categories most likely to be creative and learning is easy, children thought of their teacher as a helper. Many children in the category learning is easy stated that their teacher was nice and they liked her. In

the categories not likely to be creative and learning is difficult, children viewed their teacher negatively. In the category not likely to be creative, children perceived their teacher as someone who: (a) tells them what to do; (b) places rules on children; and (c) initiates activities and does not allow children to choose. In the category learning is difficult, “teacher” was seen as someone who: (a) provided little or no help to children; (b) did not make learning relevant to children; and (c) did not provide adequate explanations when asked. The concept of teacher connects across all other concepts as shown in Figure 1.

Concentration

The concept concentration was present in all five categories. In this concept, a qualitative difference was found between the categories of: (a) most likely to be creative and not likely to be creative, and (b) between the categories of learning is easy and learning is difficult.

In the category most likely to be creative, a quiet place was important for doing artistic activities such as drawing or writing poetry. Some children seemed to like the fact that other people were not present. However for Tyler, the ability to be able to express himself with others was necessary for him to be creative.

In the category not likely to be creative, children could not be creative because it was too loud and they were unable to concentrate. Children’s responses focused around people talking loudly, as well as distractions from peers. It was difficult to be creative because children were busy “running around”, playing, or “doing centers”. Interestingly, three children stated that they could not be creative because there were not any distractions and they were not able to talk.

In the category learning is easy, children were able to concentrate in a place that was quiet, where children were not allowed to talk. For Tara though, the steady noise of rain hitting the roof (white noise) was enjoyable.

Loudness/concentration was also the case for learning is difficult. Loudness was associated not only with people talking, but with distractions from peers. Children said that it was too loud because classmates were playing yelling, and being disruptive.

Although three children talked about their very favorite place as being a quiet location, their responses differed from those in the other four categories. For Tara, the track was a place where she could be with friends. For both Kathy and Tyler, quiet time meant "time away" from people.

Overall, quiet time may be related to privacy for some children. For Jennifer, quiet was linked to solitary activities such as swinging, sliding, and playing on the tire swing. Two children referred to the issue of safety in their responses. Tyler stated that outside he was able to "talk about private stuff." For Roxanne, safety was "not being laughed at."

Thus learning, easy or difficult, is associated with quiet or distracting environments respectively. Whereas, creative or not creative categories had much more individual variability. Any individual child might give meaning to a quiet or loud/distracting environment for either the creative or not creative category. Individual differences were more salient for creativity than for learning.

The concepts of curriculum content, teacher, activity level, and evaluation are associated with the concept of concentration. Teachers have the authority to structure lessons in a way to help or hinder children's ability to concentrate. If a teacher insists on keeping a very quiet classroom, children will be unable to express their ideas and learn from one another. If a teacher maintains a classroom that is overly chaotic, meaning that there is too much undirected activity going on in the classroom, children may not be able to concentrate because of the amount of distractions. Teachers dictate the amount and kind of activities that go on in the classroom.

Perhaps children see a need for a balance between quiet activities and those involving noise. In this study, children commented about the rewards they received for good behavior as well as the discipline strategies their teacher used to control disruptive behavior. Rewards and discipline are a form of evaluation. The use of rewards and discipline controlled disruptive behavior by the students and relates to concentration. Children were not able to concentrate when others were yelling or displaying unruly behaviors.

Concentration is not connected to the concept of freedom/choice. Although both are necessary for the processes of learning and creativity, children did not form a relationship between the two in this study.

Activity Level

The concept activity level was prevalent in four of the five categories. In the category most likely to be creative, children talked about “active” in terms of doing learning-oriented games, and art projects and only one child discussed active as involving sports. Whereas, in the category learning is easy, the majority of children mentioned games involving sports and only a few children in this category talked about learning- oriented games and art projects. For children in the category very favorite place, the responses were mixed: (a) sports; (b) writing and music; and (c) learning-oriented games. In the category not likely to be creative, children pointed out that they were bored and that there was nothing to do in that place.

In the category most likely to be creative, many children discussed games and projects that were initiated by the teacher as a learning activity. The concept of teacher became salient in these protocols. These games were clearly focused on academics and included dividing money, “Measurement Monsters”, and spelling and math games on the computer. It was evident that these games were associated with learning. Active learning also involved doing art projects such as drawing, making

masks, painting, and origami for four children. Only one child discussed active in terms of playing sports. One child perceived active as being able to talk to and feed her pets.

In the category learning is easy, games were mentioned by seven children. These games constituted sports activities such as dodgeball, tag, jump-roping, and tennis. Only two children mentioned doing any projects related to academics, one involving making a map of Tennessee, and the other involving "an under-the-sea project and the human body." For four children, active learning involved art activities such as drawing pictures and gluing things. Similarly, in the category very favorite place, the term "active" crossed over many activities: For instance, children mentioned academic games, writing, music, and sports.

In the category not likely to be creative, children talked about boredom, non-activity, no projects, and generally passive learning situations. Rob connected boredom with easy. He said that drawing pictures and doing worksheets was easy because he was given "step by step" instructions. Three children mentioned that the library was boring because "there was nothing to do there but read." Teachers in this category limited the kinds of activities children could do in this place and children in turn were bored.

The concepts evaluation, teacher, curriculum content, freedom/choice, and concentration are associated with the concept of activity level. Students are tested on their athletic ability during gym class, and on academic subjects in their classroom. They are graded on worksheets, reports, and projects. Children are also given rewards for their excellent academic performance. The teacher controls the kinds of activities implemented in the classroom and is responsible for incorporating class material into projects and games. The teacher can also permit students to choose among certain activities, ask for their input, and write ideas on the chalkboard. Since

teachers dictate the activity level in the classroom, they are able to include assignments that involve minimal noise levels so students can concentrate as well as activities that allow students to communicate with each other and involve moving around the classroom or going outside. Thus, the multidimensional nature of the classroom becomes obvious in this conceptualization.

Evaluation

The concept evaluation was present in the categories of learning is easy, learning is difficult and very favorite place. Children did not associate being creative or not creative with rewards, discipline, or evaluation. Similarly, only two out of twenty-four children mentioned it when talking about their very favorite place.

In both the categories of learning is easy and learning is difficult, children discussed the ways their teacher disciplined students. In all three categories, children pointed out that they were rewarded for good behavior. In the categories of learning is easy and learning is difficult, a few children revealed that they received rewards for doing their work well. In the category learning is difficult, a couple of children found that learning was difficult because there was pressure placed on them to succeed. For example, two children stated that the subject was hard or they did not like it, but they received a reward if they did it and succeeded. In these protocols, the concept of curriculum content was connected to evaluation.

In the category learning is easy, two children mentioned the forms of discipline their teacher used to control disruptive behavior such as conduct marks for "bad behavior", lowered student's grades, and extra playtime outside when the class was good. By virtue of discipline being a form of control, the concept of freedom/choice is connected to the theme of evaluation.

In the category learning is difficult, Matt's teacher disciplined students by writing their names on the board and putting a check beside it. But, when students

behaved appropriately they were rewarded with cokes and cupcakes. It is apparent from these protocols that teachers punish children for bad behavior and reward them with treats for good behavior. Again, the concept of freedom and choice is connected through rewards and punishments for children. This is also associated with the concept teacher. Teachers control the amount of rewards and enforce classroom rules through the use of discipline. A teacher who sets too many rules is not well-liked by the students. Likewise, evaluation seems to be connected to the concept of concentration. Disruptive behaviors inhibited children's ability to concentrate and thus the concepts overlap.

Evaluation was most prominent in the category learning is difficult. Six children emphasized that the tests were "hard." In these protocols a sense of frustration, unpreparedness and of not being proficient in a particular subject prevailed. Again, the teacher dictates the amount and content of the tests. Teachers evaluate certain activities and assignments such as projects, artwork, and athletic ability.

Evaluation was also part of the reward system. In the category very favorite place, students received a sticker by their name when they behaved appropriately. In the category very favorite place, one child mentioned that his parents received a prize in the class' foot measuring contest. These did not appear to be incentives for learning.

Evaluation was associated with all five concepts but it was dominant across only the two categories of learning is easy and learning is difficult. Teachers administer rewards and discipline to students as a means for learning. Through discipline, punishment, and rewards teachers control children's behaviors and restrict their freedom to make choices. Classmates' disruptive behaviors impede children's ability to concentrate on classwork so children may see the teacher's need to enforce classroom rules. Teachers are also responsible for the testing of class material and

also control what assignments and activities are evaluated. A favorite place was free of incentives for learning and only one student mentioned a reward for behavior. This may indicate that children do not like to be evaluated, that is, evaluation is not part of their favorite place. Evaluation was not present in the categories most likely to be creative and not likely to be creative.

Curriculum Content

The concept curriculum content was used collectively to describe classrooms where students either: (a) perceived a subject or activity as difficult or easy; (b) felt they were good or not good at a subject or activity; or (c) liked or did not like a subject or activity.

