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Critical Teacher Inquiry: Collaborative Action Research Using Post-Structuralist and Cross-National Provocations

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**Critical Teacher Inquiry: Collaborative Action Research Using
Post-Structuralist and Cross-National Provocations**

A Dissertation Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Robyn Anne Brookshire
May 2014

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, Timothy J. Kerns, Zoe Clare Brookshire Risley, and Antonia Rane Brookshire Risley, for their faith, support, commitment, and humor.

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Abstract

This study reports on the work of six early childhood teachers and the researcher as they enacted a variation of collaborative action research in a university-based early childhood center. The project included cross-national provocation via a “day in the life” video from an infant-toddler center in Milan, Italy. In addition, the model utilized a post-structural approach known as deconstructive talk (Lenz Taguchi, 2008) to facilitate teachers’ critical reflective inquiry into their own narratives. Teachers viewed the video from Milan, discussed provocations from the video, set foci of inquiry for their own classrooms, video recorded in their own classrooms, and undertook multiple rounds of interpretation and analysis of the video documentation. Deconstructive talk within the rounds of interpretation provided an approach to uncover assumptions and allowed for exploration of the sources of knowledge underlying their pedagogical approaches. Findings reveal the areas of their own practice teachers scrutinized and the processes the group employed to engage in critical, reflective thinking about epistemological foundations of pedagogy. Particular areas of inquiry included teachers’ involvement and intervention, teachers’ roles and relationships, children’s social negotiations, and children’s use of space and materials. In addition, the findings report on how the teachers used this particular collaborative action research process to transform and reconstruct new, locally-situated epistemologies in order to inform daily pedagogical decisions. Implications of the project contribute to discourse in early childhood about possible models that foster transformative teacher discourse and situated knowledge construction.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to conduct a collaborative action research project with a group of teachers at a university-based early childhood education program. Motivation for the project stems from my interest in the potential for conducting meaningful, reflective, professional development utilizing two forms of provocation: a post-structuralist theoretical stance and cross-national exchange between early childhood teachers. Scholars who propose the application of post-structural frameworks to the current context of early childhood practice suggest this type of applied research-in-practice as a way to reflexively address the complex challenges facing the field of early childhood today (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2007; Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Mac Naughton, 2005; New, 2010). My curiosity about the possibilities for this form of praxis also derives from my work in the field and my interest in extending a recent cross-national teacher research project.

Research on teacher inquiry in early childhood reveals that most scholarship has focused on children's learning and the measurement of quality environments, with much less attention to the actual daily pedagogical practices enacted by teachers (Ryan & Goffin, 2008). Researchers who do focus on teacher learning describe a recent shift in assumptions about teacher development, one from a model of transmission of expert knowledge towards a "situative perspective" that places teacher learning as socially constructed within particular activity settings (Anderson, Greeno, Reder, & Simon, 2000). Critical scholars express deep concern for the presence of a single, dominant influence on conceptions of appropriate practice in early childhood: the child development knowledge base (e.g., Lubeck, 1996; New, 2008; Stott &

Bowman, 1996). In response to these characteristics of the research climate in early childhood, it seems imperative to focus attention on what teachers do, how they make pedagogical decisions, and in what contexts they experience ongoing learning to meet ever-changing demands of the field.

A dilemma for all of education research stems from the binary relationship of research to practice. As a practitioner in early childhood, I am most interested in research that bridges the divides between research and praxis and between theory and praxis. As a scholar, I value the contribution of research and theory and look for the possibilities of making them useful to teachers working “on the ground” in early childhood settings. Having conducted research in line with the dominant topics in early childhood – classroom quality measures, accountability, and assessment issues – I now gravitate toward the story that cannot be told by distal measures of “quality environments” and “child outcomes.” There are important realities to discover about what goes on in-between the measureable features, about the nature of the messy, complex daily pedagogical nexus where teachers must combine what they think and believe with what they can and ought to do. Hence, I seek to do research that not only addresses *what* and *why* the field might need to make changes, but also *how* to go about making it happen on the practitioner level.

To address the matters introduced above, it is apparent that we need to inquire into how teachers might have an opportunity to play an active role in exercising critical inquiry toward their ideas, beliefs, and decisions. How do teachers negotiate meanings about what is presented as “best” practice based on discourses about quality while challenging the status quo of what has stood as the unquestionable canon for developmentally appropriate practice? As a researcher/facilitator, can I structure an opportunity that addresses this content, but also within a

form that can be emancipatory for teachers as they take pivotal roles as researchers and knowledge-builders?

A glimpse of a possible structure to address these questions resides in recent scholarship and research that applies a critical theoretical stance to the questions about discourse in early childhood *and* to the design of applied research in teacher development. Namely, the proposed method involves collaborative action research informed by a post-structuralist theoretical stance (Dahlberg, et al., 2007; Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Mac Naughton, 2005). It is designed to tackle tough theoretical issues about power relations inherent in best practice regimes, reflexivity in a community of practice, politics of knowledge construction, and what it means to create local, situated praxis. The method also aims to elevate teachers' roles from passive recipients of expert knowledge to co-creators of new, relevant, inquiry-driven knowledge.

The project design also attempts to harness the potential of cross-national dialogue, which I have had a chance to witness through a prior teacher research project. This proposed study is, in some ways, an extension of an existing project (Moran, Bove, Brookshire, Braga, & Mantovani, 2014) wherein teachers from a program in which I work shared video tape snippets of daily practice with teachers in Milan, Italy, and have had chances to exchange questions, observations, and reactions with each other through dialogue. That project revealed that teachers in both places raised questions about each other's and their own ideas about practice on fundamental matters such as child autonomy, teacher's roles in relation to children, and personal theories about attachment and the role of early care and education, among others. The existing project revealed that the provocation teachers experienced by making their practice public and by seeing culturally different practices was valuable to their reflection and to their ideas about practice moving forward.

A qualitative approach involves setting a line of inquiry, but not limiting the findings to pre-determined constructs. I have listed some specific questions here that provide some detail about what I hoped to learn from this study and which I used to design the specific procedural methods herein. My specific research interest focuses on the following:

1. What areas of practice do the teachers choose to inquire about by participating in this version of collaborative action research?
2. What aspects of prior ideas, beliefs, or practices do the teachers scrutinize or challenge by undertaking recursive rounds of critical review of pedagogical documentation?
3. What new meanings do the teachers construct for themselves as they reflect back on the experiences of being provoked by the critical readings of their own documentation?

In Chapter 2, I further describe the nature of critical views toward teacher inquiry and discourses about practice, and give some of the justifications for designing teacher research in this particular way. Chapter 2 also walks through the scholarly context that I drew upon to shape my inquiry into the form of a collaborative action research project. Chapter 3 will describe the specific methods I propose for the study. Findings from analysis of the data collected from the project are presented in Chapters 4 and 5. Since, in qualitative research, my role as the researcher involves a particular perspective, I describe in Chapter 6 how I interpreted my role and influence in the project. Chapter 7 includes concluding remarks, discussion of the findings, and implications for both practice and research.

Collaborative action research holds great potential for teacher inquiry and fits many of the pragmatic, epistemological, and theoretical concerns in the field. Whereas a good deal of

collaborative action research appears in the literature, little has been done in practice that explicitly utilizes a post-structuralist approach and a cross-cultural component. It will be useful to the field to explore how to this form of inquiry in a specific local context in the United States as an emerging form of professional development.

Chapter 2

Conceptual Context and Theoretical Orientation

This chapter reviews the context of teacher inquiry in the early childhood literature and characterizes the discourse about how teachers can and should decide what is best for any given setting. It also introduces new challenges lodged by scholars who call for postmodern perspectives, both on conceptual and praxis levels, including theoretical assumptions about knowledge construction and research on teaching. A review of the theoretical background for these perspectives is summarized with a suggested course of action in order to lay the groundwork for how the structure of this collaborative action research project is proposed.

Teacher Inquiry

A review of research on teacher inquiry and professional development in the early childhood field calls for much more research in the area of teacher learning and pedagogy. Three main themes emerged from a recent review of scholarship. First, there simply is not a substantial body of research on what teachers do in daily practice and how they learn or develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that they need (Ryan & Goffin, 2008). Secondly, the research on teaching has largely focused on child development research as the foundation for early childhood practice, though how the practices are built upon this base has been less clearly defined (Katz, 1996; Lubeck, 1996; Ryan & Goffin, 2008; Zimiles, 2000). Third, there appears to be a prominent theoretical orientation to learning for both children and teachers that is based on constructivist-developmental assumptions and a call to shift towards or incorporate more of a social-constructivist orientation (Durand, 2010; Edwards, 2007). For the most part, the context addressed in this review refers to the field of early childhood education in the United States.

The first and second themes listed above appear to be tied to one another. In the absence of a substantial body of research on the practice of teaching in early childhood (Genishi, Ryan, Ochsner, & Yarnall, 2001; Ryan & Goffin, 2008) what then, have been the focal topics? Many scholars have critiqued early childhood scholarship as having a dominant focus on the goal of defining what is developmentally appropriate for children and on defining quality in early childhood settings (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; Dahlberg, et al., 2007; Lobman & Ryan, 2007; Lubeck, 1996; Ryan & Grieshaber, 2005). The mainstream approach to investigating quality in early childhood settings has confined examination of teacher practice to discrete measures of education levels or a set of observable behaviors (Genishi, et al., 2001) that provide a narrow view of teachers and their practice. An example is the primary guide to early childhood practice – Developmentally Appropriate Practice, or DAP (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009) – which focuses on children’s development, but does not provide specific guidance on how teachers develop sound pedagogical practices that are culturally situated.

Several problematic assumptions underlie the role of the child development knowledge base as a dominant discourse about practice in early childhood. Lubeck (1996) points to the modernist assumptions of the “universal” child and childhood and how these do not match a climate of diverse families and children served by programs in the United States. Another problematic assumption Kessler (1991) names is the duality presented in DAP for either “appropriate” or “inappropriate” curriculum. Stott and Bowman (1996) critique the approach overall, characterizing the formal, taken-for-granted child development knowledge base as a “slippery base for practice” because it falls short of attending to the local traditions, values, and culture-based factors (e.g., social class) in early childhood pedagogy. Stott and Bowman also note that while context became a consideration for early childhood in recent years, as evidenced

by use of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), practice has largely still been driven by de-contextualized, universal ideas about child development. The tone of these critiques does not appear to imply that the child development knowledge base should be discarded or that it does not provide useful guidance, but rather, that its dominance has overshadowed the possibility for multiple theories and information sources to be integrated into teacher practice. Likewise, there is a strong need to help teachers "...gain the necessary perspective to use formal knowledge flexibly" (Stott and Bowman, 1996, p. 170) as they develop locally based versions of practice that respond to the context and constituencies of particular early childhood settings.

The third theme detected in research on teacher development in early childhood also relates very closely to the issues raised by the presence of a dominant form of discourse about practice. The relationship between the child development approach and teacher preparation has yielded a transmission-of-knowledge model to teacher preparation (Goffin, 1996; Katz, 1996; Lubeck, 1996; Mac Naughton, 2005; Stott & Bowman, 1996). In addition, a constructivist-developmental theoretical orientation to learning ends up devaluing variance and diversity and "suggests individuals in isolation moving along a qualification track, assuming logical sequence of steps that require the transmission of skills to 'develop'" (Fleet & Patterson, 2001, para. 9). A reformulated view of teacher knowledge and development emphasizes that teachers must be active agents in constructing important knowledge for practice that reflects and embodies democratic ideals about education (Cochran-Smith, 2008; Kessler, 1991). Scholars have suggested shifting to a social-constructivist orientation that can be more responsive to the context- and culture-specific needs of a broad spectrum of settings (Durand, 2010; Edwards, 2007; Ryan & Grieshaber, 2005).

A social-constructivist orientation to teacher learning and development operates from different assumptions and views about teachers' roles. The knowledge transmission model supports the view of teachers as technicians who implement a set of practices prescribed by an authoritative source, whereas a social-constructivist view of situated, agentic teachers provides the possibility of "...the teacher as a thinking individual with a biography, including characteristics of race, class, and gender" (Genishi, et al., 2001, p. p. 1183). The "situative perspective" in teacher development builds upon these conceptions as well as ideas from activity theory (Anderson, et al., 2000; Greeno & Group, 1997; Putnam & Borko, 2000). Scholars have also incorporated Rogoff's work on "guided participation" to address learning within culturally situated activities (Putnam & Borko, 2000). Thus, inquiry into teacher development shifts focus away from the definition and measurement of expert knowledge and toward the processes and relations of teacher development as an activity system (Edwards, 2007). Elements of an activity system within a teacher development project, or community of practice, might include the objects of study (content of focus), the participants, the mediating artifacts of the activity, rules of participation in the community, the division of labor in the activity, and the broader context of the community of practice (Edwards, 2007). Studying an activity system, such as the collaborative action research project proposed here, would also involve examining the processes and tools utilized as the activity system experiences change.

A Theoretical Alternative: Post-Structuralism

The need to transform both scholarly and applied approaches to teacher learning arises from pragmatic concerns about how to create relevant teacher development on a large scale. It is helpful as well to inquire about theoretical perspectives that might guide scholars' and practitioners' navigation of complex questions about theory, practice, learning, and how it relates

to daily decision making. Some educational scholars recognize the inherent political nature of educational institutions and forms of discourse about what is best for a wide, diverse population of children and families. Post-structuralism is one critical theoretical stance that challenges ideas about universal truths, the politics of legitimate or “expert” knowledge, and the role of situated subjectivity. Critical educational scholars have found Foucault’s work (Foucault, 1970, 1998) relevant, in particular, because he explored power/knowledge dynamics in public institutional settings of prisons and schools (Bloch, Holmlund, Moqvist, & Popkewitz, 2003; Giroux, 2005; Lather, 2006; Peters & Burbules, 2004). Others have invoked Derrida’s notion of deconstruction (Derrida, 1997; Derrida, 1976) as a useful critical lens (Dahlberg, et al., 2007; Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Mac Naughton, 2005) or have explored the possibility of integrating Derrida with Dewey’s pragmatism as a way of building democratic ideals for educational institutions (Biesta, 2010; Garrison & Leach, 2001).

Post-structuralism originated in linguistics theory and as such, it features the role of language in concepts of truth and subjective human experience. It has been invoked in a wide range of scholarly fields, namely anthropology, psychoanalysis, literary criticism, social theory, economics, history, education, critical race studies, cultural studies, and various feminist theories. Rather than a theory per se, Post-structuralism is better characterized as a “movement of thought” which shapes inquiry in many forms and methodologies in various disciplines (Barker, 2008; Peters & Burbules, 2004). In post-structuralism, truth is always contingent upon context and meaning and is constructed by both individuals and groups. Power relations are also very important, as in Foucault’s examination of power structures within institutions (Foucault, 1970), and every act of meaning construction is tied to the politics of values and subjectivities. In this light, schools are viewed as regulatory institutions that have always have someone’s

interests in mind, though others' rights and interests may also be subject to oppression and inequalities. (Bloch, et al., 2003; Bloch, Kennedy, Lightfoot, & Weyenberg, 2006; Mac Naughton, 2005). Post-structuralists would thus be very concerned with uncovering inequalities, especially those hidden within taken-for-granted discourses, and would openly advocate social justice values. No claims to objectivity would hold up under the assumption that all things are value-laden (Biesta, 2010). In fact, power is viewed as subversive, hidden and regulated within everyday notions about normality, and thus must be actively uncovered to be understood and possibly, to be altered (Mac Naughton, 2005).

Post-structuralism in Early Childhood

Post-structuralism can provide a critical lens to many issues in early childhood research, but does so essentially as a theoretical orientation to inquiry, shaping the nature of questions asked in the pursuit of research. An emerging body of scholarship, largely by European early childhood scholars (Bloch, et al., 2006; Dahlberg, et al., 2007; Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Mac Naughton, 2005; Moss, 2005), makes explicit use of post-structuralism to unpack some of the dilemmas for the field. In particular, they address the construct of quality and dominance of child development research as a knowledge base. Scholars have explicated the assumptions of developmentally appropriate practice, known as DAP, (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009) and how it functions as a guide for teaching (Katz, 1996; Lubeck, 1996; Ryan & Grieshaber, 2005; Stott & Bowman, 1996) as well as problems with granting sole prominence to one universal set of guidelines for the diverse spectrum of local settings and populations. The National Association for the Education of Young Children has based DAP (arguably the most influential set of guidelines for teaching young children in the United States) primarily on child development knowledge. Those who have looked critically at DAP are not making the argument that it is all

bad, but rather that it is important and worthwhile to critique the implicit assumptions within DAP and the philosophical implications of placing all early childhood practices behind a single, universal canon of “best practice” (Bloch, et al., 2006; Lobman & Ryan, 2007).

Dahlberg, Moss and Pence have written two editions of a book, the first in 1999 and the second in 2007, which focuses on deconstructing the discourse of “quality” in early childhood as it relates to practices, evaluation, and accountability. Questions about quality - what is quality?, how do we measure it?, what variables predict it?, how can children’s scores improve? how do we legislate it? – have dominated research and policy in early childhood for decades (Moss, 2005; Moss, Dahlberg, & Pence, 2000) and arise largely from modernist, positivist assumptions about how to diagnose and fix educational problems across the nation (Lubeck, 1996; Tobin, 2007). Such inquiry drives questions that reduce the complexity of practice down to predictable, defined variables and encourages a one-size-fits-all prescriptive approach. As mentioned earlier in the review of work on teacher learning, once the idea of “expert” knowledge or “best” practice becomes the language we speak about quality early care and education, practitioners are accordingly viewed as technicians as opposed to creative, agentic decision-makers. As Mac Naughton explains, “Knowledge that is sanctioned institutionally can produce such an authoritative consensus about how to ‘be’ that it is difficult to imagine how to think, act, and feel in any other way” (2005, p. 32), which applies Foucault’s ideas about how we are governed, or regulated by dominant version of “truths” (Bloch, et al., 2006; Foucault, 1980).

Decontextualized universal models also overlook the complexities of culture and place.

Post-structuralist challenges to this discourse of quality employ conceptions of power relations to uncover the taken-for-granted assumptions that reside within the discourse and its implications. For instance, *for whom* is a universal set of practices most appropriate? *In whose*

interests are the prioritized outcomes relegated to such high status that accountability measures are built around them? Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2007), informed by a post-structuralist stance towards truth and power relations, explore these and many other critical questions about quality in order to address "...a sense and an unease that what has been approached as an essentially technical issue of expert knowledge and measurement may, in fact, be a philosophical issue of value and dispute" (p. 6). Post-structuralist criticisms of grand narratives also articulate concerns about the social justice implications of ethnocentric and hegemonic discourses about children, childhood, and the purposes of early care and education (Brougere, Guenif-Souilamas, & Rayna, 2008; Lobman & Ryan, 2007; Lubeck, 1996; Zimiles, 2000).

As an alternative, Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2007) propose a transformative concept for teacher discourse and knowledge building: an active process of meaning making built upon post-structuralist ideas of multivocal, democratic processes of situated knowledge construction.

Like quality, meaning making is inscribed with certain values and assumptions derived from a particular paradigm, though very different to quality's: meaning making welcomes contextuality, values, subjectivity, uncertainty, and provisionality. The language of meaning making opens up to evaluation as a democratic process of interpretation, a process that involves making practice visible and thus subject to reflection, dialogue and argumentation, leading to a judgment of value, contextualized and provisional because it is always subject to contestation. (p. ix)

In this transformed view of discourse, teachers actively build knowledge and situate it within local, specific contexts. The idea that knowledge is provisional makes it open to criticism, flexible to respond to changing needs, and intentionally non-dominating. The process is visible

and open, thus more democratic than a top-down transmission model of knowledge, experienced as the norm by many practitioners (Goffin, 1996).

Situated Locally, but Implicated Globally

While local forms of knowledge offer promising potential for creating situated and responsive forms of practice, early childhood practitioners, scholars, and teacher educators must also attend to the broader context of the field. Globalization of discourse can enact power relations on a broad scale, as when ideas about norms for child development or the tools of research are presumed to apply across contexts where widely different beliefs and values may be held, as well as different conceptions of childhood (Zimiles, 2000). The field has an ethical responsibility not only to prevent the misappropriation of templates for best practice across contexts, but also to develop reflexive approaches to cross-cultural collaboration.

New (2005) calls on the field of early childhood to address the issues of cultural knowledge and power relations both within and across cultures. She advocates cross-cultural exchanges as a way to build new conceptions of practice. To do so, however, New argues that we must move beyond a tradition of cross-cultural comparison, where we look to another setting to provide the answers to pedagogical questions. She advocated that we move toward transformative processes of inquiry and meaning construction that address the complexities inherent to situated practices. Her critique and suggestions resonate with the type of praxis that Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2007) propose. These scholars converge upon similar ideas that we can promote a reconceptualization of practice that incorporates multiple sources of knowledge, including those specific to cultural contexts and those gained from looking across cultural boundaries.

In terms of work with teachers in the type of project proposed here, there is not a clear, established pathway for how to look at practices across cultures. In this study, teachers had the opportunity to view practices from another culture as a source of provocation or challenge to their existing ideas. Within that type experience, a wide range of reactions is possible. A general understanding of culture is useful to establish a stance from which to pose questions and reactions. In reviewing sources of cross-cultural work in early childhood, Rogoff's sociocultural theory (2003) seems to be most appropriate to this particular research pursuit. Rogoff provides a conceptual framework to understand, or at least attend to, cultural variations in caregiving around the world. Readings from cultural studies also help frame the inquiry for this research. Cultural studies scholars make similar applications of post-structuralism to global education issues.

Rogoff's sociocultural theory. Rogoff's approach to culture emphasizes the participation of individuals in sociocultural activities (2003). Instead of viewing culture as a category that exerts direct, measurable influences upon individuals, she asserts that individuals actively engage, and influence, sociocultural activities on the community level. The influence is bidirectional, with individuals taking an active role as cultural producers. Cultural tools and processes are available as established through a community's history, as these continue to be revised over time. Research on culture, thus, must attend to the specificity of each context. This has clear implications for a collaborative teacher group, and indeed, teacher researchers draw upon Rogoff's ideas about guided participation to situate teacher learning within specific communities of practice (Putnam & Borko, 2000).

Cultural Studies approach. Scholars in cultural studies employ many of the same features of post-structuralism that are applicable to the type of teacher inquiry proposed for this

study. First, scholars in cultural studies support an epistemological stance toward the nature of truth that resonates with a critical inquiry approach. Cultural studies scholars have utilized Foucault's notions of "regimes of truth" in which certain versions of knowledge take on dominant forms in different cultural contexts and manifest as "regimes of truth" (Barker, 2008). For instance, our assumptions and beliefs about how children learn best come from socially-constructed knowledges from sources we may or may not even acknowledge (Lubeck, 1996). Looking across cultures may give us a lens through which we can see more clearly or at least inquire into the possible sources of knowledge upon which we base our taken-for-granted ideas about practice.

Cultural studies also approaches "culture" not as a category, but as a set of meanings that manifest in multiple daily acts, routines, institutions, forms, and cultural/social products (Williams, 1981, cited by Barker, 2008). Some of the processes and products considered under the umbrella of pedagogical documentation will represent a set of cultural artifacts and practices. For instance, in the previous project we have been conducting with teachers in the U.S. and Italy, teachers exchanged video clips of segments representing typical daily activities and routines. From the videos, teachers noticed many differences, which led to meaningful questions about the variety of daily routines, activities, and interactions that were observed in the video. In some cases, the differences teachers noticed were very subtle, such as how a mealtime begins at the table with toddlers, but by asking about this and having dialogue with the teachers in Italy, it opened up broader questions about cultural priorities, such as children's autonomy and the approach to shared meals. In this same sense, it is possible that in the proposed project, some of the things teachers noticed from the other context could arise from small instantiations of daily practice but contribute to the knowledge built for their own practice. In other words, substantive

conversation and meaning construction can arise from these subtleties and not just from formal, overtly articulated constructs about pedagogy. What the teachers from Italy take for granted, for instance, may be something that stands out and is most compelling to teachers here, and vice versa.

Cultural studies as a discipline also makes use of Derrida's concept of deconstruction "to take apart, to undo, in order to seek out and display the assumptions of a text" (Barker, 2008, p. 87). In particular, meanings are viewed as unstable and instances of difference, or oddity, signify sites for exploration. In this project, ripe sites for exploration are signaled when teachers are provoked to notice a point of "difference" in practice, or when they find something odd or unusual in their own understandings about practice. For instance, in the prior study, teacher's reactions to the video from Milan at times posed tensions or problems for their beliefs about some part of their practice. Seeing the difference from abroad prompted them to question why they do what they do, or why they hold certain beliefs about practice. Other education scholars have also addressed contested meanings about practice as deliberate political acts to forge more democratic processes in teacher discourse (Biesta, 2010; Garrison & Leach, 2001). Moss speaks about "bringing politics into the nursery" (2007) in reference to the process of questioning dominant notions of "quality" in early childhood institutions. If provocation from another cultural context can help teachers take notice of points of difference, and consequently to *destabilize* their taken-for-granted meanings, then they might be more open to multi-vocal sources of knowledge about good practice (Moss, 2005).

Collaborative Action Research: A Method for Application

Thus far, this chapter has focused on three main themes that shape the type of inquiry needed on teacher practice: The call for transformation of teacher learning, the possibility for

post-structuralism to help usher in recommended changes, and the current globalized climate that make it important for early childhood to consider cross-cultural variations in care and practice. All of this matters because it implies certain ways of acting for scholars, practitioners, and teacher educators. Collaborative action research is the form of praxis that seems best suited to address these concerns, as well as the need for a close tie between research, theory, and practice.

Definition of collaborative action research. Collaborative action research is a form of action research, which, in teacher professional development settings, involves teachers' active pursuit of inquiry based on questions they have about practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999b). Collaborative action research involves a group of teachers participating as a community of practice. The group moves through three phases of inquiry and reflection most often depicted visually as a cycle of inquiry. Figure 1 portrays Cunningham's (2011) diagram for the three phases, which include Planning, Implementation, and Analysis and Reflection. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999a) emphasize that collaborative action research embodies an epistemological commitment to teacher knowledge construction and propose the concept of "inquiry as stance" as a way to approach teacher learning. "Inquiry as stance" involves teachers as active agents, generating knowledge about practice based on inquiry that arises from their own daily practices. This approach eliminates the "expert" or top-down model of knowledge transmission, and instead, "Teachers across the professional life span play a central and critical role in generating knowledge of practice by making their classrooms and schools sites for inquiry" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999a, p. 273).

Formal knowledge is not eschewed in this approach, but rather is integrated by teachers into the meaning construction process as they interrogate their prior ideas and form new

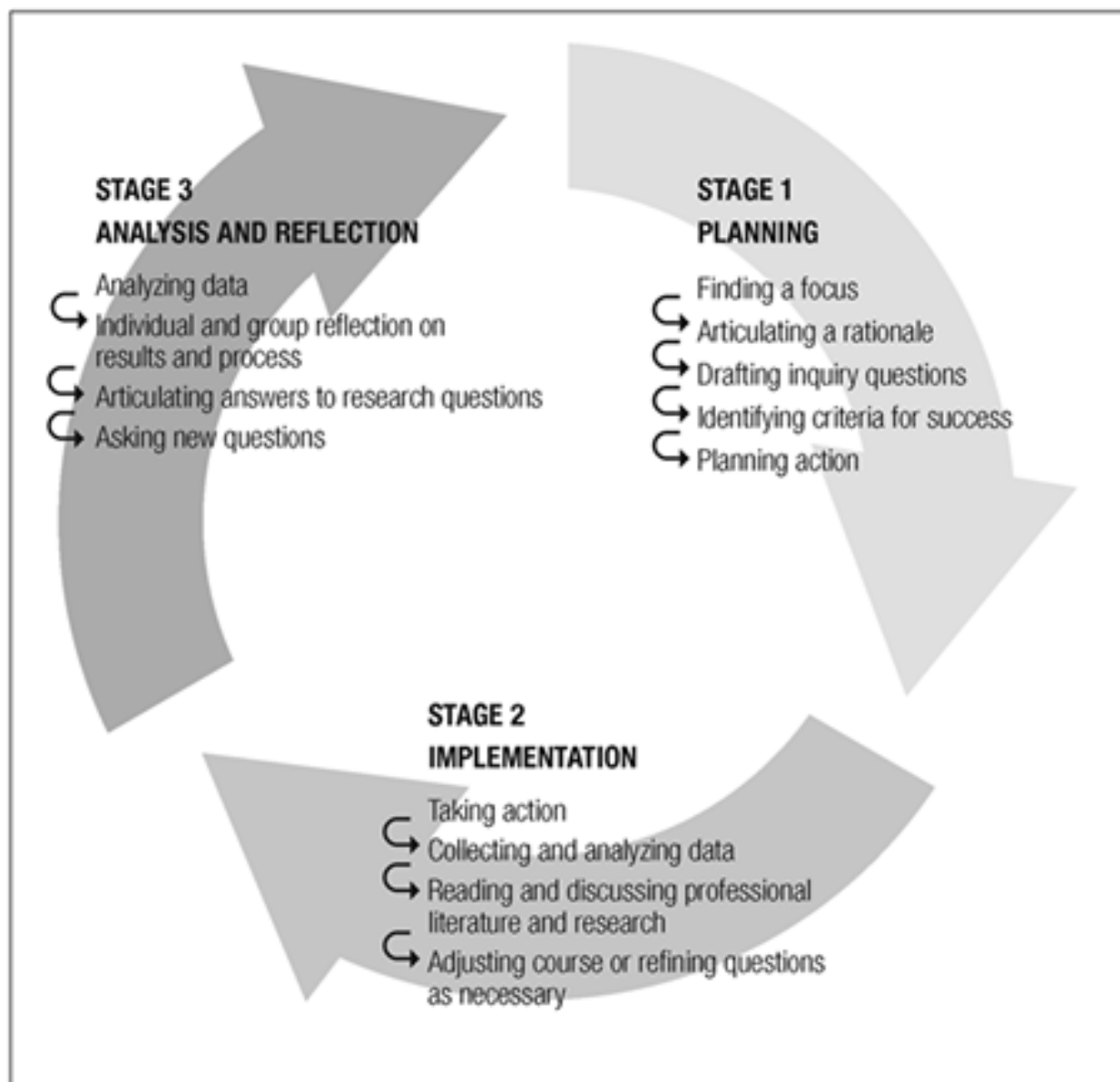


Figure 1. Cunningham's Collegial Inquiry Process (2011)

meanings; formal knowledge is a generative source that becomes owned by teachers in their active pursuit of working theories. This process does not place teacher knowledge on a linear trajectory, where we hope they reach a certain endpoint, predetermined by formal or “expert” knowledge. Rather, teachers ideally create locally situated versions of knowledge that draw upon all the available sources of knowledge that are at hand. Teachers must not only take an active role in the inquiry and knowledge-construction process, but also must be critical consumers of pre-existing knowledge (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999a). In the description of transformational inquiry that Cochran-Smith & Lytle describe (1999b), many aspects align with the post-structuralist stance. They speak about teachers challenging their taken-for-granted assumptions, challenging existing structures for the usual way things are done, and acknowledging the subjectivity and value-laden premises of knowledge about teaching.

Collaborative action research can provide a setting for teachers to have reflexive learning experiences, but also to be active in producing new knowledge and meanings for practice, thus making new contributions to the field (Edwards, 2007). Through collaborative action research, teachers have an opportunity to create a “context of need” in which they seek to produce a local discourse of inquiry about their practice (Moran, 2007). Also, action research places teachers in a problem-solving role in which they can generate innovative responses to their own local, situated challenges. Indeed, some researchers call for a new approach to teacher learning referred to as the “situative perspective” that emphasizes situated cognition, distributed cognition, and communities of practice (Greeno & Group, 1997; Putnam & Borko, 2000). Thus, action research that is collaborative – residing within the activity system of a group of practitioners - fits with the epistemological vision of reform advocated by teacher researchers.

Post-structural approach to collaborative action research. While many examples of collaborative action research have been presented in the literature (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Fleet & Patterson, 2001; Fuligni, Howes, Lara-Cinisomo, & Karoly, 2009; Moran, 2007; Oja, 1995), some scholars explicitly enact a post-structuralist theoretical framework to build a critical lens into the process. Mac Naughton (2005) and Lenz Taguchi (2007, 2008, 2010) have both explicated this theoretical orientation to collaborative action research and have illustrated the ways that teachers have actively engaged in critical inquiry. The methodological influences of their work will be described in more detail in the next chapter. Lenz Taguchi (2008) reported results from a collaborative action research project with teachers in Sweden, using a feminist post-structuralist lens and deconstruction as a process to help teachers explore their taken-for-granted ideas. This group used pedagogical documentation as the focal piece, and engaged in multiple rounds of deconstructive talks. Each time they revisited their documentation from the classroom, they peeled back more layers of meaning. For instance, their initial readings revealed strong roots in developmental psychology, with the idea that children move in a linear progression through stages of development. Within a cycle of recursive readings of the documentation and of their own documented conversations, they shifted to a new lens, one that Lenz Taguchi called a “semiotic” reading, in which teachers could make meaning about variations in children’s learning. For instance, when a child was able to produce representational drawings on a more “advanced” level than would be expected for his age, the teachers were, upon later reflection in the group, able to consider the child’s specific situated learning context to understand what experiences had led him to develop this particular ability. The process opened up the possibilities for the teachers to see what they could not see previously, and thus it changed their approach to future interactions and lessons. This example from the Lenz Taguchi study

resembles elements of Rogoff's model, in which culture manifests itself and (re)produces itself as individuals participate in social activities. The child, in this case, had a particular set of cultural experiences that needed to be viewed as a source of knowledge, but which were overlooked when teachers used the framework provided by the dominant discourse in early childhood – the child development knowledge base.

Further, Lenz Taguchi (2008) discussed additional “readings” in which teachers created new meanings from their documentation based on constructivist and critical gender frameworks. In this project, the researcher was able to provide some level of preliminary theoretical backdrop, suggesting for teachers how to look critically for the assumptions that lay beneath their readings, but at the same time, she provided a wide-open space for the group to construct their own versions of truth through new interpretations. This process of deep reflection, and teachers' abilities to dwell in a mode of inquiry driven by their own curiosities represent the heart of what many scholars and practitioners hope for in transformed professional development. These types of professional inquiry processes also have promising implications for how teachers can recognize the diversity and competency of the children in their care. Thus, the model brings forth a democratic stance that many early childhood scholars advocate (Fleet & Patterson, 2001; Kessler, 1991; Ryan, 2008; Zimiles, 2000).

