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Giving Four-Year-Old Children a "Voice" Within the Comprehensive Evaluation of Quality Teaching Practices

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GIVING FOUR-YEAR OLD CHILDREN A "VOICE" WITHIN THE COMPREHENSIVE
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ABSTRACT

Educational research has largely focused on the correlation between governmental entities and classroom pedagogy as policymakers develop more comprehensive evaluation systems that raise the expectations of teacher *quality*. However, some researchers in the field of early childhood suggest the measurement of teacher quality is largely a "mismatch between informant-based, retroactive methods" (Downer, Booren, Lima, Luckner, & Pianta, 2010, p. 5) as developmentally appropriate measurements of early childhood *quality* that include the perceptions of the children are few. To examine the potential for researchers to consider the inclusion of children's perceptions within evaluation systems, this study examines the following area of inquiry: (1) What kind of verbal and visual information is provided by four-year-old children within interviews, story stems, and drawing activities that describe their classroom teacher and the teacher's classroom practices; and (2) How does what children shared relate to the ECERS-R Interaction dimension. TUsing qualitative methods, this qualitativeis study sought to understand how children express their perceptions of their classroom teacher and the teacher's classroom practices. Data was collected across using three measures: (1) verbal interviews; (2) story stem interviews; and (3) drawing activities. Transcribed data was coded and categorized, in which Data analysis resulted in the identification of four themes, 11 sub-themes, and four main findings emerged. These themes, sub-themes, and findings —that suggest four-year-old children are able to share their perceptionsinformation including emotional experiences within the classroom, classroom procedures, the teacher's behaviors during free play, and interactions that occur with the teacher and peers. Findings also suggest an alignment of children's descriptions to the ECERS-R Interaction domain, of their classroom teacher and the teacher's classroom practices, supporting the consideration of young children's perceptions within formal evaluation systems.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In the past, educational research has largely focused on the correlation between governmental entities and classroom pedagogy within a globally capitalistic society (Bloch, 1992; Ellett & Teddlie, 2003; Viruru, 2005). Policymakers were under great pressure to develop a more comprehensive evaluation and accountability system that raised the expectations of teacher quality guided by the "desire and needs of the marketplace" (Viruru, 2005, p. 15). Exclusive of early childhood education (Bloch, 1992; Ellett & Teddlie, 2003), researchers developed new conceptual and methodological teacher evaluation systems for traditional K-12th grade academic settings (Ellett & Teddlie, 2003; Hallinger, Heck, & Murphy, 2014).

By 2016, approximately forty-three states within the United States had established statewide systems for evaluating instructional quality and teacher effectiveness within traditional K-12th grade school settings (Wallace, Kelcey, & Ruzek, 2016). However, there have been conflicting views on the theoretical construct and measurement of effective teaching with some researchers arguing that the measurements provide minimal information regarding the core effectiveness of instruction (Darling-Hammond, 1986; Ellett & Teddlie, 2003; Hallinger, Heck, & Murphy, 2014; Hanushek, 2011; Harris et al., 2014; Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009). Additionally, the need for early childhood education had grown due to increases of single-parent families, changing opportunities for women, and family economic necessity for two incomes (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; Nelson & Nelson, 2003). Parents were no longer able to serve as primary educators (Veríssimo, Torres, Silva, Fernandes, Vaughn, & Santos, 2017), causing the enrollment of children between three to five years of age in full-day preschool or kindergarten programs to substantially increase from 17% in 1970 to 61% in 2009 (U.S. Department of Education). In response to this increase, many state education representatives

have begun considering the inclusion of early childhood programs within the comprehensive evaluation system (Connors-Tadors & Hororqitz, 2014; Guernsey, Ochshorn, & New America, 2011; Martella, Connors-Tadros, & Center on Great Teacher and Leaders, 2014) to enhance quality teaching practices.

As some argue that the traditional bureaucratic structure of teacher evaluation systems provide little assistance for teachers (Darling- Hammond, 2004; Ellett & Teddlie, 2003; Harris, Ingle, & Rutledge, 2014), ideas are shifting to a more specialized paradigm of evaluating teaching effectiveness and quality (Casey & McWilliam, 2011; Darling – Hammond, 1986; Day, 2002; McColskey & Egelson, 1997). Researchers are now considering broader support for other forms of formative and summative evaluations using observational measures to examine quality preschool environments and *interpersonal* interactions (Casey & McWilliam, 2011; Darling – Hammond, 1986; Day, 2002; McColskey & Egelson, 1997). Through this shift, a wide range of traditional definitions of quality such as excellence, value, and conformance to specifications (Reeves & Bednar, 1994) have been traded for phrases such as *predictors of effectiveness* and *characteristics of teachers and teaching* to provide a more comprehensive description of quality within educational settings (Harris et al., 2014). More specifically, researchers in the field of early childhood have developed more specific definitions of quality as determined by concepts of best practices and child development research (Cryer, 1999; Dahlberg et al., 1999) inclusive of young children's social and emotional development (Connors-Tadors & Harorqitz, 2014; Martella et al., 2014). In response, researchers are beginning to examine the inclusion of perceptions of early childhood professionals, parents, and children (Casey & McWilliam, 2011; Day, 2002; Darling – Hammond, 1986; McColskey & Egelson, 1997) to assist in identifying quality practices within the preschool classroom.

Traditional practices of teaching constrict and diminish the value of children's perspectives (Clark, 2005; Pierson & Aslan, 2016) as children's perceptions of their classroom experiences have not been formally embedded within formal evaluation methods (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Ellett & Teddlie, 2003). Instead, they are expected to "contribute in molecular fashion to the formation of social and political consciousness" (Bates, 1975, p. 353) rather than explore the world based on their own curiosity, observations and interpretations. However, children shall be afforded the opportunity to provide input in matters that affect their developmental progress and actively participate in the development of practices that influence their lives (Kragh-Müller & Isbell, 2011; Mirtschewa & Djambazova, 2016; UN Commission on Human Rights: 46th Session, 1990).

The practice of examining children's perceptions works to increase educators' understanding of what children believe to be a positive environment that genuinely supports academic success (Berg & Aber, 2015; Kragh-Müller & Isbell, 2011; Pierson, Schultheis, & Myck-Wayne, 2015). Some researchers suggest providing children with a *voice* can be contributory in the planning and implementation of a positive environment (Kragh-Müller & Isbell, 2011; Mirtschewa & Djambazova, 2016) that promotes ownership and self-worth and work toward improving current measurements designed to assess classroom quality. This dialogical environment provides educators a "glimpse as who learners are on their own terms, what they think, and how they see their lives in school" (Dahl, 1995, p. 125) as *voice* is distinctive and individualistic as it contributes to the personal realities, experiences and self-definitions of children (Cansever & Aslan, 2016; Dahl, 1995). However, obtaining dependable information from children as young as four years of age tends to be a difficult and complex process that is sometimes viewed as unreliable and invalid (Measelle et al., 1998; Measelle et al.,

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2005) especially in conjunction with the evaluation of quality early childhood environments. Many researchers argue that the challenge lies in developing well-constructed instruments that are appropriately administered and developmentally appropriate for children under the age of six (Aleamoni, 1999; Dennis & Kelemen, 2009; English & Burniske, 2015; Hennessy, 1999; Measelle, Ablow, Cowan, & Cowan, 1998; Measelle, John, Ablow, Cowan, & Cowan, 2005).

Purpose of the Study

As traditional practices of teaching constrict and diminish the value of children's perspectives (Clark, 2005; Pierson & Aslan, 2016), the practice of examining children's perceptions works to increase the educator's understanding of what the child believes is a positive environment to address educational policy and improve school climate (Berg & Aber, 2015; Kragh-Müller & Isbell, 2011; Pierson et al., 2015). Four-year old children's perceptions of their classroom teacher were obtained through developmentally appropriate methods of evaluation. This study could guide policy makers and researchers in the examination and development of more comprehensive measures of classroom evaluation within early childhood (English & Burniske, 2015; Follman, 1995; Goe, Bell, & Little, 2008; MET Project, 2012). This qualitative study explores the following areas of inquiry: (1) What kind of verbal and visual information is provided by four-year-old children within interviews, story stems, and drawing activities that describe their classroom teacher and the teacher's classroom practices; and (2) How does what children shared relate to the ECERS-R Interaction dimension.

Significance of the Study

The evaluation of quality in early childhood has become a cyclical and controversial debate (Day, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Ellett & Teddlie, 2003; Harris et al., 2014) as governmental entities and politicians have experienced an increase in pressure from their

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constituents to address the need for quality education. In response, federal policy makers have attempted to address these concerns through more comprehensive assessment procedures. The use of instruments such as the revised version of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R) and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) now lead to highly important implications for preschool classroom and early childhood research. However, these assessments tend to lack equitable implementation across early childhood settings as ECERS does not require formal training, and each state is granted the flexibility to select the assessments within their own quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) (Farran, 2016). As these assessments are consistently diverse in their infrastructure and targeted indicators, comparison of quality across states' preschool programs can be difficult. This leads to questions of the accuracy of assessment results in relation to providing a clearer picture of the classroom's infrastructure (Sandilos & DiPerna, 2011). Furthermore, these assessments lack invasive and comprehensive procedures in obtaining perceptions of those most engaged within the classroom infrastructure – the children.

Definitions of Terms

affordances: opportunities for action that such as children extracting specific information about an object while simultaneously analyzing how the object will be beneficial in the future (Gibson, 2000; Gibson & Adolph, 1992; Miller, 2011)

effectiveness: producing a decided, decisive, or desired effect (effective, n.d)

emotions: known to serve as social functions (Gross, 1998) that develop extensively during the early childhood years and contribute directly to the development of decision making, rapid motor responses, the understanding of the behavioral intentions of others, and growth of self-consciousness (Fridlund, 1994; Gross, 1998; Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000).

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emotional awareness: the ability to perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotion in thought, understand and reason with emotion, and regulate emotion in the self and others (Mayer & Geher, 1996)

emotion regulation: the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions (Gross, 1998)

executive function: higher-order cognitive skills that are linked to age-related changes and entail interrelated components that are distinct, purposeful, and goal-oriented (Best & Miller, 2010; Miyake et al., 2000; Obradovic, 2016; Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000).

perception: a result of perceiving; to regard as being such (Merriam-Webster, 2011).

self-regulation: the ability to comply with a request, to initiate and cease activities according to situational demands, to modulate the intensity, frequency, and duration of verbal and motor acts in social and educational settings, to postpone acting upon a desired object or goal, and to generate socially-approved behavior in the absence of external monitors (Kopp, 1982)

voice: distinctive and individualistic expressions of connections within an educational social system expands and reflects the personal realities, experiences and self-definitions of children (Cansever & Aslan, 2016; Dahl, 1995). A child's voice allows educators a "glimpse of who learners are on their own terms, what they think, and how they see their lives in school" (Dahl, 1995, p. 125) while promoting ownership and self-worth.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Within the field of Early Childhood Education, researchers are beginning to examine the inclusion of perceptions of early childhood professionals, parents, and children to assist in identifying quality practices (Casey & McWilliam, 2011; Day, 2002; Darling – Hammond, 1986; McColskey & Egelson, 1997). However, much of the research lacks comprehensive procedures in obtaining perceptions of those most engaged within the classroom – the children. This review will focus on six areas: (1) the study's theoretical framework in relation to perceptual development in young children within social interactions; (2) the development of emotional awareness contributing to perceptual development; (3) the development of language skills within young children; (4) developmentally appropriate methods for measuring young children's perceptions; (5) early childhood teacher evaluation systems; and (6) the lack of research in examining the contribution of young children's perceptions to early childhood evaluation systems used to determine quality teaching practices within preschool settings.