The concept curriculum content provided a comparison between the categories of not likely to be creative and learning is difficult and the categories of learning is easy and very favorite place. The concept curriculum content was derived from the themes too hard/do not like it and adept at subject, however children's responses in the two themes were opposite one another. For instance, in the categories not likely to be creative and learning is difficult, children discussed: (a) receiving too much work; (b) the difficulty of academic subjects; (c) dislike for subjects or activities; and (d) not being good at particular subjects or activities. In the categories learning is easy and very favorite place children discussed: (a) fun, enjoyment and like for certain activities; (b) a subject or activity as being easy; and (c) being good at certain subjects or activities.

Under the concept curriculum content, differences between the categories of not likely to be creative and learning is difficult and the categories of learning is easy and very favorite place emerged. A place where children were not likely to be creative was one in which they did not like the subject or activity or they felt they were not proficient at particular subjects or activities. A place where children were

not creative was not necessarily a place where they found the work difficult.

Children described a place where learning is difficult as one in which particular subjects and activities were hard or they felt they were not good at particular subjects or activities. Dislike for a subject or activity appeared to be unrelated to its difficulty level.

The characteristics of a place where learning is easy are: (a) children feel proficient at a subject or activity; and (b) the subject or activity is easy for them. Like or love for an activity was not as important here as it was for the category of very favorite place. "Fun" was not connected to learning being easy. According to several children in the category very favorite place, it seemed important that a favorite place be "fun". Like or love for a subject or activity and being good at it were also essential characteristics of a favorite place.

The concept curriculum content emerged from children's understanding and perceptions of what and how class material was being taught. Children's discussion of their like or dislike, and perceived difficulty of subjects and activities is in a sense an evaluation of the curriculum. Children not only focused on their like or dislike of certain subjects or activities but expanded their responses by talking about certain aspects of the subject. For example, Kathy found the eighth notes in music difficult. Jennifer stated that the times tables in math were hard. Children in the categories of not likely to be creative and learning is difficult were evaluating the curriculum when they commented that the worksheets, story problems, and reading certain books were hard. Children also evaluated the content of the tests they received. For instance, Carla stated, "We have like tests on like groups of instruments that we don't learn about in class." In the category learning is easy, children seemed to enjoy subjects and activities because the teacher structured the curriculum to make learning easier and more enjoyable for students. Children recalled enjoying art activities, projects

and academic-oriented games. These activities helped make learning easy for them. In the category very favorite place, it was important for a place to be “fun”. “Fun” was associated with projects, music, reading, sports, and learning-oriented games. Teachers contributed to making this place fun for children.

The concept curriculum content was associated with all five concepts. Teaching style may inadvertently influence children’s perceptions of certain subjects. Teachers dictate how they teach and the activities they wish to incorporate into lesson plans. Teachers may prefer activities in which students can interact with one another and move around the room. At other times teachers may want to do activities that involve a minimal amount of noise so children can concentrate. Teachers have the power to give children choices about what they learn. They can also structure the curriculum to accommodate individual freedom within an assignment. Teachers are able to incorporate learning-oriented games and projects into the curriculum, as well as decide how these games and projects are evaluated.

MINOR THEMES

Arts as Creativity

The theme “arts as creativity” was prevalent in two categories: most likely to be creative and not likely to be creative. It was absent in the categories learning is easy, learning is difficult and very favorite place.

In the category most likely to be creative, the arts and its relationship to creativity were discussed under the theme “active”, as well as the theme “arts and performing”. For children in the category most likely to be creative, creativity was associated with doing art projects, playing instruments or singing, activities using body movements, and writing. In the category not likely to be creative, children linked creativity with artistic activities such as writing, painting, and drawing; though their teacher prohibited them from doing these activities.

Under the theme “active” four children talked about active learning in terms of “making things” such as ornaments, animal masks, and origami bunnies. All four children stated that they “liked to make” these art projects. Under the theme “arts and performing”, art and its association to creativity went beyond just talking about art projects. Three children reported that they enjoyed singing, making music, or performing at programs. Two children discussed creativity in regard to having the opportunity to write poetry or science fiction stories. Three children also discussed creative movement activities. In the category most likely to be creative, it is evident that creativity is connected with the fine, performing, visual, and literary arts.

In the category not likely to be creative, six children linked creativity with either writing poetry or stories, painting, and drawing. These children stated that they could not be creative in particular places because the teacher did not allow them to write, draw, or paint. Their ability to be creative was hindered because they could only do certain artistic activities in these places.

For children in the categories of most likely to be creative and not likely to be creative, creativity was connected to the arts. The arts included drawing, writing, painting, singing in musical performances, and creative movement activities.

Themes Present in Only One Category

The following themes only appeared in one category: (a) Children’s Use of Imagination; (b) Socialization and Freedom to Talk with Friends; and (c) Play. Although these themes were prominent in only one category some of the children’s responses are related to themes in other categories.

The theme “children’s use of imagination”, in the category very favorite place is somewhat similar to the sub-category “creative movement” in the category most likely to be creative, under the theme “arts and performing”. In the category most likely to be creative, children discussed having the opportunity to do different things

with their bodies such as doing flips on the bird cage, or hanging upside-down on the monkey bars. Two of these children engaged in pretend play. In the category very favorite place, only two children talked about using their imagination. Rob said that he played a game called "Top Gun" with his friends and pretended to shoot at airplanes. Kevin pretended that the monkey bars were a spaceship, a house, or a cave. He also pretended to be someone else such as a "submarine person" or an "airplane person". In the category most likely to be creative, children described creativity in terms of art, music, writing, and creative movement which sometimes included pretend play. Two children in the category very favorite place talked about using their imagination for pretend play, but did not mention that this was related to creativity or was an artistic activity.

Thus, the use of imagination was not associated with creativity to the degree that one may have expected. In fact, imaginative behavior emerged only as a subtheme and thus its relative absence is noteworthy. In this study of eight and nine year-old children, very few mentioned using their imagination in terms of pretend or pretense play. This may be a developmental phenomenon as pretense play is known to decline during the elementary school years. However, this finding may still raise concerns about the role of pretense in these children's life at school. These few children who talked about imaginative activities did so in ways that seemed developmentally appropriate for their ages.

Unlike any other category, the presence of friends and having the opportunity to talk with them seemed to be most important to children in the category very favorite place. Children enjoyed doing a variety of activities with their friends such as playing dodgeball, tag, and hide-and-seek. They also liked talking to their friends about various "stuff". Socialization and freedom to talk with friends was mentioned by a few children under the concepts concentration and teacher. In the category most

likely to be creative, under the theme “concentration”, children preferred to be by themselves so they were able to concentrate. In the category learning is easy, for some children it was easy to concentrate because classmates were not talking or socializing with one another. In the category not likely to be creative, under the theme “freedom/teacher as confining”, one child stated that he played freeze tag with his friends on occasion, whereas another child seemed bothered by the fact that he was not allowed to sit next to or talk to his friends during lunch time in his classroom. Socialization and freedom to talk with friends was mentioned by a few children in the aforementioned categories, but it does not appear to be a salient characteristic of those categories. There were only a few occasions when the intent of the children’s statements were about socialization more than the predominating concepts of freedom and choice or concentration.

In the category learning is difficult, children compared work with play. Chris thought the playground was a place to play, and not a place to learn. Randy could not do work on the playground because the children’s playing was a distraction. Tom rushed to finish his work so that he could play computer games. Under the theme “active in the categories most likely to be creative, very favorite place, and learning is easy, children thought of play in terms of sports, learning games, art activities, and playing music. These activities were considered enjoyable for most children. Children did not however, associate these activities with work.

Chapter V

Discussion

CONCLUSIONS

What is the emotional climate of third and fourth grade classrooms from the child's perspective?

- The emotional climate of the classroom can be defined along six concepts and four minor themes. The concepts were: (a) Freedom/Choice; (b) Teacher; (c) Concentration; (d) Activity Level; (e) Evaluation; and (f) Curriculum Content. The four minor themes were: (a) Arts as Creativity; (b) Children's Use of Imagination; (c) Socialization and Freedom to Talk with Friends; and (d) Play.
- The emotional climate of the classroom as seen through the eyes of the child is multidimensional and related among the concepts listed above. The six concepts form an interrelated multidimensional hexagon figure with the child framed in a three dimensional position above the figure and interrelating with all the concepts (Figure 1).
- Although children do not directly talk about the classroom environment in terms of psychological safety, their responses indicated that the following concepts are related to psychological safety: (a) Freedom/Choice; (b) Teacher; and (c) Evaluation. The children in this study did not perceive their school environment as psychologically safe.
- Children perceive a classroom with regard to the likelihood to be creative or not as related to the concepts of: (a) freedom and choice; (b) teacher as helper and guide; (c) active learning, with individual parameters for concentration; and with a noticeable absence of any reference to evaluation.
- Children in this study implicitly understood what Bredekamp & Copple (1997) describe as a developmentally appropriate classroom.