Research Agenda for the Proposed Study

Helping teachers not only value, but also know how to navigate an ever-changing landscape of practice and respond to situation-specific challenges is imperative for the field of early care and education. Seeing the limitations of top-down models for good practice, it is at least conceptually promising that ground-up versions of professional development may be much

better suited at developing the perspective that teachers need to create many, many instances of good practice, and not just attempt to replicate a set of decontextualized versions of best practice.

This study utilized the potential of collaborative action research with a post-structuralist approach. The project model followed the established structure for action research, with a cycle inquiry: planning, implementation, and reflection, and occurred within a community of practitioners who worked within the same early childhood program. The post-structuralist assumption that drove this work is that teachers need opportunities to create new discourse, on a local level, that challenges the taken-for-granted assumptions teachers have about their practice. Two forms of provocation were incorporated into the collaborative action research model to create the challenge: a) a post-structuralist critical perspective that uncovers the role of dominant discourse in our daily practice, and b) exposure to cross-national exchange of practice with teachers in Milan, Italy that has already provided rich opportunities for teachers in this setting from the prior research project.

The next chapter will describe the particular set of procedures developed in order to answer the following research questions:

1. What areas of practice do the teachers choose to inquire about by participating in this version of collaborative action research?
2. What aspects of prior ideas, beliefs, or practices do the teachers scrutinize or challenge by undertaking recursive rounds of critical review of pedagogical documentation?
3. What new meanings do the teachers construct for themselves as they reflect back on the experiences of being provoked by the critical readings of their own documentation?

The need for collaborative action research with new forms of provocation arises from the context of teacher development reform called for by many teacher researchers within and beyond early childhood. It also arises from a postmodern perspective on how institutional programs must find new ways to respond to the plurality of needs and cultural backgrounds of the children, families, and communities we serve (New, 2010) and to avoid hegemonic implications of top-down, one-size-fits-all versions of quality practice in early childhood (Dahlberg, et al., 2007). Although collaborative action research is well established, and whereas the theoretical critiques of the dominant discourses about quality and developmentally appropriate practice have been disseminated, little research has been published on the actual practice of doing this type of teacher development. The research that has been published comes from Sweden (Lenz Taguchi, 2008) and Australia (Mac Naughton, 2005) with reference to the practices in Reggio Emilia. Exploration of how this form of teacher inquiry would take shape in an early childhood program in the United States would represent a new area of research.

Chapter 3

Purpose and Procedures

In this study, I sought to address the following questions:

1. What areas of practice do teachers choose to inquire about by participating in this version of collaborative action research?
2. What aspects of prior ideas, beliefs, or practices do teachers scrutinize or challenge by undertaking recursive rounds of critical review of pedagogical documentation?
3. What new meanings do teachers construct for themselves as they reflect back on the experiences of being provoked by the critical readings of their own documentation?

These questions should be addressed not only through appropriately chosen research methods, but also within relevant professional development activity that matches the context of practice in which they are asked. Collaborative action research provides the most suitable format to pursue these questions. This chapter gives background on the particular kind of collaborative action research utilized for this project, and then describes the procedures employed during the study. In addition, the chapter addresses my position as a participant observer in the project. As part of my role as the qualitative researcher for the project, I also include an articulation of my own theoretical position to inform the reader of my specific stance toward the work I have conducted.

Purpose of Collaborative Action Research

Collaborative action research is a variant of action research, typically conducted by stakeholders in applied environments. In school settings, teachers may engage in action research in order to improve practices. A variety of goals, however, may be identified for action research and can include gaining insight, developing reflective practice, creating positive change in practice or the environment, or improving student outcomes (Mills, 2000). Teachers play the

role of active agents who initiate many of the steps in the research process, as opposed to other forms of research in which research is imposed upon teachers. Action research usually involves four steps: identifying an area of focus, collecting data, analyzing and interpreting data, all leading to the development of an action plan. Cunningham refers to collaborative action research as collegial inquiry (2011) and Cochran-Smith and Lytle specify that this approach to teacher development embodies the concept of an *inquiry stance* (1999) because the focus is less on developing products (or tools) and more on the exploration of questions. Through asking questions, teachers may develop more reflective and critical insight, which is believed to support their ongoing learning and development (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Moran, 2007; Oja, 2001).

The particular form of collaborative action research developed for this research project was heavily informed by a recent study by Lenz Taguchi (2008) in a Swedish early childhood program. That project involved teachers' examinations of children's drawings in the tradition of "pedagogical documentation" practices that many programs have adopted from Italian early childhood programs (Moran, Desrochers, & Cavicchi, 2007; New, 2007). Lenz Taguchi served as the researcher/facilitator in guiding the teachers' use of a feminist-poststructuralist theoretical orientation to discourse analysis while the collaborative group engaged in repeated reflections on their interpretations of children's work. The goal of this project was to facilitate a reflective experience so that teachers could acknowledge and challenge their taken-for-granted ideas and assumptions. Two main theoretical stances were used to inform the "deconstructive talks" during the project: a) as resistance to child developmentalist approach (inspired by schools in Reggio Emilia) and b) a feminist post-structural stance towards dominant discourse and power relations.

Deconstructive talk. Lenz Taguchi (2008) utilized “deconstructive talk” as a tool for challenging the teachers’ taken-for-granted views and for “promoting diverse and multiple theoretical, aesthetic, and ethical understandings” (p. 272). This process is based upon Derrida’s conception of *deconstruction*. The process involves highlighting points of differences as a ripe site for meaning-bearing ideas. This is how Lenz Taguchi described the process in one section of her research:

...the teachers carefully examined what they had asked children to do. They scrutinized the various discourses about children, learning, and map-drawing that informed their ways of thinking and valuing the children’s work. This reflection, then, enabled them to *resist* and undermine what they previously took for granted and to think differently about it. Resistance here is *not* about opposing or simply replacing one understanding with another. Rather, it is about a continuous process of displacement and transformation from *within* what we already think and do. As I will argue later, such resistance is a professional enactment of ethics (Lenz Taguchi, 2008, p. 272).

The first step in deconstructive talk involves having teachers begin with their initial, immediate reading or response to a piece of classroom documentation. This aligns with the concept of *deconstruction*, which acknowledges that we always have a particular perspective, at any given time, and that with new knowledge or new reflections, we build layers on top of and alter the initial understanding. In the Lenz Taguchi study, teachers shared their initial readings in conversation with one another and the session was recorded. The next steps in the deconstructive talks involved analysis of response-data wherein the teachers read transcripts of their prior discussions or notes from the prior session. Teachers also read the researchers’ preliminary analysis of the conversations. This process was repeated in cycles of inquiry over

the course of three sessions, producing a multi-layered set of narrative discourses. Lenz Taguchi utilized discourse analysis and feminist post-structural analysis in her interpretations of the sessions.

Rationale for collaborative action research as the method of choice. One of the main shifts in teacher development and inquiry focuses on the need to embrace a social-constructivist approach to ongoing professional learning activities (Edwards, 2007; Putnam & Borko, 2000; Ryan & Grieshaber, 2005). Collaborative action research provides a context in which teachers are active agents in questioning and pursuing the theoretical and practical bases for their decision-making. Creating *collaborative* action research projects also situates professional development within teachers' local cultural and social, thus addressing the need to keep close ties between research and practice, theory and practice, and learning and application (Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Moran, 2007). In addition, the collaboration amongst teachers in one school setting allied with collaboration with colleagues from another context or culture can provide further possibilities for a genuinely collaborative process of inquiry to replace transmission models in which one person or group is considered 'expert.' Collaborative action research can also provide the setting for 'guided participation' as described by Rogoff (2003), who views learning as intricately situated within culturally situated activities. Within the setting of a community of practice, critical and reflective discourse can be encouraged by a facilitator and peers (Putnam & Borko, 2000), and can foster the co-construction of new pedagogical stances (Dahlberg, et al., 2007) that more appropriately address the complex challenges faced by early childhood teachers.

Using a poststructuralist lens for collaborative action research shapes not only the interpretation of the data, but also informs the procedures and how the participants and

researchers relate to one another. Although it appears to be a relatively new approach to action research in early childhood, it is consistent with the critical and feminist post-structural approaches to participatory action research in other fields (Daly, 2007). The approach I propose shares several key features with participatory action research. There is a concern for keeping close ties between the personal subjectivity and history and the scholarly or professional act of inquiry. A central goal is to unsettle normativity or to challenge prevailing views to uncover the unacknowledged assumptions and biases within dominant forms of discourse about practice. Participatory action research “is concerned with the generation of practical knowledge that can serve people in the process of transformation as they struggle with the conditions of their everyday life” (Daly, 2007, p. 120). Also, the relationship between researchers and participants is reflexive and nonhierarchical. For this reason, I participated in this project as a participant observer, a member of the group, playing dual roles as facilitator and collaborator (Creswell, 2007; Hargreaves, 1967). Playing this role in collaborative action research also matches with the local context, since my role within the community is already one in which I would be facilitating group professional development and participating in meaning-making dialogue.

Procedures

Context of the study. The setting for the project is a university-based early childhood center that serves as a teacher-training site for early childhood teacher education students and as a research center to support the university at large. The program is located on a large state university in a metropolitan city in the southeastern United States. The center, a licensed child care facility, has eight classrooms: one infant, three toddler, three preschool, and one kindergarten. Most families enrolled in the program have one or both parents working at the university as faculty, staff, or students, but the program also includes families from the local

community as well. Linguistic, cultural, ethnic, religious, and racial diversity in the program typically arises from international families who come to work or study at the university, and families who relocate within the United States to work at the university or as professionals in the community.

The program's teaching staff is structured so that each classroom has one lead teacher and one assistant teacher. Part-time undergraduate students and graduate assistants also staff the classrooms to support teacher breaks and planning time. Much of the time, the classrooms have a senior practicum student assigned to work on the teaching team as part of the fourth year of a teacher licensure program in the center's sponsoring child and family studies department. Other students participate in the classroom on a range of levels including observations for courses or practicum experiences. The program also included an outreach three-year-old preschool classroom at a local public high school to serve low-income families and to provide early childhood experiences for high school students. One teacher who participated in the project was the lead teacher for the outreach site at the high school.

Participants. Teachers within the center were invited to participate in the collaborative action research project on a voluntary basis. The project was also offered to the participants as a special topics seminar course and teachers had the option to enroll in the course for undergraduate or graduate course credit. Some teachers in the program were working toward degrees in child and family studies or related fields. Teachers received informed voluntary consent forms previously approved through the University's Institutional Review Board that detailed the expectations for participation as well as any potential benefits or risks. It was expected that teachers would not experience any risks beyond what is typically present in their

usual professional activities. At the time of the study, I served as one of two program directors for the center, and worked with the teachers on a daily basis.

Six teachers chose to participate in the project and agreed to attend every session of the seminar for the duration of the spring semester on the university's calendar. Three of the teachers held positions as lead teachers and three held assistant teacher positions. In this program, the distinction between assistant teachers and lead teachers includes different levels of responsibility for the overall management and curriculum planning of the classroom. Typically, lead teachers hold bachelors or master's degrees in early childhood or a closely related field. Lead teachers held more responsibilities for mentoring practicum students. Lead and assistant teachers were similar, however, in their roles with children and parents in terms of daily caregiving, interactions, and relationships. In the program, lead and assistant teachers typically view themselves as teaching partners. One pair of the group participating in the project, Rachel and Jenna, was a teaching team in the same classroom. Table 1 presents information about each participant. Pseudonyms are used throughout this document for teacher names and any children mentioned in their narratives.

One teacher chose to enroll in the course for graduate credit. The research activities (described in detail in the following sections) served as the coursework requirements along with attendance and participation. Since the one teacher who chose to enroll was taking the seminar for graduate level credit, she was also required to write a final reflection paper to serve as a culminating assignment, but this paper was not utilized as a data source for the study. Dr. Moran, as faculty advisor, co-reviewed the final reflection paper to determine issuance of credit for the course. The intention of this was to help separate the final course-credit assignment from

the activities of the group and to help maintain my role primarily as facilitator of the group and less so as the evaluator of performance.

Table 1. Teacher Participants

Participant Pseudonym	Race	Age	Position	Highest Degree	Experience ECE/Center	Classroom
Bella	Caucasian	31	Assistant	B.S.	13 / 5	Toddler
Gabriella	Caucasian	24	Lead	B.S.	4/1	Preschool
Harriet	Caucasian	32	Assistant	Some college	14/5	Toddler
Jenna	Caucasian	30	Lead	B.A.	5/5	Infant
Rachel	Caucasian	47	Assistant	A.A.	20/9	Infant
Sarah	Caucasian	26	Lead	M.S.	3/3	Preschool

Note. Position refers to teaching position at the center at the time of the project. Experience ECE/Center refers to overall experience in the early childhood field / years worked in the current university-based center. Classroom refers to the age of children served.

Fieldwork methods and procedures. This project emerged from a previous research study in which infant-toddler teachers at the center engaged in cross-cultural exchanges with infant-toddler teachers at a university-based early childhood center in Milan, Italy. Half of the teachers who chose to participate in this project had participated in the prior study activities: Rachel was a focal teacher from the prior study, which meant she was one of two teachers video recorded to create a “day in the life” edited video to share with Milan teachers. Rachel chose scenes to include, participated in focus groups, viewed the edited “day in the life” video from Milan and exchanged dialogue in several sessions with Milan teachers over Skype. Harriet and Jenna had also participated in components of the prior study. They had viewed the Milan video, participated in focus group discussions about the video, and participated in one Skype session with Milan teachers. Bella, Sarah, and Gabriella had not participated in the prior study because they were working with preschool-aged children at that time and the study had only included infant-toddler teachers. The photo in Figure 2 shows the group meeting together for seminar in the center’s conference room.



Figure 2. Photo of Group Meeting for Seminar.

Phases of the project. The project consisted of weekly seminar sessions. The group met approximately once a week for three hours in the evening over the course of the university semester in January, February, March, and April of 2012, with exceptions for holiday closings and spring break. We cancelled a couple of sessions due to illnesses. All sessions that were held included all the participants and myself as facilitator and participant/observer. For a few of the sessions, Dr. Mary Jane Moran, faculty advisor for the study, attended sessions primarily as an observer, although at times she helped facilitate discussions as well.

Using the model of a Cycle of Inquiry (see Figure 1, on page 18), the project followed the general outline of three main efforts: 1. Planning, 2. Implementation, and 3. Analysis and Reflection (Cunningham, 2011). The main stages for this project, however, are described as Phases 1-4 to more accurately distinguish the specific activities and data collection points customized for this project. Figure 3 illustrates how the specific activities of this project were organized into four phases. (See Appendix A for a more detailed visual of how the four phases of data collection for this project were nested in Cunningham's main stages of action research, as well as a listing of seminar activities by date.)

Project Phase	Activities and Dates of Sessions
Introductory Activities	Introduction to Collaborative Action Research Group & Viewing UMB Video Seminar dates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . 2-6-12 . 2-13-12
Phase 1	Responses to UMB Video Seminar dates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . 2-13-12 . 2-20-12
Phase 2	Setting Focus of Inquiry Seminar dates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . 2-20-12 . 2-27-12
Phase 3	Review/Interpretations of Own Documentation Seminar dates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . 3-26-12 . 4-2-12 . 4-9-12
Phase 4	Analysis (deconstructive talk) of Interpretations Seminar dates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . 4-16-12 . 4-23-12

Figure 3. Outline of Phases 1-4 of the Project.

Data for the project were organized and analyzed based on the four phases. Recorded group conversations in Phases 1-4 of the project comprised the data that were collected and analyzed. Later, the findings of analyses of the data are presented as Phases 1-4. Initially, the teachers gained information about the prior Milan project and the context of the center in the video. The group then viewed the video, which showed a “day in the life” of three focal teachers in their classrooms in approximately one hour and twenty minutes of edited footage. I also assigned shared readings to the group about collaborative action research to set our intentions for the project as a group inquiry process and establish relationships with each other as a collaborative work group.

Phase 1. Initial seminar meetings, prior to data collection, involved overviews of the Milan context, readings on Italian early care and education, and readings about collaborative action research. As a starting point for the inquiry for this project, we read the transcripts of the focus groups from the prior project, viewed the video from Milan, and teachers wrote reflective journal notes to prepare for group discussion of their responses to the video. Data collection began as the group started sharing their responses to the video. In the prior cross-national research study, several topics or themes emerged that were of great interest to the participating teachers, spurred presumably by the provocation of viewing practices in another early childhood context and by having the opportunity to engage with the teachers abroad. In this project, the video was utilized to offer provocation to the teachers as they considered possible areas of inquiry for action research. Phase 1 includes data from two sessions of seminar in which teachers discussed their reactions to the Milan video and began exploring topics of interest to them.

Phase 2. Next, teachers were asked to develop areas of inquiry for their own practice, which would steer their own process of collecting data from their classrooms that was relevant to their topics. Phase 2 of the project data included conversations that took place over two seminar session in which the teachers discussed ideas for inquiry and then identified a focal topic for inquiry. From this point, teachers were asked to choose an appropriate form of documentation to collect from their classrooms to address their chosen topic. All six teachers chose to record video from their classrooms, either of children, or of teachers and children interacting. Between Phases 2 and 3, teachers recorded video in their classrooms, chose scenes to share back with the group, and prepared initial individual interpretations of their video. Teachers were asked to prepare their initial interpretations based on a note-taking outline from one of the readings in

class. Appendix B and C show two samples of notes teachers created to prepare for group discussions.

Phase 3. All six teachers decided that video footage would be the most appropriate form of pedagogical documentation based on what they wanted to observe, though they were encouraged to consider all forms of documentation – artifacts, audio, photos, anecdotal notes, voice memos, and so forth. Since everyone was interested in capturing vignettes of interactions, either between children or between adults and children, they decided video would be the most fruitful to review, discuss, and share. Over three seminar sessions, each teacher took a turn showing her video clip and sharing her initial interpretation. Then, the group spent time discussing the video, adding interpretations, questions, and reflections about the scene that was chosen. The discussions were spread across three sessions because it took a good deal of time to go through each video and discuss. Each teacher's video prompted at least an hour of discussion; some were longer than others and as facilitator, I judged the flow of the discussion to determine when it was time to move on to the next teacher's video.

Phase 4. The final phases involved analysis of the teachers' interpretation of their video. This stage was built upon the method of deconstructive talk as implemented by Lenz Taguchi (2008). In this phase, teachers had the opportunity to analyze their own narratives in order to uncover layers of embedded assumptions within their meaning constructions. After the initial review of teachers' documentation in Phase 3, I transcribed selected excerpts from each teacher's review. This produced between three to four pages of single-spaced dialogue to bring back to the group.

To initiate the process of analysis, I facilitated the development of a concept web of frameworks of interpretation and reflection. The group developed this web together based

on sources of knowledge that were perceived to be influential to the teachers' pedagogical ideas. The resulting web of frameworks developed is presented in the findings section for Phase 4. During two sessions in Phase 4, the culminating sessions of the project, the teachers were asked to analyze the transcription of their own narratives and identify within the text which sources of knowledge they felt were being employed. This process was much like using open coding in grounded theory analysis. Teachers wrote in the margins on paper copies of the transcriptions and then the group discussed together their analyses of the text. These discussions were then recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for Phase 4.

Data Analysis Plan

The goal of data analysis in this project was to address the research questions, which inquired about how teachers utilized this process of collaborative action research to ask questions about their practice and to construct new meanings based on the inquiry that arises within the context of discussions and reflection. As such, the analysis method needed to be open enough to respond to the possibilities for topics, themes, and relationships that arose in the meaning-making process. One fundamental assumption in this research was that the teachers' responses, reflections, interactions, and questions would arise from their own point of view, a very situated, subjective, and personal stance.

With a post-structuralist theoretical orientation, one could employ a number of different specific methodological approaches (e.g., ethnography, case study, action research; Peters & Burbules, 2004). Since very little research in early childhood teacher professional development specifically invokes a post-structuralist critical stance, there is not a clear pathway for choices of interpretive tools. Lenz-Taguchi (2008, 2010) and Mac Naughton (2005) chose to utilize

discourse analysis in similar collaborative action research projects. Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2007) advocate for a new approach to localized meaning-making which problematizes dominant discourses about quality, but they do not specify a specific analytical research approach. Collaborative action research examples have employed the use of a variety of analysis approaches, including case-study methodology, grounded theory, and phenomenology (Goddnough, 2010, 2011).

While a number of analytic approaches could be arguably appropriate for the data sources and paradigmatic assumptions, such as case-study, narrative, and even ethnography (Creswell, 2007; Masuda, 2010), I determined grounded theory was most appropriate for this project. Grounded theory aims to stay close to the views of the participants, which was a philosophical priority in this project. Open coding for potential themes allows for the level of openness and flexibility I was seeking in order to appreciate the as-yet-unknown questions, topics, dilemmas, and connections that teachers would articulate in the meaning-construction process. It also provides a practical approach to the iterative cycles of preliminary analysis, responses to data, and revisiting that occurred in this project. Grounded theory allows for the themes to emerge primarily from the data (grounded in the data), but also can include relations with concepts and ideas from theory or other research (Daly, 2007). Multiple rounds of coding can be employed in grounded theory, with early themes being revisited and revised through the action research project. Due to the duration of the project, with multiple sessions of data collected over a period of several months, it seemed appropriate to analyze the data for themes that arose early in the data and persist over time. Preparing the data for analysis included recording the group conversations with digital recording devices: a handheld Olympus® Digital Voice Recorder,

model AS-510M, and a laptop using Audacity 2.0.3 software. Recordings were transcribed and uploaded into Atlas.ti (2014) qualitative analysis software for coding.

For this study, I specifically utilized the grounded theory process explicated by Miles and Huberman (2004) and Strauss and Corbin (1998). Grounded theory analysis typically involves three rounds, or phases, of coding – open, axial, and selective – and is based upon procedures established by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998; Creswell, 2007). The first step is open coding, in which codes or labels were applied to “chunks” of data as units of meaning. Labels can be words, phrases, or metaphors. Codes may attempt to *describe* meaning in the texts, *interpret* (relate it to other ideas, such as an interpretive lens) ideas in the texts, or *identify patterns* in the texts (more common in later phases of coding). Open codes included labels for teacher references to phenomena, processes, interactions, and consequences. In addition, data included my own interpretation of processes, interactions, and consequences that were part of the group dynamic in the dialogue. In grounded theory, the process of comparing new data to older or other data is referred to as constant comparative analysis (Daly, 2007). As chunks, or quotes, of the data were coded, codes were refined and modified through comparative analysis both during the initial sweep and at all repeated sweeps through the data.

After the initial coding sweep, the second round of coding involved examining the initial codes to develop more abstract or broad categories. This step helped reduce and organize the units of analysis to aid in interpretation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this step, one also looks across and within the categories to determine the true nature of the category and how it is defined. In the second round of coding, I created categories of codes that encompassed some of the initial codes from the first sweep. Appendix D includes a display of the codes developed in the first and second rounds of open coding and comparative analysis. Some categories included

“Child,” denoting codes that referred to observations of children’s actions or views, “Pedagogy,” referring to questions about how to implement teacher practice, and “Frame,” to include text related to the sources of knowledge utilized in interpretation. Some of the codes and code categories were relevant to particular phases, for instance, “Frame” codes were specifically used to analyze Phase 4 data.

Axial and selective coding rounds occurred next in the data analysis. Axial coding involves linking categories and finding broader interpretive themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Specifically, I utilized axial coding to interpret dimensions of the data that could be organized as causal conditions (e.g. way of being provoked, codes such as “wondering,” or “unsettled”), intervening conditions (e.g., teacher/child relationships or context features, codes such as “trust” or “gaze of others”), strategies (e.g., “questioning prior practices”) and consequences (e.g., code for “now –different way of” doing pedagogy). Axial coding structured the process of selective coding, in which categories were saturated and concepts integrated into theory (Strauss & Corbin). At the level of selective coding, I made more sweeps of the data to identify broader overarching themes (e.g., “ways of knowing” and “ways of being”) and found relations among themes to develop an overall picture of the meanings that arose from the group’s data as a whole.

In order to organize the way findings are presented from the data analysis, I developed Figure 4 to illustrate the four main phases of the project. This diagram will precede each of four sections in Chapters 4 and 5 that relate to the four phases of the project data. Chapter 4 presents findings from Phases 1 and 2; Chapter 5 contains findings from Phases 3 and 4.

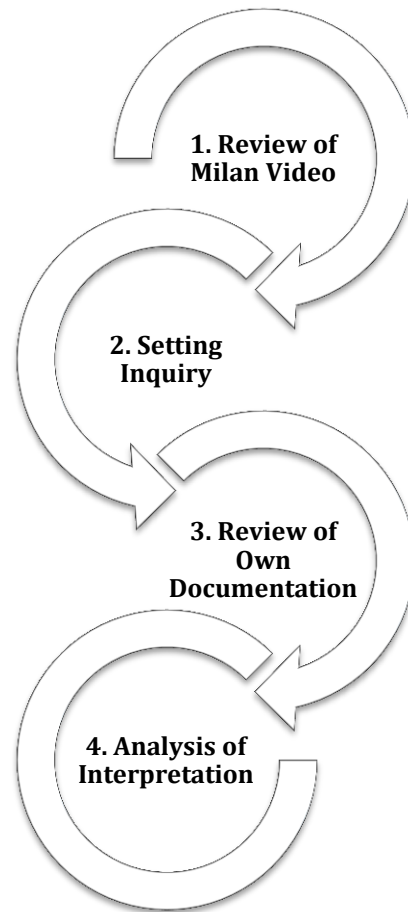


Figure 4. Four Phases of Data Analyzed.

My Role as Researcher/Facilitator

For the current study, my role was to facilitate the project and conduct the research components (i.e., study design, data collection, analysis, reporting). Since I worked in the same context with the teachers, discussing pedagogy and being involved with ongoing professional development was a typical aspect of my role. I also played a role as participant observer in the project. My faculty dissertation chair, Dr. Mary Jane Moran, served as a consultant and observer. I facilitated the group sessions by coordinating materials (e.g., readings about related topics) and planning logistics (e.g., technology and equipment we might need). As facilitator, I also coordinated our discussions so that we set our intentions for each meeting and kept to our

agreed time constraints. Although the content of our discussions was largely determined by teachers' inquiries, I set up structures for our sessions so that adequate time was given to explore documentation in depth. For instance, we had an established number of sessions dedicated to share documentation in Phase 3 and my role was to facilitate discussions to allow for depth while also staying within the allotted time so that each teacher's sharing was given ample time. My aim was to provide the structure for the collaborative conversations to occur within, but to participate as an equal partner with teachers and minimize the researcher/participant hierarchy as much as possible. It is important to acknowledge, however, that my roles as researcher, program director, and participant observer could not be separated and may at different times have arisen in the dynamic of the collaboration. I also acknowledge my role in the program as a supervisor of teachers and that this might have also played a role in the group process. One way I worked to be conscious of this was to keep a reflective journal to bring this dynamic to mind over the course of the sessions. The journal also served as a way for me to enact reflective pedagogy as the facilitator of the project, to help keep the goals of collaborative action research intact as we moved through different stages (A sample of a post-session journal entry is included as Appendix E).

Dr. May Jane Moran, my faculty mentor, also participated in the project. She served primarily as a mentor and coach for me. Dr. Moran has conducted and published research on collaborative action research and her experience was valuable to me as I facilitated my first collaborative action research project. Her notes from the sessions she attended assisted my reflective and interpretive process, and periodic debriefing sessions helped steer my decisions about how to facilitate the small steps of the project along the way. Dr. Moran knew many of the teacher participants in the project through her work on prior research studies and her role as early

childhood faculty in the center's host department. I have collaborated with Dr. Moran on the prior cross-cultural study with teachers from here and Milan, Italy. Dr. Moran is the Principal Investigator (PI) for that study, for which I also serve as a co-PI. We have familiarity working with each other as faculty mentor/graduate student as well as research team collaborators. Dr. Moran also served as advisor to my data analysis process. I sought her input during each level of the data analysis coding process and utilized her expertise in the field to offer confirmatory input to the analysis and synthesis of the findings.

My Own Theoretical Position

In qualitative research, the researcher plays a central role as an instrument of the research process. Writing research transforms the meaning of the phenomena under study and one's subjective role must be acknowledged. As Creswell explains, "How we write is a reflection of our own interpretation based on the cultural, social, gender, class, and personal politics that we bring to research. All writing is 'positioned' and within a stance" (2007, p. 215). In order to disclose my own positioning and my subjective stance as I entered into this research, I have included my biographical and theoretical position as follows.

I enter the field of early childhood with a personal history of scholarship and work experiences that shape my views about children, families, and social institutions. In undergraduate studies, I have focused on recent contemporary philosophies, especially feminist and critical theories. These informed my views about power relationships and steered my career towards social justice objectives. Post-structuralism and many elements of cultural studies resonate with me because they acknowledge injustices within social and cultural systems and seek to employ emancipatory actions at both broad and local levels (Barker, 2008; Dahlberg, et al., 1999; Mac Naughton, 2005). Because I had the opportunity to engage with radical

theoretical positions early in my adult life from scholars such as Luce Irigaray, Donna Haraway, Julia Kristeva, and others, I have been open to the possibilities for alternative meanings and acts of resistance in the various settings in which I have worked and studied. I appreciate in a personal way that feminist, post-structuralist, and critical theories deal with issues of power, race, gender, class, and ethnicity and call forth those voices and narratives that have often been overlooked in the past. During my graduate work in early childhood education, I have spent time digesting and conducting quantitative research in the traditions of the dominant discourse. Sensing a void, I sought to fill in the areas lacking meaning in those areas. As a researcher, I have used the technologies of quality and evaluation, but my experience with teachers tells me there is a deep, neglected well of reality between the lines of quality and child outcomes. These areas must be explored with sensitivity and patience for the complexity that resides in multiple realities and representations. For these reasons, and many others, I bring to my research the post-structuralist (Peters & Burbules, 2004) and cultural studies (Barker, 2008) social justice perspectives, expressed as a commitment to value teachers' voices and honor the shape of the narratives they form. I position myself as a social-constructivist because I privilege the use of multiple sources of knowledge construction in pursuit of democratic, empowering discourse (Hatch & Barclay-McLaughlin, 2006). I see myself as a learner embedded within the fabric of inquiry with those I engage with during research activities, and consequently value co-constructions of meaning and knowledge. I also privilege knowledge that is constructed and enacted within communities of practice as a way to keep research aims as useful and beneficial to practitioners as possible.

Evaluation and Validation Strategies

Creswell (2007) describes validation in qualitative research as distinctly different from the concept of validity in quantitative research. Essentially, in qualitative studies, one must ask “Is the account valid, and by whose standards?” (Creswell, 2007, p. 201). Qualitative research reveals a story about an account, and there are a number of strategies to account for how the data are interpreted, synthesized and communicated. Creswell recommends choosing among a field of strategies, mostly based on the fit with the type of qualitative study at hand. For this study, I employed the following strategies to address the quality of the data interpretation. First, there was a process of prolonged engagement and persistent observation. I spent thirteen weeks in the project sessions listening to the teachers, recording their conversations, taking field notes and writing reflective notes. The length of time I spent in the group contributed to my interpretation. Also, the structure of the project included built-in member checks, as the teachers reviewed and analyzed their own narratives and had the chance to confirm or disconfirm possible interpretations of their words. With Dr. Moran’s consultation role, I was also able to utilize peer review opportunities along the way, not only with data interpretation, but also with design and implementation issues. Her observations allowed me to check my interpretations against hers. Since this project is a doctoral dissertation, there is also built-in peer review and critique from the faculty committee, who give feedback about my reports of the data. The amount of data collected over time allowed for codes to be refined using constant comparison, so that meanings of the data could be fleshed out thoroughly. My writing also entails providing a thick description of the activity, which will help readers determine the transferability of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I have included elements of the process, the flow of dialogue, and example of the group dynamics that were outside the scope of the research questions in order to allow for

meanings that arose from the data and from the group context. Understanding the specifics of the setting and participants will help readers interpret what may be similar or different about this project compared to other settings and will help them judge the limitations and applicability to other settings.

In this chapter, I have described the collaborative action research model and how it served as an appropriate methodological structure for the research questions I have posed. In addition to the well-established collaborative action research design, I have also explained how a post-structuralist critical lens and cross-national exchanges added to the design. These additions stem from the epistemological and theoretical imperatives that frame the context for the study. Although I have used other scholars as guides (namely Lenz Taguchi, 2007, 2008, 2010, and the work of Mac Naughton, 2005), this type of research in the United States has not been represented in early childhood teacher education literature. It is expected that the findings from this collaborative action research study will be meaningful to the field as a description for how this type of professional development yields rich situated teacher learning.

Chapter 4

Findings from Phases 1 and 2

Presentation of Findings

Findings will be presented in the following two chapters based on the organization of the phases of the project timeline. In order to describe what teachers chose to inquire about in their practice, it will help to follow the timeline of their collaborative action research project so that it is possible to follow the story about the way their narratives built over the course of the project. Chapter 4 includes findings from Phases 1 and 2, and Chapter 5 includes findings from Phases 3 and 4.

Phase 1 Findings - Responses to the UMB video

This section presents an analysis of the conversations held after teachers had reviewed the Milan video. Half of the teachers had seen the video before and participated in focus group discussions (Moran, et al., 2014), whereas half of the group had not seen it previously. Figure 5 highlights Phase 1 of the data, which includes conversations that occurred across two sessions of the seminar. During the conversations in Phase 1, teachers responded by discussing what stood out to them from viewing the Milan video. Their topics can be broadly grouped into things they noticed about the Milan context, the children, the parent and teacher interactions, and most substantially, the actions and behaviors of the teachers.

Noticing the context: “It seemed very much like a home environment.” As we had found with the prior focus group discussions (Brookshire & Moran, 2012) some of the initial responses to the video from Milan included observations of contrasts in contextual features of the Milan setting. Some of examples of what they noticed include a “home-like”

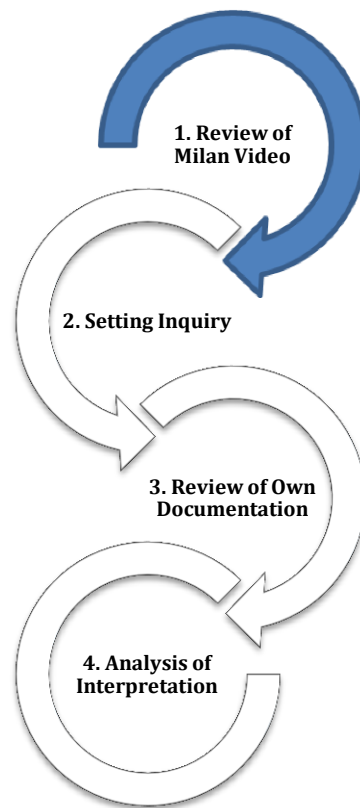


Figure 5. Phase 1 of Data

atmosphere, the use of real dishes and other features of the way routines were structured, that it did not seem as busy and chaotic as their own classrooms, and a notable difference in regulations related to routines.