Theoretical Framework

Researchers who embrace positivistic and subjective paradigms often conduct research within a critical theoretical lens (Peca, 2000). Through this lens, researchers argue for an objective reality that works to understand human interactions and predict outcomes based on those interactions. This lens works to empower educators, families, and children "to transcend the constraints placed on them" (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Peca, 2000) by governmental entities and examine the difference between appearance and reality to promote positive change within educational settings through qualitative and quantitative methods (Peca, 2000). As individual perception and group interaction is the focus of critical theorists (Pecca, 2000), there exists

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significant influences in examining quality within the organizational construct of early childhood education.

Postmodern researchers have worked to represent an objective reality through language within socially constructed dimensions (Dahlberg et al., 1999; Patton, 2002; Robinson & Jones, 2005; Ryan & Grieshaber, 2005) in the attempt to examine the quality of early childhood settings. Postmodern researchers suggest that "truth is relative, conditional, and situational" (Mills, 2003, p. 6) as singularity, diversity, and multiple perspectives should be highly valued (Dahlberg et al., 1999; Patton, 2002; Robinson & Jones, 2005). Through this lens, adults become agents for change by actively exploring and investigating their environments through social networking.

Critical feminist perspectives have provided a narrower lens in which to view postmodern interpretations as early childhood professionals are predominantly female (De Lair & Erwin, 2000) and work to promote the co-construction of identity among early childhood children (Dahlberg et al., 1999). As feminist perspectives embrace the inclusive nature of providing a voice to stakeholders, the perspectives of individuals from diverse ethnicities, cultures, economic groups, and sexual orientations are increasingly valued in the design of quality early childhood settings (De Lair & Erwin, 2000). Through this lens, researchers are able to understand how gender, social class, and language influence children's development and address them within a developmentally appropriate manner (De Lair & Erwin, 2000). Although not directly identified as feministic, feminist perspectives are becoming more prevalent within early childhood settings as principles of developmentally appropriate practices guide professionals in encouraging cross-gender play, reduce biases within the environment, and consider alternative perspectives (De Lair & Erwin, 2000). This shift has caused the core definition of quality in early childhood to

shift in a subjective nature "based on values, beliefs and interests" of stakeholders (Pence & Moss, 1994, p. 172) rather than restricted to the views of male government officials as historically suggested (De Lair & Erwin, 2000; La Paro et al., 2004; Pence & Moss, 1994).

Postcolonial researchers work to examine the oppressed traditional features of colonialism and seek a transformation in which the view of the development of young children is individualized and self-directed by the children themselves (Viruru, 2005). The challenge for these researchers is promoting "acceptance of multiplicities and ambiguities" (Viruru, 2005, p. 18) within a universally fundamental concept of civilized oppression that often goes unquestioned (Viruru, 2005). Within a postcolonial constructivist framework, input, engagement, and inclusion are the basis for constructing knowledge that engages and motivates curiosity and analytical thinking within all individuals (Cunningham & Duffy, 1996; Phillips, 1995). Eleanor Gibson embraced such a notion as she combined the nurture-based ideas of constructivists and the nature-focused ideas of nativists to describe how nature and nurture are inseparable (Sigelman & Rider, 2014)

As an expansion of constructivism, social constructivism embraces the idea that each individual views reality within a uniquely constructed context (Kim, 2001). Many social constructivists believe that theories are "always filtered through social-cultural beliefs, values, language, and categories" (Miller, 2016, p. 6) which suggests the importance of social contexts within learning contexts. The multiple subjective interpretations developed within a social constructivist lens guide the researcher in identifying the "complexity of views" (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 24) and rely on the perceptions of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Through social interactions and cultural norms experienced by the participants, social constructivists can examine the contexts in which participants are embedded (Creswell & Poth,

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2017). Building upon the progressive workings of John Dewey, Lev Vygotsky worked to examine the relationships of cognitive development and the culture in which the individual is embedded (Miller, 2016; Vygotsky, 1978), leading him to become the leading theorist within the framework of social constructivism.

      Lev Vygotsky. Lev Vygotsky believed that child development occurs based on a purely external process through collaborative interactions within children's culture that are *interpersonal* and *intrapersonal* (Miller, 2016; Mooney, 2013). Focusing on "cultural contributions to cognition" (Miller, 2011, p. 155), Vygotsky (1978) claimed that the culture in which children are embedded frames the development of cognitive structures within *lower mental functions* and *higher mental functions*. He believed these processes were influenced by the individual's ethnic culture as well as physical and historical influences within the immediate environment (Miller, 2016; Mooney, 2013: Powell & Kalina, 2009) leading Vygotsky to develop the theory of social development which has become the foundational building block of child development research.

      Vygotsky strongly believed the external culture influences children's attainment of knowledge despite being born with the basic tools required for cognitive development (Lantolf, 2000, Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky also believed that, beginning in infancy, individuals possess automatic abilities that allow them to interact with their environment to establish sophisticated cognitive processes including attention, sensation abilities, perception, and memory (Lantolf, 2000). Vygotsky also suggested that infants use these aspects simultaneously to interact with their surroundings and eventually develop higher-level cognitive processes characterized by independent learning and thinking through collaborative dialogue and meaning-making activities (Lantolf, 2000; Miller, 2016; Mooney, 2013). These processes lead to the eventual development

of self-regulation as children begin with *object-regulation* in infancy, transition to *other-regulation* during the early childhood years, and then to *self-regulation* (Lantolf, 2000).

As an additional component to development, Vygotsky viewed language as a foundational structure for cognitive processes and an accelerator to complex thought within social contexts (Miller, 2016: Powell & Kalina, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). He suggested that language serves as a method to "reshape biological perception into cultural perception and concepts" (Lantolf, 2000, p. 199) and identified three forms of language: (1) inner speech, (2) private speech, and (3) social speech (Fosnot & Perry, 1996; Miller, 2011). Vygotsky also believed a merging of these processes occurred by the age of three when verbal language becomes the main means of transmission of information through social interactions (Miller, 2016; Mooney, 2013, Vygotsky, 1978). This suggests that children above the age of three participate in verbal language processes more often than adults (Miller, 2011) suggesting their ability to discuss their perceptions of the environment.

Eleanor Gibson. Eleanor Gibson believed humans "are inherently motivated to explore and learn about their world" (Miller, 2011, p. 385) through active perceptions as they continuously observe and analyze events, objects, and places while learning how to communicate and move based on those perceptions (Gibson, 2000; Miller, 2011). Through her idea of perceptual learning, Gibson worked to identify how infants and young children learn through the perceptions of their interactions within the immediate environment (Miller, 2011). Guided by the research of James Gibson, Eleanor Gibson's research led to the development of the ecological theory of perceptual development describing how children extract information out of the sensory data obtained through interactions with the environment (Gibson, 2000; Miller, 2011).

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One of the main constructs of Eleanor Gibson's theory is the concept of *affordances* (Gibson, 2000; Gibson & Pick, 2000; Miller, 2011). Gibson identifies *affordances* as opportunities for action that "involve a relationship between the organism and its surroundings" (Miller, 2011, p. 380) such as children extracting specific information about an object while simultaneously analyzing how the object will be beneficial in the future (Gibson, 2000; Gibson & Adolph, 1992; Miller, 2011). Gibson suggested that stimulation, perception, and differentiation are interrelated which allow "affordances to be differentiated" (Miller, 2011, p. 382) and selected based on two principals: (1) selection for an affordance fit, or (2) selection for unity, order, and economy (Gibson, 2000).

Gibson also suggested that, beginning in infancy, humans develop agency, prospective, order, and flexibility as they begin to understand how movements immediately affect the environment, resulting in the ability to obtain something desired (Gibson & Pick, 2000; Miller, 2011). As infants develop, they begin to conceptually understand their surroundings and recognize patterns of regularity, such as language patterns, to identify emotions such as stress or happiness (Miller, 2011). Transitioning into toddlerhood, their perceptions and affordances continuously change as they "perceive different cues with varying degrees of sensitivity" (Suchman & Aschner, 1961, p. 453) which, according to Gibson's theory, contributes to the flexible understanding that new experiences could create new affordances (Gibson & Pick, 2000; Miller, 2011) through exploratory activity (Gibson, 2000). Through these processes, children are able to identify affordances that affect them in different capacities as they attach meaning to objects and events (Gibson & Pick, 2000).

A social constructivist perspective guided this study. This position focuses on factors that support the inclusion of children's interests within a collaborative and reciprocal environment

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(Gibson & Adolph, 1992; Mooney, 2013). Within this framework, preschool children are able to self-regulate emotions, ideas and behaviors based on affordances within the environment (Gibson & Adolph, 1992) and communicate those constructs through developmentally appropriate methods (Lantolf, 2000; Mooney, 2013) within the culture of the early childhood classroom. Preschool children's ability to understand their emotions as they develop emotional awareness can have a significant influence on the ways in which they perceive their immediate environment, suggesting a developmental progression that begins in infancy.

Development of Emotional Awareness

Linked to age-related changes that are distinct, purposeful, and goal-oriented (Best & Miller, 2010; Miyake et al., 2000; Obradovic, 2016; Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000), emotions are known to serve as social functions (Gross, 1998). Developing extensively during the early childhood years, emotional development contributes to the development of decision making, rapid motor responses, the understanding of the behavioral intentions of others, and growth of self-consciousness (Fridlund, 1994; Gross, 1998; Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000). Many researchers identify these higher-order cognitive skills as integral components that directly contribute to the development of attention, self-regulation, planning, rule use, and response inhibition within children. (Best & Miller, 2010; Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006; Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000; Zelazo et al., 1997). During the first year of life, infants continuously interact with the environment through exploratory activities (Gibson, 2000) as the rudiments of *executive functioning* processes work to develop *emotional awareness*, *self-regulation* skills, and language skills that continue to strengthen throughout the early childhood years (Anderson, 2001; Best & Miller, 2010; Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000; Reese, Yan, Jack, & Hayne, 2010).

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Researchers suggest children between the ages of eighteen months and three years of age understand moralistic behaviors (Barrett, 1998; Eisenberg, 2000) as they demonstrate the ability to perceive connections between positive or negative actions and the consequences of those actions (Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000; Posner & Rothbart, 1998). By the age of three, children have developed the capacity to identify simple emotional constructs such as happiness, sadness, and fear (Borke, 1971; Thompson, 1991) that assist in the avoidance of situations that arouse negative emotions while being drawn to situations that arouse positive emotions (Grolnick, Bridges, & Connell, 1996; Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000; Stein & Levine, 1990). Children then begin to experience substantial shifts in the ability to cognitively process and organize information, regulate emotional responses, and utilize sufficient language to provide insight into their personal and complex emotional state of mind (Bettmann, & Lundahl, 2007; Cole, Dennis, Smith-Simon, & Cohen, 2009; Dennis, & Kelemen, 2009; Measelle, John, Ablow, Cowan, & Cowan, 2005).