Children's perceptions of the emotional climate of their third and fourth grade classrooms were examined. This was the first study on this topic to investigate the emotional climate of classrooms using children's photos of their school, an open-ended interview and a qualitative analysis. Other studies have indirectly looked at the emotional climate of classrooms through the eyes of ethnographers using in-depth participant observer techniques over time (6 months to several years) (Fraser & O'Brien, 1985; Fuqua, 1989; Griswold; 1994). The majority of previous studies relied on the use of a questionnaire or interviews with the teacher. Only a few studies have interviewed children directly. In general, though, most studies have focused on only one or a few aspects of the classroom environment such as students attitudes toward one particular subject, children's and teacher's actual and preferred classroom environment, or children's perceptions of their teachers. Research using a questionnaire is limited because children's perceptions of their classroom are measured along narrow dimensions of a classroom environment inventory such as satisfaction, friction, or competitiveness. This study was more comprehensive than previous studies because children were able to describe in their own words their classroom environment as well as their school environment by talking about their own pictures taken throughout the school.

INTEGRATION OF THE LITERATURE AND FINDINGS

Classrooms and other places in the school were discussed by children in this study. Children chose to take pictures and talk about their classroom, the music room, the art room, the Resource room, the TAG room, and the playground. These environments had shared conceptualizations as perceived by the children. These concepts relate to previous literature.

Children conceptualized the classroom in terms of the presence or absence of choice. Under the concept freedom and choice children described these classrooms

as places where they were or were not given the freedom to do certain activities or were presented or not presented with choices. Choice was most salient in places other than the child's classroom such as in the art room, music room, and TAG room. Children were given the freedom to explore, often while doing art projects or playing on the playground. By and large it was in their classroom or the library where children talked about not having the freedom to choose what activities they wanted to do.

Children who are given the freedom to explore new materials and ideas, play with these materials and ideas, and formulate new knowledge and skills may have opportunities to engage in creative thinking (Tegano et al., 1991). Children in this study were given opportunities to explore while doing art. They were given the chance to decide what they wanted to do within an assignment. Some children were also able to decide what activities they wanted to play in gym class, what types of art projects to do in art class, and what instrument to play in music class. Providing students with chances to "share" in the decision-making process promotes more ownership and increased control over events in the classroom. Teachers are able to present students with choices about which assignment to do or what to do after an assignment is completed. In these situations, the teacher engages students in self-cognition about their work so that students are able to make decisions about what to do next, and how to do it (Stevens & Anderson, 1987).

Some theorists view the teacher as the sole authority figure in the classroom, meaning that the only power students legitimately have is that authorized and delegated by the teacher (Getzels & Thelen, 1960). Teachers may include children in choosing and planning assignments. This was evident in children who stated that they were able to choose among activities or what they wanted to do within an activity. Abby's teacher asked the students for their ideas about what to make in art

class. This involved the students in planning assignments. They may also ask children for their input on developing appropriate rules and guidelines for the classroom. The more involved children are in helping construct classroom rules and routines, the more interested they will be in maintaining them (Corno, 1992). In the category not likely to be creative, children thought that their teachers were strict and imposed too many rules. But, children were also disruptive and rules may not have been clearly stated or enforced. Freedom and choice is an important characteristic of a psychologically safe classroom and is discussed more fully later.

Teachers' beliefs, values, and chosen practices are major factors in creating a positive classroom climate (Court & Riecken, 1991). In this study, children primarily perceived their teachers as helpers, guides, and people who made the learning process easier for them. In the categories learning is easy and very favorite place, children described their teacher as "nice". In the categories most likely to be creative, learning is easy, and very favorite place, children stated that they liked their teacher. Sometimes, teachers were also perceived as providing little help or guidance to children, or as people who set strict rules and disciplined students.

Teacher characteristics were important to children in this study, and was the focus of a study by Shaw et al. (1990) who investigated college students' perceptions of their elementary school teachers. In the Shaw et al. (1990) study, individuals commented that they enjoyed teachers who were fair, friendly, caring, helpful, used "hands on" activities, and clarified explanations for them. These teachers also actively engaged children in the learning process by using real-life and practical examples (Shaw et al., 1990). In this study the results concur, particularly with regard to friendly, caring, and helpful teachers who offered explanations and planned hands-on activities. The way the teacher structures the curriculum and interacts with students sets the tone of the classroom. Shaw et al. (1990) also mentioned that

moderate voice levels, positive feedback, and absences of favoritism contributed to a comfortable climate. The above teacher characteristics are related to the concept of psychological safety.

Teachers in a psychologically safe classroom do the following: (a) establish friendly, trusting, warm, considerate, and respectful relationships with students; (b) give children positive feedback, praise, and encouragement; (c) provide clear rules and enforced the rules consistently; (d) help develop group cohesion by allowing students to work collaboratively on some assignments; (e) structure activities and lessons that foster critical thinking and problem solving; and (f) promote creative expression and communication (Cabello & Terrell, 1991; Cheng, 1995; Court & Riecken, 1991; Shaw et al., 1990). The findings of the present study confirm five of these six as salient in the interviews (clear and enforced rules were not included), although some of these salient concepts were not framed positively. Likewise, Fouts (1989) and Heroman (1990) results supported teacher as helper as a component of a positive classroom climate. It comes as no surprise that teacher behaviors and characteristic are an important part of a school and classroom environment and that these were expressed with extreme clarity through the child's voice in this study.

Under the concept concentration, the majority of children preferred a quiet place, without any peer distractions. But, some children also wanted to have more opportunities to converse with friends. It seemed that there was a differential tolerance level for environmental stimuli depending on the individual child, especially with regard to being creative or not. Some children perceived noise as a distraction, and some needed it for creativity to occur. When discussing learning or not learning, the classroom parameters were described as quiet or loud respectively. Perhaps an optimal balance of quiet and noise is individually preferred by particular children in particular situations.

Teachers may be able to organize the classroom and structure the curriculum and activities to accommodate children who prefer quiet and those who prefer noise. This can be accomplished by alternating periods of quiet with periods of busy activity in the classroom. Teachers may consider designating a corner of the room as a "quiet corner" where children can go read, draw, or write.

Shaw et al. (1990) found that moderate voice levels were conducive to a comfortable classroom climate. But, individuals discussed this in relation to the teacher's voice not the students' voices as was the case in this study. For example, individuals in the Shaw (1990) study said, "He does not shout at students, even if they do something wrong." and "She used a soft voice when she spoke..."(p. 3). These statements appear to be unrelated to children's ability to concentrate. Children in this study did not mention the teacher's voice level, but instead focused on the voice levels and disruptive behaviors of their classmates.

The extent to which students behave in an orderly and polite manner and classroom activities are well-organized was measured by Moos, (1974) using the Order and Organization Scale on the CES. This is related to the concept of concentration as defined by this study. In a study by Watkins & Akande (1992), students preferred a classroom in which the teacher did not put much emphasis on order and organization. Teachers in this study were found to enforce strict behavior standards that forced the students to focus on learning. Fouts & Meyers (1992) investigated the science classroom environment, and it was determined that students' attitudes toward science were more positive when they rated their classroom as being high in order and organization. Students preferred an orderly and organized classroom, where expectations and rules were clearly stated, and the need for the teacher to enforce rules was minimal (Fouts & Meyers, 1992). In an earlier study by Fouts (1989) that investigated the climate of social studies classrooms, students rated

social studies more positively when others were well-behaved, were calm and quiet in well-organized activities, were involved in class discussions, and where the teacher established clear expectations and enforced the rules.

The present results agree with the literature in that learning as easy or difficult seemed to be related to the ability to concentrate and thus to the order maintained in the classroom. What is most interesting, however, are the findings that this is not always the case for creativity to occur or not occur. Children expressed individual differences for noise levels, distractions, and talking with friends when asked to talk about places where they are or are not likely to be creative. This finding might be examined in light of Rogers (1954) conception of creativity being connected to one's awareness of various meanings or perceivings. He said that these sensings take place inside which may be another way of describing the process of reflection. Does reflection in the creative process require a degree of concentration? The data from this study would indicate that this is an individual process. Or perhaps it is a developmental process, in that for some children creativity is related more to a lack of evaluation (evaluation was not mentioned in the creativity categories) and less to the process of reflection or concentration. Creativity is discussed more fully in a later section.

Children seemed very aware of the teacher's use of reward and discipline to control behavior or to recognize academic achievements. The concept evaluation included the themes of rewards, discipline and the sub-theme testing and evaluation. Children in the categories learning is easy and very favorite place were influenced by the rewards they received for doing their work well and for exhibiting good behavior. It appeared that children perceived rewards as a powerful tool used to control children's behavior and as an incentive to try harder at academic subjects. Children also talked about discipline strategies that were used to control disruptive

behavior. In the category learning is difficult children felt that the tests were "too hard" and they were not adequately prepared to take them because in some cases the material on the test was not covered in class. Children clearly did not like being evaluated on a topic they were unskilled at and felt pressured to succeed perhaps because they were rewarded when they performed well on a test. For this study, this may be interpreted as a focus on extrinsic reward systems.