Some of the observations about the atmosphere feeling home-like were linked to a sense of comfort and a relaxed tone of the classroom. Other comments were about the use of the space and the materials used. The following quotes are some of the comments about how the classroom spaces felt home-like.

Harriet: It just seemed very much like in a home environment, um, that you would, like they could just be chilling at home on the couch with one kid asleep and once kid listening to a story and it just all seemed very relaxed and comfortable.

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Harriet: It was the naptime scene, that's when you really saw the teacher showing affection to the children, and that's exactly how it would be at home . . . it is more like an authentic family in terms of the amount of affection they show.

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Sarah: I love that they use real dishes.

Gabriella: I mean, we use real plates, but they're plastic. I mean they use, like, *real* plates like we use at home, and *real* glasses, and spoons that are really too big for those children's' mouths, but and they are perfectly fine. That's probably what they would have at home, so why have something different at school?

--

Jenna: I was thinking about just the sounds of the whole thing. It sounded home like if that makes sense. You know, my home is not always calm and quiet, but I mean, children shouting and stuff, the way that they were sounded like home, the dishes clanking sounded like home. It just sounded very home like, and I can't explain it all.

--

Harriet: It just wasn't a lot of the busy-ness and kind of chaos that you might see at the transitions to one of our mealtimes here.

Harriet also noted that the children were handling the food at mealtime and wondered if it was not a "health code violation" and "they've got real glass and what if they

break?” This was attributed to the observation that the Milan teachers “just don’t seem as uptight about all that stuff as we do.”

Jenna noted that their space options and use of space were noticeably different:

Jenna: I was just jealous of how many rooms and breakout spaces they had, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.

Sarah also noticed the use of space and the availability of materials in the space:

Sarah: My thoughts were about their use of space, and you know, looking at what all they had out in the classroom and ... but everything seemed to have neutral tones. More or less blended in. That's what struck me the most.

Another feature the teachers noticed was the presence of adult furniture. Gabriella also foreshadows a topic that becomes a very central theme later when she says that she thought it was “odd” to see teachers sitting on the furniture and not being down with the children.

Rachel: And that goes along with the big furniture, too. We're not used to having adult furniture that much, or teachers using it.

Gabriella: Although I did find it odd how often they were sitting on the adult furniture, like, they were just kind of observing the classroom, which, seems to work for them, it was just odd to me.

Although they mentioned several specific physical elements of the context, such as the dishes, the space, the colors, and materials, the persistent theme that continued through more of the dialogue related to the sense of calm and the home-like atmosphere that was detected. This idea of calmness also included perceptions of the children’s behavior, and became a topic that continued through many of the conversations that ensued. Some of the early comments shown here gave examples of physical features of the

nido (Italian term for infant-toddler center), but beyond this first session of responding to the Milan videos, these features did not keep occurring. Much more attention from this point forward was given to noticing the actions of the children and teachers in the video.

Noticing the children: “They were so autonomous.” Some of the comments were focused on observations of the children’s behavior and demeanor. The emergence of a persistent topic which carried through the entire seminar can be seen in these first discussions. Initial responses about the children included that they seemed very relaxed, paired with the observation that the children had a lot of autonomy or freedom. This was linked as well to the structure or context of the routines, such as the fact that the children set the tables and used real dishes. The co-occurrence of these themes in the quotations early in the seminar conversations are interesting and notable, and these continued to evolve and change shape over the different phases of the project. Here are examples of how Harriet and Rachel described the autonomy of the children:

Harriet: They were so autonomous. They set the tables. They served themselves all the time. They were given a lot of responsibility of when there was a social conflict, the teacher didn’t rush in to help solve anything.

--

Rachel: We could see the autonomous nature of all the children in that class. They were doing things on their own. They were very calm, very relaxed, they just took care of themselves.

Rachel also noted that she thought the children were more group-oriented than me-oriented in their behaviors, combined with self-regulation, such as at meal time.

Rachel: Maybe because of what I've been reading, but they're so not me-oriented at all, they're about the group, they're, they don't, um, I noticed sometimes when they were sitting at the table, if a child had not been served yet, he's not saying, "I want some, I want some, gimme some" you know, he's waiting. He knows he's going to get some I guess. They're just, um, children are just, seem to be more self-regulated and calm.

Further in the conversation, Rachel mentioned again that she noticed the children's self-regulation:

Rachel: And I was still amazing and that, just at their self-regulation. Especially at, when they're setting the table. The little children are going to another area and getting one plate at a time, and putting it on the table, going back, and it seems like they're little workers, they have an assignment, and they just know, are focused on what they're doing.

In these excerpts, the teachers discussed ways that children were autonomous.

These comments focused on how children behaved with autonomy, but examples in the next section show how they viewed teachers granting children autonomy. It is notable that in several instances, as above, the children are observed and discussed as having agency of their own, that the children exercise and possess autonomy through their actions of doing things for themselves. Not only was the context noted as being not busy/chaotic, but that the children themselves exhibited self-regulation and calmness. This calmness was perhaps attributed to, or seen to co-exist with autonomy, as they often co-occurred in statements. Although teachers were very interested in children's behaviors, the most compelling characters in the video were the teachers. The following section gives examples of what stood out about the Milan teachers' actions and behaviors in the video.

Teachers' interaction with parents: "It was so nonchalant." The group was provoked to discuss the implications of a scene from the Milan video that showed a brief conversation between a teacher and parent at the end of the day. Harriet described having an "aha" moment. In this quote below, she described not only noticing the different form of practice on the video, but then also stated that it "made her think" and "change [her] views" about interacting with parents when communicating about a daily routine such as naptime.

Harriet: It was my big aha moment that I had in terms of teachers relating with parents. There was a scene where the parent came at the end of the day, and it's one thing in the past that I've really dreaded, is some of those things you have to tell parents, like, your child got bit today, or your child didn't take a nap today, or certain issues that affect different parents and this was a child that didn't take a nap and the teacher just said something along, she said, "Vittoria didn't take a nap today and it's okay some days are like that" and just kept going on. And just like the ease with which she was having that conversation, just like unapologetic, "I'm the professional, this is what happens, some days are like that," and it was so nonchalant, that it just really made me think and kind of change my views on some of my parent relations even just from that clip of the parent interaction.

Another teacher, continuing the conversation about this comment, sought an explanation for this contrast between the teacher's sense of confidence in interacting with parents by situating it in the differing contexts in which parents appear to view caregiving. In the following exchange during the conversation about the parent/teacher scene, the teachers relate this contrasting example to their context, their identities, their roles, and their perception of the gaze of parents upon their daily practices.

Rachel: It shows the confidence in her professionalism

Harriet: Exactly.

Rachel: And then it made me also wonder cause I had a lot of thoughts about that as well, that same scene. Is it because parents pay so much money for us to take care of their children?

Harriet: We feel an obligation to have them be satisfied customers as opposed to...

Rachel: Yeah.

Harriet: ...the service we're providing is different, it's not "we're here to make sure your child does all these routines the way you want them to do it."

Rachel: If that were true...

Harriet: And teach them and have them well-rounded classrooms...

Rachel: We can't change our practice because of different parents' preferences. We are the ones that are the professionals at it, you know.

Rachel and Harriet seemed to have had the opportunity in this dialogue to articulate a prior conviction they held about being "professionals" and having more to consider than just parent satisfaction about routines (i.e., to teach and have well-rounded classrooms). Yet the presence of the tension between feeling obligated to please parents and asserting that "we are the ones that are the professionals" is evident, suggesting that it is a tentative conviction, one that is not firmly set.

Others in the group also found this topic compelling and they kept the dialogue focused on it a bit longer. Bella wondered – wanted more information – about what would happen if she told a parent with confidence that their child had not slept. She doubted it would have the same result as in the Milan video.

Bella: That's something where I would be interested in hearing the parent you know more parent reactions to "oh your child didn't sleep today" because I think of the numerous times that with the preschool children that we have, "well so and so didn't have a nap today", you know, then you get, "well, tomorrow I really need you to make them lay down and go to sleep", or "if they're really tired you're gonna have to keep them awake today because they're not going to bed at night."

Bella seems to pull the group back into the reality that parents in her context, in her experience, would typically request that the teacher makes sure nap happens upon request. Gabriella also acknowledged the contrast that is apparent in the Milan practices versus what she sees locally: "...so many of us feel like that we have to be apologetic because of something that happened during the day, and they don't feel that way, it's not approached that way." In the conversation, the focus shifted away from the parent teacher scene toward the pedagogical questions about when to be involved with children and when to stay back. As part of the discussion of a scene where the children were kicking each other, Jenna re-integrated the issue about parent relationships to explain why one might feel pressured from parents to prevent and intervene in child conflict. I asked for further elaboration, to which Jenna and Rachel express that the parent relationship sets a context of evaluation of their professional competence:

Jenna: I think it also, right, goes back to the daycare versus, the other. We feel like we're a service to the parents, and if something like that happens and the parents were to come ask us, "Well, we don't know that's the way it goes, you know."

Robyn: Oh, so it's the gaze of the, so you're talking about a whole other level of representation here, the gaze of the parent knowing that you don't know why something bad happened in the classroom, and what does that mean?

Jenna: Right, we weren't doing our job.

Rachel: And that means we're not... competent.

The conversation then turned back towards questions about how to know when to intervene. The dialogue about teacher and parent relationships seemed to not only address the phenomena observed (contrasting patterns of how parents interacted with teachers, or perceived expectations of teachers), but it also provided further backdrop for the meaning making process in which the group was able to explore what they felt was behind their own decisions and ideas about their roles. Most of the conversation in Phase 1, however, resulted from teachers' responses to what they noticed about the Milan teachers' practices with children.

Noticing the teachers with the children: “They didn’t dive in like we do.” The most substantial and provocative conversations about the videos ensued as the group noticed qualities or dimensions of the teacher practice they observed. Presumably they noticed behaviors that stood out as a contrast for them, or that signaled a difference from what is taken for granted in perceptions of their own everyday practice. At times, teachers explicitly noted a contrast in practice, as in the quote above, but at other times, the contrast was implied by the use of phrases like “usually we’re... but they were” and the teachers did things “much more than we do,” or “we would’ve...but they ...”. The following section chronicles not only what the group noticed about the Milan teachers' behavior, but also illustrates the processes by which the video scenes prompted meaning making dialogue.

The dialogue also shows instances in which the teachers began to frame questions for themselves and to impose self-critique based on provocations from the Milan teachers' behavior. The narratives also show that teachers were utilizing the conversations to build the foundations for their areas of inquiry. The dimensions of teacher behavior, or teacher practice, that stood out included several aspects of the ways teachers interacted with children: the amount of freedom or autonomy granted to children, the structure of activities, the level and quality of involvement teachers seemed to have with children, and the physical proximity of teachers to children.

Interactions with children. The teachers discussed the ways they noticed Milan teachers being less involved and not intervening as quickly with children. These phenomena were often brought up and connected with the idea of children's autonomy. When discussing the amount of autonomy or freedom teachers granted children, they described scenes in which children "were given a lot of responsibility" for both routine tasks and for social interactions with peers. They also noted autonomy of thought and learning by saying that teachers would "just let them [children] come to their own knowledge" by not being overly involved during activities. In many excerpts of the dialogue, the way teachers granted children autonomy was noted, and a pattern was evident in the way the group related autonomy with how teachers displayed styles of involvement with children during routines or activities. For instance, in the following quotes, Gabriella and Harriet note how the teacher stayed back and what opportunities they felt this provided for the children.

Gabriella: One of the things I wrote down was kind of related to that, was that the teacher was sitting back, a lot of times, away from the children, but they were giving them that space to go explore.

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Harriet: They were given a lot of responsibility when there was a social conflict, the teacher didn't rush in...to help solve anything. They were barely even visible in the video. They just kind of were questioning from the background, what was going on, you know, they weren't really there, they didn't dive in like we do.

In another quote, Rachel also noticed the Milan teachers' level of involvement and physical proximity with children and how this stood in contrast with her own practices.

Rachel: They're not as nurturing, and as involved, they're not touching them as much, they're not, um the teachers are holding back away from the group of children much more than we do.

She further asked about the nature of this "holding back" and how it possibly related to the autonomy seen in the children.

Rachel: Then, I'm starting to think... does the teacher interaction create more autonomy with the children? Do you think the autonomy is related to the relationships with teachers?

Rachel explained how the teacher behavior caused her to wonder about relationships. It was apparent in the narratives that the group needed not only to note the contrast they saw in the Milan teachers' interaction style, but also, to make sense of or explain what was behind the practice. Teachers often connected observations with questions, such as wondering how the teachers made decisions about being involved, in other words, what

was their intention for children? The following section chronicles some of the discussions that involved teachers working to make sense of the teacher behaviors they found compelling and how it lead the group towards critical self-reflection.

Making sense of teacher behaviors: “I’m curious to know how they make decisions.” This section explores the progression of conversation in which the group moved into a mode of discussion in which they actively sought explanations for the Milan teachers’ behaviors – what I referred to as “making sense of” their pedagogy. They focused a great deal on connecting teacher behaviors with possible outcomes for the children and for the teacher/child relationships. The following excerpts of the data show how they moved through questions about why, to making connections between multiple phenomena (e.g., child autonomy, teacher involvement, child calmness, and others). It is difficult to separate this lengthy section into topical subsections because the teachers’ conversation circled back through topics and wove together many strands of inquiry throughout the progression of the conversation. Imposing categorical boundaries on the topics the teachers chose to integrate, in fact, would limit the data in a way that would not accurately represent the complex nature of the process that the group employed.

The teachers seemed most intrigued by questions surrounding the level of involvement with children and how Milan teachers intervened during heightened situations.

Bella: I like have a big “what” question, or “how.” I am curious to know how they make decisions on when to be involved and when not to be involved. Because like, I noticed, like, children putting stuff in their mouths, and things that we would acknowledge, they seem to ignore, but like the children putting things in their

mouths and there was no acknowledging, but then when the children were going over and filling up their little pans of water, they weren't having as much freedom to be able to try and carry their water back to the table, so, it was very, like, it's kind of confusing for me. The things that we would try to intervene, they don't, and then the things that we would like, try to let them do on their own, they were helping with.

In this quote, Bella explored what she observed and how it was confusing; the teachers didn't always simply stay out of the children's way. She noticed contrasts and asked how it does or doesn't make sense in relation to what "we" would do. This need to relate back to one's own set of practices was repeated in several more instances. During open coding, the phenomena noted in Bella's quote above was her observation about the "teachers' involvement", and a "contrast" with her own practice. At the next level of analysis, with axial coding, however, her quote appeared to also represent a process or strategy of dealing with the phenomena at hand. This quote, and several others seem to indicate a strategy that I labeled "making sense of," which I interpreted as a process in which the teachers wanted to create explanations for the behavior they saw, at times identifying causality, or at least identifying the rationale for why the teacher chose to behave the way she did in the video. Bella's quote above shows an example of how she presumed there was a legitimate rationale – perhaps a pedagogical stance - for the patterns of involvement, and she challenged the group with the task of trying to make sense of it.

Along the same line of questioning, Gabriella sought to make sense of the causality of teachers' involvement by asking if it related to the teachers' personalities.

Gabriella: I'm wondering if different, so as we're talking about how in Italy, they seem more hands off, they seem less overtly nurturing, perhaps, would be a way to describe that, and we are not that way, do you think there's different type of personality types drawn to the field? Because of the different way it's structured and therefore those interactions are different because of that?

In the flow of conversation that followed from Gabriella's hypothesis, Harriet posed the idea that perhaps it is a cultural variation, and based on "how you were raised by your parents, that's how the culture kind of views things... our culture is very different so the way you're raised is maybe more of a reflection of how it is at school." To this comment, however, Rachel countered the explanation with a redirection back to a focus on pedagogical motivations as a way to make sense of the level of involvement observed:

Rachel: I thought the idea was just more intentional. I don't know but that's the idea I got. And maybe because I was reflecting on myself maybe. I need to be more intentional in, you know, having hands off a little bit more, when they need it.

Rachel was making sense of the behavior by relating it back to her own notions of practice, which she has had some time to reflect upon as she was one of the focal teachers from the original study and has brought up in the prior focus groups that she would like to examine this part of her pedagogical ideas and practices. She has not put the idea to rest, however, and still actively engaged this question about involvement in the group conversation in this phase of the study. Rachel further projected her hypothesis about the teacher involvement to not only explain that it is intentional, but also proposed that the interaction style led to the level of autonomy exhibited by the children in the footage. Her question was very

focused, but she left the answer open-ended with “do you think...” suspending her inquisitiveness about the issues and not seeking a simple resolution.

Rachel: And then, and so we noticed that first, and then I'm starting to make these connections...wait a minute, now they're not as nurturing, and as involved, they're not touching them as much, they're not, um, the teachers are holding back away from the group of children much more than we do. Then, I'm starting to think...are we, you know, does the teacher interaction create more autonomy with the children? Do you think the autonomy is related to the relationships with teachers?

Rachel went on to build her understanding of the pedagogical implication of this question and turned the lens back upon her own ideas of interactions and relationship patterns with children.

Rachel: And we're all about relationships, and you know, we have a loop so that we can form relationships from infants on up, and then to think that what um, I've spent a lot of time and energy doing, which is building a relationship with these children, is that, am I doing too much?

Next, Rachel continued her thread of questioning and making sense of her hypothesis by posing a question for herself, which she posed not only in this initial phase of the project, but also continued throughout the other phases. She explicitly credited the provocation from the video as having unsettled not only her own thinking about this aspect of relating to children (her role as teacher), but also connected it to her role as a mentor to student teachers.

Rachel: How do I learn how to... back up a little bit and let the children, you know. There's points as they're growing from infants, to toddler, to older toddler, to

intentionally learn how to pull back from out interactions with them and I just think it's a fascinating, something I hadn't really, I would have never realized that I might be doing too much of, and when we saw them sitting back, I remember when they were maybe doing beans or something, like a sensory... and the teacher was just like off to the side. And we would've, if this would've been one of our student teachers, we would've been coaching them to be more involved with the children and so, it's just another way that it changed the thinking of how we do things.

Although the other teachers in the group did not string together all these ideas into such cohesive narratives about the processes of provocation, reflection, self-review, and further inquiry, their comments echoed some of the same reactions and similar strategies of making sense of what they noticed. Harriet explained the difference between her initial reaction and further processing of the meaning of the behavior in this way:

Harriet: In my notes I had, exactly what Rachel was saying, when you're initially watching it, it almost looks like the teacher's uninvolved, she doesn't seem to be smiling, she doesn't seem to be involved with the children or doing. She looks like she's bored or something, but then once you really start watching it you realize they do have those relationships.

Harriet echoed in her comment that she made sense of the “uninvolved” teacher by thinking about the nature of the teacher/child relationships. She later mirrored Rachel’s self-critique by proposing possible outcomes of the way she sees typical practice in her context versus the Milan context. In the following quote she problematized what she thought would be a typical reaction – calling it interference - and also tied in the perceived contrast between the children in the two contexts.

Harriet: Spilling water and splashing around in it at the lunch table, just wasn't acknowledged. Dumping out flour or water or whatever material they're playing with, um, totally developmentally appropriate things for children to be doing. I could see us jumping in and interfering with that a lot quicker than the teacher, it's just kind of, not mentioned, it's just allowed to go on while other things happen, but I think that might account for a lot of what we noticed before of how it's calmer in there, the children seem to be, I think what maybe I thought first was more obedient, for lack of a better word, but now, looking at it again, it just kind of seems they're just allowed to do what they would normally do, and it's not made a big deal about it.

Gabriella also echoed similar strategies for meaning making in her comments, noting that she saw the “sitting back” as an intentional practice that granted the children some autonomy “...the teacher was sitting back, a lot of times [...] away from the children, but they were giving them that space to go explore.” She also connected this idea to a review of her own interactions with children by posing, “I think it's something that I'm too much in the middle of things.”

Although most of the comments that attempted to make sense of the teacher behavior gave the Milan teacher the benefit of the doubt, and attributed to them an intentional pedagogical approach, there were some observations that the group did not make sense of right away. Bella described being “caught off guard” by seeing a child conflict scenario and couldn't make sense of the teacher response:

Bella: I was a little caught off guard with the lunch deal, where the two little boys were hitting and kicking and the teacher that was obviously close to them ...she had

no reaction, she kind of looked at them, but didn't do anything, and here comes the superhero [another teacher] from across the room, I guess, because we don't even really know where she was, but it was just kind of odd for me that she didn't respond at all to what was happening right there, like, pretty much within arm's reach.

The group engaged in dialogue together about how to make sense of this scene. Rachel, having participated in the initial study and having had the experience of being recorded and choosing which footage to share with Milan, pointed out that the teachers from Milan made a conscious choice to include that clip. She commented "A scene where I'm turned this way and the children are hitting each other and I'm not seeing it? I would've taken it out." Here is the dialogue that ensued as I probed Rachel to explain why:

Robyn: Why would you have taken it out?

Rachel: Because I seem...guilty! [laughter from all] Right? I mean,

Robyn: Guilty of what?

Rachel: Of, of not, paying attention to...that. [laughs]

In order to elicit how Rachel understood the idea of feeling guilty for a lapse in attention and under whose gaze she felt under scrutiny, I continued to probe. At this point, other teachers joined into the conversation about why they would be uncomfortable with this scenario.

Robyn: So let's, uh, let's think about that. Is this a great . . . this is a great place to say, okay, what does that mean? So, you would feel guilty about, what, about not having prevented it from ever happening? Or, what is your role in that situation with the children?

Harriet: I think if it was me, I would've felt terrible about not noticing it.

Rachel: That's...

Sarah: And I would've felt terrible about not noticing it.

Rachel: That's, that's...

Sarah: And I would've just been horrified that I hadn't known that was going on until I turned back and then was like, "Oh." But I also I guess realize, that I know there are things that happen in my classroom that I don't see, you know.

I was interested in knowing more about what was behind the idea of feeling so horrible and terrible about being in this position, so I continued to ask questions to the group to see if they would reflect upon their reactions.

Robyn: So what's horrifying about . . . the truth of not knowing?

Bella: Somebody else seeing it! [laughter from all]

Robyn: So what would it mean, if somebody else saw it, and noticed that you didn't notice?

Gabriella: It's like a show of incompetence.

Jenna: I think it also, right, goes back to the daycare versus, the other. We feel like we're a service to the parents, and if something like that happens and the parent were to come ask us, "Well, we don't know, that's the way it goes," you know?

From the responses by Gabriella and Jenna, there is a sense of the role of the teacher and perhaps identity of professional competency. Jenna's comment focused on the context of their practice, in which the relationship of parents to teachers rests on the evaluation – or gaze – of parents upon the competence of the teacher. This dialogue about noticing that a teacher from Milan took a more hands-off approach to two children in conflict revealed a

process this group employed. The strategy appeared to be that they noticed a phenomenon, were provoked to wonder why, to grapple with how it didn't make sense to them, then to articulate – make sense of - how they would have a different perspective. By probing and pushing the teachers to explain their thinking, they were able to reflect upon why they would feel so strongly about how their practice is represented to others. In this section of dialogue, the group did not seek resolution about the meaning behind the Milan teacher's actions, but they dove into the meaning behind their reaction to it, and had an opportunity to pay attention to the fact that they feel the gaze of others upon their professional identity as caregivers. After this moment of self-review, the teachers moved back into the strategy of trying to explain or make sense of the Milan teachers' pedagogical intentions.

When the focus turned back to explaining why the teacher didn't intervene with the two children who were kicking and hitting, some new ideas about pedagogical intentions were proposed. Rachel tried to make sense of the lack of intervention by relating the lunch kicking scene to another scene in which a child had a verbal tantrum towards a peer: "...they're trusting the child to not, in that case, they were trusting that child that was yelling at the other child, to not hurt him, but at the table, you know, they were hitting each other." Then Harriet adds to this by saying, "maybe that's the same thing that the teacher was thinking, they're gonna you know shout at each other... but it's not gonna lead to anything that I need to jump up and be concerned about." Harriet added another dimension to the pedagogical stance, however, by adding that the trust the teachers hold with children is based upon their knowledge of each child: "...just the teacher knowing the children and knowing what's gonna happen in this situation that she trusts that it's not

gonna lead to hitting or punching.” Gabriella had difficulty with this explanation, however, because her sense of trust also includes a dimension of her teacher role that is based on protection:

Gabriella: I don’t think it’s even all...of that though, for me it feels like it’s my responsibility to protect you, like, you are in my care, so I would not let that child continue kicking you if I asked them once and they did not stop.

Bella next chimed in with a question, to suspend the process of making sense of the teacher’s thinking and keep the group in the mode of wondering: “... and it goes back to that whole involvement thing, you know, that was my big question. How do they, how do you decide? How did they decide when they should do something?” Rachel responds to this by saying, emphatically, “That was my big question last time!”

The answers to these questions were not clear, however, and so the group continued to employ strategies of how to make sense of this contrast in practice. They cycled back around to turning the lens upon their own practice, ideas, and patterns. In regard to how she reacts to situations of conflict between children, Bella contemplated the awareness she has about intervening when she said, “I don’t even stop and think, ‘okay should I go over there?’ I don’t process that so I don’t even think about it so I wonder how do you decide, you know, how far you can let it go?” Gabriella added that she knows some children will be able to have a verbal disagreement and others will not and that she adjusts her reaction accordingly.

Gabriella: I think it depends on if children are having a verbal argument and depending on the children. For instance, if Luke and Awan are having a verbal

argument I will let them have that verbal argument, because they're not going to hit each other.

Robyn: So you trust them to be able to do that because you know them?

Gabriella: Yeah. However, if some other children in my class are starting to have a verbal argument, I'm going to be there in a second because I know that they're about to hit or kick someone.

Bella conceded, however, that she was not sure she thought consciously about these decisions in the moment, "I feel like I just, I don't stop, I don't feel like I'm thinking about it." This conversation ended on this note and picked up a week later where it left off. When Bella returned the next week, she had new thoughts to add to her reflections on her own decision-making:

Bella: Last week I talked a lot about how did they decide when to intervene and then I said for myself that I don't think I think about it, but the more that I thought about it I really do think about it [laughs].

Rachel: I understood that [laughs].

Bella: I just don't think that it's not like a long, drawn out process like I wanted to like picture in my head, because I could almost imagine them like going through these certain steps in their head and I think just don't go through lots of steps that I do take the time really and I stop and I think about what's happening before I jump in, but I didn't see it that way really until I started thinking about it

Sarah then circled back around to knowing the children and echoed the sentiment expressed by others that one's source of knowledge – the teacher's way of knowing the individual children – informs decisions about when to intervene.

Sarah: To kind of go along with that, Bella, I had the thought that they also know the children and we don't know these children and they may know the ones that can work something out on their own, um, and then they may know the ones that they need to step in and you know be right there with them to guide them through it, and that didn't occur to me until I started looking back over stuff and really thinking about it and I was like, 'Oh wait, I know there are children in my classroom who can handle it on their own and there are some who may not be able to do that'.

In this statement, Sarah not only reflected upon and articulated her pedagogical process for this particular kind of situation, but she also reached some resolution – and agreement with Gabriella – that the Milan teachers do the same thing based on knowing their children. The notion that teachers base everyday decisions upon their knowledge of the children appeared fairly innocuous and straightforward in this phase of the project. In later phases, however, this too came under scrutiny as teachers analyzed video documentation from their own classrooms. The idea of how one “knows” children in a pedagogically useful way became problematized and posed dilemmas for the group as they engaged in critical self-reflection.

Another main topic that arose was focused on connecting two phenomena – the calmness of the children and the way teachers interacted with children. The group brought up again that they noticed the calm nature of the children, and they began to employ strategies to make sense of how this came about; what were the teacher practices and conditions which foster this sense of calm and the ability of children to self-regulate? This process was not only about making sense of phenomena, but it also moved into exploring

the meanings of central pedagogical issues such as developmentally appropriate practice, children's engagement, and ways of knowing children.

Jenna raised a couple of topics as she worked to make sense of the connection between teacher interactions and child demeanor. She posed these to the group as questions:

Jenna: I had a question, you know, it seemed like they were calm, but are there times where their children are not engaged? Like our children seem not to be engaged, you know when they're just running around the classroom or they're not in a particular area of the classroom, they're not doing any particular thing. But then I started thinking, well, are our children really not engaged or are they just not engaged how we think they should be engaged? So, I kind of started thinking about that. And then, sometimes I think that we're thinking that they're not engaged because they're not using the materials and whatever appropriately, but then I started thinking, what does appropriate really mean?

So in these questions, Jenna was wondering if the Milan teachers see child engagement and evaluate it differently than she does? This led her to a question about whether children are engaged in appropriate behavior. She then put her assumptions about appropriate behavior under examination. Bella also echoed this question about appropriate behaviors and focuses in on the interpretation of the teacher motivation versus child motivation. This moved the group into an exchange of thoughts about when and how teachers make pedagogical decisions about interrupting, or redirecting children's choices for play.

Bella: I think that a lot, like, it's appropriate for who? Like, it may be completely developmentally appropriate and appropriate for them, but it's not what we want them to do with something so we automatically...

Jenna: Right, and where do you draw the lines? For instance, we have some children who last week were trying to take our big unit blocks, the big ones, and they were thrusting them at the window. I mean, they were trying to do something. To us, right, break the window, to us that's what it looks like. So, to us, that's not appropriate. Should they be doing that? No, cause we don't want them to break the window, but do the things...

Gabriella: But what were their intentions?

Jenna: What were their intentions? What were their intentions? Do these things like this happen in Milan? And what do they do about it?

Within this dialogue the group was working to make sense of the questions that were raised in their minds about how much to control children's actions, knowing that the teachers' intentions and children's intentions are not aligned. Gabriella inserted a pivotal question in this exchange when she asked, "but what were their intentions?" This extends the issue that arose earlier in the conversation about how to know children well enough to decide when to intervene and how to trust what they will or won't do next. But in this case, the question wasn't about preventing children from hurting each other, but more about how it's possible for teachers to know children's thoughts and intentions. This in turn, is a critical type of knowledge the teachers want to be able to use to make pedagogical decisions when establishing patterns of interactions and patterns of relationships with the children. In this part of the data, I began to code content of the teachers' narrative for

comments, questions, or strategies that dealt with teachers' "ways of knowing" which almost always referred to ways of knowing children, either their thoughts, intentions, personalities, development, emotions, and so forth.

In the examples above, the assumptions under scrutiny were about child engagement and appropriate behavior. Scrutinizing the assumptions did not lead directly to answers, however, but to more questions about how to know children in authentic ways to provide information key to making the next decision step as a teacher. In the dialogue that ensued from this point forward, Rachel employed another process that resembled a way of exploring meanings about how to know children and make decisions about how much to be involved.

Rachel: I've thought a lot about, trust. And I went back and looked, cause I was most interested in the scene where they were using the scarf and they were making it a trampoline, and I was thinking a lot of the same lines as what Jenna was talking about. Do we, are they playing, what they want to play? Because what I made a note here, I said, their ideas are good enough, they were playing with the scarf.

By saying "their ideas are good enough," Rachel seemed to be developing a new construction of her ideas about how to interpret children's actions and thoughts, and to use that to guide her decisions about how to be involved. She also implied that she needed to build trust in the children, because perhaps in the past, she didn't think their ideas were good enough to direct their own play. Rachel credited provocation from watching the Milan teacher for moving her into a mode of self-review.

Rachel: The teacher sat in the chair and she talked to them about what they were doing, but it was their idea. She did suggest that it might be a trampoline, but they

went into like, there's a magic word to get the trampoline back. It seems like what I might do would be to suggest for the child to play something that was more appropriate to me, like let's pretend that you're making lunch, you know.

Gabriella echoed her support of the role of teacher trust in relationships and brought the topic back around to how it grants children autonomy. She commented that she agreed with Rachel that the Milan teacher, by being less involved, was able to trust children to know how to be self-directed in their play.

Sarah: I think I kind of thought along the same lines as Rachel, and Bella as well, really looking at that last scene and looking at how the teacher stepped back and let them really have that chance to try things on their own, she didn't sit there and tell them, this is what we're gonna do, let's try this way, you know, she really let them shape that on their own, offering suggestions when needed, but also remaining very much on the outside and letting them have that moment, I think it takes a lot of trust and trust in the children to know what they're doing and trust in the children to know they can work together that way.

To some degree, several in the group spoke with resolve about the meaning they have made about why the Milan teachers may sit back noticeably more. They placed value on the choice to be less involved and hypothesizing that the teachers not only grant more autonomy to children through these choices, but also that the relationship formation process may be something of value as well. The nature of the relationship between teachers and children also played a strong role throughout the project, the seeds of which are present here in the first sessions after reviewing the Milan video. Rachel continued to further explore the concepts around teacher/child relationships in this early session.

The process of reconstructing meaning also extended into ideas about connection between trust and attachment for Rachel. She appeared to be actively reformulating her personal beliefs or theories about attachment theory.

Rachel: But I also, as before, thought a lot about trust and I'm thinking about how we form attachments with children and how they need us to do everything for them when they're young and we're making attachment. They have to be able to trust us completely. Or they can't thrive in what they're doing. But then, the question is, how to step back and give them the trust back. I think things sometimes I'm not trusting the children enough to make the right choice when they've got a choice to make. I'm stepping in before, that takes the trust I should have for them away from them.

Rachel's comments about trust and attachment seemed to be about seeking some new truth about these as part of a bi-directional relationship process between teachers and children. She also again brought up the development of relationships over time: "I just think it's kind of neat to think of a parallel between the trust that they have to have for us in the beginning and how we kind of feed it back to them." In order to make a revision to her ideas, she critiqued her existing ideas and actions. She problematized her former way of being with children, as well as the way she thought she was forming attachment relationships. Harriet also engaged in self-critique and problematized assumptions about the role of children's choices and teachers' perceptions of these.

Harriet: Well then also ... trusting them to make the right choice, and then is there always a right choice or a wrong choice? Or is it the same as like, what we see is appropriate or not appropriate you know? Is there a time when either choice would

be okay and just to let them learn from their mistakes or from whatever choice they make? Or times that we have to step in and be firm in setting the boundary for them you know? Where are those lines, I guess.