In 1982, Claire Kopp published an article that examined the antecedents related to self-regulatory processes. Within the article, she identified three milestones young children experience in the development of these processes. She discussed that children can exhibit forms of basic control at one year of age, develop self-control by two years of age, and are able to exhibit self-regulatory skills based on change in varying situations by three years of age. This suggests that young children experience the gradual transition from extreme dependence on others to independent competencies (Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000) by the age of three. However, this transition also encompasses complex extrinsic and intrinsic processes that guide children in voluntarily initiating, monitoring, evaluating, and modifying effortful control of their behaviors and emotional responsiveness (Bridges & Grolnick, 1995; Posner & Rothbart, 1998; Roben,

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Cole, & Armstrong, 2013; Thompson, 1991), including the ability to draw on linguistic abilities within the regulation processes (Roben at al., 2013).

During the fourth year of age, these abilities are heighted as children begin to understand the more complex relationships between emotions and individual expectations while subconsciously discovering the concept of perceptions (Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000; Zelazo et al., 2003). These shifts allow children to understand emotions as "internal states that can be intentionally modified" (Dennis & Kelemen, 2009, p. 243) and regulated within various social contexts that contribute to their individual perceptions (Dennis & Kelemen, 2009). However, eliciting valid and reliable information from children four to five years of age is quite complex due to their short attention spans, motivational biases, and limited language skills (Measelle et al., 2005; Measelle et al., 1998). Due to these limited language abilities, researchers must examine the developmental progression of language skills in order to determine developmentally appropriate methods of expression and communication for children under the age of five.

Language Development

As an early extrinsic mode of emotion regulation, language has the capacity to connect verbal and written language to corresponding symbolic representations, including abstract emotional constructs (Lantolf, 2000; Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000; Roben at al., 2013; Thompson, 1991). By three years of age, children are able to create robust personal narratives that reference internal states of emotion (Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000; Reese et al., 2010; Thompson, 1991). According to some researchers, children's "emotional repertoires have expanded dramatically" by the end of their preschool years (Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000, p. 107). This expansion allows children to "discover that patterns of sound take on meaning and purpose" (Mason, 2016, p. 8) as they draw on vocabulary to verbalize their perceptions of the external environment

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(Domitrovich, Cortes, & Greenberg, 2007; Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000; Reese et al., 2010; Thompson, 1991; Vallotton & Ayoub, 2011). According to Wallace et al. (2016), "adolescent students are unique reporters of classroom interactions" (p. 1858) and provide reliable information in regard to their ongoing classroom experiences that outside observers are typically unable to obtain.

Researchers suggest children as young as four years of age are able to accurately identify supportive environments and provide feedback in ways achievement results cannot (Aleamoni, 1999; English & Burniske, 2015). These methods of measurement provide unique opportunities for children to communicate their perceptions of their immediate environment through developmentally appropriate means.

Methods for Measuring Children's Perceptions

Literature suggests a great influence, specifically European, on the studies of soliciting children's perceptions through diverse methods (Edwards, 2002). In the late 1800s, Rudolf Steiner developed an instructional approach in the respect for children's developmental processes (Morrison, 1988; Edwards, 2002). In the early 1900s, Maria Montessori designed a qualitative instructional approach solely based on children's self-initiated observations, interactions, and perceptions of their immediate environment (Gutek, 2004; Kramer, 2017; Lillard, 2013). In the mid-1900s, Loris Malaguzzi designed an instructional climate based on the personal relationships children developed with adults and peers (Edwards, 2002). Despite the significant contributions to early childhood research afforded by these researchers, developmentally appropriate methods formally assessing young children's perceptions remain scarce (Dennis, & Kelemen, 2009; Measelle et al., 2005; Measelle et al., 1998). However, the limited research does suggest children as young as four years of age possess the ability to

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provide reliable and valid perceptions (Emde, Wolf, & Oppenheim, 2003; English & Burniske, 2015; Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000; Zelazo et al., 2003) as "active co-constructors of learning ecologies" (Wallace, Kelcey, & Ruzek, 2016, p. 1836) through diverse methods of communication.

Narrative assessments using puppetry. Narrative assessments allow researchers to gather information directly from young children through indirect measures to examine multiple aspects of social, emotional, and cognitive functioning (Bettmann, & Lundahl, 2007). In reference to children's perceptions, narrative assessment instruments include the use of puppets that can be adapted to diverse situations including ethnicity, language, and ability (Bettmann, & Lundahl, 2007; Cole et al., 2009; Dennis, & Kelemen, 2009; Measelle, et al., 1998; Measelle et al., 2005). Furthermore, as a developmentally appropriate qualitative method that promotes various modes of communication, the versatility of narrative assessments has allowed researchers to develop more quantitative measures, such as the Berkeley Puppet Interview (BPI), as reliable multidimensional approaches to obtaining young children's perceptions about key contributions of their individual experiences (Measelle et al., 1998; Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton; 1976).

Influenced by the work of Rebecca Eder, Jeffrey Measelle and Jennifer Ablow of the University of Oregon developed the BPI in the early 1990s as a developmentally appropriate method designed as a "peer-like exchange between a child and two puppets" (Measelle et al., 1998, p. 1558) to assess young children's perceptions. Implemented within a variety of studies within the field of psychology, the BPI has been identified as a valid and reliable method of assessing children's perceptions in regard to varying developmental constructs (Arseneault, Moffitt, Caspi, Taylor, Rijsdijk, Jaffee, ... & Measelle, 2003; Bettmann, & Lundahl, 2007; Cole

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et al., 2009; Dennis, & Kelemen, 2009; Luby, Mrakotsky, Heffelfinger, Brown, Hessler, & Spitznagel, 2003; Luby, Belden, Sullivan, Spitznagel, 2007; Measelle et al., 1998; Measelle et al., 2005). The semi-structured approach allows children the opportunity to respond to questions in a non-forced method most comfortable to them while researchers document responses on a seven point Likert-style scale (Measelle et al., 1998). As the BPI is not content specific, questions presented can be adapted to fit the needs of children, researchers, and the design of the study (Measelle et al., 1998; Measelle et al., 2005).

Researchers suggest the BPI to be a more refined measure of young children's perceptions and significantly valid in early childhood research (Arseneault et al., 2003; Bettman, & Lundahl, 2007; Dennis, & Keleman, 2009; Measells et al., 1998). Implementing the BPI is time-consuming, requires costly and extensive training, and tends to be labor-intensive which leads to the inability to include this method within the current study. However, other methods of soliciting children's perceptions could provide an alternative means of data collection that could be equally effective, cost efficient, and less time-intensive.

Mosaic approach. Pioneered by Alison Clark and Peter Moss, the Mosaic approach uses "practical ways to contribute to the development of services that are responsive to the 'voice of the child' and which recognize young children's competencies" (Clark & Moss, 2011, p. 2) within various settings. Through the Mosaic approach, the correlation of relationships to environmental perceptions is gauged within a process that allows children to communicate with multisensory means including but not limited to photography, drawings, observations, and interviews (Clark, 2005; Dahl, 1995). As the Mosaic approach has a multi-method structure, researchers have the freedom to implement multiple measures to obtain children's perceptions (Einarsdottir, 2005; Clark, 2005).

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In one such study, Johanna Einarsdottir (2005) used the Mosaic approach in her examination of the perceptions of children ranging from four to five years old. Although Einarsdottir implemented multiple methodological concepts of the Mosaic approach within her overall study, her published article focuses on the use of photographs as a basis for her argument. Within this examination, children photographed what they deemed to be the important components within their classroom. One group of children possessed a digital camera while providing a guided tour to Einarsdottir. A second group of children took photographs independently with disposable cameras. Einarsdottir then printed the photographs taken by each student and engaged each child in a conversation about the photographs he/she had taken. Outcomes suggested that the combination of photographs and discussions offered a relatively informative view of how the children perceived their school climate, which, in turn, informed decision-makers of aesthetical components that would benefit from re-design.

The inclusion of photographs within the examination of children's perceptions provides a hands-on methodology that tends to be engaging for the children. However, in many cases, teachers do not have the resources required to provide children with adequate materials to engage in photographic activities. Furthermore, photographic activities tend to focus on the physical dimensions of the classroom environment and exclude social and emotional dimensions, leading to the exclusion of photographic activities within this study. This leads to more cost-effective and comprehensive methods of collecting children's perceptions within social and emotional dimensions through a combination of discussions, drawings, and story stem activities.

Drawings. At the end of the nineteenth century, researchers began to examine the expressive constructs of drawings within young children (Rosenblatt, &Winner, 1988). Research suggests that children as early as two years of age begin to create mental representations through

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random non-linear scribbling that researchers describe as spontaneous and aesthetically pleasing (Cherney, Seiwert, Dickey, & Flichtbeil, 2006; Dyson, 1982; Literat, 2013; Rosenblatt, & Winner, 1988; Wilson, & Wilson, 1977). Some researchers propose that young children's internal motivation when drawing is to strive for a realistic portrayal of emotions and perceptions, which provides insight into how children understand their environment outside of the confines of interviews and questionnaires (Cherney et al., 2006; Literat, 2013). In a sense, children's drawings allow for the versatile communication of abstract notions (Cherney et al., 2013) using color, lines, and composition (Rosenblatt, & winner, 1988).

As perceptions can be difficult to obtain from young children, participatory visual communication methods, specifically participatory drawing, allow for a more practical and enjoyable task for young children that is inclusive and interactive (Literat, 2013). According to Ioana Literat (2013), participatory drawing is co-constructive in nature and places the researcher as the outsider while empowering young children to become expressive and engaged. Through participatory drawing, children are able to convey perceptions within a visual form rather than orally (Literat, 2013). Participatory drawing does not only lend itself to basic expression but also contributes to the diverse needs of children with varying abilities and/or disabilities (Literat, 2013; Rollins, 2005).

Although the end of the nineteenth century brought forth a new interest in the studies of children's drawings in understanding child development (Rosenblatt, & Winner, 1988), children's drawings remain understudied in isolation and documentation is scarce (Literat, 2013; Rosenblatt, & Winner, 1988). Due to the personal nature of children's drawings, reliable studies are difficult with large samples and are highly interpretive which causes difficulty in establishing validity (Literat, 2013; Rosenblatt, & Winner, 1988; Wilson, & Wilson, 1977). Furthermore,

some researchers suggest that drawings are simply non-aesthetic symbols or signs rather than representational visuals (Rosenblatt, & Winner, 1988; Wilson, & Wilson, 1977) and argue that children do not begin developing spatial and visual realism until they are more developmentally mature (Literat, 2013; Rosenblatt, & Winner, 1988). Other researchers believe children's drawings are simply one way of providing a singular method of expressive communication (Cherney et al., 2006) that allow researchers to combine various visual and non-visual methods of assessments that include narratives through data triangulation (Literat, 2013).

Perceptions through story stem techniques. In the mid-1980s, researchers within the MacArthur Research Network began to recognize the connection between narrative storytelling in young children's symbolic play to their social, emotional, and moral understanding of the external world (Emde et al, 2003). Researchers within the network began to develop studies using story prompts and small family figures to elicit children's perceptions of their experiences through narrative storytelling (Emde et al, 2003). Originally designed to examine the internal working models connected to attachment theory (Page, 2001), these methods became known as the Narrative Story Stem Technique (NSST) as the combination of representational play and verbal narratives allows young children to freely "regulate, understand, and communicate their affective experiences" (Emde et al, 2003, p. 27) using representational manipulatives.