By de-emphasizing grades and other extrinsic rewards teachers are encouraging learning for its own sake. Under the concept of evaluation, there were no references to self evaluation (intrinsic) by children. Do teachers instill a sense of accomplishment in children by giving them candy, a star, or a sticker? Teachers may plan lessons without early progress evaluations (feedback) from external sources. Evaluation from a teacher implies a sense of teacher superiority and restricts children's power to judge their own work (Kamii, 1982). When children have the opportunity to express themselves and their work in a nonevaluative context, their aptitude for certain activities and subjects increases (Corno, 1992). Children may not take chances or tackle difficult tasks because they want to avoid negative evaluations. For instance, Cabello & Terrell (1991) reported that when the teacher's evaluative nature was perceived as a threat, children engaged in more ego-protecting strategies.

Positive comments were perceived as helpful to children. Such comments provide encouragement to children and enhance their self-esteem, the opposite of the ego-protecting behaviors described by Rogers (1954). Positive comments can be used when redirecting inappropriate behaviors and encouragement may be more desirable than praise (Hitz & Driscoll, 1988). The present study showed that extrinsic evaluation was related to learning contexts, whereas creative environments lacked reference to evaluation.

Rewards are commonly used to increase external motivation. With young children, rewards negatively affect motivation and performance and do not encourage creative thinking in children (Amabile, 1983; Groves & Sawyers, 1987). If children are rewarded on creative tasks that they initially enjoy, intrinsically, their creativity on such tasks in the future may be lessened (Amabile, 1983). Likewise, Maslow (1959), speaking of the affective consequence of evaluation discusses creativity as a means to express ideas without the fear of ridicule.

The content of the curriculum and its importance was stressed among children in this study. Under the concept curriculum content, children discussed their opinions about what and how they were being taught. Children did not like certain subjects or activities because they were difficult. Some children thought that their teacher assigned them "hard work" or "too much work". In contrast, some children felt bored and unchallenged because the work was "too easy". Children also enjoyed certain subjects or activities taught by the teacher. The Teacher innovation scale of the CES measures the extent to which teachers are innovative with teaching methodology and student participation in designing classroom activities (Moos, 1974). This is related to the concept curriculum content. Innovative teaching methods described by children in this study included acting out a story, making a plaster map of Tennessee, showing the children a life size plastic model of the human body, and playing learning-oriented games such as "Set" or "Measurement Monsters".

Many studies indirectly addressed the importance of the curriculum when studying the classroom environment. Heroman (1990) found that students enjoyed teachers who used methods that increased their interest and actively involved students in the learning process. Students also liked teachers who emphasized the value and importance of learning (Fouts, 1989). This was also important to children

in the present study. Students mentioned that their teachers did not make learning a subject relevant to them. In Fouts' studies (1989; 1992) relating to the science and social studies classroom environment, it was determined that no matter what the subject being taught, it was the teaching methods that influenced children's perceptions of the subject. In this study, perhaps children who disliked a subject because it was boring may be influenced by a teacher who makes the subject uninteresting. Children in the categories learning is easy and very favorite place liked certain subjects and activities because their teacher made them "fun" or enjoyable. Typically, classroom environment studies do not solely focus on the curriculum content but incorporate it into activity level and teacher characteristics.

In the present study, under the concept of activity level children discussed their liking for academic-oriented games and projects. Similarly, Shaw et al. (1990) found that students enjoyed learning through "hands-on" activities and field trips. They also liked teachers who provided them with clear explanations. In this study, under the concept teacher, children liked teachers that gave them clear explanations. A study by Fuqua (1989) found that students learned better when teachers prepared lessons which had clearly stated objectives and an enjoyable presentation. This is consistent with the present study in that some children were bored or found the work to be too easy when teachers presented them with worksheets. Teachers did not make learning relevant to some children which may be related to the absence of clearly stated objectives. Likewise, teachers who incorporate physical and hands-on activities into the curriculum contribute to a positive classroom climate.

The results of this study show that children are aware of this curricular premise. Children at this age need physical actions to help them understand abstract concepts. Children, in comparison to adults, are more dependent on hands-on experiences. Learning should involve active rather than passive activities. Children need to be

provided with direct experiences instead of sitting and listening for extended periods of time. The curriculum content should be relevant, engaging, and meaningful to the students. Children in this study were able to express their need for meaning and relevance in the curriculum. Because children understand concepts through their experiences they need to be challenged in order to use and refine the thinking skills they bring with them and to identify and solve problems that interest them (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

Since children rely on perceptual information when constructing knowledge, it is imperative for materials to be real or concrete if possible. Real objects provide information for children that pretend objects or pictures of objects do not contain. Learning by way of real objects may help children make sense of their world and construct new knowledge (Gullo, 1992).

With regard to relevance, it is crucial for children to have experiences with familiar objects that they can manipulate before they can understand the meaning of symbols. Children should be given opportunities to experiment with objects such as grouping them, pouring from them, stacking them, and interacting with them with other children and adults. Teachers should use objects that are relevant to children's life experiences. Concepts may be easier to comprehend if learning can be made relevant to children's everyday experiences (Gullo, 1992). Relevance of a subject seemed important to children in the category learning is difficult. According to these children, a subject was difficult because the teacher did not stress its relevance or value. Teachers who incorporated academic oriented games or projects into the curriculum may have also stressed the importance of certain subjects.

IMPLICATIONS BASED ON PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

A psychologically safe classroom has the following characteristics: (a) children are permitted to express their ideas openly without fear of ridicule or criticism from

the teacher or other students; (b) children are presented with opportunities to take risks (experiment, explore, create); (c) teachers give students positive feedback and praise; (d) teachers ask students open-ended questions; and (e) teachers implement lessons that encourage problem-solving skills and challenge students (Adamson, 1985; Dodge, 1992; Honig, 1983; Kennedy, 1995; Maslow, 1959; Wallace, 1986). Psychological safety was directly mentioned by only two children, but it was present in children's responses when they described certain places. Tammy, when talking about her favorite place, stated that her classroom was a safe place because she knew her classmates well and they did not "make fun of her." Similarly, Roxanne, in the place where learning is easy, found comfort in asking the librarian a question because when she asked a question in her classroom her classmates laughed at her. These two responses are related to the first criteria listed above, expression without fear of ridicule. Likewise, Rogers' (1954) first condition of psychological safety was to accept the individual as having unconditional worth.

The second condition of psychological safety according to Rogers (1954) was to provide a climate in which external evaluation was absent. In this study under the category learning is difficult, many children talked about the concept evaluation in the form of testing. This was not limited to the classroom and also included the resource room, the music room, the library, and the gym. All the children commented that the tests were "hard". Some children felt that they were not adequately prepared for the test and that their teacher asked them questions about information not covered in class. In the categories learning is easy, learning is difficult, and very favorite place, children received a reward for getting the correct answer or exhibiting good behavior. Children seemed to feel frustrated because there was pressure placed on them to perform well and they felt they were not skilled on the topic in which they were being evaluated. In interpreting these children's

responses, this type of testing and evaluation may not make these classrooms psychologically safe.

Understanding empathically, the ability to see an individual and what she is feeling and doing from her point of view, was Rogers' (1954) third condition of psychological safety. This condition was evident in the concept teacher. In the categories most likely to be creative, learning is easy, and very favorite place "teacher" was perceived in a positive light. Tammy indicated that, "she helps me understand what I'm supposed to be doing." It seemed that teachers in these categories cared about the needs of individual students. Teachers helped students understand academic subjects and provided easy to understand examples and explanations to students which contributed to making the learning process easier for children. Children liked their teacher because she taught them how to do certain things like how to play musical instruments, how to play various sports, or how to draw. Teachers were also well-liked and considered "nice" when they rewarded children for their academic success, gave children treats for good behavior, allowed children to do art activities, or made learning fun by playing academic-oriented games with children. These teachers may have provided a psychologically safe environment for children (albeit, rewards and treats may not always be regarded as a positive means of creating safety; however, few children clearly saw it as positive and were not threatened).

In contrast, children in the categories not likely to be creative and learning is difficult "teacher" was perceived in a negative light. A teacher was someone who restricted their freedom by not giving them any choices about what they were learning. Children clearly did not like the fact that teachers "told them what do". "Teacher" was also perceived as someone who failed to make learning relevant to children. Teachers did not help students with work and did not provide them with

clear explanations when asked. According to these children, these may be considered ineffective teachers because they were not empathetically responsive to children's needs. For Rogers (1954), the condition of understanding empathically was related to the concept of psychological freedom. Psychological freedom was "the complete freedom to think, to feel, and to be whatever is most inward within himself" (Rogers, 1954, p. 258).