Harriet, like Rachel, appeared to have made the issue of understanding what to do much more complicated by questioning the foundation upon which pedagogical decisions are made by teachers. In this example, once again, the issue of the teachers' "ways of knowing," something, – i.e., right choice/wrong choice – is pivotal to steering decision making about how much to control or intervene with children's self-directedness.

Framing inquiry. In many ways, the group not only responded to the Milan videos by naming what stood out, but also began the process of framing inquiry from the implications that they considered from the provocation. The data in Phase 1 held a substantial amount of both content and process. Teachers articulated what they noticed from the video, which was most often something that stood in contrast to what was familiar to them. They sought to make sense of what they saw, creating narratives about why the Milan teachers enacted pedagogical decisions the way they did. This was used as a lens to view their own practices and re-interpret how they understood their pedagogical approaches. Although their questions about why and how the Milan teachers made pedagogical decisions were not necessarily answered, the group was able to make use of the opportunity to help frame their own areas of inquiry that drove the next stage of the project.

Phase 2 - Teachers Set Foci of Inquiry

In the next phase of the project, teachers were asked to share with the group what they chose individually as a focal topic for inquiry. Based on the topic, they were to plan to collect classroom documentation in a way that best fit with their topic. Figure 6 indicates which phase of the data this section reviews.

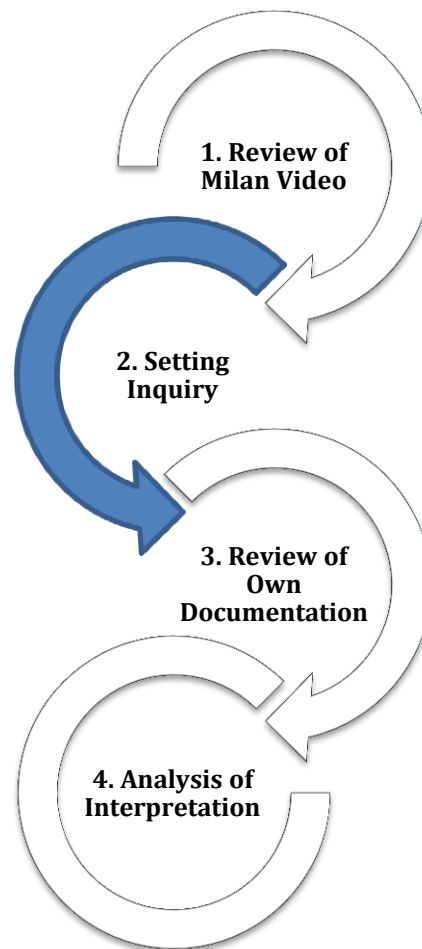


Figure 6. Phase 2 of Data.

When the teachers were asked to shift to forming a focus of inquiry for their collaborative action research documentation pieces, the discussion continued to bring forth some of the threads that had arisen from the discussions of the Milan videos. For some, the ideas came into focus quickly, and they were able to pinpoint a target for inquiry in their own classroom. For others, the discussion helped them flesh out their ideas a bit more and the focus came about over the course of more than one session. The conversations about the foci of inquiry occurred over two consecutive sessions of the seminar, one week apart. Pedagogical questions about how to be involved or when to intervene with children carried over from Phase 1 into the inquiry topics. Seeing teachers less involved with children from the Milan video inspired teachers to seek more knowledge about how one might thoughtfully balance being involved with children and giving them space to do things for themselves. Wondering how children's interactions with each other look when the teachers are not right in the middle of things was a related area of interest. Another idea was the goal of providing more autonomy to children by moderating the amount of teacher involvement. Yet another question focused in on how child engagement would look with less teacher involvement. In addition to these related areas of inquiry, one teacher wanted to examine her use of spaces with children by first taking a closer view of how children utilized classroom materials in outdoor spaces for their play. The following section presents how the teachers' talk addressed these areas of focus over the two sessions. The findings also illustrate the continuation of meaning-making dialogue whereby the process of "making sense" of either Milan practices or their own practices occurred.

Bella. Bella identified interactions as the focus of her inquiry. She reiterated this during both of the sessions that were about setting inquiry topics.

Bella: I think the big idea of interactions was what kind of stood out to me out of what everyone has said and not just individual interactions with children but just when we interact and how we choose to interact you know with children and also with the environment.

She elaborated that the Milan video sparked her curiosity about interactions because she noticed, “they look so different, just that the teacher wasn't always right there all the time and then just kind of how do they decide when to be a part of that interaction?” This question about how and when to be involved was clearly a motivating part of her focus of inquiry. She recognized again that wondering about how they made decisions caused her to review her own decision making, to question whether and how she made those on the spot decisions in the classroom on a routine basis: “Kind of I first felt like I didn't make those decisions but then when I sat down and thought about it, I really do make those decisions.” Bella also related her focus of inquiry to the act of observing and seeing what the children are doing in the classroom, anticipating perhaps that collecting documentation would allow her to see things she knows she misses while interacting with not only the children in her class, but also the high school students who have practicum placements in her classroom.

Bella: And there's a lot of time during like, when they're in the centers [areas of the classroom] and things like that I feel like I'm there a lot. Just to facilitate play between children but also listening to the language of the high-schoolers and

modeling for them and kind of giving them the words that they need. But as scary as that sounds, that's what it really is, I want to see what I'm doing.

Bella expressed above that she was aware that documenting herself may be scary, but the thought of seeing more than she was capable of seeing during her daily habits was very compelling. Although Bella did not specify what type of interactions she wanted to see, or in which specific contexts she was interested, she described what motivated her interest to look more closely at interactions, and indicated somewhat that her goal was to become more aware of things she couldn't see about interactions when she's right there in the middle of things. She also spoke to the importance of her role as mentor to the high school students in shaping their interactions with children.

Gabriella. Like Bella, Gabriella articulated an interest in exploring child interactions in her classroom. She was spurred to think about how children negotiate social situations. Early in the discussions about framing a focus of inquiry, Gabriella observed that the Milan children were given the chance to be “more independent” and that they also showed a noticeable amount of self-regulation. She related this, in turn, to the level of involvement, or proximity, of the Milan teachers.

Gabriella: They're much more independent so the fact that they have these small group activities that go so well and seem so calm and the teachers are able to sit off to the side, I mean, would have to be impacted by the expectation and however the children are raised and taught in school and whatever happens that they are to be independent in their actions. They are to be able to regulate themselves. It's an expectation it seems. It's something that they all do.

She identified what teachers “are able” to do, to sit off to the side, but also that children are expected to be more independent, so the causality of whether less teacher involvement brings about more child independence, or whether children having self-regulation allowed the teachers to be less involved was not clear. Gabriella observed that all these things were in place, but she did not hypothesize whether one caused another. During a group dialogue in which others in the group expressed an interest in learning to step back more from the children, Gabriella kept the group aware of the tension she saw in the local context between providing children more autonomy and performing the role that she perceived was expected of her.

Gabriella: I mean I enjoy sitting back and watching them sometimes but I can't imagine doing it all day long, just because I would feel like I wasn't doing my job. I mean I feel like that's part of why we're there is to have those interactions with them, whether they're asking for your help or not; I mean, whether you're really doing anything to guide them or help them make a decision, but just to be present with them I feel like is part of why we're there.

Gabriella seemed to want to keep the question of involvement in a complex place where it would not be simple to decide to interact less due to a risk of a) looking like you weren't doing your job, or b) not meeting children's needs. Gabriella decided that her focus of inquiry would be on watching children interact with each other more closely to know more intimately how they manage social interactions, particularly during moments when teachers might perceive they need to intervene, and she identified specific classroom contexts that she might find fruitful to document.

Gabriella: So, I was thinking about doing child interactions like how they, when

they're playing together, along the lines of like problem solving, playing in imaginary play and they're negotiating how the scene's gonna work out or if they're negotiating sharing of materials, things like that. The mealtimes too because we have a really hard time listening to each other at mealtimes, like, teachers have to really be like, "Hey did you hear so-and-so they asked you to pass this," or "Hey, make sure you say that person's name so they know you're talking to them when you ask them to pass."

In this passage, Gabriella's perception was that children may need teacher support during times when they need to negotiate imaginary play, to employ social problem solving, to share materials, or to listen to each other during mealtime routines. Identifying these moments of classroom context helped Gabriella plan for when to document children's interactions, and helped her focus in on the dynamics she would like to see much more closely as they occurred naturally in daily routines.

Harriet. Harriet was interested in examining interactions, informed by the provocation of seeing a different degree of involvement from the Milan teachers than she was used to seeing or practicing. In particular, she wanted to look at providing autonomy to children.

Harriet: Yeah, I agree. I mean I think that's something that I've been more aware of in my practice, just, not being in the middle of the children's play but being in the back and observing and you know, not putting myself in there unless they ask for my help or my assistance, being more of an observer than an active participant because they don't always need me to be an active participant.

In this statement about her focus of inquiry, Harriet identified not only that she became more aware of her own practices, but also that she was thinking about what children need, how they indicate or ask for involvement, and her roles as a teacher, observer, and participant. She further elaborated that she wanted to look at how much freedom the children have during free play times and mealtimes, and what the children were allowed to do on their own. Her line of inquiry also came with the question about how and when to decide to intervene.

Harriet: Cause I'm just thinking you know and every teacher has a different style with things; at what point in their free play that they have no sense to call for my help, at what point do I step in and offer it without being asked you know? At what point is their play their own and at what point am I stepping in and trying to redirect their ideas? There's the obvious, they're hitting each other and you know getting involved in a physical altercation, then I'm gonna step in, but that was what really interested me was what do we allow them to do versus what they're capable of doing? How much do we give them chances to find that out?

Harriet's questions scrutinized her prior practices when she wonders if she has interrupted children's abilities to explore their own capabilities. She also wondered what if...?; what if I were to give them the chance to find out for themselves? She not only asked "How much do we give them chances?" but she could also envision a change in practice in order to experiment and explore with new possibilities for giving the children more autonomy in their play.

Sarah. While the group was discussing how and why the Milan teachers seem to foster autonomy by the way routines and activities are structured, Sarah developed a question about the use of space as a pedagogical dimension.

Sarah: It makes me think, why don't we utilize the times when we're outside? Let's pull four inside for a little while, come do this really quick activity with me and it's not gonna take long, you'll still get your playtime outside, and the downside to that part is not all the children are gonna want to leave their playtime which is fine.

Sarah's focus of inquiry was just beginning to appear in this quote. It was apparent that she had used the provocation from the video and group discussion to ask a "why" question in terms of "why don't we...?" She was using a critical eye toward her own daily routines to open up a space for imagining more possibilities. In the quote she also actively engaged some other considerations for adapting her practice: What if it takes away from outdoor time? What if some children don't want to come in for small group? She voiced these questions, but settled on knowing that it would be fine. Sarah's topic led into a dynamic exchange of ideas about child engagement, child self-regulation, and the structure of small group activities. They had observed that the Milan teachers tended to work in small groups of children with one teacher leading activities or routines for about six or seven children. This made them wonder about the teacher decisions that went into the groupings of children. Sarah brought up that this is what she was wondering about, which is how the Milan teachers choose to group children and what if she tried something like that in her classroom?

Gabriella: I wonder how those groups were made?

Sarah: That was one of the things I wrote about, how they chose.

Bella: I wonder if any of it has to do with the teacher personality too?

Harriet: I'm sure, yeah, that's what I was envisioning.

Gabriella: I was thinking child personality; like I'm thinking maybe you have these four.

Sarah: But it does make me think if, we did something similar to that and in our preschool setting, there are groups of children in my classroom I'm not sure I'd put together.

Further in the session during which the teachers were asked to individually articulate their focal topic for inquiry, Sarah explained that she intended to narrow her focus on examining children's interactions with their environment and with classroom materials. She likened her curiosity to Rachel's based on provocation from the Milan video scene where two children had an imaginary play session with a scarf.

Sarah: Part of that was a lot like Rachel, using that scarf as a trampoline and how the teacher let them move things around, it didn't have to be in one space. It was okay. It really made me think about why do I have it set up in our classroom that? "No, this has to stay in this area, you can't take it somewhere else," you know, that type of thing. And what would happen if I said, "all right, go ahead and take it over to the science area, let's see what you can use it for."

Sarah explained some of the motivation behind her inquiry, revealing again her process of self-review in which she asked a "why" question, why doesn't she let children take materials across different play centers in the classroom? It seems she's asking not about how she has the classroom set up physically, but why has she set it up that there is a rule about not moving materials around? Her last phrase in this quote about "let's see what you

can use it for” also seems to show that she was interested in the idea that children should have more self-direction in their play, something the other teachers have articulated in terms of fostering autonomy in children.

Jenna. Jenna began speaking about her focus of inquiry in very broad terms, and asked the group to help her narrow it down. After talking some more, she was able to express some of her motivating questions that fed her interest in the nature of interactions and how she wanted to explore them.

Jenna: Really I need help narrowing down, cause I had three major areas that I am kind of really interested about. One is about engagement, but there's three areas inside engagement: Teacher and child engagement, child to child engagement, and then child and materials engagement. Very, very broad. I think they're all really important.

When asked what times of day or in what settings were good times to document the types of interactions she wanted to look at, she focused on specific scenarios.

Jenna: Child to child, you know, when does a teacher step in? How do the children engage with each other during conflict times, during different social situations? How are they entering social situations, how do they share materials? Then, teacher and child, when does the teacher step into activities, when does the teacher stay out of activities? When does the teacher step into social conflicts? So, overall engagement.

Jenna seemed to be curious about what children do on their own without teachers involved, especially during peer conflicts. She wanted to know more about how they manage their social play situations, such as sharing materials and entering play. This

desire to know about “how” the children are doing things perhaps relates to a need to form a basis for pedagogical questions about “how” teachers should behave. So, Jenna’s questions hovered over emergent themes that came back to central pedagogical questions from Phase 1: When and how do teachers get involved with children’s play? During open coding, it was apparent at this stage of the data timeline that the phrases “how to...” and “when to...” were significant re-occurring phrases in the teachers’ narratives, especially in connection with pedagogical issues.

The meaning of engagement was not apparent in the quote above, because Jenna did not distinguish between interactions and being engaged. But as she spoke further about where she envisioned recording footage for her documentation review, her query was more descriptive:

Jenna: Teacher/child, any time, during free play times, during planned activities, during outside. When you're outside how much should a teacher get involved with what activities they're doing? I mean we have our safety things, you have to be by the climbers, you have to be, you know, those sort of things, but actively engaging them in something you know, do we do that? Free play time, like you were saying you know, letting them actually have that free play, or kind of directing their free play. Activities, that again goes to how much are we following their lead on the activities? How much do we direct them in those activities and how much do we just sit back and say, here are the materials, what are you going to do?

In this quote, Jenna was not only asking about what the children are doing, but she was also wondering about the different activity settings and how much teacher involvement should be exercised. Her question about involvement also links to the idea that children should be

self-directed and that teachers should be following their lead. It also implies that there must be a way to figure out a balance between how much teachers should work to engage children versus giving children space to do so on their own. Although she didn't mention child autonomy, her questions seemed to hover around the pedagogical implications of providing children with chances to be autonomous, and that this is a worthy goal. The questions involved not just what to do, but also how to know; how to know what children actually need in order to steer decisions about what to do pedagogically.

Rachel. Since Rachel had the longest history of this group of teachers with the Milan project, having been one of the focal teachers in the original study, she had been forming questions about her practice in the context of the cross-cultural collaboration for several years. Her first involvement in the project began in 2010. Video footage was recorded focused on her practices in her classroom; it was eventually edited into the “day in the life” video tape viewed and critiqued by Milan teachers and researchers in 2011. Rachel's explanations about her focus of inquiry were lengthier than the others in the group, and she tied in many issues or concepts within her talk. She started speaking of her main focal question for inquiry, and then elaborated on the many questions embedded within it. She described her main question in this way:

Rachel: What I'm wondering about is: How and when I should lessen my interactions with children in a way that will encourage them to focus more on their group of peers and help them to think more independently about the ideas and solutions to their own problems?

Rachel wanted to explore how to do this, and was more specific than others about her intended outcomes for children based on revisions to her involvement with them.

Rachel: How can I lessen it and if I lessen my interactions with them will that encourage them to be more independent and be able to think for themselves better? And if that's true, will it help them regulate themselves better? Will it give them more autonomy? Will it lead to them being able to earn my trust better than they have it now?

Goals for children's autonomy and self-regulation were explicit in Rachel's questions, and were part of the group's prior discussions of making sense of, or creating narrative explanations for the teacher and child behaviors that stood out for them from the video. Rachel, in particular, however, raised the question of trust between the child and teacher, and pulled the idea of a bi-directional teacher/child relationship into the center of her inquiry about involvement. Above, she asked if by being less involved with the children, would it help them be "able to earn my trust better than they have it now?" In this way, Rachel was questioning her current stance, not just her practice, or the "how to" of her pedagogical self, but her self-critique also asked about "why" do I interact the way I do? She recognized that she didn't trust the children as much as she wanted, and realized that the relationship of trust (and possibly connected to ideas of attachment relationships) served as a base upon which her interactions and pedagogical decisions rested.

Rachel went on to explain to the group how one scene in particular, in which the Milan teacher facilitated two children playing with a scarf on the floor, prompted her to think critically about supporting imaginary play. She spoke about being "impressed" with how the teacher chose to be involved and to give children space to direct their own play, and she said, "that's not how I would've been..." in the situation. She continued to use the provocation to reflect critically upon her own practice. But then Rachel also went on to

discuss trying to see the relationship from the child's point of view, in what began to emerge from her narrative and from others' as a category of the teacher's "way of knowing" about the children's perspective. She described what she thought was a developmentally typical interaction pattern, but then complicated the interpretation of how to know what children need.

Rachel: Right. And at the age that some of them are at right now specifically, they're starting to say, I mean it's a three year old thing, they're trying to say, "Rachel, watch me, watch me put my shoes on, watch me swing," "No I want you to come play with me, I want you to watch me." And they, like Ayla wants me to watch her and, you know, there's eleven other children, I can't just watch her. But you know, that's her thinking right now because she doesn't maybe understand how much capacity she would have to play with other children, because she's focused on what she wants me to watch her do, maybe.

Robyn: So she needs you, but it's not clear to you what she needs you for?

Rachel: And it's not fair to her either.

Harriet: That maybe the need she has she could fill through social interactions with other children?

In this dialogue, Rachel seemed to questioning one's ability to be certain about how to decide how involved to be when it seems the teacher may have one agenda and the child may express a desire for involvement or attention. Rachel was complicating her ability to know what is the right thing to do because she realized the child has a legitimate point of view; and yet, perhaps she, as the teacher, must bear some responsibility for developing the child's understanding of her own capacity to rely on peers for attention and

involvement. Rachel suggested “it’s not fair to her either,” meaning that the child has come to rely on a teacher’s attention, which of course is limited within the context of group care. In Rachel’s narrative, it appears that she needed to not only revise her stance towards how she interacts with children, based on something she was impressed by seeing in the video, but she also needed to revise the foundational knowledge upon which her pedagogy rests. She was problematizing how she formerly interpreted children’s needs, the meaning of a trust-based relationship with children, and her sense of what’s fair, or what it is that children deserve in the context of group care. In other words, it seemed that Rachel brought in these deeply reflective questions because she didn’t just want to implement new actions, but also wanted to re-construct the meanings behind those actions. In coding the narratives, I began, at this stage, to develop categories for labelling this process, and developed broad codes for when the teachers discussed “ways of being” with the children versus “ways of knowing.” I had a suspicion that the tension between these process phenomena would become important to the interpretation of the narratives in further stages of the project.

The teachers’ narratives about their topic of inquiry wove together the phenomena they wanted to examine with a continued process of making sense of the Milan video, perhaps as a way to articulate what had inspired or motivated their focus of inquiry. In addition, the teachers continued to utilize processes of self-review, turning foci back to their own existing practices, as well as processes of revising or reconstructing their pedagogical ideas. Some also included specific thoughts about how they wanted to envision their practice in the future, try something out, or make improvements to their practice. It was clear that they assumed that undergoing a process of action research

would lead them to a different place with their practices and ideas, and they seemed to embrace the movement toward change.

Chapter 5

Findings from Phases 3 and 4

Phase 3 – Initial Review of Documentation

After setting a focus for their classroom-based inquiry, teachers brought video documentation they had collected in their classroom to share back with the group. In the timeline of the project, these discussions of the reviews of documentation occurred during Phase 3, represented in Figure 7 below.

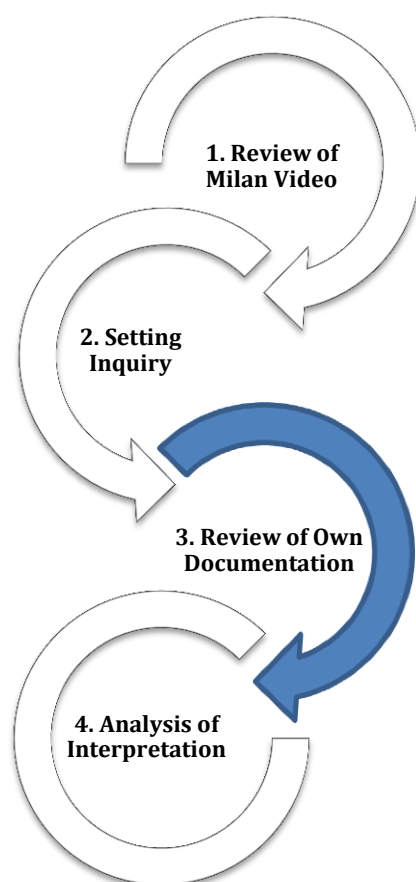


Figure 7. Phase 3 of Data.

The following sections describe the topics that arose from the teachers' initial sharing of their videos. These conversations took place over the course of three seminar sessions. During the three sessions, each teacher took a turn presenting their video and interpretation to the group. The group then spent time discussing the scene and how it was interpreted, sharing additional thoughts, questions, and observations.

Overarching Themes: “How to Know” and “How to Be”

The topical focus of the documentation review phase continued to include themes from the prior phases based on the teachers' intended areas of inquiry. Namely, teachers wanted to explore issues about how much to be involved during children's play, when to intervene or not intervene during conflict or times when they perceived children needed help, and ways that children utilized material and people resources in their contexts. Overall, the teachers continued the process of creating meaning about what they observed, this time in their own classroom contexts, as opposed to making sense of what children and teachers from the Milan video were doing. During the process of developing axial codes, I identified an overarching theme to encompass this activity of “making sense of” what was observable, along with any other ideas for which the teachers created narrative explanations in order to come to better, or more complete, understandings of phenomena. I termed this overarching theme “How to Know.” In terms of the axial coding process recommended by Strauss and Corbin (date), one might decide that this narrative relates to participants' ideas about the “conditions” of the context – deciphering the why, where, how, and when of the phenomena. The process of forming questions about “how do I know” about a set of phenomena can also be viewed as a “consequence” of the interpretive activity, resulting from the provocation and context of the collaborative inquiry set up in this project. Within the theme of “How to Know,” the teachers

used critical inquiry as a lens to make sense of either children's experiences or their own experiences. These themes are represented in Figure 8 within a concept map of dominant themes from Phase 3.

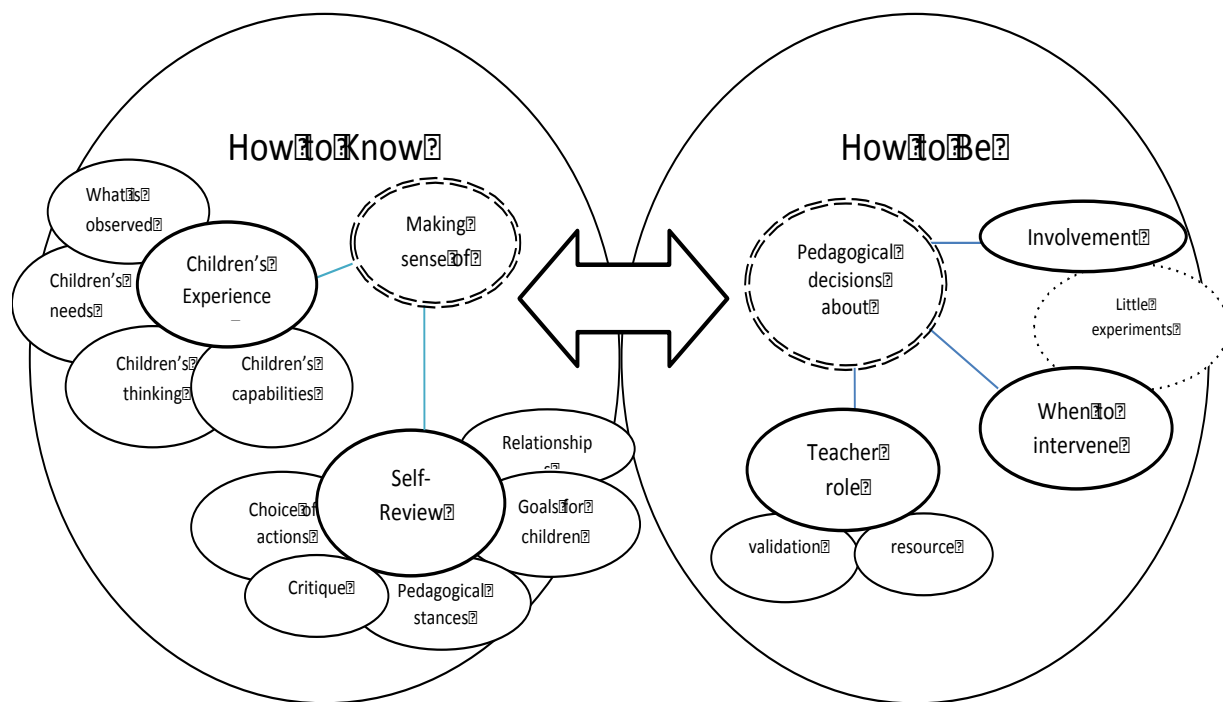


Figure 8. Conceptual Map of Overarching Themes in Phase 3.

When examining children's experiences, the teachers worked to make sense of how they understood children's needs, children's capabilities, and children's thinking. They also wondered how they could rely upon what they observe about children, how they interpret observations, in order to make decisions in the moment. When examining their own experiences, teachers put themselves under self-review to explore how they could make sense of their choices of actions, their interpretations of relationships with children, their ways of rationalizing their pedagogical stances, and how they set goals for children. In addition, they also actively put some of their specific prior practices under critique. It was important to distinguish an overarching theme of "How to Know" because the teachers did not simply try to explore new ways of doing pedagogy. They also seemed to need to flesh out the foundational knowledge upon which their former or current practices rested before, or as part of, the process of reconstructing new meanings, beliefs, and pedagogical actions.

Along with the process of exploring "How to Know" about pedagogical issues, Figure 8 also introduces another overarching theme termed "How to Be" which developed during the axial coding process as well. This theme arose from the teachers' language about how to enact specific pedagogical processes, in other words, how they behave and put pedagogical ideas into motion on a routine basis. The process of asking about "How to Know" about practice fed the process of exploring "How to Be" with children. Questions revolving around "How to Be" included topics like how to decide how much to be involved, how to decide when to intervene, how to disrupt the usual patterns of teacher/child interactions, how to fulfill the desired teacher role through relationship dynamics over time, and how to facilitate children's development toward desired goals. Although it was tempting to organize the discussion of analysis of the overarching themes of how to know and how to be as a dichotomy, it is impossible to separate

them based on how the teachers tied them together in their narrative. In the conceptual map in Figure 8, the relationship is indicated with a bidirectional arrow to indicate the interrelationship between the themes.

Before presenting the findings specific to the themes in the conceptual diagram, it will help to read an excerpt of dialogue that gives a sense of the overall tone of the conversations that occurred in Phase 3. The following section contains an excerpt that was chosen because it exemplifies the group dynamic that was typical as one teacher shared documentation and the others participated actively in framing questions, offering insights, suggesting alternative points of view, and so forth. After reviewing this sample of dialogue, the findings will then be presented based on the themes that were revealed from analysis of Phase 3.

A collaborative inquiry vignette: “Wasn’t that what we thought we were supposed to do?” Rachel, Bella, Gabriella, Jenna, and Harriet, set out to collect documentation about how to be involved in children’s play or how to intervene during times of social conflict. Although they intended to explore how to be with the children, when they shared their documentation with the group, much of the discussion focused on the information or knowledge one would need – how to know - in order to decide on pedagogical actions. The following sample represents the tone of the discussions and the form of collaborative inquiry within the Phase 3 sessions. This section of dialogue occurred on the first day of the sharing sessions that comprised Phase 3 of the project. It was Rachel’s turn to present her video and interpretation to the group. The video she chose to share was a scene in which she was on the floor playing with a group of children in the imaginary play area. I had facilitated the discussion by getting it started, and whereas I was a participant in the conversation, a good deal of the dialogue involves the teachers engaging in questions and comments with each other to maintain a context of inquiry.

Rachel: I'm a little nervous to watch it because I know, I already know that I'm too heavily involved in what they're doing. So, I don't know if I want to show it to everybody [group laughs].

Harriet: But you know, there's a point, before watching all these videos from Milan and really thinking about it, I mean, wasn't that what we thought we were supposed to do? You're supposed to be completely involved?

Rachel: That is what I always did. Yeah, that's what I thought.

Harriet: So you have no reason to feel like you shouldn't be because that's what we always felt like you were supposed to be, that's the good teacher, the one that's heavily involved and that's...

Robyn: So we're taking something that's normal to all of us, but we're trying to make it a little bit not normal, right?

Rachel: It's kind of shaken me a little bit. Ever since the whole Milan videos back last year.

Sarah: Gives you a very different perspective on things. Makes you really look back yourself. I know I've done that a lot more. Just from watching it and being like, oh, what happens if I don't step in as much, I'm not sure if I've let them solve this one on their own.

Gabriella: Well and it totally comes from knowing the kids, you know you have some kids that you can just stand there and let them do whatever they need to do for ten minutes or however long it takes them and they're gonna work it out, and then you have some kids that you can tell 30 seconds in they're about to haul off and punch somebody.

In this excerpt of dialogue, the teachers raised several of the key areas of practice that permeated the dialogue within Phase 3. The questions about involvement and intervention

feature prominently here. Rachel acknowledged that the activity of video recording brought a level of discomfort when it came to sharing back with the group, perhaps as a thorny part of the experience of self-critique. Later, they explore the activity of videotaping as an act of epistemology and praxis, with consequences for themselves and the children. In the dialogue above, they also help moderate each other's feelings about the process by trying to make the inquiry group a safe place to be unsteady and to question one's practices. Sarah also introduced the idea that the video provided a "different perspective" or a new way of seeing yourself. Teachers discussed having new ways of seeing their practice or seeing the children as they reviewed the video, in other words, they used new lenses to look upon what were familiar, everyday situations. Gabriella also raised one of the prominent themes from the data in this phase, which is the phenomenon of knowing the children well in order to interpret and make decisions.

How to Know About Children

A key set of phenomena within the "How to Know" theme that the teachers needed to explore epistemologically focused on aspects of the children's experiences. The teachers wondered how they could trust their observations to interpret what children needed; in other words, were their observations accurate and representative or were their interpretations skewed or limited? They were also concerned about how they could understand what children need from teachers, what children were thinking or feeling, and what were the children's capabilities. The questions about how to know these things can only be conceptually separated from the questions about how to be; in the examples of dialogue presented below, the themes often intertwine within the conversation.

“How often do we jump in with the wrong information?” At times, teachers questioned whether their observations gave them the kind of information they needed to make good pedagogical decisions. Part of the doubt about the accuracy of observations was related to the actual facts of a scene – did they really see what happened – and it was also about interpreting what children might have been thinking. Reviewing video closely allowed for detailed examination of child scenes that otherwise isn’t possible during real time. Harriet presented the group with a scene from her video in which two children were having a conflict over a toy. She framed questions to the group this way: “I was having the same questions [as Gabriella]. Do I intervene too quickly? Because these children are not thinking ‘How could I solve this problem?’ they’re thinking, ‘Where is the teacher?’” Harriet was noticing how the children look to the teachers and she tried to make sense of what she observed by guessing at what the children were thinking. She acknowledged that the video review process gave a new lens to seeing things she hadn’t noticed before: “It’s soooooo, it’s just very interesting to me and just watching the videos, I just see stuff that I never would’ve seen otherwise, I’m just really excited.” She gave more detail about how she interpreted the scene she had shared:

Harriet: One child grabbed what another child was playing with and ran off with it, and then the other child came to confront her and so eventually our 470 student [practicum student] pulled them apart and said, she said, “No, Thomas, Paige had this first.” But in reality, Paige was the one that stole the toy and ran off with it, but she hadn’t seen that part, so how often do we jump in with the wrong information? What’s the dynamic in her mind? And then, what just really knocked my socks off was when the teacher comes over and she totally had it wrong.

Harriet seemed to be concerned with getting the right information in order to judge how and when to intervene in conflict situations. She also doubted her interpretive integrity, however, where she questioned the accuracy of her observations and wondered how often teachers choose to act based on the “wrong information.” Further, she shared her questions about how to know what the children are thinking:

Harriet: But then I really was focused on Paige’s viewpoint. Once she ran to the chair and was laying on top of that frog, and then Thomas came over and started taking it away, and she was saying, Paige was saying, "No I had it, I was playing with it," and so what's in her mind at that point? Has it really been so short of a time, or does she in her mind really feel ownership of that toy now that she has it and she's been laying on it? Or in her mind does she know, “Oh, I took this from Thomas and now I'm...” You know, what's going on in her mind as all that's happening?

Harriet not only questioned what Paige was thinking, but she already engaged in the process of filling in the gaps in the story of Paige’s thinking. She presented hypotheses about possibilities for what Paige was thinking in order to satisfy this need to know. Harriet was also explicit about her need know and more fully understand what children are thinking, as she continued in her discussion:

Harriet: And you have to get to that before you can figure out what my goal will be...cause if I don’t understand where they’re coming from then how do I know where I should fit in to their problem solving? As much as you can actually be in the mind of a two or three year old.

This quote also revealed the close connection between Harriet’s inquiry about “how to know” what children are thinking and quest to figure out “how to be” with children. She must

understand the children's thinking in order to decide what goals she has for them and how she can support their problem solving. At the last sentence, though, she also recognized that her knowledge will always be limited, a partial story of what toddlers really think and feel.