As representational manipulatives are "proving to be useful in understanding children's perceptions of social relationships" (Page, 2001, p. 172), clinicians have described this process as "putting together large chunks of memories into a storied whole that makes sense" (Emde et al, 2003) to provide insight from the views of the children themselves (Emde et al, 2003; Page, 2001). Various versions of the NSST have been implemented within research to expand researchers' understanding of how children view their world in regard to teacher-child

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relationships (Verissimo et al, 2017; White, 2016), child social anxiety (Pass, Arteche, Cooper, Creswell, & Murray, 2012), and child relationships with mothers, teacher, and friends (Vu, 2015). The flexibility and effectiveness of NSST has led to the development of comprehensive batteries of story stem assessments currently used within multiple fields of study (Emde et al, 2003).

One of the earliest batteries of assessment, the Attachment Story Completion Task (ASCT), was designed to assess a young child's interactions with primary caregivers within five stressful situations to indicate secure or insecure relationships (Bretherton, Ridgeway, & Cassidy, 1990) in five themes: (1) mishap, (2) fear, (3) pain, (4) separation, and (5) reunion (Emde et al, 2003). During this same time, other researchers were beginning to develop similar assessments using differing story stems (Emde et al, 2003; Emde, Biringen, Clyman, & Oppenheim, 1991; Oppenheim, 1997) to examine the internalization of moral rules in preschoolers and the balancing of attachment and exploration in preschoolers using Doll Play (Oppenheim, 1997; Pass, Arteche, Cooper, Creswell, & Murray, 2012). The combination of these three assessments became the framework for the development of a more comprehensive battery of story prompts, which became the MacArthur Story Stem Battery (MSSB) (Emde et al, 2003).

The MSSB is a narrative story stem based assessment tool developed to "elicit children's narratives about specific themes" (Bretherton et al., 1990). Story stems within the assessment are delivered via one-on-one interviews in which the child and interviewer sit directly across from each other on either side of a child-sized table that accommodates the use of small figures and props to represent the characters and objects within each story stem (Bretherton et al., 1990). The selection of figures and props, including the number and variety, are at the researcher's

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discretion; however, the assessment requires figures be able to stand, and the size of each figure aligns with the realistic size of the characters within the story stem (Bretherton et al., 1990). Each story stem begins with a three to four sentences introducing a specific scenario as determined by the intent of the study (Bretherton et al., 1990). The participant is then prompted to show and explain what would happen next. The time in which administration of all story stems occurs differs based on the number of story stems and the engagement of participants.

The implementation of the assessment requires a warm-up story stem designed to familiarize the child with "moving the figures and talking for them" (Bretherton et al., 1990, p. 382). During the warm-up activity, the interviewer may prompt the child using the identified prompts. After the implementation of the warm-up story stem, the remaining story stems are implemented without leading prompts or demonstrations other than those specifically identified within the implementation protocol (Bretherton et al., 1990). A concluding story stem encourages a "positive, relaxed ending to the story task" (Bretherton et al., 1990, p. 395). Although story stems provided within each study vary as determined by the topic under evaluation, the protocols of implementation remain consistent (Bretherton et al., 1990; Page, 2011).

Since the development of the MSSB, researchers have explored diverse themes and concepts with young children using the methodology of narrative-based story stem assessments. These studies include examining children's understanding of hurricanes (Buchanan, Casbergue, & Baumgartner, 2009), the correlation between parental aggression and children's representations of family relationships (Grych, Wachsmuth-Schlaefer, & Klockow, 2002), understanding how children with incarcerated mothers describe attachment relationships (Poehlmann, 2005), and understanding children's perceptions of teacher-child relationships

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(White, 2016). Through the use of such assessments, researchers have been able to further understand parent-child relationships within different capacities (Pass et al., 2012; Verissimo et al., 2017; Vu, 2015); however, only recently have these assessments been used to examine relationships formed within the classroom environment (White, 2016) and remain scarce. Furthermore, the use of these narrative-based assessments in the examination of classroom quality within current teacher evaluation systems is non-existent, supporting the use of the NSST within this study.

Although diverse methods of soliciting children's perceptions exist, they tend to be unreliable in isolation in determining the quality of the early childhood classroom, suggesting the need of embedding these methods within comprehensive evaluation systems. However, before implementing such methods in the examination of classroom quality, we must first understand the foundational construct of preschool teacher evaluation systems to work toward an effective method of advocating for the inclusion of children's perceptions within such a complex assessment process.

Early Childhood Teacher Evaluation Systems

Federal initiatives within the past decade, such as Race to the Top in 2011, have strengthened the focus on quality improvement within early childhood education (Tout, Chien, Rothenberg, & Li, 2014). With a "mismatch between informant-based, retroactive methods" (Downer, Booren, Lima, Luckner, & Pianta, 2010, p. 5) of measurement, developmentally appropriate measurements of early childhood quality are few. To address this dilemma, the leading organization for the progression of early childhood education, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), has developed standards that are widely used to define quality within diverse early childhood settings (NAEYC, 2009). To assess these

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standards, NAEYC joined the BUILD initiative to assist states in the development of QRIS and to establish a nationally unified approach for evaluating the quality of early childhood programs (NAEYC, 2009). Although "content, scope, and investment" (Tout et al., 2014, p. 5) vary from state to state, the framework of QRIS contains three primary variations: (1) level-based standards; (2) a point-based rating system; and (3) a combination of level-based standards and a point-based rating system (Tout et al., 2014).

The ECERS, along with the revised version (ECERS-R), has been the most commonly used instrument in the measurement of classroom quality within early childhood and has received extensive validation (Harms et al., 2014; La Paro et al., 2004; La Paro et al., 2012; Mashburn et al., 2008). First published in 1980, the ECERS examines the appropriateness of the classroom environment based on the observed integration of developmentally appropriate practices (Gordon, Fujimoto, Kaestner, Korenman, & Abner, 2013; Harns & Clifford, 1980). The original ECERS instrument was used in multiple national studies including the Head Start FACES study, the National Child Care Staffing Study, and the Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study (Clifford, Reszka, & Rossbach, 2010; La Paro et al., 2012). In 1998, the revised ECERS included culturally sensitive indicators along with examination of program curricula, environmental safety, and program infrastructure using a numerical Likert scale (Harms et al., 2014; La Paro et al., 2012).

The ECERS-R instrument has been the leading instrument within the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey and Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (Clifford et al., 2010; La Paro et al., 2012). The revised instrument encompasses seven subscales: (1) space and furnishings, (2) personal care routines, (3) language-reasoning, (4) activities, (5) interactions, (6) program structure, and (7) parents and staff. The implementation of ECERS-R expands

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across three hours of observations with an interview lasting approximately 20 minutes (Bryant, 2010). Although ECERS-R examines quality in early childhood settings, the use of the instrument guided by the desires and needs of each state's established QRIS system (Tout et al., 2014) which brings forth the question of reliability in the assessment's ability to accurately assess quality within a holistic view of the early childhood field.

Despite the ECERS-R's widespread use and attention to "the breadth of classroom quality" (La Paro et al., 2012, p. 5), some researchers have identified the ECERS-R as valid and reliable in investigating correlations between quality early childhood settings and children's development (Harms et al., 2014; La Paro et al., 2004; Mashburn et al., 2008) while others question the ability for the instrument to consistently conceptualize quality (Gordon et al., 2013; La Paro et al., 2012). For example, within a U.S. study conducted by Mashburn et al. (2008), "84% of data collector responses were exact matches or within one scale point of the expert trainers' responses" (p. 738) during pilot implementation. On the other hand, Gordon et al. (2013) have used the Rasch Partial Credit Model (PCM) to analyze the validity and reliability of the ECERS-R instrument with conflicting outcomes. Based on the outcomes of the analysis, challenges in response process validity, structural validity, and criterion validity seem prevalent as the most concerning challenges. To further support Gordon et al.'s findings, La Paro et al. (2012) indicates that ECERS "fails to capture the depth needed" (p. 5) to understand factors that directly affect developmental progression (La Paro et al., 2012). These conflicting arguments suggest that further research is required in establishing validity and reliability of the ECERS-R instrument if it is to be the sole assessment of quality in early childhood settings. However, researchers who have worked closely in the development of the ECERS-R instrument have conducted revisions based on the questionable reliability of ECERS-R and feedback from

stakeholders (Harms et al., 2014). Published in 2014, an additional revision (ECERS-3) is being transitioned into observational assessment procedures (Harms et al., 2014).

The CLASS has also been widely used in the measurement of emotional and instructional support within the classroom (Hambre, Goffin, Kraft-Sayre, 2009; Mashburn et al., 2008). Adapted from other observational scales (Hambre et al., 2009; La Paro et al., 2004), the CLASS was designed to target multiple faucets of interactions among teachers and children including teacher sensitivity, classroom management, and instructional support using a numerical Likert scale (Downer et al., 2010; Hambre et al., 2009; La Paro et al., 2004; Mashburn et al., 2008). Originally developed to target pre-K classrooms, the CLASS has been expanded into six age specific assessments rubrics: (1) CLASS-I for classrooms serving infants; (2) CLASS-T for classrooms serving toddlers; (3) CLASS Pre-K for pre-kindergarten classrooms; (4) CLASS K-3 for kindergarten through third grade classrooms; (5) CLASS 4-6 for fourth through sixth grade classrooms; and (6) CLASS-S for seventh through twelfth grade classrooms (Hambre et al., 2009). However, similar to ECERS-R, researchers suggest limitations in the effectiveness of the CLASS, specifically CLASS - Pre-K, as select classroom behaviors may not correlate with CLASS indicators (La Paro et al., 2004).

According to La Paro et al. (2004), "findings from the CLASS need to be examined in relation to child outcomes" (p. 423) as the basic construct of CLASS fails to examine some classroom behaviors such as the curriculum, ongoing child assessments, and individualized teaching. Supporting this notion, Pianta & Hamre (2009) suggest the differing natures of observational assessments, including the CLASS – Pre-K, cause a limitation "with regard to measuring the multifaceted nature of the classroom" (p. 114). This argument extends to classrooms with diverse socioeconomic populations as a classroom with a low socioeconomic

population identified as lower quality "was actually quality that is appropriate to these children's needs" (Pianta et al., 2005, p. 156). Sandilos & DiPerna (2011) also question the interrater reliability of CLASS – Pre-K as whole-group instructional time is often infrequent within pre-kindergarten classrooms which limits the opportunity to observe "rich examples of certain dimensions" (p. 79) such as Instructional Support. Additionally, as multiple adults are often embedded within pre-kindergarten classrooms, CLASS – Pre-K observations tend to become subjective in nature within the Emotional Support domain and may not provide an accurate assessment of the primary teacher's ability to provide quality-learning experiences (Sandilos & DiPerna, 2011).

The evaluation systems implemented within early childhood settings lack the inclusion of perceptions of those most affected by the environmental setting – the children. Professionals who experience only a glimpse of the day-to-day interactions within the classroom often implement these systems of measurement. The exploration of the ways in which children perceive their experiences, interests, and concerns could potentially allow these least powerful members of society to become catalysts for change within a multiagency network of services (Clark, 2005).