In a similar vein, Rogers talks about a child's need to expand, extend, develop, or express their potentialities. This is also evident in these data as described by children's conception of freedom and choice. Psychological safety can be fostered in a classroom where children are given the freedom to explore new ideas, reveal their feelings, discuss their thoughts with others, and make choices about what they learn. In a psychologically safe classroom, teachers give students encouragement and praise, not only for good behavior and academic excellence, but to students involved in creativity, curiosity, and independent thinking. The use of praise was evidenced by only two children who talked about being praised for doing good work, but only one was praised by a teacher.

Evidence of psychological freedom can be found in children's responses under the concept freedom/choice and under the theme socialization and freedom to talk with friends. Freedom and choice was presented to children when doing an artistic activity such as playing a musical instrument, writing a story, painting a picture, or drawing. The concept of freedom and choice was also found on the playground where children were permitted to play games with friends and engage in pretend play. They were also allowed to talk to their friends. These were activities that they could not do in their classrooms. In the category not likely to be creative children's freedom to do artistic activities was inhibited, and they were presented with either no or limited choices. For some children, freedom meant having the opportunity to use

their imagination or express their ideas. They were able to do this on the playground and in other selected places within their school.

In this study, the concept of freedom/choice was primarily visible when children discussed their freedom to do "what they wanted" within an assignment involving art or some creative activity. According to these children, teachers in the classroom generally did not present them with choices involving their learning of academic material.

Rogers (1954) believed that the classroom environment was a place where students could discover their own potentialities. They were able to do this in a classroom where they were free to try new experiences and subsequently take risks. In this type of classroom children may feel empowered to "reach" for knowledge and to challenge themselves to create new ideas. This component of having the opportunity to take risks was not mentioned in the protocols. Children's conception of learning was not tied to the challenge of learning about math, science, reading or other academic subjects. It appeared as if children did not have an interest in learning as defined in an academic paradigm. Instead, according to these children, learning involved such things as sports, doing art projects, singing, and playing musical instruments. On the other hand, children may have been challenged while doing "hands-on" projects and taking part in learning-oriented games. They described these activities in a positive light. It remains an interpretation to say that these "project approach" activities were challenging. Children in this study may not perceive their environment as psychologically-safe because they did not mention learning in connection to an intrinsically motivated challenge.

The children seemed to have a comfort zone in the classroom and they stayed within the boundaries of that zone. They may have been comfortable with the work being easy and not have wanted to seek out challenges. Children seemed to know the

"rules" and "roles" of the classroom. They seemed to have learned to follow the rules and stay within their roles. Although children did not directly state that games, projects, and sports were challenging, it is an interpretation to read this into the statements under the concept activity level.

INTERPRETATION BASED ON CLASSROOM CLIMATE FOR CREATIVITY

Creativity is fostered in a classroom that has the following characteristics: (a) the classroom is a safe and comfortable place where everyone is respected; (b) children are presented with opportunities to make choices; (c) lessons and activities challenge students and encourage problem-solving; (d) lesson plans incorporate new skills and concepts; (e) supplemental materials are used to extend, not only to reinforce the curriculum; (f) intellectual and academic risk-taking is encouraged by asking students open-ended questions; (g) the teacher gives the student positive feedback and praise; and (h) grades and other extrinsic rewards are de-emphasized to encourage learning for its own sake (Adamson, 1985; Dodge, 1992; Kennedy, 1995).

Exploration, play, and creative expression are essential components of the elementary school curriculum. In this study, children reported that they were given opportunities to explore, play, and express themselves in their most creative place. Creativity may emerge in a classroom where students are actively engaged in learning, the teacher shows concern and caring for students, and the teacher guides students through the learning process (Court & Riecken, 1991). When talking about the place where they were most likely to be creative children perceived their teacher as someone who provided them with direction and guidance. That is to say that these children did not equate a place to be creative with a total lack of structure, rather they seemed to perceive that although choice was salient, so was a facilitative adult.

Teachers play a pivotal role in fostering creative thinking in the classroom. A

classroom in which teachers interact with children based on their goals for learning is one that enhances creative potential. Teachers can seek out occasions in which to encourage problem finding and problem solving. In this study, teachers did this by incorporating "hands-on" learning activities in the classroom and by giving them choices about their learning. All teachers bring into the classroom a distinct teaching style which plays a role in the way they motivate children, use rewards and encouragement, and perceive children's academic success. These characteristics may affect how teachers observe children, the importance they place on time and schedules, and their interactions with students. Children in this study did not talk about being given encouragement by a teacher specifically, but they did talk about teachers being helpful and guiding their learning. However, teachers used rewards to motivate children to do well. Teachers also helped students with their work which may have increased their academic success. Teachers can foster student's creative potential once they are aware of how their teaching style influences the day-to-day interactions with children (Tegano et al., 1991).

A component of creativity is the teacher's ability to adapt to unstructured or open-ended situations or in other words, tolerate ambiguity. Teachers who welcome ambiguous situations are more likely to demonstrate flexibility in the classroom, to permit time for children's ideas to prosper, and to be less directive and less evaluative when interacting with students. These are all characteristics which promote creative expression in the classroom. Some teachers in the categories most likely to be creative and learning is easy fostered creativity by giving students choices about an assignment or allowing for self-expression within an assignment. Many children who were permitted to do art projects in the classroom were also given opportunities to create what they wanted. Teachers also fostered creativity by instituting learning-oriented games or projects such as dressing up and acting out the characters in a

book, making a model of the human body, and dividing pretend money. These activities may have required a degree of ambiguity tolerance on the part of the teacher.

Teachers are able to design developmentally appropriate activities that foster creative potential and at the same time help students construct the knowledge and acquire the skills outlined in the curriculum. Tegano et al., (1991) suggested ways in which the curriculum could be modified to encourage creative thinking. The following is a list of these suggestions and for modifying the curriculum and are examples of how this study may be interpreted. Teachers can modify the curriculum to:

- (a) Make content relevant, engaging, and meaningful to children and actively involve children in choosing the materials. For example, children who were playing academic-oriented games and learning through classroom projects were found to be actively engaged in learning and choice.
- (b) Provide materials which allow children to think critically and explore their environment. For instance, teachers assigned projects which involved making a planet, a map, and the human body.
- (c) Engage children in physically and mentally active learning activities. Children enjoyed singing, playing musical instruments, drawing, painting, writing stories, using their imagination, and doing creative things with their bodies. Thus, a place where children were not creative was also a place where children were prohibited from doing these activities. Children were able to express their creativity while playing sports, or playing learning-oriented games. These learning-oriented games directly involved students in the learning process.
- (d) Foster intrinsic motivation. It did not appear that teachers fostered intrinsic motivation in this study but, to some extent, they emphasized the value of rewards

such as free homework passes, candy, and extra playtime outside.

- (e) Permit communication among children and adults and the acceptance of ideas without evaluation until they have been stretched, combined, and embellished. A place where children were or were not creative was also free from evaluation.

Children perceived creativity as the arts in this study by description of the visual, literary, and performing arts. Tegano et al. (1991) discussed ways in which drama, music, movement, and art can be integrated into the curriculum. Drama activities may include charades or games involving the imitation of various facial expressions. Creative expression can be fostered through puppetry. Children can also act out stories and make up new stories. Drama can be used in other parts of the curriculum by using creative dialogue techniques. According to Tegano et al. (1991) creativity is not just related to the arts and can be integrated throughout the curriculum.

AN INTEGRATED MULTIDIMENSIONAL CONCEPTUALIZATION OF CLASSROOM CLIMATE

Children perceived their classroom as an interrelated system involving the following six concepts: (a) Freedom/Choice; (b) Teacher; (c) Concentration; (d) Activity Level; (e) Evaluation and (f) Curriculum Content. The concepts represented children's conceptualization of school. All of these concepts were found to be interrelated, in that one influences the other in some way, except concentration which was not related to the concept of freedom and choice.

A narrow definition of an integrated classroom is one in which each of the content areas such as math, social studies, and math is recognized as a separate unit, but is also part of a whole. In this view, an integrated approach means that when teachers plan activities for individual subjects, they keep in mind that other curriculum concepts and skills are woven into the activity. There are several

advantages of the integrated curriculum: (a) it closely matches the natural ways in which children learn spontaneously in their environment; (b) it provides for greater depth of curriculum coverage; (c) it builds upon children's natural interests; (d) it teaches children knowledge, processes, and skills in a meaningful context; (e) it provides for maximum flexibility with the curriculum; and (f) it provides teachers with a curriculum-planning device (Gullo, 1992). This study supports the idea of an integrated curriculum but goes beyond this to present a model of the child's perception of an interrelated multidimensional conceptualization of the school environment.