What do children need "...when they're looking at you and asking for your help?"

Another area the teachers explored was how to know about what children really need and how the children develop their perceptions of what they need from teachers. So, again, needing to know what children are thinking was interwoven with the topic. Continuing to follow the dialogue about Harriet's documentation scene of the two children tussling over the toy, the following section of dialogue reveals how the teachers wondered about the connection between what children seem to want from teachers, and how this relates to relationship-building processes and ideas about autonomy.

Harriet: And then what was the right choice for me to make for Thomas? When he's looking to me and saying, "I had that, I had that, why are you not doing anything?"

What, is the response you know?

Jenna: It's kind of what I was thinking about, with anything, they're looking to us for ... to help them solve these social problems. Yet we're trying to create autonomy by letting them have this freedom, but when they're looking at you and asking for your help, it's also when they're relying on you, and trusting you to help them. They're trusting you to make those secure attachments with you and that you're going to help them do those things, so I don't know maybe there's a happy medium between not doing anything and solving it for them.

Gabriella: Yeah, I mean, I think that there's definitely, you can help without doing it, you know? You can help.

Harriet: And if this was not being filmed, obviously that's not how I would react that would not have been my normal reaction to that situation but I think that's why they look to me because I have always helped them. But the reason they look to us so much is because we are so heavily involved in their social problems. I mean it's a self-fulfilling prophecy if we're always swooping in to solve their problems, they think they need us to solve their problems, you know?

Rachel: But they do.

Jenna raised the topic of child autonomy and trust. She recognized there is a desire to "create autonomy" for children, giving them freedom to deal with things independently of teachers, but there is a tension between providing that freedom and responding to the children's need to trust that the teacher is there to help. She pointed out that it is a more complex question than just standing back or taking over. Harriet maintained the tension in the question by noting the patterns of relationship in which she critiqued "we are so heavily involved" and "we're always swooping in." Whereas Rachel made a comment at the end of this bit of dialogue to remind the group "But they do" need the teachers to help solve their social problems. This comment of Rachel's seemed to suggest that building new meanings about their knowledge and practice must also include holding onto a key piece of former knowledge about what children need from their teachers.

Bella also mentioned children's needs in her review. In her turn with sharing documentation, she showed the group a scene from her video in which a high school student teacher was playing with a child at the water table. They were filling containers and the student teacher was asking the child questions. Bella had shared her observations of the back and forth exchanges of interaction between the student teacher and Felix, a three year old boy. Bella's

questioning about this scene involved not only what children need, but also considers children's autonomy.

Bella: Right, but that second time, when he started to squirt, she actually took the bottle and was squirting. It did look like he was having a hard time squeezing, but did he need help? Did he want help? He didn't say he did.

Gabriella: She did the same thing with taking the lid off. She took it from him.

Bella: And then after he emptied the bottle, she picked up the bottle out of the table ...and handed him the bottle that was already full. I mean, what's not to say that he wanted to continue experimenting with the filling of the bottle? As opposed to...here's a quick fix, this one's already full, we'll just start with it.

The group continued this line of questioning about whether Felix really needed teacher support to the degree it was given.

Robyn: Well, she did just kind of screw that cap on for him, instead of, teaching him how to do it, or...I'm just kind of, really curious...

Sarah: The wait time, part of it, or ...

Gabriella: Allowing him time to see if he can do it. Maybe he didn't even need to be taught; maybe his hands were just slippery.

Harriet: Yeah, let's just slow it down, the verbal and the physical.

Rachel: Wasn't she assuming that.... maybe he had a different idea.

The dialogue reveals an interest in respecting the child's thoughts and intentions, and a critique that this scene didn't consider that the child "had a different idea." Sarah, Gabriella, and Harriet also evoked the role of time in these interactions, as if to suggest that some teachers do not give enough time to listen and wait before responding children. Sarah identified it as "wait time" and

Harriet said, “let’s just slow it down.” In this example, again, the group concurrently spoke about the importance of “how to know” what children are thinking and needing and about the decisions involved with “how to be” in situations where children may need varying degrees of involvement or support. The questions about how to determine what children need were not solely based on unidirectional perceptions of teacher understandings of children, but began to involve the conception of bidirectional relationships and patterns of interactions between children and teachers.

How to understand children’s perspectives during play: “I don’t really know if I should interrupt it.” During their turns to share video with the group in Phase 3, both Gabriella and Sarah brought scenes to the group that featured pairs of children playing in typical settings. The interpretations of scenes included an interest in understanding the children’s perspectives; Gabriella and Sarah both wanted to know more about the nature of interactions between child dyads. In addition, their interpretations represented epistemological inquiry about what they thought were typical behaviors – what they knew to expect from children – and what stood out as outside the norm for these children. Gabriella’s video focused on a pair of girls sharing time in the drawing area, and Sarah’s video showed two children creating an imaginary play scene on a redesigned area of the natural playground outside the classroom. Gabriella intended to see children interacting with each other, negotiating social situations on their own without teacher intervention. What ended up catching her eye in the classroom, however, was something different. She described how it was that she noticed something different happening between Lauren and Kelly in the drawing area and was sparked to begin recording this scene instead.

Gabriella: So they were in drawing and writing, and I was watching them for a couple of minutes and then decided I thought it was interesting, and pulled out the camera. But the

whole time, Lauren is dictating to Kelley what to draw and Lauren is, I mean, not very forceful, doesn't really tell people what to do most of the time, ...her parents but not at school. And Kelley is very forceful and, wants her way, ninety nine point nine percent of the time. So it was just interesting to me to see the dynamic kinda flipped. Kelley just doing something to please Lauren and Lauren telling her what to do. But Kelley is usually very in charge. I mean she tried to take control a few times here, but she also let Lauren have control, which is not the norm.

Gabriella was keen to pay attention to this play scenario because it stood out to her as outside of "the norm," as she described. Although she originally was more interested in child conflict, this scene intrigued her because she found it just as interesting to see the two girls interacting in a pattern she had not noticed before. The group spent some time discussing possible explanations for this apparent difference in pattern between the girls. They posited it could be due to the large space granted in the drawing area, or the time of day in which the play occurred. Rachel mentioned it was perhaps due to the availability of time: "Like... Italian, they don't seem like there are...not time constraints." To elicit what it was that Gabriella found so interesting about the clip, however, I probed her to articulate more about what she was interpreting from it:

Robyn: I'm curious about the idea of what is normal for Kelley and Lauren, in terms of their interactions or if somehow because you were looking closely at their interactions you were able to see the nuance of how they did kind of go back and forth, versus Kelley dictating what's happening.

Gabriella: I found it really odd, because the majority of the time they're interacting, Kelley is dictating what they do whether it's "hey, let's go play in imaginary play," or "let's go to the water table," or, you know, whatever, she is dictating the majority of what

they do which is why it stood out to me.

Robyn: Do you like it? Do you like the fact that Lauren was more assertive?

Gabriella: Yeah, yeah.

Robyn: So tell me about why you like it.

Gabriella: She's not usually I mean she just goes along with whatever anybody wants to do and she's a happy camper with whatever happens for the most part. I mean, even when she is being, I guess, assertive, what you would consider assertive, it's more in like, a whiney, pitchin a fit kind of tantrum, and this was not.

This probing led Gabriella to raise the idea that she had implicit goals for Lauren to be more assertive in her peer interactions, and Rachel echoed this goal.

Rachel: She needs practice at...being the leader.

Gabriella: Yeah.

Robyn: So I kind of hear you saying that you know, Lauren's sort of normal, passive role with Kelley, is something that you want to see more balanced out by more of this, so she's not always passive

Gabriella: I mean I wouldn't even say I want to, I just found it interesting, I mean if that's her personality and she's happy doing that then, fine, she doesn't seem unhappy ever, she's not like pouting about doing what somebody else wants her to do, or an idea somebody else comes up with. So I wouldn't even say that. I would just say I found it interesting. It was a role I don't see her take on.

Gabriella did not agree that she wanted Lauren to change her style of interaction, but I pressed further to ask what she thought could be the implications of her interpretation.

Robyn: What does it have you asking now about, either Lauren or Kelley?

Gabriella: I, I just want to watch them interact more. I just wanna see if it happened again, if Lauren will try again or if Kelley will allow it to happen. I honestly think a lot of it was Kelley being like, “Okay, I’ll let her do this” cause most of the time Lauren tries you know to say like, “Hey let’s do this” or whatever, Kelley’s like, “No, let’s do this.” She kind of doesn’t let it pass. But this time she did.

Robyn: Has it caused you to think anything about how you might do something different for Kelley or for Lauren?

Gabriella: Yeah, I mean, yes and no. I think that there are times I could be like, “Hey, I think that Lauren had a really great idea, let’s listen to that, let’s try that you know, and try and play up Lauren’s idea... but at the same time, they have such a great dynamic with each other that I don’t really know if I should interrupt it, I mean they play well together. They almost never have any type of conflict, they find things to do together, have a good time, they go along with each other’s’ ideas, and so I’m like, if Lauren’s okay with this, then why should I butt in, and change it?

Gabriella’s responses to my probing about her interpretations indicated that she was ambivalent about setting specific goals for Lauren, and that she hesitated to prescribe a change for the girls’ relationship, saying, “I don’t really know if I should interrupt it.” Her interpretation seemed to focus more on understanding the children’s interactions at a deeper level – “how to know” about their relationship for the sake of understanding it, and not necessarily to pedagogically insert her influence – or power – into the children’s peer context. Gabriella seemed to suspend the questions about “how to be” and linger more in the arena of “how to know” the children more fully.

Along with Gabriella, Sarah had similar interests in the video she collected which showed two children playing in an area of the playground that had been replanted with a small grove of trees. Sarah was interested in how children utilized this new space for play possibilities, and in particular, that fact that they noticed small windows in the side of the building that would have been in plain sight before the trees were planted in front of them.

Sarah: The first thing I thought was absolutely fascinating was the fact that they've never even noticed that those windows were there and that drew them over to those, just having those trees there you know...and I think they spent all of twenty minutes maybe just looking at the changes on the playground. One of the things I put in here was, having those trees over there has really helped the children to the area, but not in the way I thought it would. Like I figured they were going to get down and pretend to be little fairies or you know, something like, around the trees, but ours tend to play more with the stuff around that area, you know, under the tree house or under the climbing wall now or, against the bricks right there because it's such a small, confined space. It's been really interesting to them.

In this description, Sarah set up the video for the group, and indicated that the children's play shaped up differently than she would have predicted. Like Gabriella, she was noticing how her expectation of the children did not match what she observed when she went about video recording their play. She further described her fascination with the fact that instead of using the trees directly in their play, the children seemed to take advantage of the space and privacy created by the trees. Sarah also found a similarity in her video with Gabriella's, in that she observed an instance of two children playing that she would not have expected to occur.

Sarah: In this video, this was the second time maybe they'd really played together and they really hadn't played together much before. Lyla tended to play in imaginary play and Myles would be the in art area or the block area. And so that was something that also kind of caught my interest. This was a different pairing than usual. He's not with his normal buddy that he plays with and she's not playing with her normal buddy.

Sarah went further to indicate that she noticed that Myles showed a different style of interaction in this scene than she would typically see.

Gabriella: And so for Myles to have a say for once, it's a really good thing for him to have that experience, to make his own decisions without someone else there telling him, "No this is what you're going to do right now". . . Dana [teaching partner] and I have noticed that a lot, that we have several that will do that with Myles. You can just kind of see Myles in the back going, "but wait a minute, I have a good idea too!"

Although Sarah did not go further in her interpretation of the meaning or potentially implicit goals she has for Myles and his peer interactions, Gabriella commented that she thought it represented a form of more productive play for him, and Sarah agreed.

Gabriella: I mean, me watching this and just knowing Myles from having him as a toddler, and from what was happening when he'd just like, come in, I mean to me it seems like probably playing with Lyla regardless of whether he's taking the lead or not, seems to be probably much more productive than his play would be with [another peer]. That it is probably more focused, probably more productive, safer, um, and more thoughtful.

Sarah: Yeah.

Whereas some teachers needed to observe children in order to directly address a question

about “how to be,” Gabriella and Sarah seemed more interested in interpreting their video primarily for the sake of understanding the children more fully. Their goals were perhaps implicit, under the surface of their observations, but they were more interested in gathering knowledge about what the children were thinking, what motivated children’s play and styles of interaction. In her notes, Sarah wrote that some of her questions were, “What is successful for Myles? What is good for him? More productive and thoughtful play with Lyla than with [other peer].” Also evident in their interpretations of these two videos were Gabriella’s and Sarah’s awareness that, in the process of collecting video for this work, they both noticed child behaviors or interactions that they had not noticed before. The meaning they inscribed to the process of seeing something new was that the children’s behaviors were “outside the norm.” The chance to see new possibilities for the children fueled more curiosity and a desire to learn even more about children’s perspectives when they were playing on their own terms.

How to Know Ourselves: Teacher Self-Review

Aside from exploring how to know about children’s experiences and points of view, the teachers also explored how to know more about their own ideas, practices, roles, and relationships. The discussions involved a process of critical self-reflexivity, as if the lenses they were using to behold new observations from the video documentation also allowed them to turn a reflective lens back toward their own practice. Many instances of teacher narrative were coded as “self-review” in which the teachers seemed to critique, question, or articulate their view of themselves as teachers in light of the role they played in relationships with children.

In relationships with children: “Do I trust the children?” In one example of self-review as an epistemological process, Harriet continued to wonder about how she understood the child conflict scene she brought to the group.

Harriet: Would I have trust that they could handle it without being aggressive? No. I don't have that trust because you know, the way that Thomas feels that he can take control of the situation is physically.

Harriet's question was not only about how she behaves with the children, or about how she can predict children's behaviors based on past observations, but was asking about the presence of trust in her relationships with them. Harriet's phenomena of interest moved beyond the observable acts of teacher or child behavior and toward an understanding of the relationship.

Rachel explored the idea of relationships with children in another way when sharing her documentation. Her self-review process hovered around noticing, or becoming more aware of, the usual pattern of behavior with children and the ways children were agentic in seeking certain types of teacher involvement. When discussing her scene of children playing with her in imaginary play in the kitchen area, Rachel wondered why she did not react differently to children's attempts to focus on her involvement in their play.

Rachel: And then looking at the imaginary play, I just felt like, as...maybe what I'm learning about my teaching is that, that whole play was focused about me, that's it. The food for Rachel, and it was my idea to order the pizza, and ... the conflicts were because they wanted to give me the food. So I need to learn how to help them play those same kind of scenarios between themselves and take myself out. I think that would be a real key idea. . . to what, needs to happen. I made a note here, I said that, Hunter wanted the interaction with me, he didn't even think about getting food for Titus or Lanie, but I didn't, I should've maybe said, "Ask Titus if he wants some of this."

Rachel's language reflected her need to understand more about her own practice when she said, "...maybe what I'm learning about my teaching is..." Further, Rachel continued to look

critically at her own choices in practice and she began to imagine possibilities for other ways of being with the children that integrated what she saw was possible from the Milan video.

Rachel: So, the question is, I think what Harriet said at the beginning, what would it have looked like had I been away from this . . . I had not been right in the middle of the imaginary play scenario, and maybe I was. That's why I was intrigued by the video that we watched from Milan, how she directed the play but was not in the middle of it.

Further, Rachel made an observation similar to Harriet's about trust, when she continued to contemplate what might be different if she were less involved by saying, "I think there would still be conflict. I don't know how different it would be. I sort of know that I don't have enough confidence in them."

Within the topic of relationships with children, both Rachel and Harriet chose to explore ideas of trust and confidence in the children. They were not only concerned with how they decide how to be with the children, but found it necessary to try to understand how the foundations of their relationships with children provide a basis for how they approach interactions and make decisions about how to be involved. Relationships include both the teacher and the child perspective, however, which the group also attended to in their dialogue.

Children actively contribute to the relationships too: "They think we have the answer." In some ways, the teachers also wondered about children's roles in maintaining relationship patterns. When the group was discussing Rachel's imaginary play scene, the discussion revolved around how to respond to children if one's goal is to be less involved and have the children exercise more autonomy. Again, the group brought up the nature of the teacher/child relationship. Bella framed a question about how one really knows what the children need, which was common in the dialogue: "What does each child need? What prompts

do they need or what do they need you to say? Or what did they not need me to say?" At first, this seemed to indicate that teachers really need to decide what children need, but the group also pointed out that children often play a role in setting the tone for teacher involvement through bids for help or attention. In the quote below, Rachel explained how Lynn, an older toddler in her imaginary play scene, was trying to get Rachel to help her locate one of the play phones.

Rachel: I think it's interesting that Lynn wants the phone, she wants a specific phone, and she knows where it belongs, it belongs in that basket, and she was getting annoyed with me, cause, she thinks that I know where it is. . . and I didn't know where the phone was, and I was playing. And I couldn't, nor should I. She needs to have the responsibility to look for the phone herself, if that's the phone she wants.

Others chimed in as well with this line of inquiry, commenting further about what children may expect from adults.

Rachel: I'll just say, "I don't know. I don't know where you put the phone the last time." You know, it's been really weird for me to see their reactions when you tell them because children think that we know everything and that we should have the answer to . . .

Bella: I've thought to myself a lot lately, I think that too. I think parents, as well as children, just because we are teachers, a lot of the time, they think we have the answer. And for a long time, if I didn't really know a concrete answer for children, like I would kind of dance around it, but I've gotten to where stuff like that, I'll just say, "I don't know."

Harriet: It's hard to see when you're in the middle...it is hard to know what everyone's intentions are when you're that in it, you know?

Gabriella: As far as Lynn goes . . . if she's like coming up to you and wanting the phone

and is not going to look for it by herself, do you give her like . . . give her like an idea of how to find it or do you need to say “hey I’m kind of busy doing this right now, you might need to find somebody else to help you,” because I find myself doing that a lot, with the children who seem to need . . . think they need your help more often for things they probably really do not need your help with.

In this dialogue, the teachers seemed to recognize the complexity of the transactional nature of relationship patterns over time: the ways children indicate needs, how the needs are interpreted by teachers, and how the teachers choose to enact patterns of expectations. The task of deciding more precisely what children actually need and what they could do for themselves seemed to suggest that teachers should be mindful of children’s agency and autonomy in the context of teacher/child relationships.

Reflecting on one’s role: “Do we have to make children talk?” Bella applied the lens of self-review toward teacher/child relationships and how teachers set expectations while engaging children in talk. Her video scene showed a boy playing at the water table with one of the high school student teachers who spend time in Bella’s classroom. She explained that this child was not very verbal compared to peers, and often was very quiet during playtime. Although the video was a recording Bella took of a child and a student teacher, Bella used the documentation to engage in self-review.

Bella: Well and that’s where kind of, I thought, just the fact that she really did, even without him being verbal the entire time, she carried on a conversation with him without him talking because I feel like a lot of the times we do, we’re like....we sometimes try to make children talk when, really, do we have to make children talk? Do they have to be verbal to be engaged in something, and have a conversation with us?

Although Bella's question was not so much about teacher involvement in the same way Rachel's was, her question did touch on similar concepts about the level of control teachers need to have in the way they are involved with children during interactions. It began to open the question up about whose intentions drive the interactions – children's' or teachers'? She asked a critical question of her prior understanding of talking with children, "Do we have to make children talk?" Even though the child in her scene did not make bids or requests for attention, the student teacher still took control of the play. Bella seems to wonder, as did the others, about the accuracy of teachers' perceptions when deciding how much to direct children's play. She also called into question her prior perceptions of engagement; did she perhaps used to assume that children had to verbalize their engagement, giving the teacher conversational evidence?

Whereas in the previous example, Bella called into question some of her pedagogical assumptions about her role, at other times, the awareness of one's pedagogical role involved confirming prior assumptions. Part of the self-review process included instances where teachers spent time articulating the rationale behind their practice, affirming prior, current, and possible new directions. The following dialogue is an example of this process, which seemed to capture a moment in which teachers were in the act of inquiry, but needed to pull together the meanings of several sources of knowledge to be more aware of how goals for children are derived. The conversation was part of a discussion in which Harriet was talking about the dilemma of trying to intervene less when children are in a social conflict situation, but then moved into a discussion about how her goals for a child involved letting him have a comfort item from home in the classroom.

Harriet: We were talking about the goals...but, it makes me think of me, and what my goal is, which is, possibly, for them to solve social problems on their own. Which, just

because I'm not interacting, or I'm not putting myself in the middle of the problem doesn't mean they're gonna solve it on their own. It's two different things. I have to teach them how to do that, or at least, facilitate an environment where they're learning to do that. And, just by not reacting, isn't teaching them that. It's just kind of flipping it, over on that. And it was for Sam too because that's his comfort item, that's his thing I mean he might as well have been holding his blanket or his baby doll from home, because that's his. "No you can't play with this, it's too dangerous." He uses that phrase a lot about things that he brings from home. And that gives him that control, you know, the control of "I'm not the little kid I'm the big kid. I can play with it, but it's too dangerous for the other kids."

Bella: Well and that kind of helps him to justify why he's not sharing too. It's because...

Harriet: But we've never tried to convince him to share, you know, cause that's his thing, like today it was a kazoo, it's always something he brings from home but it's his and whether he puts it in his pocket, or he, you know, it's special to him to have that.

Rachel: That gives him a lot of power though.

Harriet: But he needs to fill a lot of power. That's the root of some of Sam's, Sam doesn't have a lot of power in most situations, so...

Gabriella: [to Rachel] What's your concern about the power?

Rachel: Well, it's just no matter if another child...it's not...fair. If another child has it then he can just go get it anytime he wants and it's gonna be something, it's not...I was thinking that that was his thing, that tractor, and that other children would get used to that, and it's not that big of a deal, but yeah, but something new every day, everyone wants it every day.

The conversation revealed a few different dimensions of self-review. Harriet imposed critique upon her own practice and the complexities of deciding how much involvement or intervention to exercise in order to support children's social problem solving. But as she articulated her rationale for letting Sam bring different toys from home, Bella and Rachel requested more clarification as they engaged in critical dialogue about this practice. Gabriella, in turn, asked Rachel to explain why she was concerned about a child having too much power. In this example, self-review was clearly a function of group critical inquiry, and not just individual teachers engaged in self-review of their own ideas and practices.

In addition to self-review of their prior and current practices, some of the documentation review showed that teachers were engaged in an active process of inquiry – trying out different versions of their practice. These were built upon their questions about how to be involved with children, and tied also to the activity of video-taping itself, which took them out of the usual pattern of their interactions with children. These comments moved beyond epistemological purposes, and into the realm of action and decision-making. I related these instances to the overarching theme of “How to Be” with the children, a fundamentally pedagogical area of inquiry.

How to Be with Children – Little Experiments with Pedagogical Action

As individual teachers shared their video documentation with the group, some acknowledged experiential process of video recording. Several teachers spoke about engaging in pedagogical acts of experimentation while recording – “little experiments” - in which they tried to pull back from being in the middle of children's activities or their social conflicts. In some cases, they chose to experiment as part of being behind the camera lens, in others, they were not behind the lens, but also chose to experiment with their involvement. After reflecting on

epistemological questions about how to decide on pedagogical choices, some teachers seemed compelled to test new strategies with the children.

Disrupting patterns of involvement or intervention: “I found myself not doing what I would normally do.” The first mention of experimenting with new strategies came up during Gabriella’s initial sharing of her video. Before Gabriella introduced the scene of Lauren and Kelley drawing, which was her chosen piece of documentation, she also shared that she had recorded other scenes that she did not end up bringing to the group. She spoke about attempting not to jump into conflict while she was in the act of video recording a scene in the block area.

Gabriella: And then I got a long piece where I was in the block area and just sat down and filmed them and there were a bunch of different interactions happening. There were four children in there and one of the children for almost the entirety of this period like stood there and watched these other three kids. Because there was like, constant conflict, which I think is why he was watching, because normally he doesn't really pay all that much attention. He's happy to play by himself or to find something else to do . . . but I don't know, I sat there and I had a really hard time like, not jumping in. I had a really hard time, and it made me, when I was looking back at it, it made me think that maybe we jump in too quickly.

Gabriella seemed to be saying she was trying something new, something different, in how she chose to stay back and not jump in, but that it took great effort. She also seemed to engage in critical reflection about this part of her practice when she said, “it made me think that maybe we jump in too quickly.” The teachers had discussed this idea of jumping in too quickly before, during their inquiry-setting phase, but it seemed to have a new or different meaning for Gabriella

once she was in the act of resisting this prior, usual pattern. Her “little experiments” also revealed that children responded to the change in pattern.

Gabriella: And immediately when they were having a conflict, they would look to me, and Nick especially seemed super confused that I would kinda look at him and not say anything. And [laughs] so I mean eventually I would say something like “what do you think you should say?” or just something simple. Not telling them what to do but just trying to get them like, on the path of thinking about what he needed to do instead of just looking to me to take care of it . But yeah, it really made me think that wow, maybe we jump in way too quickly. A lot...if that's his first reaction is to look at me.

Gabriella’s commentary about what she noticed revealed that the disruption was evident for the children as much as it was for her. Gabriella’s little experiment with teacher intervention involved her observation of not just how the child might behave differently, but she also noted how the child looked to her, hinting back at the idea that bidirectional teacher/child exchanges are central pedagogical considerations.

Harriet also mentioned performing “little experiments” with intervening during conflict while she was recording. She described it as “not doing what I would normally do.”

Harriet: Mine, the videos I chose go directly with that. It's layer upon layer upon layer. There's so much that I question just by watching the clips that I took, but I've, I took a lot of footage, I decided to narrow it down to children's social problem solving and conflict, and so like Gabriella, I was filming and so I found myself not doing what I would normally do in terms of intervening because of trying to catch what they were gonna do on their own and so I have two really good clips of completely different conflicts between two children and it's just so interesting to me there are so many different levels

of interest, but on both of them, in the very beginning when the conflict occurs, which both of these happen to be a child taking away something from someone else, their initial reaction is looking at me. And so you can see them looking in the camera, where I'm filming and like, one child is not as verbal, is crying and saying, "mine, mine," and one is telling me exactly what's happening but I'm not responding and so you see the first instinct is to look to me, just like Gabriella was talking about.

Harriet also noticed that the children's usual pattern – their "first instinct" – is to look to her to help solve their social problems. Harriet also followed this commentary by mentioning how the activity of collecting documentation of child conflict gave her a new lens to view the situations: "...and then you can see the moment where they realize that I'm not doing anything and then peeking into their problem solving which is very interesting." She seemed to be not only talking about how being behind the camera pulled her away and allowed her to see, but provided a disruption and perhaps opportunity for the children to solve things on their own that would not have been present otherwise, under the usual conditions of Harriet's way of interacting with them.

Jenna also discussed the experience of disrupting the usual pattern of interactions while video recording. Her dialog revealed an ambivalence, however, about whether she was collecting what typically happens in the room – whether it was "authentic" – she found it challenging to collect helpful footage. In the quote below, she described an attempt to record children playing together in the book area.

Jenna: Wednesday morning we had [a student teacher] come into the room so we could take some footage, and it was just kind of like a comedy of errors! [laughs] We had no idea what we're doing, we didn't know what we were going to document, and it ended up

being that we didn't even really...we didn't end up using any of it because it didn't seem authentic to me because we were just videotaping, but we weren't doing what we would normally be doing. We were just letting... one of the videos we took was [three children] just having a free for all in the book area.

Rachel: It's kind of interesting because the teacher didn't intervene so they were getting more and more wound up; they were like, ooh, we can do this?

Jenna: Yeah. . . and I ended up getting some footage because I kind of wanted to focus on some social conflict and what is, what we do as teachers, our involvement with that, and then also kind of my involvement with the development of activities or the engagement with their play.

For Jenna, video recording this scene, which she called a “free for all,” in which a teacher didn’t intervene as usual, did not yield a little experiment; it seemed so aberrant from her usual pedagogy that it did not provide insight for her. Jenna tried on another day to collect video that was more useful to her questions. In this next scenario, she mentioned performing a little experiment to let children work out their problems with less intervention from her. This scene ended up being the one she used as her main piece to share and interpret with the group.

Jenna: Renee [student teacher] is very, very insightful and she saw two children starting to have a social conflict and so she called my attention to it . . . so you know I went over there and I was able to, I let them as much as I normally would, try to resolve it, but what ended up happening was Bowen stole a puzzle piece to the alphabet puzzle that Marc was doing which is his favorite puzzle in the whole wide world, and he just ran. And so Marc got up and he chased him and they're running through the room screaming at each other. So, um, I gave them that brief few moments to try to resolve it but then when it became

everybody else's [problem] then I tried to intervene and, you know, I helped them kind of come up with the language.

Jenna's narrative above showed that she was actively engaged in experimenting with her involvement and she discussed her decision point about when to intervene, "when it became everybody's else's" problem. She also shared that her way of intervening was to give children the language to use to work through it. The experiment helped her decide that her role, her way to be with the children, was to be a resource for the children to support their own ways of working out social conflict.

Like Jenna, Rachel's first experience with recording video also veered from her plans, and she revealed her intent to engage in "little experiments" with her interaction style as well.

Rachel: I started taking videos and I was, my question was, "How can I lessen my interactions and improve their ability to solve their own problems?" and "Will that also in turn help me to trust them more?" And that was my basic questions when I was interested in the scarf video in the Milan videos, so I started videoing in imaginary play and I had the wrong idea. I was starting out trying to predict what I wanted to happen so I was going to video a child needing me and then the outcome would be that I would lessen my interaction, you know, and it would be a nice package. And, first of all, I videoed the wrong child, because Aidan was like, she didn't need me at all. But then I continued videoing in imaginary play because that was my, you know, main interest, and um, actually you [speaking to Jenna] videoed me in imaginary play and when I look at it and you said the same thing, when I was sitting with the children at the table in the imaginary play area, I was the center of... they were my ideas... they [the children] didn't come up with their own ideas.

Although Rachel did not succeed in recording the type of experiment she had planned to implement as “a nice package,” her teaching partner later recorded video of a scene with her playing with the children in imaginary play, which was her intended setting. She discussed having a new lens in this quote – that she was able to see that she was the center of the ideas for play. Later, Rachel reiterated her ability to use video and observation to see through a new lens. She also took other opportunities in the classroom to experiment with disrupting the usual patterns of involvement.

Rachel: And also like what Gabriella was saying earlier, I found myself when I did video, or I've been doing a lot of observations just for assessment, and that brings me back a little bit, and so that helps me to see it through a different lens when I'm... cause normally where I'd be, and they'll look to me, and when I'm videoing, I'm like, “Well, you figure that out,” or, “You help. You know, ask him to help you.”

Defining pedagogical roles: “They’re relying on you and trusting you to help them.”

In the previous quote, Rachel, like Harriet, also found that through experimenting with being less involved, she felt her role was to support the children’s interactions. Implementation of this looked like giving suggestions to children on what to say without stepping all the way in to resolve problems for them. Defining teachers’ roles of supporting the children and validating their need for the teacher satisfied what the group had previously been wondering about children’s needs. Jenna had described when Harriet was sharing video earlier in Phase 3 that “They’re [children] relying on you, and trusting you to help them.” She further explained it in the context of relationship.

Jenna: They're trusting you to make those secure attachments with you and that you're going to help them do those things, so I don't know, maybe there's a happy medium between not doing anything and solving it for them.

Rachel stated during her video sharing that "they relied on me to do it for them...too much." The teachers sought a balance – "a happy medium" - between goals that on the surface could appear to be in opposition: children developing greater abilities to solve problems for themselves and meeting children's needs for trust and support. The group worked to make new meanings about teacher roles to address this balance. The effort to pull back on involvement and intervention required struggle, in some ways. From an earlier quote above, Gabriella's language during her review also revealed how she perceived it as challenging:

Gabriella: I sat there and I had a really hard time like, not jumping in. I had a really hard time and, it made me, when I was looking back at it, it made me think that maybe we jump in too quickly.

While sharing her video involving child conflict, Harriet also acknowledged that figuring out how to understand new roles and how to enact them was difficult work.

Harriet: That makes it hard from what I'm trying to get, out of the videotaping, is that it's so hard to take yourself out of it . . . they were looking to me and whether it's to solve their problem or just to be that person that, to say, "Yeah, that really stinks. Sorry that happened to you."

In this quote, Harriet expressed that while she wanted to pull out of solving children's problems for them, children do need validation from the teacher.

Further in discussion about Harriet's scene of the children in conflict over a toy, the group had reflected about how typical it was for them to focus on resolving who deserved the

toy. Rachel, seeing in a new way how much focus went into the object, built new meaning about the purpose of teacher intervention.

Rachel: That's really what strikes me deep, I had to think a minute to think of it being something other than about the prop. We do, millions of times a day, it's always about objects. And I understand that it's about other emotional kinds of things.

Rachel's articulation of her new understanding points to the role of the teacher as an emotional resource for children, rather than as a referee in toy justice disputes. The narratives about how to implement new pedagogical strategies did not result in a definitive guide for how to be with children. The new meanings created, however, about the idea of balancing tension between goals of giving children space and giving children support, seemed to create a platform of pedagogical insight and continued inquiry.

The discussions in Phase 3 revealed that developing new pedagogical approaches required thorough exploration and modification of the knowledge base teachers utilized. Exploring how to know about children's needs, perceptions, capabilities, and experiences provided epistemological currency for the teachers to have faith in what they understood about children. Likewise, they needed to explore how they knew about themselves as teachers in action: why they made prior decisions, what they saw as problematic about prior assumptions, how they determined goals for children, and how they experienced relationships with children. These strands of thoughts about knowing wove into new meanings about possibilities for pedagogical reformulations. Phase 3 was characterized by active, complex engagement with the external world of practice represented by video documentation, the inner workings of teacher's perceptions and knowledge about practice, and proposals for possible new pedagogical constructions.

Phase 4 – Analyzing Interpretations of Documentation

The fourth phase of the project data included transcribed sessions of the teachers' use of deconstructive talk as a way to analyze their interpretations of documentation (the content of Phase 3.) Figure 9 highlights the fourth phase of the project data. This section includes content about the way teachers utilized a deconstructive talk method to further reflect upon their initial interpretations of documentation. To begin the process, the group created a graphic organizer that contained ideas about frameworks for interpretation and reflection.