Children's Perceptions in Relation to the Identification of Quality Teaching Practices

Many believe children's perceptions should be evaluated as one of multiple measures within a comprehensive teacher evaluation process rather than in isolation (English & Burniske, 2015; Follman, 1995; Goe, Bell, & Little, 2008; MET Project, 2012) to provide a more comprehensive view of teacher effectiveness and avoid the formation of underdeveloped measures (Wallace et al., 2016). Instruments of measurements used within QRIS are at the discretion of each state based on the state's goals, needs, and political context (NAEYC, 2009) with common instruments, such as the ECERS-R and the CLASS, nationally favored. However,

these assessments lack invasive and comprehensive procedures in obtaining perceptions of those most engaged within the classroom. Although developmentally appropriate methods formally assessing young children's perceptions are scarce (Dennis & Kelemen, 2009; Measelle et al., 2005; Measelle et al., 1998), research does suggest that children respond more openly when engaged in developmentally appropriate activities incorporating visual materials or life-like props within a realistic context (Clark & Moss, 2011; Cole et al., 2009; Measelle et al., 1998). Furthermore, these activities allow teachers to infer varying methods of learning through observational cues and obtain performance feedback from children who could potentially guide teaching practices (Jamil, Sabol, Hamre, & Pianta, 2015).

As *voice* can be described as distinctive and individualistic, its contributions to the personal realities, experiences and self-definitions of children (Cansever & Aslan, 2016; Dahl, 1995) have the potential to provide a vast informational framework for identifying effective teaching practices within preschool classrooms. This dialogical framework also provides educators a "glimpse as who learners are on their own terms, what they think, and how they see their lives in school" (Dahl, 1995, p. 125). The challenge is obtaining valid and reliable information from children four years of age (Measelle et al., 1998; Measelle et al., 2005).

As the "attitudes, viewpoints, concepts, and general stances of learners (their perspectives) play out in what learners believe and decide to do" (Dahl, 1995, p.124), it is the responsibility of educators to actively listen to children and invasively evaluate children's perceptions through multiple methods to develop a deeper understanding of their individual learning needs. This will not only assist in the development of an effective classroom climate, but also expand our own understanding of the meaning of high-quality teaching practices. This framework supports the following areas of inquiry: (1) What kind of verbal and visual

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information is provided by four-year-old children within interviews, story stems, and drawing

activities that describe their classroom teacher and the teacher's classroom practices; and (2)

How does what children shared relate to the ECERS-R Interaction dimension.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Qualitative researchers approach inquiry with an interest in "understanding how people interpret their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5) and the self-constructed meaning of these experiences by the individual (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). This inquiry based methodology involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach to understand phenomena that occur within natural settings (Cohen, Manion, & Marrison, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, Patton 2002) as researchers work to "understand the way things are" (Mills, 2003, p. 4) through the view of the research participants within diverse environments and circumstances. This study incorporates Gibson's framework of the reciprocal relationships between humans and their immediate environment (Miller, 2011) to the examination of how four-year-old children perceive their classroom teacher. The present project sought to understand what kind of verbal and visual information is provided by four-year-old children within interviews, story stems, and drawing activities that describe their classroom teacher and the teacher's classroom practices as well as how the information shared by children relate to the ECERS-R Interaction dimension.

Setting. The ~~site selected for~~ setting for the study, ABC Learning Center, is a laboratory preschool located at a southeastern university and was selected. ~~ABC Learning Center, was selected~~ based on convenience due to the time allotted for the study's completion, low cost of travel, and a previously completed background check. In 2004, ABC Learning Center opened with one preschool classroom serving children 4-5 years of age and one certified teacher with a mission of training pre-service preschool teachers. This mission has continued as the center expanded to now provide educational services for children six weeks to six years of age and contains five classrooms: (1) an infant classroom serving seven children; (2) a one-year-old classroom serving 10 children; (3) a two-year-old

classroom serving 20 children; (4) a three-year-old classroom serving 22 children; and (5) a four-year-old classroom serving 12 children.

With a licensed capacity maximum of 99 children, enrollment at the time of the study's implementation was approximately 71 children. Approximately 89% of enrolled families reside within middle to high socioeconomic communities while approximately 11% reside in low socioeconomic communities. Approximately 11% of families receive state funded financial assistance. Approximately 92% of the children are enrolled full-time consistently attending five days per week while approximately 8% of the children are enrolled part-time attending two or three days per week.

One classroom of four-year-old children within ABC Learning Center was the focus of this study. as Ffour-year-old children were the chosen participants becausedue to -preschool children's ability to understand the more complex relationships between emotions and individual expectations while subconsciously discovering the concept of perceptions (Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000; Zelazo et al., 2003). The classroom demographics consist of a homogeneous group of five Caucasian male children and seven Caucasian female children. Approximately 33% of the children reside in high socioeconomic communities, 59% reside in middle socioeconomic communities, and 8% reside in low socioeconomic communities. One child receives state funded tuition assistance. No children receive modifications or accommodations based on a 504 Plan or Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Eight children within the classroom have been enrolled within the center since infancy, three children were enrolled at two years of age, and one child was enrolled at three years of age. All children within the selected classroom are enrolled full-time, attending five days per week for 10 hours per day.

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At the time of the study's implementation, the selected classroom was comprised of a lead teacher and a paraprofessional. The classroom teacher, referred to in this study as Mrs. Alice, is a Caucasian female with a minimum of five years of experience employed within early childhood settings and is working toward earning a CDA certification. She had been employed with ABC Learning Center for approximately six months and was reported by the director to have established a classroom of consistency and positive guidance. The director also reported Mrs. April to be consistently calm when redirecting the children, enthusiastic about trying new teaching strategies, and continuously vigilant of all children at all times. During observations conducted prior to data collection, Mrs. April was observed engaging in consistent conversations with children, providing redirection as needed, providing additional guidance when children asked, and actively engaging in play. Mrs. April consistently maintained a calm voice tone, did not display any type of physical aggression toward children, and provided immediate redirection of behaviors as needed.

The paraprofessional, referred to in this study as Mrs. Rachel, is a Caucasian female with a minimum of three years of experience working with young children through early childhood facilities and non-profit community organizations. As a paraprofessional, Mrs. Rachel's responsibilities include assisting Mrs. Alice in daily tasks as well as assisting in other classrooms when necessary to meet state licensing teacher-child ratio. During observations conducted prior to data collection, Mrs. Rachel spent most of her time within other classrooms.

The classroom's physical arrangement consists of eight main learning centers: (1) laundry/home center; (2) kitchen center; (3) block center; (4) science center; (5) art center; (6) library center; (7) computer center; and (8) sand center, (see Figure 1). All learning centers are situated along the outside perimeter of the classroom and contain child-size shelves consisting of

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various manipulatives and materials aligned with the center in which they are located. In the center of the classroom are four child-size kidney shaped tables with four child-size chairs at each table. To the right of the entrance is a parent corner consisting of announcements and center newsletters to maintain communication with parents as well as a sink and children's cubbies. The restroom is located adjacent to the classroom; however, children must leave the classroom to access the entrance to the restroom. The teacher's work area is located on the far side of the classroom adjacent to the emergency exit. All children are able to be monitored effectively from most areas of the classroom with the exception of the sand and cubby area.
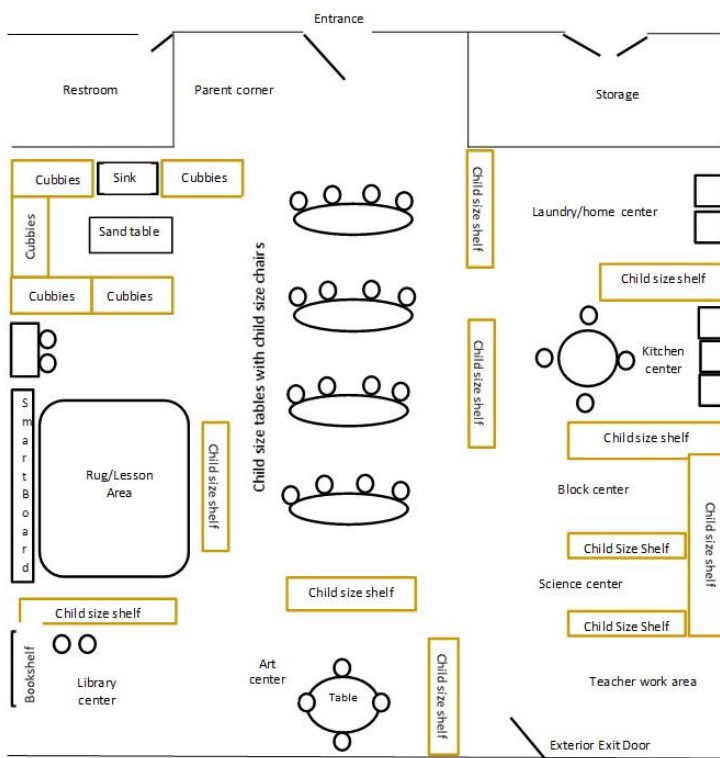
Figure 1. Layout of Four-Year-Old Classroom

The classroom also follows a daily schedule to guide the establishment of consistent routine for the children (see Figure 2). The classroom daily routine begins at 7:00am. For one hour and 45 minutes, children arrive, engage in arrival procedures, and participate in learning centers. Children are able to navigate through learning centers as they wish. During this time, the classroom teacher greets children as they arrive, briefly engages with parents, and prepares for the morning lesson. At approximately 8:45am, children are directed to clean-up learning centers by the ringing of a small bell. Children clean-up, go to the restroom if needed, and sit in their assigned seats for morning snack. During morning snack, children are able to converse with each other as desired. After morning snack, children engage within a whole group activity, small group activities, and again learning centers over the span of one hour. At 11:00am, children engage in outdoor play or learning centers contingent on weather conditions. After outdoor play, children engage in lunch procedures followed by a two hour resting period, afternoon snack, read-aloud activities, learning center play, and outdoor play.

4's Daily Schedule	
Time	Activity
7:00-8:45	Arrival- Learning Centers (Free Play)
8:45-8:55	Clean Up/Morning Routine
8:55-9:05	Restroom/ Handwashing
9:05-9:20	Morning Snack
9:20-9:40	Circle Time/Whole Group
9:40-10:00	Small Groups (ELA) Small Groups (Math)
10:00-10:35	Learning Centers/Clean Up
10:35-10:50	Shared Reading/News
10:50-11:00	Restroom/ Handwashing
11:00-11:35	Outdoor Play/ Learning Centers
1:35-11:45	Restroom/ Handwashing
11:45-12:05	Lunch
12:05-12:25	Restroom/ Handwashing/Story Time
12:25-2:30	Naptime
2:30-2:45	Pick up Mats/Restroom/Handwashing
2:45-3:00	Afternoon Snack
3:00-3:15	Review/Story Time
3:15-3:50	Learning Centers/Clean Up
3:50-4:00	Restroom/Handwashing
4:00-4:30	Ourdoor Play/Learning Centers
4:30-4:45	Clean Up/Restroom/Handwashing
4:45-5:00	Small Groups/Manipulatives

Figure 2. Fours Daily Schedule

Throughout each activity, excluding hallway walking and the resting period, children are allowed to engage in conversations as desired. During hallway walking to the playground area and the resting period, children are required remain quiet to avoid disturbing others. Children are picked-up by parents between 3:00pm and 5:00pm.