Others have theorized about the complexity of the classroom. Schmuck & Schmuck (1974) defined the classroom climate as the group's evaluation of various dimensions of the psychosocial environment. According to them, the following five characteristics are present in every classroom and affect the classroom climate: (a) interpersonal expectations; (b) leadership and influence; (c) awareness of norms; (d) verbal and non-verbal communication channels; and (e) cohesion. These characteristics can be manipulated in order to strengthen the classroom climate. This model is based on the belief that classrooms are rich and complex social systems that account for more than just academic learning (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1974).

Doyle (1979) also conceptualized the classroom as being a complex social system. Classrooms were comprised of the dimensions of multidimensionality, simultaneity, and unpredictability. Multidimensionality was defined as the high number of events and activity occurring in classrooms. Doyle contended that a classroom was a crowded place in which many children with different interests and abilities used a limited supply of resources to accomplish a broad range of social and personal objectives. Simultaneity was the overlapping occurrences of classroom events which happened continuously. Unpredictability referred to the changing

nature of classroom activities. Doyle (1979) also believed that classroom characteristics were a result of the on-going negotiation between teachers and students.

According to Getzels & Thelen (1960), the classroom environment is comprised of a broad spectrum of variables and these variables interact to form the characteristics of individual classrooms. Characteristics of the classroom are determined by curriculum expectations, the compulsory social interaction of the classroom group, the control of the classroom by the teacher, and the network of out-of-class groups to which the students and teachers belong (Getzels & Thelen, 1960). Thus, the classroom environment is not solely defined by the teacher and includes relationships among classmates and the content of the curriculum. The present study substantiates this in that the teacher plays a pivotal role in children's perception of the classroom environment. The content of the curriculum determines whether children find subjects easy or difficult, and like or dislike for the subject. The present study did not investigate the influence of out-of-class groups. Out of class groups were not mentioned by the children, though this does not negate their importance in a broader context. The present study expanded on Getzels & Thelen's (1960) characteristics of the classroom to include the role of evaluation, freedom/choice, activity level and concentration in the classroom.

Moos (1974) conceptualized the classroom environment as having the following three dimensions: (a) personal relationships, such as how involved individuals are, how much they help one another, and how spontaneously they express their feelings in a classroom; (b) personal development, such as the extent to which independence and achievement is encouraged or stifled; and (c) system maintenance and system change, such as how organized and orderly the classroom is, how clear expectations for behavior and outcomes are, how much control is maintained, and how responsive

the teacher and students are to change. The present study confirms these ideas. The students relationships with their peers and teachers influenced their perceptions of the classroom environment. The ability or inability to communicate with friends was important for learning and creativity to occur as well as the development of peer friendships. The system maintenance and system change dimensions were related to the concept of evaluation in this study. Teachers used reward and discipline to control behavior. Teachers also controlled the class by the nature of the activities in the classroom.

Perhaps Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) is the best match for the multidimensional interrelated model present in this study. According to Bredekamp & Copple (1997), in order to maintain a positive classroom climate the curriculum and teaching strategies must be developmentally appropriate. Teachers must integrate their knowledge about child development and its implications with regard to how to teach, the curriculum content (what to learn and when), ways to assess what children learned, and learn how to restructure the curriculum to coincide with children's strengths needs, and interests (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Developmentally appropriate practices not only are part of contributing to a positive classroom climate, but also help foster creativity in the classroom. The six concepts which form children's conceptualization of school are related to the components of DAP.

Classrooms should protect children's psychological safety by providing an environment that is secure, relaxed, and comfortable. For example, a couple of children in this study discussed feeling safe in their classroom because they were not ostracized. Generally, it seemed that children felt relaxed around a teacher who was nice, helped them with their work, and implemented learning-oriented games, contributing to a non-threatening atmosphere. In DAP teachers build positive,

personal relationships with children in an attempt to enhance their development. Children in this study discussed their liking and disliking for teachers, as well as the ways in which their teachers made learning “fun”, easy, boring, or difficult. In DAP, teachers create an intellectually engaging, responsive environment by providing students with a variety of experiences, projects, materials, and problems, and ideas to explore and investigate in the classroom. Children who were involved with art projects, games, sports, writing, music, and playing on the computer in this study were actively engaged in learning. DAP classrooms are ones where teachers give children meaningful choices and allow them to self-select certain activities. Some children in this study described being able to choose what they wanted to do and being given some flexibility within an assignment which permitted self-expression; at least the children expressed this as the desirable situation. Teacher as helper and as guide is related to the belief that teachers should coach and guide children in the learning process.

Children talked about the use of discipline by their teacher, and some children believed that their teacher imposed too many rules. However, discipline strategies controlled disruptive behaviors which impeded children's ability to concentrate. In a DAP classroom, it is important for teachers to set clear, consistent, and fair limitations for student behavior. The tenets of DAP include a curriculum that is comprised of a broad range of content across disciplines that is socially relevant, intellectually engaging, and personally meaningful to children. Children in this study questioned the relevance of certain subjects. Evaluation should be appropriate to the age and experiences of children. Many children stated that the tests were too difficult or the questions asked were not covered in the lessons. The results of assessment should be used to adapt the curriculum and teaching to meet the needs of children. Assessment should reflect progress toward important learning and developmental

goals. Assessment should recognize individual variation in children and accommodate differences in learning styles and the rate of learning. This was not evident in the present study.

Children seemed to be aware of and seek out developmentally appropriate practices in a non-psychologically safe classroom. It is evident in children's responses that: (a) they enjoy a comfortable, non-threatening atmosphere for learning; (b) they prefer a teacher who helps, teaches, and guides them through the learning process; (c) they enjoy learning when teachers implement "hands-on" activities such as projects and learning-oriented games, and when teachers make learning relevant to students; and (d) they recognized the difficulty of tests as well as information presented on the test that was not covered in class (Bredekamp & Copple (1997).

Thus, it is possible that the children in this study were not experiencing a psychologically-safe environment (as defined by Rogers) where they felt safe enough to engage their own learning through challenge and risk-taking, pushing oneself to learn in an atmosphere of self-evaluation. At the same time, these children seemed to be fully aware of what the optimal school environment would be and were able to describe a developmentally appropriate setting.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Previous studies examined only one or two variables related to the classroom climate. These variables differed depending on the study. Fouts (1992) investigated student attitudes toward social studies and science using the Classroom Environment Scale (CES), whereas a study by Grady et al., focused on teacher's perceptions of their school. Cabello & Terrell (1991) and Court & Riecken (1991) studied ways in which teachers provided a warm and comfortable classroom climate. Shaw et al., (1990) examined college students' perceptions of their elementary and secondary

school teachers. Research by Ryan et al., (1992) & Watkins & Akande (1992) investigated students and teachers actual and preferred classroom environment. This research pertaining to classroom environments may be limited in that researchers discuss the different variables that affect the classroom climate such as teacher personality, school subject, gender of teacher, and curriculum content but not all these variables are studied together. Classroom environment variables are studied through the use of classroom environment inventories such as the My Class Inventory and the Classroom Environment Scale. Again, these inventories focus only on certain aspects of the classroom. Children's responses are limited to yes or no answers. For example, a child who answers yes to the question "In our class the work is hard to do?" may feel that only certain subjects are difficult but cannot explain this on the questionnaire. In this way, children are not able to talk about characteristics of their teachers, their like or dislike of various subjects, the activities they enjoy, how they feel about being evaluated, what choices they are given in the classroom, and how they feel about the learning process. In the present study, children were able to discuss various aspects of the classroom climate and these aspects were found to be interrelated.

This research confirms what we know but does it in an integrative way by giving children an open-ended opportunity to talk about their school. This study gave children a forum for expression of their strong opinions about what goes on in their classroom. They were willing to discuss aspects of their classroom as both positive and negative. The classroom climate is comprised of several factors such as relationships with teachers and peers, achievement, and curriculum content. These factors influence children's perception of their classroom climate. This study provides a more accurate and detailed understanding of children's conceptualizations of school through the use of pictures and an open-ended interview. Children were

able to describe in detail several aspects of the classroom climate. This study provides us information about how to structure the classroom to accommodate the needs and interests of children.

IMPLICATIONS

Based on what the children in this study reported, changes can be made to improve the classroom climate, and ultimately to improve learning. These changes are also indicative of a classroom that is psychologically safe. The following implications are presented as a result of this study:

- Teachers should establish positive personal relationships with children to foster their development.
- The curriculum should include a broad range of content across subject areas that is socially relevant, intellectually engaging, and personally meaningful to students.
- Teachers can involve students in planning assignments and activities by asking for children's input, thus making experiences relevant. Children recognize that they learn through active involvement.
- Teachers should provide students with positive feedback on daily class assignments and help children improve their academic performance. This may seem like re-inventing an old idea, however, this study clearly pointed to the powerful positive affect this holds for children. This positive emotion is tied to teacher's affect and may influence children's overall approach to school and learning.
- Teachers should work to dispel the myth that creativity is only related to the "arts". Creativity can be integrated throughout their life. Creativity is an approach rather than a subject area, though children seemed unaware of this. Efforts may be directed at helping children see the effects of creativity in all aspects of learning.
- Teachers should implement activities that allow students to interact with one another while being cognizant of individual needs for quiet periods for concentration.