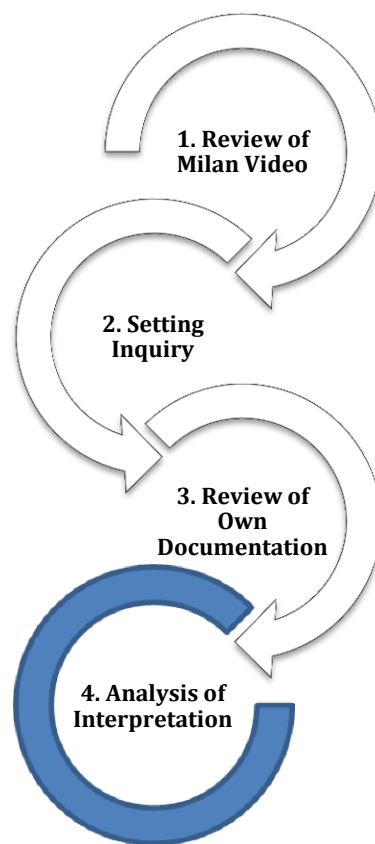


Figure 9. Phase 4 of Data: Analysis of Interpretations.

The next section describes the process for development of the Web of Frameworks for Interpretation and Reflection. Next, the findings section describes how the teachers used this collection of frameworks to identify parts of their narrative that represented use of the different sources of knowledge.

Developing a Web of Frameworks for Interpretation and Reflection

In this project, the primary goal of using deconstructive talk was to challenge teachers to become aware of some of the taken-for-granted assumptions embedded within their pedagogical ideas and practices. To start the process, the group was tasked with constructing a concept web of the major sources of knowledge that we could identify that shaped and fed ideas about practice. Figure 10 represents the web that was created in this process: “Frameworks for Interpretation and Reflection.” During the webbing process, I suggested three knowledge frameworks as a starting point, based upon the scholarly literature that was utilized to frame the inquiry for this study (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Dahlberg, et al., 2007; Katz, 1996; Kessler, 1991; Lobman & Ryan, 2007; Lubeck, 1996; Moss, et al., 2000; Stott & Bowman, 1996).

The initial suggestions included theory, pedagogy, and child development. In addition to these three, the teachers generated two additional knowledge frameworks: parents and other teachers. The web in Figure 10 illustrates how the teachers added detail to the frameworks as we clarified the meaning behind each of them. Once the web was constructed on large chart paper, it was placed in a visible spot of the wall in the room. Teachers were asked to reference the web as they read transcriptions of their documentation review. Each member of the group analyzed the entire set of transcription sections (21 pages of single-spaced type), which included one excerpt from each teacher. I gave teachers flexible instructions to mark up the transcriptions to make notes of which of the five frameworks they felt were being utilized in parts of the

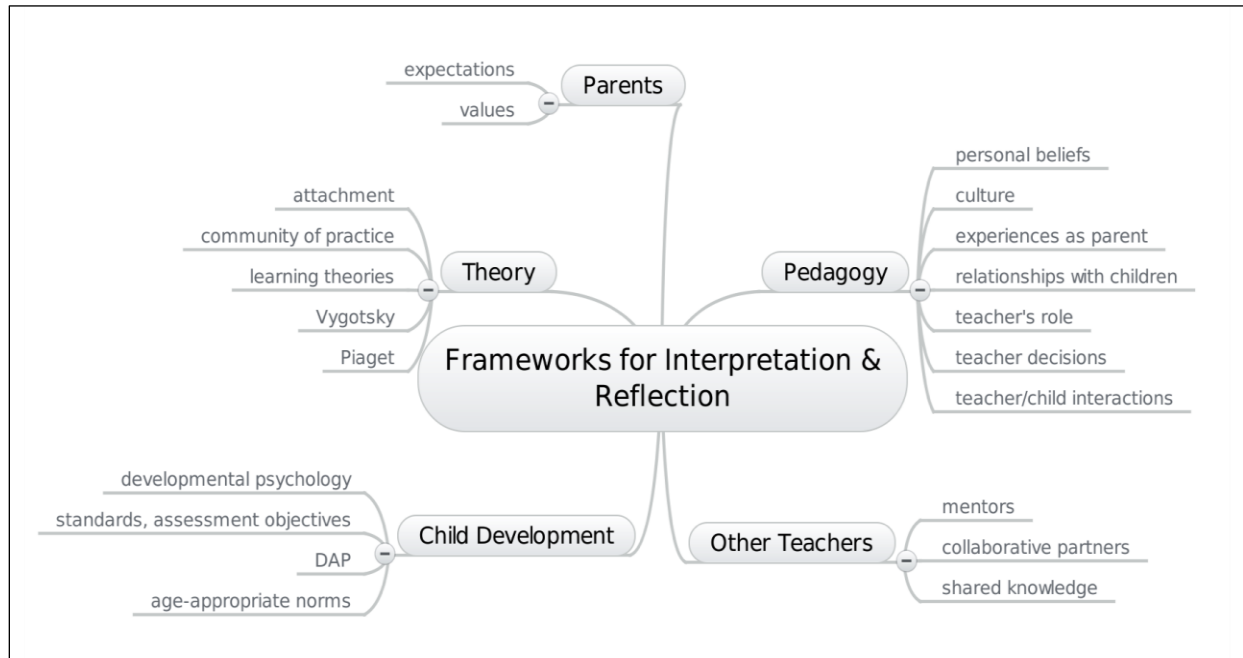


Figure 10. Frameworks for Interpretation and Reflection.

narratives. After everyone had a chance to analyze the transcripts, the group came together to discuss.

Pedagogical Framework

The discussion of the group's analysis was transcribed and coded for which frameworks teachers felt were invoked within the narratives. The most prevalent framework that teachers mentioned was "pedagogy." The teachers identified their use of a pedagogical framework to address a number of concepts. The narratives from Phase 4 indicated a continued prominence of the "way of knowing" children: their patterns, relationships with others, their individual qualities, their intentions and thoughts. This, again, was utilized in order to explore "ways of being" with children: pedagogical decisions, especially about how and when to be involved, as well as articulating the role teachers should play with children. In addition, the group appeared

to have a metacognitive view of their thinking. They discussed how a pedagogical framework was often combined with, or contrasted with other frameworks, they were aware of being in a state of inquiry, that their image of the child was at play in their interpretations, and that they knew they thought about time and space in pedagogical terms. Lastly, the group expressed some pedagogical consequences of their action research journey in the ways they decided to try out new versions of their practice and to reconstruct new meanings about their pedagogical stances.

Ways of knowing. The following excerpt from Gabriella is an example of how the teachers looked back over the transcriptions of their documentation review and identified which frameworks they felt were present in their language.

Gabriella: I felt like, or thought after reading this, that the majority of what I was relying on or pulling from was pedagogy. I was talking about the children's relationship to each other, I was talking about whether or not I should intervene, or should try to make their relationship different in some way, or if Lauren needed that support or if she was happy with how things were. I think there was a little bit of child development as well. We talked, Harriet and I and Sarah, at one point on the second page, we're talking about their interactions and kind of like the bridge between the toddlerhood and real preschool interactions, so I thought there was some child development in there.

Continuing to explore the conversation that followed this excerpt, the following section of dialogue gave a sense of the conversation dynamic that occurred as the group discussed not only the frameworks in operation, but also the pedagogical implications of their thoughts. It also serves as an example of the process in which I made efforts to challenge teachers to carefully examine their use of language and the meanings within their narratives.

Robyn: So, right, as a specific example, when you all were talking about how they are moving from toddlerhood to preschool type play, so that made me think of yes, child development, going through stages, and even those play typologies where we think that they go through parallel, solitary to parallel play to collaborative/cooperative play, but to me, that challenged a little bit of this idea of, you're talking about them as individual and that somebody's sort of always in charge of the play, right? Like it's either Kelley dictating, or Lauren dictating, but then when you think about what they bring up with the play typologies, if they're moving more into a cooperative style of play, could Kelley and Lauren be doing cooperative play and not necessarily one person dictating for the . . . like one in charge or the other in charge, but . . .

Gabriella: Like they've agreed upon. . .

Robyn: Maybe what they're both doing is trying to be in collaboration or cooperation with each other, so that would be one way that I would read this and say, that would be one way to challenge what your first reading was. Your first reading was, ok Kelley's in charge, or Lauren tries to get in charge, and it, kind of, is like this power thing that only one of them can hold at any one time.

Harriet: But couldn't they have that dynamic but it still be in cooperative play? I mean, if they're in a mutual agreement that this is how that type of play is gonna go down, then wouldn't it still be cooperative even if someone is taking more of a lead role? I think that the differential would be watching it versus listening to it. Because if you listen to the words, it draws into more of the who's dictating and that, but if you just watch what's happening in the video, then it looks like more of a cooperative type of play, if you're looking at it, from, you know, just a visual aspect.

Gabriella: Yeah.

Harriet: Because if she says draw a sea turtle or whatever and she's like, okay, and she draws a sea turtle, well then they've collaborated.

Gabriella: Yeah. Well I don't really feel like I was trying to say that they weren't collaborating, I was just, it just seems that in their play, one person is dictating what they're doing, but there's not ever any conflict about it, they're both ok with it, they both do it, so, I mean I think it is collaborative play.

Robyn: But I think that sometimes, our language about that, let's imagine last week we were talking about ... the language of saying that Kelley's dictating the tone, or this is interesting because Kelley's not dictating, Kelley has actually stepped down from her position of forcefulness and power, that language comes with a, it's really strong language, you know, and it's saying that it's painting Kelley as sort of this, . . it's giving Kelley a kind of a personality profile, like Kelley has to be in charge, and that's when she's happiest. But if you chose to use that language of collaboration and cooperation it might paint this picture of here are two girls who really like to be together and they like to do things a lot and this is how they maintain their relationship through, and this is the language that they use, but the teacher language pretty much sets the tone.

Gabriella: Right, yeah.

Robyn: So those are choices about how you . . . you're the story teller, and so um, I just think it's interesting to think about the words we could use, and it depends on your audience, right?

Gabriella: Yeah, I mean I would not say this to the families; I would not type this up. That's not the context I would put it in. I mean I would probably just choose to you

know describe the play scenario, that they were working together, that Lauren was telling Kelley what to draw, that Kelley was drawing what Lauren said, that they had a little bit of a struggle for a moment, but it was resolved this way ... I would pretty much just describe what was happening rather than putting any judgment on their relationship. Yeah, I mean I would not say Kelley's usually pretty forceful and Lauren just does whatever she wants, which is what I probably said during this, at some point, but I would say something along the lines of "Kelley tends to take charge when they play, Lauren tends to assume a more passive role but in this scenario Lauren took the lead and Kelley was happy to allow her that decision or something."

Robyn: And another question I had on the third page [of the transcription], we were talking about what questions you have and you're saying, you know, I just wanna watch them interact some more and I want to see if this would keep happening ... I guess which is that a pedagogical question too? So what do you think we would learn if we did keep watching and do more documentation on that?

Gabriella: Just knowledge about their personalities and their ability to interact with each other and their level of trust with each other. The, almost deepness, or richness of their friendship.

Harriet: Maybe even to see patterns, because we were kind of talking about how . . .

Gabriella: Mmm hmm.

Harriet: ...maybe interactions like this might've happened before but it's not something that screams out for attention so that if you were intentional about looking at that, specifically, then you might see things that maybe you would miss otherwise?

Gabriella: Right.

Bella: And that's what I wrote is just from the pedagogical standpoint, that you, like almost everything you said to me, just kind of led me to say, "Ok, you're relying on knowing the individual children and just what you're seeing them do." That you're not trying to change it, just you know, how they act on a normal basis and just what the norm is for them, as opposed to looking at child development of what's normal for that age.

Gabriella: Right, right.

This sample of the dialogue that occurred as the group reviewed their narratives revealed a continuation of many of the same processes that were evident in the earlier phases. The gist of Gabriella's narrative about her clip of Lauren and Kelley working in the art area centered around Gabriella's need to understand the interactions between the girls to better know them and their relationship. In the dialogue above, the process of making sense of what Gabriella observed and how she interpreted it came under scrutiny, partly because of my prodding, and partly because of the task of analyzing the transcription. Gabriella articulated that her intent was to gain "knowledge about their personalities and their ability to interact with each other and their level of trust with each other" and she described witnessing "the almost deepness, or richness of their friendship." By analyzing her narrative and engaging in critical dialogue, Gabriella seemed to become aware of the fullness with which she desired to know about the children, a more full comprehension of their play and who they were. Harriet chimed in that the motivation for interpreting this type of clip would be "maybe even to see patterns" and the subtlety of looking for things you might have otherwise missed because "it's not something that screams out for attention." These points seemed to allude to the act of video observation and the lens it provided for the teachers to observe and make sense of the children's actions in a different light. Bella also added that she thought Gabriella was using the video to gain information for pedagogical

purposes, just to more fully know the children, but not to use a child development perspective to look at whether that was normal for their age, for example.

Harriet continued to explore the need to know more about children's perspectives. She looked back upon her interpretation of the scene in which two children were physically tussling over a toy and expressed that the motivation to know more about children's thoughts linked to the desire to make responsive pedagogical decisions.

Harriet: Well what led me to wonder was, I was trying to figure out if what she was saying, because at that point when the teacher became involved, or even before that, when they were tussling over the toy, she was saying, "I had it I had it," so in my mind I'm wondering, does she know that she took that from someone else and she's trying to be deceitful? Or in her mind, has she had it for enough of a time period that she believes that she had it, or, something in between? You know? But I think that, for my overall goal, you know, my overall big question of, where do I fit in to their social conflict? I need to have the answers of what they're thinking, where they are, in terms of relating with others.

Pedagogical ways of being. Teachers continued to use critical inquiry in the ways they analyzed their narratives in order to dwell in the pedagogical questions about how to be with children. Prevalent were continued comments about how to determine levels of involvement, within a larger question about what children need from their teachers.

Harriet: [Speaking about Gabriella's documentation review] That was the common thread that I found in yours and a lot of ours, definitely mine, and I think in Rachel's also, definitely all that I saw was very pedagogical, but how, but you're very, at the very last page, you're talking about that was such a great dynamic, I don't really know if I should

interrupt it, and that's how kind of like we were all, where does the involvement need to begin? Does it need to begin, that's kind of the question that a lot of us have, was . . . what do they need from us as teachers? And how do we best benefit them by being involved or not being involved?

Gabriella: Well and it was in my other videos, just not on that one, there wasn't, they had a little bit of conflict, but it was fine, they were able to solve their own very quickly, there wasn't a need for me, there wasn't a need for someone to step in, there wasn't something that they could not easily handle themselves that they felt they needed help with, you know?

In Jenna's narrative, she saw a lot of child development in her words, but she also noticed a pedagogical question about responding to children.

Jenna: Then there was also some, pedagogical thoughts going through as well, as far as how does one respond.

Jenna was aware that her question about how to respond was from a pedagogical framework. Others saw that they inquired about involvement and intervention. The teachers also tied the discussion about pedagogical "how" questions to ways of speaking about their role in the teacher/child relationship. Rachel spoke about what she saw most prevalently in her narrative:

Rachel: I really didn't see theory, I just saw some child development. Mostly it was about my teacher decision-making, about my teacher role, teacher and child interactions and how much interaction is appropriate and how much should I hold back and help them learn how to play on their own.

Harriet added another dimension to the conversation about teacher role when she added that she felt her role in utilizing a pedagogical lens was to validate the child she observed in her video clip.

Harriet: My job is to find other ways to feel like he's doing a good job. Cause to me what I read in most of this was validation. He's looking for validation. To me it seems like a social emotional type need that he has, a lot of pedagogy would go into how you can foster that and make him feel validated.

She further acknowledged that in order to clarify her role, it was important to engage a process of self-review:

Harriet: Cause a lot of what I was looking at is me kind of looking at myself and figuring out how, um, to best handle certain situations of conflict, so, um, it's a lot of like, introspective.

Both Harriet and Gabriella expressed that Rachel's narrative also included pedagogical self-reflection, a critical look at her role, as she tried to determine how much to be involved, which was Rachel's "big question."

Gabriella: Yeah, yours was a lot of pedagogy, though.

Harriet: Mmm hmmm. Well, cause it kind of reminded of mine, like, it's really you being very introspective and wondering how you should, you know, what's the most benefit to the children of how much or level of involvement that you have.

Rachel: That's my big question.

Robyn: I think that it's really clear in several places how much you're really pushing yourself and challenging yourself. You're challenging your views.

Rachel: Yes.

Robyn: Umm, so I'm kind of curious about that and what you all think...

Harriet: Well I think she was very brave, I think to, I mean she's admitting a lot of what she feels are areas that she needs to work on, like when she's talking about that she doesn't have trust for the children, I think that that's pretty powerful to be able to say that, you know, admit that to yourself or the other people, cause maybe that wouldn't be the popular way to look at it, but it's being really honest with herself in looking at her teaching, and thinking why she does things a certain way.

Later, as the group discussed analysis of Bella's video review, there were also indications that teacher knowing (in this case the student teacher's ability to know) was linked to pedagogical decisions about how to react and respond.

Bella: And I think there was some child development stuff too as far as, I noticed that I ask a lot about, did he really need help? Did he really want help? Could he do it by himself? And...

Gabriella: But that also fits into pedagogy, you know with the teacher decisions, with the teacher's view of the child relationship with the child, the competence.

Bella: And I think that completely comes with your reactions to those things and responding to those things, completely comes with experience, and they don't have that. And sometimes I wonder, you know, as I'm trying teach them these things am I asking too much at the same time? You know, they really, they may not be there, to understand what's going on right there in that moment, and be able to process it.

Bella's comments show that she wondered about how to support the student teachers in their understanding of the children, because the understanding is absolutely essential to their ability to

make pedagogical decisions. Gabriella reinforced the idea that pedagogical implications are woven throughout the questions about what children are capable of doing.

Metacognition. In the process of analyzing their narratives, the teachers occasionally seemed to take a broader view of their thinking about their use of a pedagogical framework. The example above, in which Gabriella prioritized a pedagogical framework over child development, reveals that at times, it was important to think about the interconnections of the various frameworks, or to see that multiple frameworks may be in use at the same time. In some cases, they thought about the relation of pedagogy to the other frameworks and resisted the option of choosing one particular framework. In one case, I commented to Gabriella that I saw an ecological view of the child in the transcript of her documentation review, which was a theoretical framework; however, she tied in the pedagogical.

Robyn: We did bring up family ecology again, that came up in this one, so I think that's more of a theoretical thing than a pedagogical thing that we keep wondering about how these girls... we have to know how they act at home in order to understand.

Gabriella: But I think it also ties into the pedagogical, because it's part of knowing the child and it's part of how you make your decisions for each child.

Gabriella's assertion seems to indicate that she privileges the use of the pedagogical framework, and she reinforces once again the common tie between "how to know" the child which feeds into "how to be" with each child. When the teachers employed the use of words like "competence" and "capable" with their ideas about knowing children, this seemed to employ reflective thinking about their image of the child upon which their pedagogical stances were built.

In discussing Harriet's interpretation of the child conflict scene, and Rachel's interpretation of her imaginary play scene, the possibility was raised that multiple frameworks

would have been utilized to help teachers understand the scenes. In particular, the group seemed willing to identify their use of a child development framework in their narratives when inquiring about what children were capable of doing. First, from Harriet:

Harriet: Well what led me to wonder was, I was trying to figure out if what she was saying, because at that point when the teacher became involved, or even before that, when they were tussling over the toy, she was saying, "I had it I had it," so in my mind I'm wondering, does she know that she took that from someone else and she's trying to be deceitful? Or in her mind, has she had it for enough of a time period that she believes that she had it, or, something in between? You know?

Gabriella: Well see, I think that that question falls under more of child development, because you're asking whether or not she has the competency to differentiate between, I have this in my hands therefore it is mine, or I took this from someone.

The same combination arises during discussion of Rachel's interpretation, and Bella added in that learning theory may have influenced the interpretation as well.

Harriet: Well, if she wanted to continue looking specifically at an area, like specifically at imaginary play, then I think child development would be a way to go because then you could specifically look at what, you know, what should they be doing at that age in imaginary play and then trying to facilitate those kind of activities and just assessing where they are without her involvement, would be a place to start.

Bella: I think that would tie back to as far as how you're gonna do that looking at theory and how we know children learn various things and just trying different approaches for giving them those skills.

Rachel: Along with the individual children . . . would be pedagogy.

Bella: I don't think you could use, rely on one without using [the others].

In addition to looking broadly at the uses of multiple frameworks, the group also seemed to step back and look at the way they utilized consideration of time, space, and materials when they interpreted or articulated their own practices in the documentation clips. The following excerpt is an example of the how group found these elements salient to their understandings of their practices.

Robyn: Sarah pointed out, you kind of came from the materials and environment standpoint, you were like, look at all that space they have at the table, that really afforded them the opportunity. . . so you were asking different pedagogical questions.

Sarah: A little bit, I think some of that comes from the fact that we just changed our art area in the classroom to have a bigger table because we were realizing that so many children wanted to be there, so why not make that a space where they could.

Gabriella: That's what we had to do, too.

Harriet: And where Rachel said, Gabriella said that they are very comfortable with each other, and at 9:36 [time stamp on transcription] and Rachel says, they're like Italian, they don't seem like, they don't have time limits, so it's like the space and the time seemed very relaxed and very, yeah they had a lot of room, they weren't rushed, they were just very much in the moment, there wasn't teacher guidance, there wasn't a set of expectations for what they were supposed to be doing at that time. So it was very much child-initiated.

Rachel: And I was wondering if that was more like, that was maybe specific to our program, I mean it's kind of like our community, a lot of other places would not have that much time or space.

Sarah: True.

Harriet: At that table there'd be ten of them with the same coloring sheet that you have ten minutes to color and that's art time.

Rachel: The teacher would come around and glue something on each one of them.

In this exchange, the teachers seem to be reinforcing their values and intentional decisions for structuring children's experiences the way they do. Rachel identified that the practices may be evidence of their "community" of practice.

Recognizing pedagogical consequences. A few sections of the Phase 4 dialogue also noted changes, or consequences, brought about due to the processes of critical inquiry and provocation. In the first example below, Rachel noted a particular pedagogical goal, to which others responded with how they felt they have been changing their practices to line up more intentionally with this goal. Gabriella and Sarah took the opportunity to articulate how they felt they had implemented new pedagogical approaches.

Rachel: And we're teaching them how to take care of themselves.

Gabriella: Mmm hmmm.

Robyn: Without direction, usually our direct intervention, right?

Sarah: Yeah, I have been kind of watching several of the children in my class now, and how they react when someone takes something they don't like, or when someone says something they don't like, and I've realized that several of ours, just, they'll start crying, because that means the teachers' gonna come over and a teacher will solve the problem. So I've kind of started stepping back, saying, you know, maybe you guys need to talk about it. Talk to each other. And it's been fascinating watching them, you know, try to talk it out, and be like, "why are we crying?" That's my favorite is when, "why are you

crying?" "well, I didn't like it when you took this." "Oh, well just tell me." You know, it's those little things, that like (sigh), and realizing how often it is that I step in and I solve the problems for them without even necessarily thinking about it and realizing how much I'm cutting out from what they can do and taking away from them.

Gabriella: Yeah, I've found since this class, I've found myself much more often saying, "I think you can solve that. I bet if you talk to him you guys will be able to come to a solution with that. And we, you know, in all of the other areas of our classroom, we don't put a time limit on what children do and with the computer, we had, and then I was talking to [our student teacher] during one of our staff meetings and it's like, you know, we don't do that in any other area, why are we doing that over there? I mean, yes, we have like two children in our class who would stay there all day long, and yes, we eventually say, "Hey, let's find something else to do," but for the children that will spend 15 minutes there and then find something else to do why are we only letting them spend 10? What's the point? Why are we making them take turns with the mouse if they're really into it and maybe they need another 3 minutes before they're ready to give it to the other child. Why are we doing that? So we stopped. And now it is a social situation that they have to solve. We don't do it for them. We're like "hey, it is, you two are at the computer and you'll have to work out when it will be each of your turns at the mouse." And eventually it turns into "I wanna turn on the mouse, come help me, uhhhh, teacher" I'm like "oh, yeah he has had the mouse for a long time, you might need to talk to him about that. Seems like probably you need to have a turn sometime soon, you should tell him that. You tell him that and eventually, you get a turn."

Bella: It really turns out okay [laughs].

Gabriella: And it's all fine.

Robyn: So you've moved from wanting to regulate children through some kind of rule or structure, or teacher control, um design, to creating another opportunity for them to learn how to solve social problems and relate to each other and, again, take care of each other, right?

Gabriella: It's been really interesting. Yeah, to watch them work through that. Because some of them are really, really great at it and some of them are really struggling with it, and it's interesting to watch those happen, especially when two children that struggle with it are at the computer are together. That requires a lot of reminders, "Oh remember, you guys have to talk about that. You have to work that out."

Robyn: Do you try to make yourself closer or more available when you realize it's that kind of pairing?

Gabriella: Yeah, yeah. I'll be at the play dough table or the book area because that's kind of an arm's length reach away [laughs], for when the fists might come [laughs].

Robyn: So you're watching, but you're also not right on top of them.

Gabriella: Mmm hmmm.

Gabriella: It gives them their space when they need it.

Gabriella: Yeah.

Sarah: But still being close enough to also help when they need it.

Gabriella: Mmm hmm.

In this section of conversation, Gabriella and Sarah expressed not only a change in practice, but they revealed some of the processes in which they put themselves under scrutiny in order to move toward different actions. They identified using collaboration with colleagues as well as an

examination of their role in responding to children's bids for help during social negotiations. They spoke about the intentionality with which they tried to support children's social learning, and how giving the child the opportunity, "their space when they need it," was important in shaping pedagogical action.

In another part of the discussion, Gabriella also differentiated between giving children space and being too hands off, and reiterated the role of the teacher in keeping children safe: "I feel like there's a difference between letting them solve, you know, just little social scuffles, and keeping them from being seriously injured." In addition, Gabriella also expressed in more detail what her goals were for the children within this pedagogical stance:

Gabriella: But I think there also comes the point of like, you know, you have, you're teaching them to respect each other's' emotions, you know, to listen to each other, and you also have to teach them that, "Hey, if you're gonna have a tantrum, that's fine, but this is not the place to do it."

Harriet: Exactly.

Gabriella: "You cannot do it in the middle of group time."

Gabriella's identification of limits to children's autonomy seemed to reveal, as well, the depth of intentionality with which she based her pedagogical decisions.

Appropriation of pedagogical ideas "just for your classroom." In addition to trying out new practices, Bella also mentioned that she felt she was reconstructing new pedagogical knowledge by appropriating different pieces to make them relevant to her particular context. In the dialogue below she expressed this and added that appropriation involved not just replicating practices she may think are working elsewhere, but rather owning the knowledge and awareness of those practices to build something of her own.

Bella: At the beginning, Mary Jane used the word appropriation. Taking, you know, knowing what it is, but then taking these pieces and making it what it needs to be, just for your classroom. . . Pulling from all of the things, the theory, the Milan stuff, child development, and just making it work for the situation that you need it to work in. It's not gonna be exactly the same and you're just gonna use the pieces that work the best.

Harriet: I think that's what ours really has in common is that the Milan, you know watching the Milan videos, is that we kind of had this, vision of, of what things could be like in our classroom and so it's looking at how they actually are and thinking how could we maybe get closer to this.

Bella: Right, you're not gonna try to make it exactly the same [overlapping]

Rachel: How did they get like that? That's what we want to know.

Harriet: Yeah, like it would be interesting to have them engage in these activities with less teacher involvement, it would be interesting to see them solving social conflict with less teacher involvement. We see that from these tapes so...where are the children we are working with fit into that and then what could we as teachers do to facilitate moving to that next step?

Although the group also recognized that parts of the interpretations utilized child development, theory, and other frameworks, the pedagogical framework seemed to be what they saw evidence of in their own narratives. Not only did they see use of pedagogical views most prominently, but they also stayed within concepts of pedagogical knowing and action as they discussed implications of their critical inquiry.

Child Development Framework

The teachers identified much fewer times that they felt they had utilized a child development framework in their interpretations. When they did recognize using a child development perspective, it was most often when they spoke about developmental expectations, norms, or age appropriateness. Jenna's narrative received the most comments that related to child development, and this was likely due to the fact that, although her initial intent was to record video of children engaged on their own, she ended up getting footage of one of her older toddler boys, Marc, who perseverated on reciting alphabet knowledge from rote memory. Jenna had raised questions in her interpretation about how to get him to move on from the perseverative behavior, and towards a wide range of other developmental goals. In the excerpt below, Jenna commented about her narrative.

Jenna: I think that probably most of mine was child development; it had a lot to do with what are the developmental norms? What are the developmental objectives? Then there was also some, pedagogical thoughts going through as well, as far as how does one respond. And then a little bit of theory, had some Vygotsky, sprinkled in there. I really felt like development was the question as far as developmental psychology and developmental norms of his behaviors, and age appropriateness because obviously by three, age appropriateness is not to know the entire alphabet and to be reading, etcetera, etcetera.

In discussing Jenna's documentation further, Rachel also invoked ideas from child development, she spoke about what was the norm: "He's just so un-, it's not the norm the way he asks for his validation, it's just so different than what we have ever experienced." Jenna, in turn, discussed

how his behaviors compared to those of peers, when she spoke about how Marc could not draw a representational picture of himself “like the other ones can do.”

Jenna: So, some of the things that I've been doing, like when he for some reason, the last several weeks, he's really, really wanted to be in the art area and he fills up papers and papers and papers all of writing, writing words, words, words, words. So obviously he writes his name, a lot, and so I've, last week, I tried to get him to draw a picture of himself so he's using a different form of expression other than writing. And it was really interesting because I try to use really positive validation of what he was doing, a lot more with that than I did with him writing his name. But it was interesting how he did it. He really was not able to draw a picture of himself at all, like some of the other ones can do like a beginning stick figure, so I took a picture of him, and sat it in front of him, and then he could do it, but his eyes were here, his mouth was here, none of it was connected.

Jenna's expectations for his drawing seem to come directly out of an assessment probe, where it would be expected that he could draw specific features or elements of a stick figure.

Other teachers also utilized a child development framework to speak about developmental expectations for children, as they worked to make sense of child behaviors or perspectives. Bella had been prompted by her documentation review to wonder about how we know what a child really does or doesn't need from teachers. She thought this was framed from a child development perspective:

Bella: And I think there was some child development stuff too as far as, I noticed that I ask a lot about, did he really need help? Did he really want help? Could he do it by himself?

Harriet identified that she used Theory to talk about expectations for toddler social interactions, but she also described thinking about expectations for what was “normal to see” at specific ages:

Harriet: In terms of Theory, for toddler social interaction, um, cause where I talk about that she anticipated that Thomas was gonna come over to the chair, I mean that's why she threw her body on top of the frog, you know, she was anticipating that this was gonna happen. So then that kind of goes into, I think into Theory - social interaction at the toddler level, and what you know, what is normal to see at certain ages in terms of interacting with peers.

She further discussed her aim to figure out what a child was thinking (within an excerpt mentioned previously) and Gabriella chimed in that she felt that was a question framed from a child development perspective. The conversation continued, and included discussion about how to utilize knowledge that is framed within a child development perspective.

Harriet: ... I'm wondering, does she know that she took that from someone else and she's trying to be deceitful? Or in her mind, has she had it for enough of a time period that she believes that she had it, or, something in between? You know?

Gabriella: Well see, I think that that question falls under more of child development, because you're asking whether or not she has the competency to differentiate between, I have this in my hands therefore it is mine, or I took this from someone.

Robyn: I can see that point. But earlier you said you thought it was pedagogy?

Gabriella: Well I think that there's a difference between wondering in general what children are thinking cause what children are thinking is going to lead your action. If you're talking about a very specific situation, like, Paige, you're wondering where she is developmentally.

Harriet: mmm hmm. But I almost feel like, in order to use this child development, to use the standards and Gold®¹ and all that, you need something to put it up against, do you know what I mean? Like we can say how far along they are in literacy by them naming off how many letters they know. But in this instance, I can't necessarily take her actions and words at face value if I'm curious about... if I just took it at face value, then I wouldn't have the question, you know, my question is, what's really behind?

Bella: You don't have anything concrete.

Harriet: Right. I don't have anything to compare to some kind of developmental standard.

Robyn: But maybe what Gabriella is saying is for instance, our child development knowledge base tells us about children being egocentric and children not being able to take the perspective. So we have this suspension of ...

Harriet: That's kind of where I went into the theory.

Robyn: Yeah, suspension of ideas about what children are actually experiencing may be a reality that's a bit different from what we observe and see. So we see it this way, but there could be a whole other reality going on inside our head and we don't understand that, it's a bit mysterious, and so maybe some of our questions are coming from that place of, we know their brain and their understanding of the world is really different from the adult ...

Harriet: And I think it actually takes all three of these because you have to have understanding of that personal child too.

Robyn: Do you think it's more of a pedagogy?

¹ Referring to the web-based portfolio assessment system the program utilizes. Heromah, C., Burts, D., Berke, K., & Bickart, T. (2010). Teaching Strategies GOLD objectives for development and learning. Washington, D.C.: Teaching Strategies.

Harriet: Exactly. And if you look at the standards and see, cognitively, or even social-emotionally, where they should be, and maybe compared to other areas where we do have more concrete evidence on, for her in particular, where she falls, and then to kind of look at theories, you know I think it could, it could really encompass all of those areas if you're going to try to really dig deep into that.

Sarah: Mmm hmm.

Gabriella: Well, and I think that it would be easier to have one if this child were either younger or older, because Paige is kind of in that age where she could still be, you know, in that completely egocentric, not being able to take another person's point of view at all, or she could be more in a preschool frame of mind where she still may take it but she knows for sure that that was that other person's and all you have to do is say, "Um, was that yours?" and they're like, "No." But because of her age you don't really know where she is.

On the one hand, in this dialogue, Harriet was saying that she doesn't get complete information from looking at developmental norms, or standards, that she needs "something to put it up against," in order for it to have meaning for pedagogical purposes. Gabriella asserted, though, that thinking about developmental expectations is embedded within the questions about what a toddler might be thinking, but that it's challenging at the toddler age, to really be able to predict what a child might be thinking. Harriet added that it "takes all three," meaning that you need multiple frameworks to help guide pedagogical decision making. This idea of combining frameworks to fill in a more complete picture also came up in another part of this phase of group conversations.

Teachers acknowledged that often, there seemed to be an incomplete picture of the child, and that utilizing tools for analysis, such as video documentation or getting input from peers, could take one out of the “tunnel vision” that develops from spending day in and day out with the children. Bella chimed in at the end of this segment by adding that considering a child development perspective can also add perspective to interpretation of a child’s behaviors. The segment began with Harriet talking about how you can’t know a child’s point of view by just what you see, that some interpretation is necessary.