A small room, known within the center as the Intervention Room, is approximately 10 feet by 10 feet and served as the data collection area (see Figure 3). Teachers, visiting therapists, and collegiate candidates often utilize the Intervention Room to engage children in individualized interventional activities. All children enrolled within the center are familiar with the room and have visited the room periodically on multiple occasions. The room consists of a child-sized table, two child-sized chairs, and multiple manipulatives used during intervention activities.
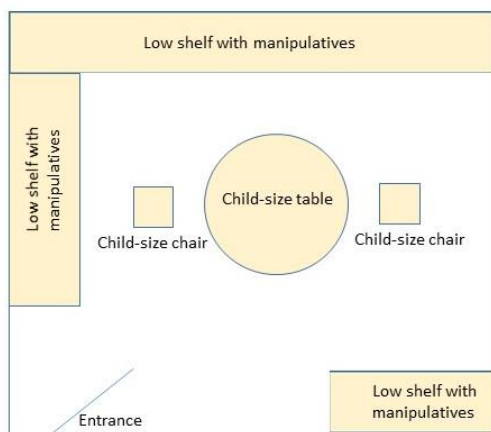
Figure 3. Intervention Room

The room is also located at the end of the main hallway in the far corner of the building to minimize the amount of noise from other classrooms.

Participants. ~~Published participants of prior conducted studies with smaller sample sizes...~~ The sample for the current study included 12

children enrolled ~~with~~in the four-year-old classroom. Criterion-sampling procedures guided the

selection of classroom participants (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). Children whose

parent(s)/guardian(s) provided consent were selected based on the following criteria: (1) child

was four years of age by the start of ABC Learning Center's current academic year; (2) child

remained four years of age for the duration of the study; and (3) child's score on the Ages and

Stages Social-Emotional Questionnaire (ASQ: SE-2) was below the cut-off score for the

questionnaire. The ASQ:SE-2 was selected as a screening tool as the assessment "focuses

exclusively on a child's social-emotional behavior" (Squires, Bricker, & Twombly, 2015, p.4) to

support the identification of children who may require individualized intervention in areas of

social and/or emotional development (Squires, Bricker, & Twombly, 2015).

As a parent-completed assessment tool, the ASQ: SE-2 system encompasses 21

questionnaires; each implemented at various stages of development based on the child's exact

age, determined by an age interval calculated by subtracting the child's date of birth to the

current date (Squires, Bricker, & Twombly, 2015). This process allows evaluators to distribute

the correct ASQ: SE-2 assessment aligned with the child's expected developmental level. The

ASQ: SE-2 also contains procedures to determine the exact age of children born prematurely.

Questionnaires are implemented independently for one-time assessment purposes or in

combination for extended developmental monitoring (Squires, Bricker, & Twombly, 2015).

Scoring of the ASQ: SE-2 questionnaires encompass a point-value rating system ranging

from 0 points to 15 points (Squires, Bricker, & Twombly, 2015) based on the indicated responses

to each item from the parent. A total score is identified and then compared to the ASQ:SE-2

cutoff scores to identify one of three indicators: (1) above the cutoff requires further evaluation,

(2) close to the cutoff requires basic monitoring, or (3) well below the cutoff indicates no further concerns (Squires, Bricker, & Twombly, 2015). The ASQ: SE-2 also contains procedures to modify scoring for unanswered items. Based on the predetermined criteria, eight children met all criteria for participation in the study (see Table 1).

Table 1. Participant's Demographic Information

Pseudonym	Age	ASQ:SE Age	Gender
Gaston	4 years 6 months	48 months	Male
Sally	4 years 4 months	48 months	Female
Lionel	4 years 1 months	48 months	Male
Robert	4 years 8 months	60 months	Male
Chrissy	4 years 2 months	48 months	Female
Brittany	4 years 8 months	60 months	Female

Measures. Qualitative data were collected through four methods of measurement: 1) unobtrusive naturalistic observations of interactions between children and the classroom teacher; 2) a semi-structured one-to-one interview with each child; 3) a semi-structured one-to-one interview using an adapted version of the MSSB; and 4) an unstructured one-to-one drawing activity with each child. Each interview was conducted within an area free from distractions or potential interruptions (Mills, 2003) using interview protocols guided by indicators within the ECERS-R Interaction subscale. Each interview and drawing session was video-recorded and lasted between three to 30 minutes as determined by the method and level of participant engagement.

Unobtrusive naturalistic observations. Unobtrusive naturalistic observations allow researchers the opportunity to obtain data by "going into a social situation and looking" (Denzin

& Lincoln, 1994, p. 354) at the "natural context of occurrences" (Adler, 1994, p. 377) without inserting themselves within those same occurrences. The researcher becomes the observer as he/she documents explicit notations in reference to "participants, interactions, routines, rituals, temporal elements, interpretations, and social organization" (Adler, 1994, p. 380) to become familiar with the physical setting, participants, and other environmental factors (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These observations often occur within an isolated area of the setting that is conducive to unobtrusive observational note taking.

Two unobtrusive naturalistic observations occurred in order to obtain an overview of the classroom's daily routines, procedures, and interactions. The first observation occurred on Monday from 8:00am - 10:00am. This period allowed for the observation of drop-off procedures, free-play learning center activities, whole group instruction, and small group instruction. The second observation occurred on Thursday of the same week from 10:00am - 12:00pm. This period allowed for the observation of free-play learning center activities, free-play outdoor activities on the playground, and lunch routines.

Interviews. Interviews in qualitative studies often encompass open-ended and minimally structured prompts within semi-structured and/or unstructured formats (Merriam, 2009) to understand "things we cannot directly observe" (Patton, 2002) such as perceptions. According to Merriam (2009), semi-structured interviews encompass prompts that are open-ended and allow flexibility for modifications during the interview. The design of semi-structured interviews include: (1) specific information acquired from participants; (2) predetermined prompts; and (3) a mix of structured and unstructured prompts (Merriam, 2009). Unstructured interviews incorporate exploratory prompts designed to assist the researcher in exploring a general topic (Rubin & Rubin, 2011) to understand a phenomenon (Merriam, 2009).

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The interview protocol include 24 questions or prompts (see Appendix E for the Individual Interview Protocols) and is made up of two parts. Part 1 includes six questions and focused on asking children about events that might elicit three basic emotions: (1) happiness; (2) sadness; and (3) anger. These prompts include but are not limited to "what do you think it means to be happy", "what do you think it means to be sad", and "what are some things that make you angry". These prompts were delivered first in order to obtain an understanding of how the children describe basic emotional constructs such as happiness, sadness, and anger (Borke, 1971; Thompson, 1991). This would assist in further examination of the relationship between the children's understanding of basic emotions and how they perceive Mrs. Alice and her classroom practices. (Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000; Zelazo et al., 2003).

Part 2 includes 15 questions or statement prompts focused on prompting children to discuss how they perceive Mrs. Alice's practices during multiple activities throughout the school day. The second set of prompts were designed to elicit information regarding the behaviors of Mrs. Alice based on assessment components within multiple ECERS-R indicators such as *Supervision, Discipline, Staff-Child Interactions, and Interactions among Children*. These prompts include but are not limited to "Tell me what Mrs. [Alice] does when you are playing on the playground", "What happens when someone in the class is making the right choice", and "How does [Mrs. Alice] make you feel when you come to school". Children's responses were followed with further prompting as needed to expand or clarify his/her response such as "How does that make you feel" and "Why does it make you feel that way".

During the video-recorded interview sessions, children's behaviors were observed, tagged in the transcription and included in the analysis. As these behaviors could provide further evidence of children's perceptions of classroom interactions, data was documented alongside the

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transcribed audio data. Documented behaviors include: (1) sitting upright, lifting of head, smiling, and speaking confidently through a high-pitched voice tone; (2) slouching, lowering of head, does not smile, and speaking softly with less confidence; and (3) remaining in a slouched position, frowning, creasing of eyebrows, and responding with a more aggressive voice tone.

MSSB. The protocol consists of an adapted form of the MSSB (see Appendix F for the Story Stem Interview Protocol). Similar to the MSSB, the adapted protocol includes five story stems and five characters. The five story stem scenarios developed are based on five observational components targeted within the ECERS-R Interaction subscale. The five observational components and corresponding scenarios include: (1) supervision of gross motor activities during outdoor play; (2) general supervision of children other than gross motor during indoor center play; (3) discipline of children following an accident or incident; (4) child-staff interactions during morning arrival of children; and (5) peer-peer interactions during center play. For each story stem, a scene is created using dollhouse sized manipulatives aligned with the presented story stem scenario. These manipulatives include: (1) an outdoor playset containing a slide and merry-go-round; (2) a stove with built-in oven to represent the home learning center; (3) multiple bricks to represent the block learning center; (4) a table and a cup; and (5) figurines representing each character within the story stem. The scene is re-designed prior to the presentation of each story stem prompt.

At the start of each story stem session, the child is introduced to five previously selected figures representing the classroom teacher and four children as well as multiple props aligned to each story-stem scenario. Each story stem prompt includes a brief description of the setting followed by prompting the participant to continue the story. If the participant does not respond, follow-up prompts are delivered. The first scenario was taken from the MSSB while indicators

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within the ECERS-R Interaction subscale guided the design of the five additional scenarios. The figures and props were used to model the beginning of a scenario involving the classroom teacher. For example, one story stem description includes, "It is time to play in learning centers. Susan and Jane play in the home center while George and Bob play in the block center. The teacher is in the classroom too. Show me and tell me what happens now". The follow-up prompt includes, "What does the teacher do while the children play in learning centers?"

A time limit for responses is not imposed in order to allow participants the opportunity to provide a comprehensive ending of their choosing. Once participants provided a verbal statement indicating they were finished or no longer physically engaged with the materials, they were asked if they were ready for the next scenario. As no time limit was previously identified, complete story stem sessions ranged from seven minutes to approximately 30 minutes. Time engaged with each scenario differed among participants. Responses given by each child as well as field notes referencing children's behaviors during the activity were documented during review of each video recording.

Drawings. For this study, the drawing interview protocol consists of a presentation of materials and directions for a drawing activity (see Appendix G for the Drawing Interview Protocol). At the beginning of the activity, the participant is given a blank piece of paper, crayons, color pencils, and markers. The participant is given the following directions: "I want you to use the materials to draw a picture of how you feel about your teacher, Mrs. Alice, and something she does in the classroom that makes you feel that way". This prompt was designed to elicit information regarding something Mrs. Alice does within the classroom that may influence the ways in which children perceive Mrs. Alice's actions throughout the school day. For instance, if children report feeling happy, this may be due to Mrs. Alice's ability to provide

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constant positive reinforcement. If children report feeling sad, Mrs. Alice may lack to ability to provide supportive guidance or redirection as she may simply ignore children's requests for assistance. If children report feeling angry, there may be instances in which Mrs. Alice exhibits aggressive behaviors when implementing discipline strategies.

Each participant is given approximately eight minutes to draw his/her response. After this period, participants are then prompted to describe and discuss their drawing. If needed, responses are followed by further prompting the participant to provide a reason why he/she chose to draw the classroom teacher performing the drawn action.

Positionality/Role. I have ten years of hands-on experiences within diverse early childhood settings as well as extensive studies of early childhood theory and practices through collegiate programs. Through these experiences, I have witnessed the effects of restrictive and non-restrictive environments on young children's social engagement and overall development. I have observed and compared the engagement, motivation, and encouragement within each environment and have continuously found myself re-examining my own teaching practices and philosophies. These experiences laid the foundation for my interest to examine young children's perceptions. Through this study, I hope to give young children a voice in the examination of the quality of their classroom experiences. My hope is that policymakers, school administrators, and teachers begin to value and consider the importance of young children's perspectives about teaching practices, which I would hope lead to increased quality of classroom experiences.