- A non-threatening atmosphere can be fostered through the use of games, projects, and active learning.
- Testing should be appropriate to the age and experiences of children.
- Evaluation and discipline should be conceptually reframed as opportunities for a “mini-lesson” on respect, social interdependence, and making good choices.

Teachers may allow students to make choices, thus fostering autonomy.

FUTURE RESEARCH

There are several areas in which more research is needed. If one wanted to gain information about the emotional climate of one particular classroom, several children from that classroom could be interviewed to form a composite profile. This would be of interest if a particular model program were being implemented and may be an appropriate methodology for program evaluation. In-depth interviews, coupled with ethnographic methodologies over time would provide a more detailed glimpse of classroom climate.

Another area of further investigation is children's perceptions of their teachers. Although the focus of this study was not about student's perceptions of their teachers in these classrooms or places, children had strong opinions about their teachers. This information may be valuable for developing teacher training programs.

Future research should be extended to include children from urban and rural schools because perceptions of the classroom environment may differ among urban, suburban, and rural school districts.

It would be interesting to interview children at the beginning of the first grade and then again at the end of third or fourth grade to see if their perceptions changed over time. Likewise, a follow-up during middle-school of the children in this study perceptions would provide information about developmental changes in children's

conceptualization of school.

Many children in this study wanted to take pictures and talk about places in their afterschool program rather than their daytime classroom. A future study could apply this knowledge to children's perceptions of their afterschool program and teachers in that program.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

When this study was originally proposed, the My Class Inventory (MCI) was planned as a variable in a correlation design to investigate the following questions:

- (a) What are childrens' perceptions of the classroom environment using the My Class Inventory?
- (b) Do children's pictures correlate with their scale scores on the MCI. For example? Are children who score high on the Difficulty scale of the MCI more likely to choose to take a picture of their classroom as the place where learning is difficult for them and if they score low on the Difficulty scale are they more likely to choose their classroom as the place where learning is easy for them?

The qualitative analysis of the interview data became the focus of this study because the interview data could not be reliably coded into the five categories of the MCI (cohesiveness, friction, satisfaction, competition, and difficulty). The MCI and its results are presented here. Although the MCI was part of the original purpose of the study, it did not become the focus of the thesis .

Additionally, in any category there were, at the most, only nine out of twenty-four participants who chose to take pictures inside their classroom. Therefore, the planned analysis comparing the results of the MCI to the picture-taking data was not feasible (i.e., question b could not be answered).

PROCEDURE

This section presents the procedure and attempt to generate results that would answer the above stated research questions. Data collection occurred during two sessions.

Session 1

The researcher had been a volunteer with the YMCA afterschool program for

several weeks prior to data collection. As a volunteer for several afternoons during Spring 1997, she familiarized herself with the children. She was introduced by the teachers as someone who would be working with them for the next few weeks.

Each of the twenty-four children, in groups of two to five, completed the My Class Inventory (Fraser, 1983). The My Class Inventory (MCI) is a 38-item standardized questionnaire used to measure the psychosocial environment in elementary school classrooms (see Appendix B). Each child had a copy of the oral assent form in front of him or her as it was read aloud by the researcher. Each child gave oral assent before participating. Then, the researcher read each question on the questionnaire (MCI) to the group of children as they read it silently. Each child marked his or her own answers on the questionnaire. The MCI provided a systematic means for each child to be exposed to a list of questions about his or her classroom environment and may have created a similar "mind-set" for the picture-taking session (Session 2). Session two is described in the methods section.

Session 2

The picture-taking and interview session described in Chapter III were completed several days after the MCI.

MEASURES

My Class Inventory

The MCI is a 38-item standardized questionnaire developed by Fraser (1981) used to measure the psychosocial environment of elementary school classrooms. The MCI is suitable for children ages 8-12 because it is easy to read and understand. The MCI consists of the following five scales: (a) Satisfaction, the degree of student enjoyment of class work; (b) Friction, how much students quarrel among themselves and how much tension there is between them; (c) Competitiveness, the degree to

which students compete with each other; (d) Difficulty, extent to which students have difficulty with class work; and (e) Cohesiveness, the degree to which students know, are helpful to, and are friendly to each other (Willerman, McNeely, & Koffman, 1991).

Each MCI scale has satisfactory reliability for use with either the individual or class as the unit of analysis (Fraser & Fisher, 1981). When using the individual as the unit of analysis the following scale reliabilities were reported by Fraser & Fisher (1981): (a) Cohesiveness (.67); (b) Friction (.67); (c) Difficulty (.62); (d) Satisfaction (.78); and (e) Competitiveness (.71). The internal consistency reliability for each scale using the classroom as the unit of analysis is: (a) Cohesiveness (.80); (b) Friction (.75); (c) Difficulty (.73); (d) Satisfaction (.88); and (e) Competitiveness (.81). The mean intercorrelations for each scale using the class mean as the unit of analysis is: (a) Cohesiveness (.27); (b) Friction (.30); (c) Difficulty (.20); (d) Satisfaction (.28); and (e) Competitiveness (.13). The mean intercorrelation is .23 (Fraser and Fisher, 1981).

Items designated + (in the Teacher Use Only column) are scored 3 for Yes and 1 for No. Items designated - are scored in the reverse manner. Adding the scores for items with the same scale identification yields the total score for that scale. The method of interpreting the scores is not based on an absolute scale. Based on each scale total, the higher the score the stronger the perception of that particular dimension. In other words, there is no cut off point of low satisfaction, neutral satisfaction, or high satisfaction. For example, a student who has a score of twenty on the satisfaction subscale is more satisfied with his classroom learning environment than a student who scores a twelve (Greer, 1993).

Two independent coders attempted to code the children's interview responses into the five categories that define classroom climate: Satisfaction, Friction,

Competitiveness, Difficulty, and Cohesiveness. Of these five categories, cohesiveness and satisfaction are theoretically positively related to psychological safety. Adequate interrater reliability was not obtained. For some children 100% reliability was obtained, while for other children, the raters agreed on less than 30% of the rated responses. Therefore, the data was presented to a qualitative research group for analysis and the quantitative methods were not used further in the study.

RESULTS ON THE MCI

Quantitative statistics were run using the My Class Inventory and are reported in the section below titled "Descriptive Data." These data were derived to answer the proposed research questions. However, the researcher was unable to achieve a reliable coding system for the interview data (that is, it could not be reliably coded to fit into the MCI subscale categories as expected). Therefore, the interviews were analyzed using qualitative methods (Chapter IV of thesis) and became separate from the MCI data which is presented here.

Descriptive Data

Question (a): What are children's perceptions of the classroom environment using the My Class Inventory?

The mean score was calculated for each scale of the My Class Inventory. The mean, range, and scale totals are found in Table A-1. The mean score on the Difficulty scale was 11.83. This result indicates that children perceived their classrooms as being moderately difficult. A mean score for Cohesiveness was 12.33 (moderately cohesive), for Competitiveness was 14.92 (somewhat competitive), for Friction was 17.25 (high friction), and for Satisfaction was 18.58 (moderately satisfied). Thus, question (a) results, because they cannot be compared quantitatively to the picture-taking/interview data provide little insight into children's perceptions of classroom environments.

Summary of Means for Scales of the My Class Inventory

Scale	Mean	Range	Total Possible
Difficulty	11.83	8-20	24
Cohesiveness	12.83	6-18	18
Competitiveness	14.92	9-21	21
Friction	17.25	8-24	24
Satisfaction	18.58	9-27	27

Two other quantitative analyses are reported, *t*-test and intercorrelations. A *t*-test was run comparing males and females and was significant at the .049 level for satisfaction only. The mean score for males on the Satisfaction scale was 15.73 and the mean score for females was 21.00. Due to the small sample size it is difficult to make any conclusions about this finding. The internal consistency of the scale was determined by the intercorrelations on the MCI. A negative correlation was found between: (a) Cohesiveness and Friction ($r = -.69, p < .001$); (b) Competitiveness and Satisfaction ($r = -.41, p < .05$); and (c) Friction and Satisfaction ($r = -.80, p < .001$). A positive correlation was found between: (a) Cohesiveness and Satisfaction ($r = .58, p < .003$); and (b) Competitiveness and Friction ($r = .48, p < .02$). These correlations show that the scales discriminate and correlate appropriately.

Children's Pictures by Category

A frequency count was performed on each of the five picture-taking categories (e.g., most creative, not likely to be creative, learning is easy, learning is difficult and very favorite place) with regard to whether or not the picture was taken: (a) inside the classroom; (b) outside the classroom but inside the school; and (c) outside the school or on the playground. Frequencies are shown in Table A-2.