Harriet: Cause there isn't a way to, I mean, we can't just take it for what she's saying, and what her actions are, you know, and so it's just a lot of different pieces that you can put, you know, my knowledge of her in other situations, or the combination of the actions and the words, what happened before, what happened after, um,

Rachel: You get stuck, in your classroom with your children, sometimes in another perspective it just, a light bulb goes off sometimes...

Harriet: Well, if you don't know the child, then you might have insights that...

Rachel: True.

Harriet: That someone that doesn't wouldn't be able to get to because they do know the child, you know, sometimes you're boxed in to what your stereotypes are, that it's hard to see.

Sarah: Outside of the...

Rachel: And your patterns that, your dances that you play with them all the time

Harriet: Mmm hmm.

Robyn: I think that happened with Marc too, when we were talking about him, it's like you all have such a daily habit of interacting with him, that it's like, you were really

looking, I think, Jenna, for some other viewpoints to help interpret and explain his behavior and should you be concerned? Should you not be concerned? And if so, what to do next? Um, so I think you were trying to be open to like, okay, everybody else look at this too and see what you make of it.

Jenna: And it's also so easy with any child to get just, used to their behaviors, you know, at one end or the other, think that they're normal when, because you know the child so well, whether it's speech, or their social interactions, or Marc's perseverations, or anything, and knowing if it's actually normal because that's what you deal with because you're used to it?

Gabriella: It's almost like we get tunnel vision at times, and then forget that there's other things to see around us. I think that's why it's so helpful to have other people around where you can go to them and be like, "Okay, tell me what you notice about this," or "Have you been watching so and so on the playground because I really could use eyes out there," or...

Jenna: It's interesting because we talked about that Friday at our staff meeting getting ready for conferences, specifically we were talking about Bowen, because, you know, has he made all these great strides? Well, you know cause we talked about, nobody is coming up to us on the playground anymore and saying, "What's wrong with Bowen today?" So, either, everybody has just accepted him for what he is, or has had made all these great strides.

Robyn: I think it's important we brought the video in, because when you just tell the story of what a child does, you're already only telling your version of the story of it. You know, and you're already putting all of your subjectivities into it, but when you all were

able to bring the video and yeah, you gave your interpretation, but then everybody at the table, it was fair game to say, "I see this differently. I interpret that behavior differently."

Bella: Seeing something definitely makes a difference, I was looking at the part where, it was said, you know, "or is she trying to be deceitful?" and I made a note, you know, child development-wise, does she actually have the ability to be deceitful and it kind of took me back.

In this section of dialogue, several teachers acknowledge the problem of having “tunnel vision” or the benefit of having a new perspective, like a “light bulb” moment. Bella said “it kind of took me back” to consider a new interpretation of child behavior from a child development perspective. As in the section on pedagogical framework above, the teachers seem to acknowledge here that they have a metacognitive awareness of shifting lenses, new ways of interpreting and seeing children’s behaviors, and these at time, have even caught them off guard.

Theoretical Framework

The teachers identified theory as a framework less often than pedagogy and child development. In discussing their use of theory as an interpretive framework, some acknowledged that using theory influenced the way they look at children’s family ecology, as well as the influence of attachment theory. In some cases, the teachers identified the use of multiple theories within the interpretation of particular documentation pieces, including social learning theories, image of the child, and theory of mind.

Ecological theory. The following excerpts show examples of times when the teachers identified with using ecological theory to interpret behaviors. In the first example, Harriet was speaking in general about the use of ecological theory, not tied to a particular documentation piece.

Harriet: And you can have a lot of “aha moments” when you have those conversations with parents, that's why... but in a way when you think about it, being in child and family studies, we have this idea of the family ecology, and that the family context does matter a lot and less so if we were coming from a straight developmental psych, but even in some cases, an education background, I don't know if you've felt that way from special ed, Jenna, but much less emphasis on the ecology so I would almost put that more towards our theory because being in CFS [child and family studies] I think we have this commitment to understanding. We do go to the family context, what does daily life look like at home, what does this routine look like, what are the values for the cultural nuances that this family is expressing to the child that we don't fully understand or see at school? So in a way, I would say, even though we might not acknowledge it all the time, I would say that we do have a theoretical position on families.

In another example, Gabriella discussed thinking about the family context in order to understand how children interact at school.

Robyn: Do you think they help each other, like, be more competent because they have a competent peer?

Gabriella: Probably. They also, back to family dynamics, they also have older siblings that they're forced to have all those interactions all the time with a sibling who both very vocal siblings who are gonna have those conversations with them, you know?

Rachel also invoked family ecology when she discussed the focal child in Jenna's documentation review.

Rachel: Is all that coming from home? Is the rote memorization stuff, is it being fed to him at home?

Lastly, Bella identified that she could utilize an ecological view of the high school student teachers she supervised in her preschool classroom.

Bella: Well, and you know we've talked about, we talked a lot last week about the family ecology, and when I look at you know, when I'm thinking about looking at the interactions between the children and the high school students, I feel like it's just as important to look at that ecology for the high school students as it is for the children. Because they're coming from, they're coming from so many different backgrounds and they have so many different things going on that it makes it really complex when I try to, you know, pick everything apart. I want to know it all, and I can't know it all [laughs].

Multiple theories in dialogue. The group mentioned several theories as they discussed Jenna's interpretation of her documentation in which she expressed concern that one of her older toddler boys, Marc, was perseverating too much on reciting the alphabet. The group not only suggested ideas about the role of different theoretical lenses to interpret the behavior, but they also, in general, exercised a process of group collaborative inquiry in how they engaged in dialogue with each other about the many possible ways to reflect upon the situation. Jenna began this vignette by saying that she felt Marc did not exhibit a curiosity toward learning new things, but rather stayed in the mode of rote recitation. She began by saying she felt that curiosity was an essential party of childhood.

Jenna: Well I think I mean maybe it's just my own personal experience coming from having curiosity as a child, but I mean you know you look at an infant and they have curiosity about everything, and I feel like children should always have that, and continue to always have that. Instead it seems like and I think Bella said it, it's like it's coming from a script, so it seems to me like he's just repeating things that have been fed to him

over and over instead of having that sense of curiosity without somebody always saying, this is what it is.

Gabriella: I just keep going back to the social thing though because if, I mean you're assuming that he's not wondering about things because he's not verbalizing it, but if he's lacking those social skills to engage in conversation like you've said he is, maybe he just doesn't know how, maybe it's not that he's not wondering, maybe it's that he doesn't know how to communicate it.

Harriet: How would you know he's not curious?

Robyn: And he just hasn't gotten enough reinforcement for that kind of communication versus the other.

Gabriella: Versus the rote, "Let me tell you what I know."

Rachel: Is all that coming from home? Is the rote memorization stuff, is it being fed to him at home?

Bella: I see it as the exact opposite, I see him so caught up in what he's already doing that he can't get outside of that and focus on anything else.

Sarah: He's kind of stuck in a loop. That there's just, Jenna said it's kind of like, he already knows the answers, so he's stuck with what he knows already and can't get outside of that.

Gabriella seemed to have brought in social learning theory, Rachel brought up family ecology, and Bella and Sarah seemed to be relying on a perspective that perhaps came from theory of mind. Following the conversation further, Rachel also brought in attachment theory to interpret the behaviors, which sent the group back into considering the family context and its effects on

the child. They recapped information they knew about how Marc had spent his infancy with his grandmother in another country.

Rachel: She [mother] doesn't seem to be very emotionally involved with him, I mean, it's just sort of distant and kind of I don't know how to describe it, but she just doesn't talk to him or touch him or anything the way that....

Bella: See and that really surprises me that you say that, because when he was born, he did not go to grandma right?

Jenna: He did.

Bella: He did go? Because for some reason...

Harriet: They moved here.

Bella: But they were here, whereas [Marc's brother] was with grandmother the whole time.

Robyn: Abroad?

Bella: Yeah.

Robyn: Well it's amazing when you think about him living in two different worlds, I mean think about it. It's another way to see him, from not the child development point of view, but think about these two worlds that he navigates and he has to be successful in two completely different contexts, like . . . wow. I just am trying to imagine how he has to. . . it's like night and day.

Sarah: I think in my perspective that's a good reason to not be what we would consider to be typically developing; he has been in two different cultures with very different views on things.

Robyn: And several of our children are in that same boat.

Rachel: That does explain the little bit of emotional something between him and his mom that's missing because of how much time he spent with his grandma when he was younger.

Jenna: What about that imaginary play though? He gets very easily upset when other people try to do imaginary play scenarios.

In this excerpt, the individual teachers seemed confident in posing different ideas about the many ways to utilize various frameworks to inquire about Marc's childhood and learning experiences. Another example of this interplay of ideas occurred as the group discussed Rachel's documentation review. Again the group seemed to employ multiple theoretical views in their quest to make sense of the role Rachel should play in the children's imaginary play. They brought up ideas about attachment, image of the child, scaffolding, and social learning theory.

Rachel: I really didn't see theory, I just saw some child development. Mostly it was about my teacher decision-making, about my teacher role, teacher and child interactions and how much interaction is appropriate and how much should I hold back and help them learn how to play on their own. How could I help them, how could I be involved in helping them interact with each other without being the center, being the idea-maker?

And I just found it harder in imaginary play than in any other area of my classroom.

Gabriella: You said you didn't find any theory, but I thought your very last statement was total theory. [quoting] "And they still have that strong attachment and trust that goes along with it."

Rachel: Yeah.

Jenna: And you also talked about the image of the child when you're talking about the...

Gabriella: Yeah, with Reese and Ayla especially.

Jenna: I also thought you had some theory when you're talking about how, or it was Bella, but when you're talking about having Reese and Ayla maybe scaffolding or pairing up the children, I was thinking of scaffolding in that area.

Bella: Well I, with Rachel, along the same lines, when she was talking about playing, you know, when they played the game outside, the Pizza Man, and she shifted to saying, "find a friend to play," I think that kind of went along the lines of theory, and you know, learning and interactions.

In another example, the group was discussing Bella's transcript from her documentation review and they reflected on the assumptions behind some of the guidance Bella would want to give her student teachers.

Bella: I did notice that a lot of the things that I was suggesting that I was hoping that [the student teacher] would say were things that I would've said. You know, when she was making her comments, but is that, you know, I thought about that, is what I would've said really the right thing to have said? I mean...

Sarah: One of the things that you bring up in here is that you know you were really trying to push the high schoolers from just saying things like, "good job" or "you did it" or "there you go" or whatever it is and really trying to get them to see what they're doing. And to really think about how they're saying that. Is that really what they mean, and is it just "oh good job" or are you really trying to say, "you did a really nice job with turning, opening that bottle or squirting that baby that time" or you know, whatever it is.

Bella: And that's one of those things, is that, I think that's important, that we clarify, but is it really, is it just something that I think is important, or is there something you know?

Jenna: "Five reason not to say 'good job.'"

Gabriella: What did you just say?

Jenna: An article..."Five reasons to not say 'good job,' providing authentic praise." I mean, that's part theory of why to provide authentic praise.

Robyn: Tell us about that, tell us about how it relates to theory.

Jenna: Ummm,

Bella: It has something to do with learning, you know if we're not clarifying in telling children what they've done, I mean,...

Harriet: Even in their, their feelings of self-worth, and self-esteem, um you know. I think that's a lot of what the article is intending to say, is that you know, "good job, good job, good job," loses its meaning when it's applied in so many different areas of the day if you're wanting to actually, and I think that you talked about that in the other areas where you're wanting to have them to, you talked, someone talked about the image of the child, the child as competent, you're wanting for her to instill into this child praise, but you want it to be praise that is for something that's tangible, that she's elaborating on what she's feeling.

Sarah: Giving them that self-worth.

Harriet: Mmm hmm. What it is that the child actually did. Like you talked about how at the end, that he did squirt the body and not the baby, and that she looked at him, but there's no recognition for the fact that he had done with she'd asked. And so, I think it looks like that's what you were looking for, for her to give him verbal praise for what he's actually doing, and not just generic, "way to go."

In this dialogue, the group believed learning theories were implicit in Bella's concerns. They used this opportunity to articulate, as well, some aspects of their pedagogical beliefs about why it is important to give authentic feedback to children.

Summary of Phase Four

The goal of the fourth phase of the project was to facilitate the teacher's use of a web of frameworks for interpretation and reflection (Figure 10, page 131) to participate in deconstructive talk about their own narratives. They were asked to identify some of the underpinnings behind their interpretations of the content in their video documentation pieces. The web included several frameworks: "Theory", "Child Development", "Pedagogy", "Other Teachers", and "Parents". The teachers primarily utilized the pedagogy framework and saw evidence of it most often in their narratives. They also found some child development and theoretical perspectives, but to a lesser degree. Largely, the findings from analysis of the conversations in phase four revealed that teachers continued to search for more complete "ways of knowing" children and their behaviors in order to decide on "ways of being" with children. Many times, these were closely tied together in their dialogue. The group seemed to employ, on multiple occasions, processes of critical inquiry when identifying the frameworks they felt were present in their narratives, and used the discussion to further engage in dialogue about the many ways to view their thinking about practice. Their dialogue also showed a willingness to try different lenses to behold a particular phenomenon in their daily classroom life and to entertain multiple possibilities for making meanings about how they know what they know, and how they use what they know to make pedagogical decisions.

Chapter 6

Writing Myself into the Narrative

My Situatedness in this Community of Practice

In my role as the storyteller of the narratives in this study, it is important to lay claim to the embedded nature of my relationships to the participants, to the context, and to the work situated within this project. In the research project presented here, I played multiple roles within the community of practice that engaged in a process of collaborative action research. First, I had prior relationships with all the members of the group, as we work together on a daily basis in the university-based early childhood program. Prior to the beginning of the action research project, I had been a parent of a child in the program, a lead teacher in a preschool classroom, and at the time of the project, held the role of one of two program directors at the center. I had worked with all the individuals in the group to varying degrees. Secondly, within the project, I served as the facilitator of our group discussion sessions, the instructor of record for the seminar course, as well as a participant observer in the discussions that took place throughout the course of the project. In many ways, my intimate knowledge of the context in which these teachers work allowed me to interpret their stories with a constant consideration of the settings from which they arose. I had spent time in all of the teachers' classrooms, I knew the children who were features in their video documentation, and I knew the recent history of the teaching climate of the center. In addition, my work with the prior project in which we shared video with teachers from Milan provided a backdrop for my understanding and interpretation of the narratives in this project.

My Role within the Group

My intention during the project was to facilitate discussions and assign tasks to the teachers, in hopes that they would become the protagonists of the story I would tell about the

journey we took together. In the process, I saw my role as providing provocations to the teachers and allowing them to be active agents in creating meanings for themselves. These took shape as tools, such as the video from nido in Milan, the space and opportunity to enter into regular dialogue with one another that held a balance of safety and challenge, and methods to analyze their own words. In addition, I also intended to facilitate the group process of critical inquiry by asking everyone to participate, by supporting engagement in the discussion, by prompting turn-taking to balance the talking space occupied by both the extroverts and introverts in the group, and by prodding the teachers to dwell in the mode of asking questions and suspending the need to find quick answers or resolutions. Typical prompting questions from me to get conversation going included open-ended starter questions, such as: “Talk about what stood out most for you from watching the Milan video?” or “What about the specific areas do you want to look at in your classroom?.” These brief prompts were enough to get the dialogue started, as teachers were always eager to begin sharing with the group. Beyond these open-ended prompts in my role to start our various discussions, however, as a participant observer, I was part of the conversations many times as well. I was interested in understanding my role in the content and style of the dialogue, and in the following sections, I discuss ways I think I influenced the discourse.

Participation in Dialogue

During the open coding phase of data analysis, I took the opportunity to code what seemed to me to be examples of how I played a role in the conversation. I first coded them all as “R challenges or questions” to create a collection of quotes that would resemble my style of participation throughout the different sessions of conversations and phases of the data. Analysis of these quotes revealed some patterns. First, there appeared to be three categories of comments or questions on my part: observations/narrations, elaborations, and challenges. Secondly, I

noticed that my participation seemed to change over time; early in the sessions, I tended to give observational and narrative comments, and by the last sessions, I was much more participatory in giving my own comments and more frequently challenged the teachers to reflect on their words and thoughts. Perhaps this was because I sensed that the group had established a pattern of sharing their voices, and I became less hesitant that I might stifle others' voices by participating more actively. It is possible, though, that other influences were present, such as my building collection of interpretations over the course of the project, to the degree that I felt that I could gauge how to insert myself to support the inquiry that had already built momentum.

Observations and narrations. Early in the seminar sessions, my comments typically mirrored back to teachers what they were saying to the group. Mostly, my commentary restated or described what was said, and sometimes sought to clarify or confirm the meaning of teachers' comments. A couple of examples of this are included below. In the first exchange, the group had been discussing responses to the Milan video and issues about when to intervene or how much to direct children's actions. I attempted to summarize their points by commenting on the way the topics were framed by the group and asking for clarification:

Robyn: I hear you all saying it's an issue of me trusting the child, but then Jenna's saying it's an issue an issue of somebody else expecting us to prevent what... prevent all accidents? Or all scuffles? Or all conflicts?

Gabriella: I don't think it's even all, necessarily, all of that though, for me it feels like it's my responsibility to protect you...

Robyn: So that speaks to the relationship thing, you have to [...] this child in your care, right? Your role, primarily, is to protect, in that kind of situation.

Rachel: And to see it. [laughs] You have to look up, you can't just focus on one child, you know, you train yourself to look up at your whole classroom all the time, and we talk to students about it, seeing that.

Although I had summarized what I thought were some key points, Gabriella clarified and added what she felt was at the heart of the issue of why she felt it necessary to intervene at times. She brought up the phrase “responsibility” which I then translated into a relationship-based idea. Rachel then further clarified how she viewed it, not just as a teacher responsibility to intervene, but first and foremost, to see it, to notice and be aware of the whole classroom all the time.

Another example from the second phase of the project was when Rachel was explaining her focus on inquiry and how she wanted to explore how to remove herself from the center of children’s play especially in imaginary play. Here are two snippets from within that conversation that illustrate my mirroring comments.

Robyn: You want to give them more range to explore the materials or whatever they're doing in their own way, but support them...

Rachel: Right. And at the age that some of them are at right now, specifically...

[later:]

Robyn: So what you're saying is that you would love for them to have more confidence in relying on each other...

Rachel: And I worry that I'm hindering it, yeah.

In these types of exchanges, I felt that my role was to summarize and to carefully push the teachers to articulate their ideas further than they might have if their words were taken at face value. My role in these types of exchanges seemed to be that of a documenter; someone taking inventory of what was said, making sure that the lens we were using to understand the dialogue

was catching the dimensions and details of the phenomenon. Like a videographer or photographer, I wanted to make sure we had enough exposure to see clearly what was in front of us, but I didn't seek to change the nature of what the teachers were saying.

Part of the deconstructive talk process involved having teachers, and myself as the researcher, make multiple readings of our narratives, which not only occurred as we formerly exercised that process in the fourth phase of the project, but also throughout the sessions during informal exchanges. Asking the teachers to clarify or explore the many angles within their discourse was one way of bringing out those multiple readings in the moment. My preparation as facilitator involved reviewing theoretical influences upon this method, and I found that I wove the methods of critical reflective discourse into many of the group's discussions. At times, I not only asked the teachers if what I heard was correct, but also asked them to go further with their comments and explanations, which I termed elaborations. In these times, I moved beyond simply representing what was present and into a process of trying to uncover layers of meaning that were not apparent on the surface.

Elaborations. Some of the ways I tried to help teachers elaborate on their ideas could be seen in the example with Gabriella and Rachel above, but other times, I was more specific about asking for elaboration in order to push for deeper meanings. Perhaps I was especially tuned in to moments when I felt the teachers were just at the tip of something that held hidden assumptions or themes of dominant discourse. Mac Naughton (2005) asserts that part of the deconstruction process involves exposing truths underlying the meanings of our words. One way that discourses become dominant and limiting is through processes of regulatory control, which can be self-imposed. In the following example, I prodded the teachers to elaborate on a comment made about a scene they viewed in the Milan video. This was during the first phase of the data –

responding to the Milan video - and they were reacting to seeing a teacher allow a scuffle to occur between two boys. They interpreted that perhaps the teacher had not even noticed it happening. In their initial comments, I felt there was a possible hint at underlying assumptions embedded in the words they used to indicate feelings of guilt and fear.

Harriet: I think if it was me, I would've felt terrible about not noticing it.

Rachel: That's ...

Sarah: And I would've felt terrible about not noticing it.

Rachel: That's, that's...

Sarah: And I would've just been horrified that I hadn't known that was going on until I turned back and then was like, "Oh." But I also I guess realize, that I know there are things that happen in my classroom that I don't see, you know, I don't have eyes in the back of my head, or on the sides half of the time. I'm lucky when I turn this way, and I'm like, "Ooh."

Robyn: So what's horrifying about... the truth of not knowing?

Bella: Somebody else seeing it! [laughs around]

Robyn: So what would it mean, if somebody else saw it, and noticed that you didn't notice?

Gabriella: It's like a show of incompetence.

Jenna: I think it also, right, goes back to the daycare versus, the other. We feel like we're a service to the parents, and if something like that happens and the parent were to come ask us, "Well, we don't know; that's the way it goes," ...you know.

Robyn: Oh, so it's the gaze of the, so you're talking about a whole other level of representation here, the gaze of the parent knowing that you don't know why something bad happened in the classroom, and what does that mean?

Jenna: Right, we weren't doing our job.

Rachel: And that means we're not... competent.

By requesting that the teachers describe what was underlying their words about what was “terrible” or “horrifying” and coaxing them to elaborate on the meaning behind someone else seeing their actions, we were able to expose some beliefs they held about their role and how they utilize the gaze of others to feel competent. This example illustrates some of the processes that helped us get to multiple layers of meanings behind the teachers’ interpretations of either the Milan video, their own video, or their narratives. Interpreting this segment of dialogue from a distance, well after the days of the seminar sessions, I now see that my role was akin to that of an archeologist, digging deeper into the layers of the phenomenon which was only hinted at on the surface. I didn’t necessarily want to disrupt or disturb the thoughts of the teachers, but I wanted to expose them so we could see them more fully in the light of day, so to speak. Further in the sessions, however, by the last phase in which we were analyzing the teachers’ narratives, I found myself doing more than uncovering. In the following section, reveal show some of the ways I issued more challenging questions to the teachers to push for critical readings of their words.

Challenges. In the latter phases of the project, during reviews of the teachers’ documentation in phase three and especially during the analyses of their reviews in phase four, I found that my questions and prodding to teachers sometimes became more challenging and solicitous. We had, it seemed to me, developed a comfort level with considering multiple meanings and interpretations, based on the way that conversations included a good deal of back

and forth dialogue with teachers inserting a wide range of opinions about how to make sense of the content under review. Some teachers had felt comfortable enough to put themselves under quite a bit of scrutiny, represented by this example of a time when Rachel was discussing her big question about how much to be involved.

Harriet: Mmm hmmm. Well cause it kind of reminded me of mine, like, it's really you being very introspective and wondering how you should, you know, what's the most benefit to the children of how much or level of involvement that you have.

Rachel: That's my big question.

Harriet: Mmm hmm.

Robyn: I think that it's really clear in several places how much you're really pushing yourself and challenging yourself. You're challenging your views.

Rachel: Yes.

Robyn: Umm, so I'm kind of curious about that and what you all think...

Harriet: Well I think she [Rachel] was very brave, I think to, I mean she's admitting a lot of what she feels are areas that she needs to work on, like when she's talking about that she doesn't have trust for the children, I think that that's pretty powerful to be able to say that, you know, admit that to yourself or the other people, cause maybe that wouldn't be the popular way to look at it, but it's being really honest with herself in looking at her teaching, and thinking why she does things a certain way.

In addition to the validation that was present, like in the example above, which acknowledged the difficult work involved in being critical of one's own practice, there were many times throughout the seminar in which Dr. Moran or I reminded the teachers that it was important to stay in the mode of questioning. We reiterated that in the process of collaborative inquiry, it was

okay to have more questions than answers, and that they did not need to find quick resolutions to issues.

Perhaps because my perception was that we had created a safe space over time to experience challenges and critiques, I exercised more bold attempts to press teachers to unpack their thoughts more often. In the first example I give below, previously highlighted in Phase 4, when we were applying the frameworks of interpretation, the group had been discussing Sarah's scene with the two children playing in the trees, and the concern with figuring out what children were thinking. In this case, I asked not just for further meaning, but I challenged the group to articulate why it is they have this question in the first place. Harriet jumped in to answer this question, which led her back to wondering about the children's thinking in her documentation scene in which the two children tussled over a toy.

Robyn: I wanna understand where our question about "what are children thinking?" comes from. So what leads us to wonder what's going on inside the child's head?

Harriet: Well what led me to wonder was, I was trying to figure out if what she was saying, because at that point when the teacher became involved, or even before that, when they were tussling over the toy, she was saying, "I had it I had it," so in my mind I'm wondering, does she know that she took that from someone else and she's trying to be deceitful? Or in her mind, has she had it for enough of a time period that she believes that she had it, or, something in between? You know...

Gabriella: Well see, I think that that question falls under more of child development, because you're asking whether or not she has the competency to differentiate between, I have this in my hands therefore it is mine, or I took this from someone.

Robyn: I can see that point. But earlier you said you thought it was pedagogy?

Gabriella: Well I think that there's a difference between wondering in general what children are thinking cause what children are thinking is going to lead your action. If you're talking about a very specific situation, like, Paige, you're wondering where she is developmentally.

Harriet: Mmm hmm.

In this case, Harriet didn't directly address the question I posed, and explained further why she wanted to try to figure out the child's thinking. Gabriella, however, chimed in that she thought this type of question comes from a child development perspective. I then prompt her to connect that back to a previous comment about pedagogy, I think in an attempt to keep the dialogue resting in the complexity of the epistemological challenge at hand – that the teachers tended to utilize multiple frameworks of knowledge to make sense of and inquire about daily events.

In another example later on in this same conversation, I also posed challenging questions to prompt the group to consider pedagogical implications of their thoughts. This comes along in the conversation after Harriet had expressed that it's possible that Paige truly believed the truth about her possession of the toy, and her reality could be quite different from the reality in the eyes of the teacher.

Robyn: And if you can acknowledge the fact that she truly does believe it's hers at this point, does that change the way that you choose to interact with her versus you thinking that she's arguing something that she knows is not true?

In this comment, I believe that I was not challenging Harriet's idea so much, but I was asking for a transformation of the knowledge about "how to know" into what they were exploring in their process of "how to be" with children.

In another example of me challenging a teacher, Gabriella was discussing her interpretation of Kelley and Lauren in the drawing area during phase three. I pushed her to think about the words she used to describe their interactions, in which she talked about one child being dominant over the other, and so forth. I wanted to challenge her to see that her interpretation was perhaps one of many that could be made, and at the least, to own and recognize the subjectivity in her narrative about the two girls. This segment also gives an example of how my dialogue became lengthier in the conversations over time.

Gabriella: Yeah. Well I don't really feel like I was trying to say that they weren't collaborating, I was just, it just seems that in their play, one person is dictating what they're doing, but there's not ever any conflict about it, they're both ok with it, they both do it, so, I mean I think it is collaborative play.

Harriet: Kind of like if you're playing imaginary play house and somebody was saying, assigning roles or something.

Robyn: But I think that sometimes, our language about that, let's imagine last week we were talking about what does this look like in terms of documentation that you would produce, so you might have some pictures pulled from the video and you're gonna have to describe what's happening there. but the language of saying that Kelley's dictating the tone, or this is interesting because Kelley's not dictating, Kelley has actually stepped down from her position of forcefulness and power, that language comes with a, it's really strong language, you know, and it's saying that it's painting Kelley as sort of this, [...] it's giving Kelley a kind of a personality profile, like Kelley has to be in charge, and that's when she's happiest, but if you chose to use that language of collaboration and cooperation it might paint this picture of here are two girls how really like to be together

and they like to do things a lot and this is how they maintain their relationship through, and this is the language that they use, but the teacher language pretty much sets the tone, do you see what I'm saying?

Gabriella: Right, yeah.

Robyn: So those are choices about how you, you're the story teller, and so um, I just think it's interesting to think about the words we could use, and it depends to on your audience, right?

Gabriella: Yeah, I mean I would not say this to the families, I would not type this up. that's not the context I would put it in.

Robyn: Right, right, because it would seem, it would feel like, ok. . . well you tell me how it would feel, or what language would you choose to use?

My facilitation role in this case moved into a different mode, one in which I was again asking for a transformation of the ideas that were expressed. I was pushing Gabriella to consider that her words were powerful, that they held meaning perhaps beyond what she was even aware. I knew at the time that this was a risk, that I stood a chance of pushing one of the teachers too far with my challenging questions, a dilemma not unlike the one the teachers were concerned with themselves: how much involvement do I exercise in my pedagogical attempts to support teacher learning? Did I trust the teachers enough to challenge them, and to decide when they had pushed their thinking far enough? These are questions that do not necessarily have answers, and I interpreted the tension around “how to be” within this collaborative group as a sign that I was trying to be reflective and intentional about my role.

Reflections about the Process

Looking back upon my role in the collaborative inquiry group, I see that I was much more than a facilitator of the conversations. My participation in the group played a key role in how the conversations took shape over time. I not only provided structure to the group, providing prompts and tools, but I also think I was a co-constructor of the meanings that were created some of the time. My familiarity with both the local context and the context of the Milan project allowed me to comment on questions that arose. In some ways I felt very much a part of the inquiry group, even though I did not collect classroom documentation. I understood their questions and their contexts well enough to feel connected to the pedagogical dilemmas being posed. In other ways, however, I felt as though I was having a parallel journey of inquiry with the teachers; my recording and review of the conversations we held in seminar were akin to the video documentation they collected in the classroom. It was my task to ask questions about my role as facilitator, sort of a pedagogical guide for the teachers' process. In order to maintain the goal of the process to have teachers play the protagonists and to feel empowered to construct their own knowledge, I needed to constantly reflect on my role. It would have been easy to fall back on traditional models of "expert" knowledge and to treat the teachers like recipients. During the seminar, however, I not only reflected individually after each session (see sample of my reflective journal notes in Appendix E) but I also discussed this challenge with Dr. Moran and asked for her observations of the group process as well. At times, for instance, I worried that there was too much or too little structure for the discussions, whether I asked the best questions possible, and whether I added too much to the conversation. I think that my own process of engaging in reflective thinking about my role was necessary to maintain a setting in which

teachers could be active agents constructing knowledge in a setting that embodied democratic ideals in practice (Cochran-Smith, 2008; Kessler, 1991).

Chapter 7

Conclusion, Discussion, and Implications

Conclusion

The previous chapters presented findings from analyses of the phases of the project and gave examples of the elements that composed the dynamic system that was in place for this particular group of practitioners. The project contained a number of phenomena that were identified as provocative and interesting, narratives that were created in response to these, documentation of classroom practices, tools for analysis and deconstruction, and the role of the teachers and myself as facilitator. The three research questions were addressed through the findings, and a summary will be provided of these below. In addition to the ways the data provided content to respond to the research questions I posed, the data also revealed meaningful findings about the processes through which teachers managed to inquire about their ideas and practices, and how they reconstructed meanings for themselves in the project. These processes will also be discussed below, along with the interpretation of how the findings address the goals of this particular form of professional development as posed in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 of this paper. The implementation of and findings from this project provide implications for practice and point to further directions for research. The design of this study intentionally involved a small community of practice, which certainly provides specific limitations, which I discuss first in this chapter.

Strengths and Limitations

By design, this collaborative action research project was limited to a small group of early childhood teachers within the same program. They formed a small community of practice, over the course of a semester, and this was situated within the broader community of practice at the

university-based early childhood center. The findings from this project tell the story of this particular group's process, which would not be expected to be replicated as such by other groups. Part of framing the inquiry for this project from a post-structuralist and social-constructivist point of view involved an expectation that these particular teachers would bring their unique constellations of autobiographical personal and cultural history, professional history, formal and information knowledge bases, and dispositions as participants in a community of practice. Their experiences within the project are unique, as a result, and may not resemble how other practitioners would respond in a similar context. This is, in large part, however, the purpose of collaborative action research in helping teachers build locally situated knowledge in a way that is deeply embedded within their own specific pedagogical context.

The benefit of the findings of this study lie in the contribution of the research to reach other practitioners and scholars who are interested in designing and implementing similar projects. This study reveals not only that teachers in this group engaged in critical inquiry that disrupted dominant discourses, but it also sheds light on the specific processes that enabled teachers to engage in this level of critical dialogue and knowledge construction. Much like the way I drew inspiration and guidance from another study of a small group of practitioners in the Lenz Taguchi study (2008), perhaps others may benefit from learning about how this group process unfolded. Many of the scholars who advocated this type of professional development model indicated the suggested activities and outcomes of critical inquiry, but this paper gives an in-depth view of the micro-processes that occurred within the group and for individual teachers. This type of project can offer suggestions for elements that may need to be in place for teachers to be able to engage in similar forms of critical inquiry and knowledge construction.

Limitations in this work hover around the specificity of the approach to facilitating teachers learning in the ways I discussed in Chapter 6. My role as facilitator was complex, and negotiated several roles. It can be viewed as a major challenge in this type of work that the researcher must also be reflexive and practiced in the art of intentional facilitation, in addition to the other skillset required to perform research tasks such as data analysis. Writing in this particular form of research must be careful, therefore, to disclose fully the role of the researcher and to explore the many dimensions of practice embedded within the research in order to guide others who may wish to replicate or modify the approach in other communities of practice.

Discussion

The research questions I framed for this project guided the way that the collaborative action research project was structured and facilitated. In this section, I will discuss how I utilized analysis of the data to address the three questions. The three questions I posed at the beginning of the study were:

1. What areas of practice do teachers choose to inquire about by participating in this version of collaborative action research?
2. What aspects of prior ideas, beliefs, or practices do teachers scrutinize or challenge by undertaking recursive rounds of critical review of pedagogical documentation?
3. What new meanings do the teachers construct for themselves as they reflect back on the experiences of being provoked by the critical readings of their own documentation?

These questions focus on *content* that might arise from the data, and I looked to the teachers' narratives for evidence of the topics that arose and prompted critical reflection and new knowledge construction. In addition to topical themes, however, the findings also revealed the

processes through which teachers engaged in critical inquiry and co-construction of new knowledge. The following sections will include discussion of how the data addressed the three research questions, but will also include evidence from the data about *how* the group utilized the context of the collaborative action research group to transform and reconstruct their pedagogical knowledge.