Equally important to notate is my personal connection to the selected site. Seven months prior to the study's implementation, I was appointed to an administrative position overseeing the operations of the selected site. Within this role, I visit the site approximately three times per week to discuss managerial operations with the site's director. ~~During each visit,~~ I also routinely

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navigate through each classroom to engage with children and staff. Within these engagements, I discuss any concerns staff may have regarding children or families, observe the engagement of children to identify any behavioral concerns, and participate with children within play to engage them in advanced social conversation. Each classroom visit typically lasts approximately 20-minutes. As these visits to the classroom are a part of the researcher's administrative responsibilities, information obtained from them were not used within the study. For the purposes of the study, separate unobtrusive observations, as an outside observer, were conducted in the attempt to reduce bias.

Procedures

Following approval by the Louisiana State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the study's proposal, procedures, consent forms, the site director and classroom teacher, parent(s)/guardian(s) were asked to complete a consent form (see Appendix A, B, and C for the Site Director Consent, Classroom Teacher Consent, and Parental Letter of Consent) for children's participation. A paper copy of these forms as well as the ASQ: SE-2 were packaged in letter-size manila envelopes and sent home with children. Families were given approximately two weeks to return the completed consent form and completed questionnaire. Nine of the 12 families submitted consent along with the completed ASQ: SE-2 forms to ABC Learning Center's director.

All submitted packets were retrieved from the director by the researcher at the end of the two-week period. Within one week, the researcher analyzed all information submitted to identify children who met all components of the predetermined criteria. Of the nine children whose parents gave consent, eight children met each of the three predetermined criteria. All children meeting the criteria were then asked to participate in the study using the child assent form (see

Appendix D for the Child Assent Form). All eight children verbally gave consent. However, after week two of the study, one child chose to no longer participate while another child was withdrawn from ABC Learning Center. As both children withdrew prior to completion of data collection processes, initial data obtained from these children were not included within the data analysis.

      Data Collection. Data collection began during the last week of November, approximately three weeks after receiving IRB approval, and concluded during the third week in January. In collaboration with the site director and classroom teacher, specific dates and times for data collection were scheduled in advance and modified as necessary for unexpected absences among the participants. Due to the design of the data collection methods, one-on-one interview sessions were implemented first for a brief non-formal transition into the study, the story stem activities occurred second as each session requires a more invasive period, and the drawing activities were implemented third for a brief non-formal transition to end the study. Due to a prolonged holiday break forcing a closure of the facility, an adjustment period of three days was given upon participants' return before implementing the remainder of the study.

      Week one. Both observations were conducted from areas that provided zero to minimal distractions to children and teachers while maximizing views of routines and interactions. Notes were recorded on a laptop using a blank document on the Microsoft Word program. During each observational experience, the researcher objectively recorded daily routines and transitions, behaviors of participants throughout different activities, behaviors of the classroom teacher during activities, and interactions among teachers and children as well as between children.

      Week two. Interview sessions were scheduled to occur across two days; however, as the first three sessions were completed quicker than anticipated, all interview sessions occurred on

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the first day, Wednesday, between 8:00am and 9:00am. Responses given by each child as well as field notes referencing children's behaviors during the activity were documented during review of each video recording. After the interviews were conducted, one child chose to no longer participate and one child withdrew from the facility. The initial data collected from the two participants were excluded from data analysis.

   Weeks three and four. Due to a holiday closure, weeks three and four within the study were separated by a two-week break. During week three, story stem interviews consisting of six story stems were conducted with three children on Tuesday between 9:30am and 11:00am. In order to allow children time to adjust after a two-week break, story stem interviews were conducted with the remaining three children on Thursday of week four between 9:30am and 11:00am. Story stem sessions with children last between seven and 30 minutes each as determined by the engagement of the child.

   Week five. Unstructured drawing activities with each participant were conducted over the course of two days. Four children were interviewed on Monday between 9:30am and 10:30am while the remaining two children were interviewed on Friday between 9:30am and 10:00am.

   During each interview, the child was prompted to create a drawing of how he/she feels about the classroom teacher followed by a verbal description of the drawing when prompted. Additional prompts were given based on children's responses. Responses given by each child as well as field notes referencing children's behaviors during the activity were documented during review of each video recording.

   Data Analysis. Data were analyzed across six participants and the three methods of data collection. The steps of data analysis included: (1) transcribing audio data from each video recording within Microsoft Word; (2) recording participant behavior from each video recording

within each audio transcription; (3) coding specific phrases or statements to create categories within Microsoft Excel; (4) identifying ~~possible~~ themes and sub-themes; and (5) identifying findings across data using inductive examination.

Transcriptions. Descriptive information within each transcription includes: (1) the pseudonym assigned to the child, (2) the date the interview occurred, (3) a description of the setting including the observed disposition of the child during the interview (Merriam, 2009), and (4) facial expressions and physical behaviors of the child when responding to prompts. Each transcription also includes labels to distinguish between the interviewer and the child's responses; line numbering along the left side; double spacing between speakers; and placing prompts provided by the interviewer in bold format and the child's response in italic format (Merriam, 2009) to assist in the data analysis process. Each transcription included the following labels: (1) the letter I to represent the verbal prompt given to the child, and (2) the letter R to represent the verbal response provided by the child (Merriam, 2009). The transcriptions were used to examine verbal data and participant behaviors. All data within transcriptions were coded and categorized within Microsoft Excel.

Coding of data. Coding of data requires the identification of words or phrases "that are responsive to [the] research questions" (Merriam, 2009, p. 176) and interpretable in isolation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Following the completion of data collection, 18 interviews were electronically transcribed within Microsoft Word and inductively open-coded during review of the transcriptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These open codes were examined and transferred within Microsoft Excel for further examination. Information included within the Excel document included participants' pseudonym, the line number of retrieved data, and the code identified to align with the data set. This allowed for *horizontalization* in which all data were viewed as

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contributing equal value to the study (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). To allow for easy grouping of similar codes, each code within the Excel document was designated a unique color as the code was established. A total of 33 codes were identified (see Table 2).

Table 2. Frequency of Codes

Code	Frequency	Code	Frequency	Code	Frequency
Active	5	Positive self-image	2	Negative interactions	6
Choice	3	Teacher behavior	26	Teacher guidance	4
Family engagement	2	Center play	3	Teacher engagement	34
Physical perception (table cont'd)	9	Distracted	1	Positive environment	14
Betrayal	1	Positive View	1	Uncertainty	12
Home Environment	7	Compassion	2	Teacher-directed	1
Independence	1	Physical space	1	Positive interactions	16
Available materials	3	Peer Interactions	14	Personal preference	2
Classroom routines and procedures	23	Misunderstanding of question	5	Positive relationships	1
Isolation	2	Teacher disengagement	5	Negative view of peer	4
Personal experience	10	Self-regulation	1		
Discipline	33				

Category and theme identification. Categories were identified through the examination of recurring open codes across participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). Coded data across data sources for each participant were grouped by similarities that resulted in eight categories: (1) engagement; (2) environment; (3) guidance/discipline; (4) interactions; (5) personal view; (6) routines/procedures; (7) teacher behavior; and (8) understanding. Data within each category was then evaluated based on relatedness to the intent of the study, mutual exclusiveness, data sensitivity, and conceptually congruent (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). Similar categories were combined for further evaluation as "the fewer the categories, the greater the level of abstraction" (Merriam, 2009, p. 187) resulting in six main categories: (1) engagement; (2) environment; (3) guidance/discipline; (4) interactions; (5) routines/procedures; and (6) understanding, (see Table 3).

Table 3. Category Alignment with Codes

Engagement	Environment	Guidance / Discipline	Interactions	Routines/Procedures	Understanding
Teacher Engagement	Positive environment	Discipline	Peer interactions	Classroom routines and procedures	Active
Positive environment	Available materials	Teacher guidance	Negative interactions		Betrayal
Teacher behavior	Center play		Negative view of peer		Distracted
Family engagement	Physical space		Positive relationships		Misunderstanding of questions
Choice	Positive self-image		Positive interactions		Teacher-directed
Teacher disengagement	Isolation		Personal experiences		Uncertainty
Independence	Home environment		Positive view		Physical perception

(Table cont'd)

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Engagement	Environment	Guidance / Discipline	Interactions	Routines/Procedures	Understanding
Self-regulation			Compassion		
Personal preference					

Categories were analyzed in isolation. Through this process, themes and sub-themes were identified based on similarities of children's statements across data collection measures. These themes and sub-themes then led to the identification of multiple findings. ~~Once data was categorized,~~ Once themes, sub-themes, and findings were identified, data was examined once more to see how the findings that emerged from the themes and sub-themes relate to the ECERS-R Interaction dimension. Participant responses within transcriptions serve as supporting evidence and were placed within tables to assist in the presentation and discussion of data analysis within Chapters four and five.

Data organization and security. As the study incorporates multiple forms of data collection, an electronic master file for each child was created to track the verbal responses, drawings, and behavioral field notes. Each master file included the child's transcribed responses, drawing, and related data analysis notes in the order in which data were collected which allowed for the examination of children's perceptions through multiple methods of data collection over the course of several weeks. For the purposes of confidentiality, the center, each participant, and other individuals included within participant responses were identified by a pseudonym within all documents. All digital files were kept on a password-protected computer within a locked office space. Paper documents, including children's drawings, were kept within a locked cabinet within the same office space.

Validity and Reliability

Due to the naturalistic inquiry framework of qualitative research, establishing validity and reliability of a qualitative study incorporates "different assumptions about reality and a different worldview" (Merriam, 209, p. 211) using terminology that differs from quantitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Within qualitative research, conventional terms such as *internal validity*, *external validity*, *reliability*, and *objectivity* substituted, in respective order, for *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009, Patton, 2002). This shift in terminology allows qualitative researchers to describe their processes in "producing valid and reliable knowledge" (Merriam, 2009, p. 209) to support the trustworthiness of their research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009, Patton, 2002).