A frequency count (see Table A-3) was also calculated on the places (e.g., Classroom, Art Room, Library, Gym) children chose to take pictures in each of the five picture-taking categories. Within these places some children chose specific areas of the room or the school. For instance; for her most creative place, one child said the art center in her classroom, while another child said the reading table in her classroom. For the category not likely to be creative, one child said the computer in her classroom and another child stated at her desk in the classroom. For the category learning is easy, one child said at the reading table in her classroom. For the category learning is difficult, one child focused on the math stand in her classroom because

Table A-2

Frequency of Children's Pictures by Category

Category	Inside the Classroom		Outside the Classroom but Inside the School		Outside the School or on the Playground	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Most likely to be creative	9	37.5	12	50.0	3	12.5
Not very likely to be creative	6	25.0	16	66.7	2	8.3
Learning is easy	9	37.5	15	62.5	0	0
Learning is difficult	8	33.3	12	50.0	4	16.7
Very favorite place	4	16.7	12	50.0	8	33.3

Table A-3

Frequency Distribution of Places Children Chose to Take Pictures

Category	Most Creative		Not Creative		Learning is Easy		Learning is Difficult		Very Favorite Place	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Classroom	9	37.5	6	25.0	9	37.5	8	33.3	4	16.7
Art Room	6	25.0	1	4.2	3	12.5	0	0	1	4.2
Music Room	3	12.5	3	12.5	3	12.5	4	16.7	2	8.3
Outside/ Playground	3	12.5	2	8.3	0	0	4	16.7	8	33.3
Library	0	0	7	29.2	3	12.5	2	8.3	5	20.8
Other (Resource, Talented and Gifted, Cafeteria, Girls' Bathroom, Speech)	2	8.3	1	4.2	1	4.2	4	16.7	3	12.5

math was the most difficult subject for her and in the last category, very favorite place one child focused on the computers in her classroom, whereas another child chose the fiction center of the library. Beyond this, one child took a picture outside under a tree which was several yards from the playground and another child specifically took a picture of the swings because that is where he performed his stunts.

Pictures Taken in Two or More Categories

Twenty (83.3%) of the children chose to take a picture of the same place for two or more categories (see Table A-4). For example, Michelle chose her classroom as the place where learning was difficult and as her favorite place, though her reasons them were different. Leona chose the library as the place where learning was difficult and the place where she was not likely to be creative. Four of those children chose only two places to take a picture in either four or five of the picture-taking categories. For example, Roxanne chose the classroom in the following three categories: (a) most likely to be creative; (b) not likely to be creative; and (c) learning is difficult. She also chose the library as: (a) her very favorite place; and (b) where learning is easy. Conner chose the art room as the place where he was: (a) most likely to be creative; and (b) not likely to be creative. He also chose the playground for the following two categories: (a) learning is difficult; and (b) very favorite place. The picture-taking categories varied among individual children (see Table A-5). No distinct pattern emerged among the choices children made.

Table A-4

Children Who Chose the Same Place for Two or More Categories

Place	Number of Children
Classroom	10
Library	4
Music Room	3
Outside/Playground	4
Art Room	2
Cafeteria	1

Table A-5

Distribution of Places by Category for Children Who Chose the Same Place for Two or More Categories

Subject #	Place	Categories
1	Classroom	Difficult Favorite
2	Classroom	Creative Not Creative Difficult
2	Library	Easy Favorite
3	Music Room	Not Creative Difficult
4	Music Room	Not Creative Difficult
6	Outside	Not Creative Difficult
7	Classroom	Not Creative Easy
8	Music Room	Not Creative Difficult
9	Classroom	Creative Easy
10	Library	Not Creative Easy
11	Library	Not Creative Easy
12	Classroom	Not Creative Difficult

continued

Subject #	Place	Categories
13	Classroom	Creative Not Creative Difficult
15	Classroom	Creative Favorite
16	Playground	Creative Favorite
16	Classroom	Not Creative Easy
17	Art Room	Creative Not Creative
17	Playground	Difficult Favorite
18	Classroom	Not Creative Easy
18	Playground	Difficult Favorite
20	Art Room	Creative Easy
22	Library	Not Creative Difficult
23	Art Room	Easy Favorite
24	Classroom	Creative Difficult
24	Cafeteria	Not Creative Favorite

APPENDIX B**MY CLASS INVENTORY**

NAME _____ GRADE _____

DIRECTIONS

This is not a test. The questions are to find out what your class is like. Think about the classroom where you are during the day, your regular classroom. Please answer all the questions.

Each sentence is meant to describe your class. If you agree with the sentence, circle **Yes**. If you don't agree with the sentence, circle **No**. Sometimes it is hard to decide so think "mostly yes" or "mostly no".

If you change your mind about an answer, cross out the old answer and then circle the new choice. I will read each question to you as you read it silently, just in case there are some words you don't know.

EXAMPLE**Circle Your Answer**

1. Most children in the class are good friends Yes No

If you think that most children in the class are good friends, circle the **Yes** like this:

1. Most children in the class are good friends. Yes No

If you do **not** think that most children in the class are good friends, circle the **No** like this:

1. Most children in the class are good friends. Yes No

S _____ F _____ CM _____ D _____ CH _____

START HERE**Circle Your Answer**

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- | | | | | |
|-----|--|-----|----|-----------|
| 1. | The children enjoy their schoolwork in my class. | Yes | No | +_____ S |
| 2. | Children are always fighting with each other. | Yes | No | +_____ F |
| 3. | In our class the work is hard to do. | Yes | No | +_____ D |
| 4. | Some of the children in our class are mean. | Yes | No | +_____ F |
| 5. | Most of the children are pleased with the class. | Yes | No | +_____ S |
| 6. | Children often race to see who can finish first. | Yes | No | +_____ CM |
| 7. | Most children can do their schoolwork without help. | Yes | No | -_____ D |
| 8. | Some children don't like the class. | Yes | No | -_____ S |
| 9. | Most children want their work to be better than their friend's work. | Yes | No | +_____ CM |
| 10. | Many children in our class like to fight. | Yes | No | +_____ F |
| 11. | Only the smart people can do the work in our class. | Yes | No | +_____ D |
| 12. | In my class everybody is my friend. | Yes | No | +_____ CH |
| 13. | Most of the children in my class enjoy school. | Yes | No | +_____ S |
| 14. | Some children don't like other children. | Yes | No | +_____ F |
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Circle Your Answer

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|-----|---|-----|----|----------|
| 15. | Some children feel bad when they do not do as well as the others. | Yes | No | +_____CM |
| 16. | Most children say the class is fun. | Yes | No | +_____S |
| 17. | Some people in my class are not my friends. | Yes | No | -_____CH |
| 18. | Children often find their work hard. | Yes | No | +_____D |
| 19. | Most children don't care who finishes first. | Yes | No | -_____CM |
| 20. | Some children don't like other children. | Yes | No | +_____F |
| 21. | Some children are not happy in the class. | Yes | No | -_____S |
| 22. | All of the children know each other well. | Yes | No | +_____CH |
| 23. | Only the smart children can do their work. | Yes | No | +_____D |
| 24. | Some children always try to do their work better than the others. | Yes | No | +_____CM |
| 25. | Children seem to like the class. | Yes | No | +_____S |
| 26. | Certain children always want to have their own way. | Yes | No | +_____F |
| 27. | All children in my class are close friends | Yes | No | +_____CH |

Circle Your Answer

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|--|-----|----|------------|
| 28. Many children in our class say that school is easy. | Yes | No | - _____ D |
| 29. In our class some children always want to do their best. | Yes | No | + _____ CM |
| 30. Some of the children don't like the class. | Yes | No | - _____ S |
| 31. Children in our class fight a lot. | Yes | No | + _____ F |
| 32. All of the children in my class like one another. | Yes | No | + _____ CH |
| 33. School work is hard to do. | Yes | No | + _____ D |
| 34. Certain children don't like what other children do. | Yes | No | + _____ F |
| 35. A few children in my class want to be first all of the time. | Yes | No | + _____ CM |
| 36. The class is fun. | Yes | No | + _____ S |
| 37. Most of the children in my class know how to do their work. | Yes | No | - _____ D |
| 38. Children in our class like each other as friends. | Yes | No | + _____ CH |
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VITA

Kimberly Ann Taliano was born in Staten Island, New York on February 8, 1973, and grew up in Parsippany, New Jersey. She graduated from Parsippany Hills High School in June 1991. She began her undergraduate study at The Ohio State University in September 1991, and in June 1995, she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology, with a minor in Criminology. In August 1995, she began study toward a master's degree in Child Development at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. During her first two years in the master's program, she was employed as a graduate assistant in the preschool in the Child Development Laboratories at Cumberland on campus.