Research question 1: What areas of practice do teachers choose to inquire about by participating in this version of collaborative action research? The activities in Phases 1 and 2 provided teachers with the opportunity to wonder about what provoked them from the Milan video and to frame questions for their own action research. Although the six teachers all responded to the video and then framed individual areas of focus, quite a bit of overlap occurred in their topics. The prominent phenomena that arose from the teachers' responses to the Milan video included:

- The way Milan teachers appeared less involved in children's play and conflict; children seemed to exercise more independence and freedom to construct their own experiences and social interactions.
- The way Milan teachers showed a different type of intervention with children's conflict; they were less likely to intervene quickly and become the main negotiator for the children.
- Children in the Milan video appeared more calm, self-regulated, and autonomous.
- The environment of the classroom and the interactions, structure, and materials seemed more calm, relaxed, and home-like.

These phenomena were the "provocations" that prompted teachers to raise inquiry about specific areas of their own practice and of their pedagogical knowledge. Some of the provocations can be traced directly to the areas of practice that teachers chose to inquire about.

For instance, because teachers noticed the Milan teachers' style of being less involved during children's play, Rachel and Harriet chose to inquire specifically about how they, too, could be less involved with children's play and social conflict situations. Rachel, Harriet, Gabriella, Jenna, and Bella all wondered about how children's self-regulation was related to the type of teacher involvement and intervention and their inquiry was framed to explore children's interactions based on this curiosity. They hypothesized that children's self-regulation and calmness could be a result of less teacher involvement and more opportunities to be autonomous. Sarah's inquiry about how children engage within the context of space and materials arose from the provocation of seeing different uses of space and materials in the Milan video. The diagram in Figure 11 lists the provocations and areas of inquiry.

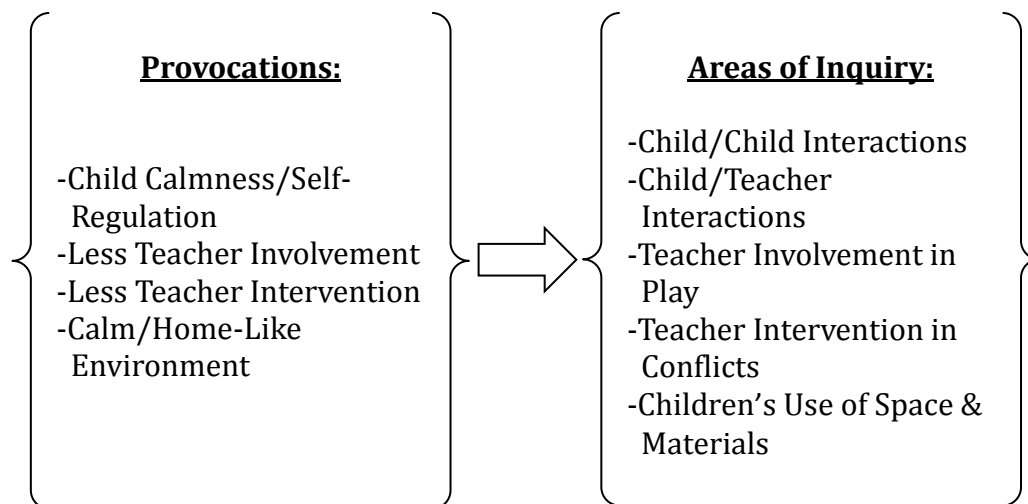


Figure 11. Provocations and Areas of Inquiry.

The lists presented in Figure 11 indicate the strong influence of the provocations from Milan on the areas of practice the teachers chose to identify for their inquiry in the project. These could be considered the *content* that arose within the project. There were, however, also important *processes* of critical self-reflection, which began to emerge in Phase 1 and Phase 2 and continued to be utilized through Phase 3 and 4. I began to code for how teachers were using their discussion to “make sense of” what they saw from the video in relation to their own practice. They crafted narratives to help situate what they saw within their existing knowledge base. Their self-reflection was also very closely tied to the contrasts they ascertained between their perceptions of their own practices and those of the Milan teachers. Instead of just looking at the Milan practices and seeing them through a tourist’s lens, the teachers used a personal, informed lens that almost always reflected back to them a new image that altered how they interpreted their own practice. Recognizing how teachers utilized the provocations in this way to frame their inquiry and to engage in reflective discourse helps identify the ways this group of teachers participated in teacher development as an activity system (Edwards, 2007). In the system for this community of practice, the provocations, areas of inquiry (serving as the objects, or content) and self-reflection processes (mediating tools for change) were interconnected even during the early phases of the project. Further, during Phases 3 and 4, the self-review process became even more prominent. From a post-structuralist perspective (Dahlberg, et al., 2007; Mac Naughton, 2005) it is also important to notice the processes of provocation and self-review. Based on the prevalence of questions about ways the Milan teachers chose to interact with children and build relationships with children, and the need to make sense of the scenes from the video, there was evidence that early in the project the group was beginning to become unsettled with their prior ideas. Their questions about why the contrasts were present led them to engage

in collaborative dialogue to construct meanings (make sense) of the compelling topics. Present in the early phases of dialogue were meaning-construction processes that utilized locally-relevant and self-built notions of sound practice, beyond and sometimes in tension with the dominant discourses of “best practices” in early childhood (Dahlberg, et al., 2007).

Research Question 2: What aspects of prior ideas, beliefs, or practices do teachers scrutinize or challenge by undertaking recursive rounds of critical review of pedagogical documentation? One of the overarching themes identified through analyses of the latter two phases was the notion of “how to know” in order to steer pedagogical decisions and action. Many of the quotes from teachers hovered around epistemological concerns. Questions arose about how to know what children are thinking, how to know what’s appropriate, how to know if what I observe is accurate, how to know what children need, and how to know children’s capabilities. One robust category of questions about “how to know” specifically involved teachers’ self-review. The ideas within self-review addressed how to know oneself as a teacher-in-practice. Questions arose during self-review that addressed what choices one makes as a teacher, why specific pedagogical actions were made, what goals are set for children, what kind of relationships are built and maintained with children, and how one articulates or justifies prior practices. While the focus of inquiry for most of the group identified the pedagogical concerns about how much to be involved and when to intervene, the questions about “how to know” arose because the group problematized the foundational knowledge previously held that would be relied upon to steer pedagogical decisions about involvement and intervention. In this way, the “how to know” epistemological tensions were raised to more fully flesh out the pedagogical tensions about “how to be” with children. The way this group of teachers enacted critical inquiry into “how to know” in order to develop locally-relevant knowledge about “how to be” with

children provides an example of how teachers can be active agents in constructing knowledge for their own practice (Cochran-Smith, 2008). It also gives an example of the type of transformative teacher discourse proposed by Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence (2007). These scholars recommend that teachers should evaluate practice for themselves and not rely on the dominant discourses of quality, which determine good practices through sets of universally prescribed practices. This group of teachers embraced the opportunity to wonder why they thought they should be involved with children all the time, why they felt the need to speak for children, why they did not trust children to develop their own ways to navigate social conflicts, and other key questions that linked back to their familiar bases of knowledge.

As the group questioned how they knew fundamental things about children, such as their thoughts and intentions, their needs and capabilities, they spoke critically about the former bases for knowledge that had been relied upon. The group was often engaged in dialogue about how to know when children needed involvement from teachers or when they did not. In one instance, Harriet referred to the level of involvement that was part of their prior practice, and asked, “I mean, wasn’t that what we thought we were supposed to do? You’re supposed to be completely involved?” This type of comment, sprinkled throughout the discussions about involvement and intervention, implied that there was a particular way one was “supposed to” be with the children. This, and other instances, represents a taken-for-granted position about teachers’ roles and the knowledge base upon which ideas are formed about what children need from adults. In the same exchange, Rachel mentions being “shaken” a little bit by the process of realizing that what has been one’s presumed way of being a good teacher has been complicated. Such moments seem to represent a deconstruction of the dominant discourses about quality, in which a universal prescription exists (Dahlberg, et al., 2007), for example, about how much to be involved with

children during their play. The feeling of being shaken a bit represents a disruption of some of the grand narratives of best practices in early childhood classrooms. These are the grand narratives about the ideal early childhood teacher who is always on the children's level, on the floor, scaffolding their language use, extending their ideas about play, and promoting more engagement. Rather, in Rachel's words, it's possible that "their ideas are good enough." The teachers scrutinized their tendency to be ever-focused on the next goal in the developmental continuum according to normal child development data and the self-imposed expectation to always maintain a classroom that is harmonious and free of conflict.

Teachers questioning "how to know" about children through close, careful, and collaborative review of documentation represents a different kind of knowledge construction than what has been the dominant knowledge based in U.S. early care and education (Katz, 1996; Lubeck, 1996; Ryan & Grieshaber, 2005). The process of asking, on a very local level, how "we" know about "our" children in "these" classrooms, based on inquiry developed in the specific context of a small community of practice, resembles the type of transformative process of meaning-making proposed by post-structuralist scholars such as Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence (2007) and Mac Naughton (2005). The critical inquiry the teachers used to wonder "how to know" some essential things about children and their roles as teachers was important not just to build ideas and knowledge, but, in a very pragmatic sense, it drove their questions about "how to be" with children. The need for more trustworthy knowledge about the children and themselves tied directly to the act of making pedagogical decisions about how much to be involved with children, when to intervene during conflicts, how to build trust with children and of children, and how best to foster more autonomy while still being fully responsive to children. One could also argue that the teachers' attention to children's needs for autonomy, freedom, and space to

explore resembles a more democratic stance toward pedagogy and a revision of their image of the child. They spoke more through the latter phases of the project about children's competencies. The discourse also included more doubt in the possibility of knowing what children think, want, and need, which I believe represented a form of humility that granted more respect and deference to the child's authentic self. In this image of the child, teachers only hold partial knowledge, and recognizing this means being humble about the power that teachers hold to control the interactions and relationships with children. It also calls upon teachers to be more careful and thorough in observations of children and to listen much more closely to the subtle ways children might communicate their needs and wishes to teachers. Again, as suggested by Dahlberg, et al. (2007), the meaning-making process here "welcomes contextuality, values, subjectivity, uncertainty, and provisionality" (p. ix). From a post-structuralist perspective, the teachers' acknowledgement of partial truths in their ways of knowing represented a deconstruction of their taken for granted notions of normality (Mac Naughton, 2005). The group in this project seemed to be able to flexibly employ child development knowledge about what was typical for certain ages, and also combine that with the desire to understand particular, individual children. They also seemed able to dwell within the uncertainty of their knowledge, and proceed with building pedagogical stances based on shifting, contextual, and shared sources of knowledge. Through the process of unpacking their ways of knowing, the teachers simultaneously addressed pivotal questions about how to be with the children as they re-constructed pedagogical stances.

Research Question 3: What new meanings do the teachers construct for themselves as they reflect back on the experiences of being provoked by the critical readings of their own documentation? As discussed under the second research question above, the teachers'

discourse about the provisional nature of their understandings about what children need, want, think, and are capable of provided the basis for new ways of constructing knowledge for pedagogy. This manifested into pedagogical meanings that addressed some of their questions about how and when to be involved with children and how to understand ways children actively engaged with peers, teachers, and their context. New meanings arose about how to interpret children's peer relationships, how to consider one's goals for children, how to give children more autonomy and space in the classroom's physical and social world, and how to value children's abilities to have control over their learning experiences.

When Gabriella and Bella interpreted and analyzed their videos, they discussed new ways of beholding children's efforts to be engaged in activities. Gabriella discussed new ways to notice Lauren and Kelley's friendship and the subtle ways the girls managed the different personalities in their play. Gabriella talked about seeing the "deepness, or richness of their friendship" in a new light. Her process of interpretation and engaging with the group in deconstructive talk about her narrative created a shift in the language she used to describe and explore her observations of the two girls in action. Bella created new meanings as well, through watching the child in her video playing at the water table. She developed new questions to ask herself about how to be involved in his play, asking critical questions like, "Do we have to make children talk?" She, like Gabriella, realized she wanted to have a deeper understanding of individual children and make particular decisions that honored their styles of interacting with others and materials and not prescribing a universal approach to involvement that assumed a certain type of verbal exchange.

Another way teachers reconstructed ideas about practice surrounded the question about when to intervene. Several set out to document child conflict situations and the discussion about

child conflict led to new meanings about the teacher's role with children. Harriet discussed the provisional nature of her knowledge of children's intentions and capabilities, and formed new meanings about how to read children's cues. She noticed that the child in her video may have needed validation from her about his feelings during a conflict, but perhaps he did not need her to step in to navigate the social negotiation for him with an older peer. Harriet seemed to reconstruct her ideas about being responsive and available to a child's emotional needs in this situation, as opposed to her prior default mode of "swooping in" to resolve the debate over who should have a toy at a certain time. Her approach to knowing how to manage a conflict shifted from needing to figure out the "facts" about who had the toy first, to needing to figure out how to look at herself more closely in those situations: "looking at myself and figuring out how...to handle certain situations of conflict, so...it's a lot of like, introspective."

Rachel continued to build new meanings about her relationships with children as she constructed a pedagogical stance towards how to lessen her involvement with children during imaginary play. She had questioned what she knew about her relationships with children, and whether she had built the kind of trust that gave children confidence in themselves and gave her confidence in them. In the process of deciding how to lessen her involvement, the new meanings she created about how to behave pedagogically were not so much about prescribing specific actions and decisions, what to say and when to do things, but rather, she developed an idea that she needed to change the process of building relationships with children over time. This sense of the longevity of building relationship *with* children, and not just doing pedagogy *to* children, was rooted in an image of the children as more competent and more agentic. The whole group joined Rachel's discourse about children learning to take care of themselves and rely on peers, and not just upon teachers for play, comfort, ideas, and learning. Gabriella applied new meanings in this

sense to other situations in her classroom, for instance, in noting that by giving children more chances to negotiate turns at the computer on their own. She and Bella agreed that doing so was beneficial to the children, and that, “it really turns out okay,” “and it’s all fine.” This seems to resemble a movement towards giving children more control over themselves and placing teachers in a less dominant position over children. Perhaps it also resembles a move toward more co-construction of learning and development between teachers and children.

Like the epistemological shifts discussed under the second research question, these shifts in the pedagogical meanings teachers created appear to move away from universally prescribed models of best practice and toward more locally situated, context-driven constructions of teacher knowledge. Not only does this address the post-structuralist challenge of deconstructing dominant discourses (Dahlberg, et al., 2007; Mac Naughton, 2005), but it also represents a move towards situated knowledge-of-practice advocated by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) in which teachers utilize multiple forms of knowledge, both formal knowledge and theory from the field of early childhood, and locally-generated knowledge constructed within the local sites and communities of practice. Towards the end of the project, Bella acknowledged explicitly that she saw the group appropriating knowledge to make it their own:

Bella: At the beginning, Mary Jane used the word appropriation. Taking, you know, knowing what it is, but then taking these pieces and making it what it needs to be, just for your classroom. Pulling from all of the things, the theory, the Milan stuff, child development, and just making it work for the situation you need it to work in. It’s not gonna be exactly the same and you’re just gonna use the pieces that work best.

The act of appropriating and “pulling from all the things” represents what Stott and Bowman (1996) call for in professional development models: that teachers “gain the necessary perspective

to use formal knowledge flexibly” (p. 170) to develop locally-situated practices considering the particular community being served.

Implications for Practice and Research

Implications for practice. This project was developed to explore the possibilities of collaborative action research with the addition of cross-cultural provocation and post-structuralist analysis. The findings reveal that teachers engaged in critical inquiry utilizing processes of knowledge construction and appropriation of various sources of knowledge to construct locally relevant pedagogical approaches. This group of practitioners enacted the type of active, teacher-driven professional development recommended by many scholars in early childhood who see the need to challenge dominant discourses about quality and developmentally appropriate practice (Dahlberg, et al., 2007; Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Lubeck, 1996; Mac Naughton, 2005; New, 2010; Stott & Bowman, 1996). Lenz-Taguchi (2010) and Mac Naughton (2005) applied post-structuralist theory to action research projects in their work in early childhood communities of practice and I was curious to know if I could facilitate a collaborative action research group that would utilize deconstructive talk to yield reflective, critical inquiry as well. The findings suggest that teachers not only utilized the opportunity to exercise critical self-reflection, but also reconstructed meanings about key issues at the core of post-structuralist concerns in early childhood. These issues include: relations of power between teachers and children, questions about how to decide what is best for particular children, issues of freedom and autonomy, awareness of the forms of knowledge available to make pedagogical decisions, and that some of those forms of knowledge are privileged over others, and the possibility that multiple truths may exist in the narratives we craft about our experiences (Mac Naughton, 2005).

One concern for teacher professional development lies in the prospect of scaling the use of models to other communities of practice. This model was a very locally-situated project and one that could be replicated within many different early childhood contexts. One key factor in replicating this type of action research group would be the availability of cross-cultural partners to provide a contrasting view of practice. It is not clear how much of a contrast needs to be apparent in order to provide enough provocation to help teachers move into a mode of critical self-reflection. In this case, we had the benefit of utilizing video from another project with teachers in Milan. It is possible, however, that less distant cross-cultural partners may be able to exchange illustrations of practice in order to facilitate this type of inquiry. Another key factor for scaling out this type of project would be the availability of a facilitator who was interested in utilizing the same theoretical orientations and analysis tools. As I was able to prepare for the project utilizing existing literature and example of studies using deconstructive talk by Lenz Taguchi (2007, 2008, 2010), it seems that this would also be possible for other action research scholars. Certainly, a willing group of teachers who will actively engage in critical reflection and commit their time and energy to participation in this type of work is also critical. Communities of practice can be facilitated over time, given pedagogical leadership from within programs and with support from outside practitioners and scholars if needed.

Scholars advocating for critical teacher inquiry argue for the relevance of this type of teacher professional development to diverse early childhood settings (Dahlberg, et al., 1999, 2007; New, 2010; Ryan & Grieshaber, 2005). In fact, many early childhood settings face pedagogical dilemmas that relate to the culturally situated conditions that exist for any particular setting, such as diverse family needs, linguistic diversity, children's learning and ability needs, community needs, program accountability mandates, and teacher development needs. Shaping

teacher development and learning to specific communities seems like a promising avenue for responding to the specific climate of a given program. Unlike dominant models of practice in early childhood that prescribe specific actions and provisions for care and instruction, small collaborative action research groups can frame inquiry focused on the particular pedagogical and development needs within a program. Teachers themselves can decide what they are most curious about or what they are struggling to understand and implement in their own settings.

Implications for research. Directions for more research in this line of inquiry into teacher development models could address this possibility and others. It would be favorable to have more examples in the research literature about the application of this type of model in diverse settings. The more case studies that are available, the more communities of practice will be able to thoughtfully cater a project design specifically for their own settings. In addition, further research is needed to understand how much variation is needed in cultural contexts to provide contrast that would provoke teachers to see possibilities, to question their assumptions, and to consider alternative ways of thinking about and enacting pedagogical approaches. Would it be enough contrast, for instance, to have two programs within the United States, but situated in different cultural communities? Would it be possible to provoke change processes by sharing video across sites with different constellations of children, for instance, inclusive classrooms serving children with disabilities and those serving mostly children without disabilities? Would it be possible to contrast geographical settings, such as urban, inner-city programs versus rural programs? Many dimensions of culture make it possible to see contrasts, but more research is needed to see how teachers would utilize those contrasts to create dialogue and critical reflection.

Another variation of the method of conducting this type of collaborative action research could involve the use of various forms of pedagogical documentation to prompt teacher

interpretation and reflection. In this project, the teachers were given open options for what type of documentation to use, and all chose video recordings. In Lenz-Taguchi's study (2008), however, the group of teachers used children's drawings to develop teacher narratives about the children, teachers' views, pedagogical inferences, and so forth. It would be interesting to explore how teachers might make use of different types of classroom artifacts, children's work samples, teacher notes, photographs, or other representations. Would teachers gain similar insight and ability to create layers of interpretation and critical reflection based on these other representational forms? How would teachers feel about those other forms and the stories that they tell? Additionally, what could be some possible intersections between the type of documentation review included here and the type of documentation utilized for child assessment tools that are so widely mandated in early childhood settings in the U.S.?

Another direction for future research on this type of project could involve exploration of various methods for collection and analysis of data. For this project, I utilized grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to analyze the transcribed narratives from the data. It would be interesting, however, to utilize other analysis methods, such as discourse analysis, that might capture other dimensions of the processes that occurred in the group. Likewise, alternative methods could be utilized to document the dialogue that occurs in collaborative action research groups. For instance, video of the conversations could be recorded, and these could be used to allow teachers to participate in a process of review that parallels the review of the video from their classrooms. Other research has captured the potential for video review of teacher dialogue to foster reflective inquiry (Moran, Lamb, Newton, Worthington, & Carow, 2007). Multiple methods are possible for allowing teachers to behold their ideas about practice and to analyze their own narratives as they participate in multiple stages of action research.

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Appendixes

Appendix A

Outline of Project Activities

Collaborative Action Steps:	Phases of project data collection	Dates	Activities during sessions
I. Planning		1-30-12 2-6-12	Initial meetings: introduction to Collaborative Action Research, Share background on Milan project Initial readings (Italian context, action research) Share Milan focus groups, preliminary themes, participants stories
	Phase 1	2-13-12 2-20-12	View Milan Video Discuss responses, areas of curiosity, possible areas of inquiry Begin discussing possible areas of inquiry
II. Implementation	Phase 2	2-20-12 2-27-12	Share identified area of inquiry with Readings on documentation Begin collection documentation from classrooms Select video to share with group; do initial interpretation of own video
III. Analysis & Reflection	Phase 3	3-26-12 4-2-12 4-9-12	Share documentation with group, discuss one's own interpretation and have group discussion about each video shared
	Phase 4	4-16-12 4-23-12	Develop Frameworks for Interpretation & Reflection Revisit own documentation, analyze using deconstructive talk

Appendix B

Sarah's Notes

Sarah Observation # 1 Myles and Lyla- Zombies

Location: Trees by the Climbing Structure

Myles and Lyla are peering into the window of the garage located behind one of the new trees.² Myles sees a large storage container and says, 'Mummy Case!'"³ Lyla screams, "Hide!"⁴ Both Myles and Lyla turn around and run. Lyla runs straight back (towards the climbing wall). Myles runs toward the fire exit stairs.⁵

While off camera, Myles says, "Haha, I see'd that mummy case." Lyla walks toward the climbing structure and glances around. Myles runs around the backside of the climbing structure. Lyla then skips and run back toward the window.⁶

(off camera) Myles says, "Real zombies live there!" Myles then runs up to the other side of the window next to Lyla. Both Myles and Lyla turn back toward the window and glance in.⁷ Lyla says, "We have to hide."⁸ They both look in the window for a few more seconds. Myles looks over at Lyla and says, "Let's get out of here." Lyla says, "Yeah."⁹ Both children turn around, Lyla walks toward the fire exit side and Myles walks around the tree and then says, "Well, a zombie lives in that!" Lyla continues moving and says, "We have to get out." Lyla and Myles walk away from the area still talking about zombies.¹⁰

	Anecdotal Notes/Observation	Initial Thoughts	Revisiting Thoughts
1	Myles and Lyla are peering into the window of the garage located behind one of the new trees.	It is interesting to note that the children never used this area before the trees were planted. In fact, they never even noticed the windows that are over there.	Are the trees creating a small, cozy area? What drew the children over to the window? Was it the trees? Was it the small space?
2	Myles sees a large storage container and says, 'Mummy Case!'"	Very creative way to view a storage container. Definitely using imaginative play! Interesting how Myles focused on mummies, I wonder why. What is his previous knowledge on mummies? Also, why mummies	What does mummy stand for? A big scary thing? A monster? Dark, hazy area with cobwebs- the context was already set in the garage.
3	Lyla screams, "Hide!"	Lyla seems to be picking up quickly on the game without being told that they were playing "mummies/zombies." What does Lyla know about mummies?	What is Lyla's point of reference on Zombies? Does she actually know what a zombie is or does she just know it is something to run from/be afraid of?
4	Both Myles and Lyla turn around and run. Lyla runs straight back (towards the climbing wall). Myles runs toward the fire exit stairs.	It is interesting that they did not run in the same direction, instead it seems that they both had slightly different ideas in mind.	
5	Lyla walks toward the climbing	It seems that they are both looking	Lyla led him back to the

	structure and glances around. Myles runs around the backside of the climbing structure. Lyla then skips and run back toward the window.	for each other- especially Lyla when she looks under the Lyla wall- but both end up heading back to the window to meet up instead of meeting by the climbing wall. Was Lyla looking for Myles when she glanced back- maybe making sure that he was coming back to the window?	window- Does it feel like a safe place with the tree behind them?
6	(off camera) Myles says, "Real zombies live there!" Myles then runs up to the other side of the window next to Lyla. Both Myles and Lyla turn back toward the window and glance in.	Myles and Lyla both seem to be very fascinated with the large container in the garage. I wonder what has sparked their interest- could it be the K/1 class talking about zombies, things from Myles' older brother, or something from television?	
7	Lyla says, "We have to hide."	I wonder why Lyla feels the need to hide- Is it something that she has heard before? Where is she wanting to hide?	
8	They both look in the window for a few more seconds. Myles looks over at Lyla and says, "Let's get out of here." Lyla says, "Yeah."	It seems that Lyla keeps waiting on Myles to dictate some of the progression of play. He seems to have more of a lead than Lyla does. In my opinion, this is a good outlet for Myles as he is not often the one in the lead when he plays with some of the other children.	
9	Both children turn around, Lyla walks toward the fire exit side and Myles walks around the tree and then says, "Well, a zombie lives in that!" Lyla continues moving and says, "We have to get out." Lyla and Myles walk away from the area still talking about zombies.	The window does not seem to hold as much interest at this point. As the children walk away, they keep talking about hiding and about finding somewhere to hide. They head toward the underside of the treehouse- maybe a hiding place?	Myles glances back- is he making sure that Lyla is still with him?

Other thoughts from our class discussion:

Building friendships?

Interest in Zombies/Mummies? Myles has previous knowledge about mummies- family member went to Egypt and brought back a Egyptian headdress.

Myles and Lyla revisited the window several times throughout their time on the playground. After peeking into the window, they would run away and "hide" in another place on the playground.

Space was very confined- helps focus their play

Myles - previous experience playing similar games

Lyla - unknown previous experiences

What is successful for Myles?

What is good for him?

More productive and thoughtful play with Lyla than Trey.

Look at a scene with Trey where Trey is more in the lead compared to Myles being in the lead- compare them both.

Look at research on social roles- leaders and followers or both. How does that influence behavior?

What am I looking at?

Is it the use of space?

Is it the narrative that Myles sets forth?

Is it Myles' interactions with Lyla?

Where does this lead me as a teacher? (pedagogical knowledge)

If I want to understand the narrative and where they are- I need to understand what is behind their interests.

So what do I want to do with this information? Where do I want to go next?

This is what leads project work investigations that focus on the children's interests

Share the video with the children- small group

Together?

Or separate?

Use field notes (don't always need to have camera with you)- observations are okay as well.

Perspectives:

Looking through windows- window frame in classroom

Small spaces

Explore their viewpoints

What could we do with that window? Or the garage?

What could we put in the garage to enhance their play?

What would you see if you were looking out the window?

Have them draw their ideas.- How would it look from a different view/vantage point?

Wires off (the screen) window vs on the window?

Appendix C

Bella's Notes

Daria (high school student teacher)	Felix (child)	My Interpretation
1. There you go.	2. <i>(Took the bottle and filled it up.)</i>	Intro. Felix and Daria were at the water table working on washing babies when recording began.
3. Did you know if you fill the bottle up and put the lid back on we can use that to pour it on with?	4. <i>(Takes the lid from DeAnna.)</i>	
5. Do you want to put the lid back on?	6. <i>(Shakes head yes and puts the lid back on.)</i>	7. Daria could have stated what Alex did to clarify what she was talking about and praising him for.
7. There you go.	8. Like that.	
9. See, you are using less water if you put the lid on.	10. <i>(Opens the lid and squirts the water on the baby.)</i>	11. Why did she take the bottle and squeeze out the water? Felix did not indicate that he needed or wanted help.
11. Squeeze it <i>(takes the bottle and squeezes it)</i>	12. <i>(Squeezes the bottle with both hands.)</i>	
13. There you go, now we have to fill the bottle back up.	14. <i>(Tries to open the bottle.)</i>	15. Felix did not ask for help to open the bottle, it looks like he may have held it in her direction but not sure he was indicating that he needed or wanted help. Daria could have asked if he needed help.
15. <i>(Opens the bottle),</i> There you go	16. <i>(Fills the bottle using a cup.)</i>	19. Daria indirectly corrected Alex's grammar. I wonder if she realized that she did that?
17. <i>(Hands lid to Felix)</i>	18. <i>(Drops the lid.),</i> Where are it?	23. What did Felix do a good job of? A clarifying statement would have made this more powerful or meaningful.
19. Ah, where did it go?	20. <i>(Finds the lid.)</i>	
21. Oh, you found it.	22. <i>(Puts the lid on.)</i>	29. Daria did not explain why Felix should not squirt water in the baby's face.
23. Good job.	24. <i>(Drops the bottle.)</i>	31. This would have been another great opportunity to explain why it is not okay to squirt babies in the face. Daria could have addressed Felix's laughing and discussed how he would feel if someone squirted him in the face.
25. Uh-oh, is it a little slippery?	26. <i>(Squirts water on the baby and drops the bottle.)</i>	33. How is it going to hurt the baby?
27. <i>(hands Felix another bottle),</i> Here you can use this one, it's full of water	28. <i>(Squirts water on the baby's face.)</i>	34. Felix accepted the suggestions about not squirting the baby in the face.
29. <i>(Puts her hand over the baby's face),</i> No, No we don't squirt the baby in the face.	30. <i>(Laughs.)</i>	35. Daria could have talked to Felix about making the right choice.
31. Don't squirt the baby in the face	32. <i>(Drops bottle.)</i>	
33. You're gonna hurt the poor thang.	34. <i>(Gets more water and squirts it on the baby's body.)</i>	
35. <i>(Smiles.)</i>		

Appendix D

List of Codes from Open and Axial Coding

"light bulb" appropriation attachment (or reference to...) Bella Child - child conflict Child - child rel to others Child - child's needs Child - child's perspective Child - engagement Child - self-regulation child autonomy Child Autonomy_Independence control documentation Harriet Focus of Inquiry Frame: assessment & developmental persp related Frame: assessment tool Frame: Child Development Frame: combined frameworks/perspectives Frame: Other Teachers as source of K / pedagogy Frame: Parents - source of K Frame: pedagogy-personal experiences/beliefs Frame: standard (child development) or reference Frame: Theory Frame: theory versus pedagogy (clarification) Framework Pedagogy gaze (of others - parent, students) goals for children Group conversation dynamics home-like independence or autonomy? Interpretation - by teacher Jenna Sarah Gabriella mentoring Milan influence now - different way of... odd Ours Parents	patterns (teacher/child) Pedagogy - decisions Pedagogy - Interactions Pedagogy - when to intervene Pedagogy_ how to... Pedagogy_Involvement Pedagogy_Teacher Role questioning prior practices R challenge or questions to Ts regulations relationship (teacher/child) relationships versus individual respect Rachel Rachel's main ideas safety self-review staying with the question Strategy: Making sense of ____ Strategy: Problematizing dominant discourse Strategy: Reconstruction or Appropriation stuck (perspective) swooping in take for granted teacher collaboration Teacher -nurturing teacher observation teacher proximity training vs. new thinking trust UMB - contrast - UMB/UTK UMB video UMB: culture Unsettled video recording - as an activity way of being way of knowing way of seeing Wondering
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Appendix E

Sample of Robyn's Reflective Journal

--Seminar journal--

After 2-20-12 meeting:

About 35-40 minutes into tonight's conversation about topics, I felt ready to prompt with another question: "What specifically are you 'wondering' about now about your own practice after watching the video and talking about it?" And this steered the second part of the conversation. I ended with the assignment to ask them to articulate in their journals about what they are wondering about with their practice, what specifically they saw in the Milan video that prompted it, and where/how they might see that issue arise in their own classroom...

Having everyone do an initial share – based on what MJ said was the Harvard ... protocol – seems to be a fair way to get everyone owning the conversation early on, as well as making sure that everyone's voice is heard. They did often bounce off each other's initial sharings, which was nice. I can tell that if we were doing discourse analysis, we would see turns and exchanges in the conversation that were prompted by what someone else said and comments built upon the initial comment.

My role – I felt worried as usual at the beginning about whether there was enough structure planned for the night to elicit substantive conversation. I know we need the flexibility in our discussions so that they go where they're going to go without too much structure from me, but it has started each time with a big blank unknown. I started tonight just by having check in, which then quickly leads to other social sharing, and requires us to call back to the topic of the night at some point. It is clear that the group is comfortable being social together and that everyone chimes in even during social sharing. It feels as though we could talk all night long, just sharing funny stories of our time in the program and in our social lives. So to start the conversation, I just reviewed what we did last time and summed up that we talked last time about what we noticed, what stood out, from the video, and asked everyone to share what they had thought about further.

Bella focused on interactions, which I think was echoed by Harriet and at least someone else. Rachel struck me again with the depth of her thinking about her "image of the child" or her relationship to children, if that's what it is. She spoke about a central issue of Trust with the children, related how attachment is about children trusting us as caregivers, with a suggested process of reciprocating trust back to children. Trusting them to act, to make decisions, to steer their activities in different directions. Jenna was also very interesting in her talk about noticing the 'true constructivism' that she saw in Milan, and admitted she has trouble meshing that with our emphasis on assessment

<<this makes me think of pulling in an article possibly from North American Reggio Alliance to explore the connections between U.S.-style assessment with Italian-inspired practices.>>

Vita

Robyn Anne Brookshire was born and raised in Carlisle, Kentucky. She earned a B. A. in philosophy from Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky. After graduating from Transylvania, Robyn served as Executive Director of Life Adventure Camp, a primitive wilderness camping program in eastern Kentucky. After earning a post-baccalaureate degree in middle school special education from Eastern Kentucky University, Robyn taught middle school special education in Lexington, Kentucky. In 2008, she earned an M. S. in Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Special Education and Child and Family Studies from the University of Kentucky, and moved to Knoxville to pursue doctoral studies in early childhood within the University of Tennessee Knoxville's Department of Child and Family Studies. Robyn currently serves as Director of the Early Learning Center for Research and Practice at the University of Tennessee Knoxville.