For this study, credibility was addressed through the following means: (1) prolonged engagement within the classroom over the course of five weeks; (2) naturalistic unobtrusive observations; (3) a description of the researcher's role and personnel connection to the study; (4) data analysis across participants and measures of data collection; and (5) the inclusion of peer-debriefing with a peer-reviewer to identify any biases that occurred during the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability was addressed through comprehensive and concise descriptions of the setting, participant selection, data collection protocols, and data analysis procedures in order to allow easy replicability within other sites. Dependability and confirmability were addressed through the inclusion of an inquiry audit in which a second colleague unfamiliar with the study examined the study's processes, data collection, data analysis, and data interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

The present project sought to understand what kind of verbal and visual information is provided by four-year-old children within interviews, story stems, and drawing activities that describe their classroom teacher and the teacher's classroom practices as well as how this information relate to the ECERS-R Interaction dimension. To examine thisese area of inquiry, three measures of data collection were generated from children over the course of five weeks: (1) a semi-structured verbal interview with a researcher created protocol; 2) a semi-structured story stem interview using an adapted version of the MSSB; and 3) an unstructured drawing activity with each child. Data analysis and categorization led to the identification of four main themes, a total of 11 sub-themes, and four main findings. The four themes and 11 sub-themes the emerged from children's descriptions are:

1. Theme 1: Emotional experiences within the classroom (sub-themes: happiness, sadness, and anger)

2. Theme 2: Classroom routines and procedures (sub-themes: lining up after outdoor play procedures, morning arrival procedures, learning center clean-up procedures, and discipline procedures)

3. Theme 3: Quality of teacher engagement during free play activities (sub-themes: quality of engagement in outdoor play, and quality of engagement in learning center play)

4. Theme 4: Quality of formed relationships (sub-themes: quality of teacher-child relationships, and quality of child-child relationships)

Children's discussions within each theme and sub-theme led to the identification of four findings: (1) when prompted, children can describe their emotional experiences, (2) children are aware of classroom procedures; (3) children are cognizant of teacher behaviors during free play;

and (4) children can provide evidence of classroom interactions that contribute to their

perceptions of others, (see Figure 4). Each finding is discussed in more detail within Chapter 5.
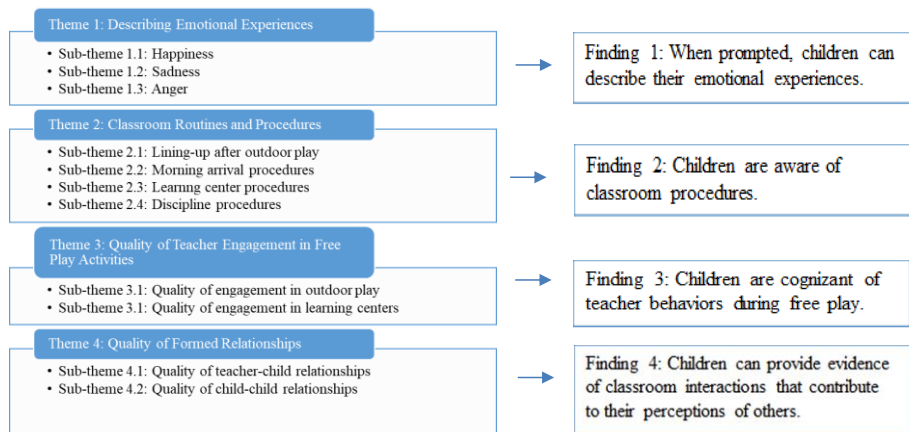
Figure 4. Alignment of Themes, Sub-themes, and Findings

Theme 1: Describing Emotional Experiences

During the interview and drawing activities, children described their emotions. Children

recalled many classroom experiences and described how those experiences made them feel (see

Table 4). When prompted to provide examples of things that may cause someone to feel happy,

sad, or angry, many children began their response stating, "I feel [happy, sad, or angry} when"

followed by providing an example of a classroom experience. For instance, Gaston stated, "I feel

happy when playing in centers", Sally stated, "I feel angry when I'm playing by myself", and

Chrissy stated, "I am happy when I play in centers". Although some responses referred to

experiences within their homes, most responses were specific to classroom experiences.

When prompted to draw how Mrs. Alice makes them feel and something Mrs. Alice does

that makes them feel that way, children stated either what they were going to draw or what

makes them happy. Sally stated, "I'm drawing me and [Mrs. Alice] together" followed by "I like

to play I centers and [Mrs. Alice] let's us play in there everyday. Lionel replied, "In the classroom, I play in centers and centers make me happy", while Robert stated, "That's [Mrs. Alice]" followed by "She makes me feel happy". Brittany further stated, "I wanna draw [Mrs. Alice] playing with me with the magnets" followed by "I feel happy sometimes she plays with me". When describing their completed drawings, all children described classroom occurrences they stated caused them to feel happy. Responses of children also led to the identification of three sub-themes: (1) happiness; (2) sadness; and (3) anger, which will be discussed.

Table 4. Children's Responses Related to Emotional Experiences

	Interview	Story Stem	Drawing
Gaston	**Happy**: Playing outside/ playing in centers / when nobody's being mean to me **Sad**: I get sad when my friend [John} be mean to me / when nobody shares with their toys **Angry**: when [John] tells on me / when I don't play in centers that makes me mad **Responses to other prompts**: [Robert] plays with me a lot and I play space with him and [Thomas] comes play with me / they not making the right choice I don't want to play with [John] cause he always doesn't make the right choice		I love playing in blocks with her / I love to play with her
Sally (Table cont'd)	**Happy:** I like getting green lights / [Mrs. Alice] lets us play in centers for a little while and she lets us play with table toys. She		I'm drawing me and Mrs. [Alice] together I like to play in centers and [Mrs. Alice] let's us play

	Interview	Story Stem	Drawing
	um even lets us play with our stuffy animals for a little but but not everyday but for a little bit of days/ [Mrs. Alice] lets us play outside **Sad:** I am sad when [Megan] doesn't give me hugs/ when I'm playing by myself/ when I have bad dreams / They get a red light **Angry:** When [Max] doesn't really doesn't play with me **Responses to other prompts**: She tells people to stop and come play with us if outside if we're sad and nobody is playing with us / Me and [Megan] are best friends / We're all best friends in our class / [John} always gets red lights cause he always bes bad		in there everyday
Lionel	**Happy:** Playing outside / [Mrs. Alice] puts a check **Sad:** Go in time out / When I was bad, I got a yellow light **Angry**: Being late		I want to draw happy / I want to draw Mrs. [Alice] too / Look at Mrs. Alice. Hers so funny / In the classroom I play in centers and centers make me happy
Robert (Table cont'd)	**Happy:** [Mrs. Alice] gives me a green light / Cause green lights are good / playing in centers **Sad:** You are sad if somebody doesn't give you the toy / They get a yellow light **Angry:** If someone doesn't listen to you /		That's Mrs. [Alice] / she makes me feel happy / So I drawed me and Mrs. [Alice] and we have happy faces because we are both happy

	Interview	Story Stem	Drawing
	Responses to other prompts: She always helps me / We read books and build things / [John] makes bad choices		
Chrissy	**Happy:** Happy means that you're excited / You want to play outside / [Mrs. Alice] is going to take care of you when your mom leaves / When I play in centers **Sad:** If you say I don't want to play with you **Angry:** Angry means that you can get frustrated / The teacher will get mad if someone hits you		I am going to make all of my friends and my teachers / I'm gonna draw Mrs. [Alice] my teacher / we are all having dress up fun
Brittany	**Happy:** You play outside / You don't get to be fussing you just get to go play around / I like more when people make the right choice and not wrong choices / [Mrs. Alice] bees nice to me **Sad:** [Mrs. Alice] has to fuss. **Angry:** When mommy fusses me a lot **Responses to other prompts**: Sometimes she gets my name for me and sometimes she picks my name out for me / She doesn't fuss whenever I come in / I'll play a lot in centers with them		I wanna draw Mrs. [Alice] playing with me with the magnets / I feel happy sometimes she plays with me so that's me and that's her and the new magnet toys are in the box

Sub-theme 1.1: Happiness. During verbal interviews, children were prompted to identify experiences or things that made them feel happy. Smiling and speaking confidently, Gaston, Sally, Lionel, Chrissy, and Brittany expressed feeling happy when playing outside. Gaston, Sally, Robert, and Chrissy also identified feeling happy when playing in centers within the classroom. While Gaston, Robert, and Chrissy gave generalized statements, Sally's response was directed toward feeling happy when the classroom teacher allows her to play in centers. Sally stated,

> [Mrs. Alice] lets us play in centers for a little while and she lets us play with table toys. She um even lets us play with our stuffy animals for a little but not everyday but for a little bit of days. (Sally, 2018)

Gaston and Robert also identified experiences outside of the classroom that have elicited feelings of happiness. Responding in a high-pitched voice tone, Gaston expressed feeling happy "when nobody's being mean to me" while Robert expressed happiness when eating his favorite desserts.

Sub-theme 1.2: Sadness. Children's responses directly referencing feelings of sadness are evident within verbal interview responses when children were prompted to identify experiences that may elicit feelings of sadness. Gaston, Sally, Lionel, Robert, and Chrissy directly identified classroom experiences with examples shared by Gaston, Sally, Robert, and Chrissy referencing peer interactions. Speaking softly, Gaston shared feeling sad when his friend is mean to him stating, "I get sad when my friend [John] be mean to me", while Sally discussed feeling sad when her friend chooses not to give her hugs. Sally stated, "I am sad when [Megan] doesn't give me hugs". Additionally, Gaston and Robert recalled feeling sad when peers do not share their toys. When prompted to describe additional things that make him sad, Gaston stated, "when nobody shares their toys", while Robert stated, "You are sad if somebody doesn't give you the toy". Chrissy described becoming sad when her peers say, "I don't want to play with

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you". When given the same previously mentioned prompt, Sally, Robert, and Lionel discussed feeling sad when disciplinary actions are taken within the classroom. Lowering their heads and speaking softly, Sally described feeling sad "when they get a red light" and Robert stated, "when they get a yellow light". Lionel responded, "When I was bad, I got a yellow light", followed by stating that being "placed in time out" also makes him sad.

Furthermore, all children shared examples of experiences outside of the classroom that have elicited feelings of sadness. Gaston and Robert indicated feeling sad when not allowed to purchase something they desired while Chrissy slouched when she softly described feeling sad when the family pet destroyed one of her toys. Brittany's responses identified corrective behaviors she identified as "fussing". In response to three separate prompts, she stated feeling sad, "when mommy fusses", "when I do something, mommy fusses me", and when "[Mrs. Alice] has to fuss".

Sub-theme 1.3: Anger. Children's responses directly referencing feelings of anger were also evident within verbal interviews. When asked to provide examples of things that elicit anger, Gaston, Sally, and Chrissy shared responses referencing classroom experiences. Gaston stated, "When I don't play in centers, that makes me mad" while Sally discussed feeling angry when her peers do not want to play with her. When prompted to describe things that make her angry, Sally stated, "when [Max] doesn't play with me". Chrissy, on the other hand, described the classroom teacher feeling angry when one child hits another. She stated, "The teacher will get mad if someone hits you". On the other hand, Lionel, Robert, and Brittany related feelings of anger with home-based experiences. Lionel expressed feelings of anger when "being late" while Robert feels angry "if someone doesn't listen to you" or "if you can't have a special treat after dinner". Brittany's responses once again included her mother. She expressed feelings of anger

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"when mommy fusses me a lot" and "when mommy fusses me more". Again providing a more observational perspective, Chrissy defined anger as becoming frustrated as she described her mother's reaction to the family dog's behavior. Chrissy stated, "If our dog chews up your toys then your mom will get very mad".

Theme 2: Classroom routines and procedures

~~Across the three measures of data collection, C~~hildren described multiple daily procedures occurring during the school day across the three measures of data collection (see Table 5). Three specific procedures were discussed across children: (1) morning arrival procedures, (2) learning center clean-up procedures, and (3) discipline procedures. Verbal interviews and story stem activities provided the most opportunities for the children to describe classroom procedures. For instance, during verbal interviews, children were prompted to describe the actions of Mrs. Alice during outdoor play, Sally responded, "When it's time to go inside, [Mrs. Alice] tells everybody to line up", while Lionel stated, "We go in line". When prompted to describe what happens when someone in the class is not make the right choice, Gaston stated, "[Mrs. Alice] fusses at them and they go sit in the moment area", while Chrissy stated, "When someone hits a friend and [Mrs. Alice] gets very mad and puts them in the time out". During story stem prompts, one scenario prompted children to describe what happens when they enter the classroom in the morning. Robert stated, "They put the backpack in the cubby and then the teacher says wash the hands", while Brittany stated, "She [wrote] her name now she can go play in centers". During drawing activities, Robert was the only child providing a response mentioning a classroom procedure; however, his description aligned with his response to the drawing prompt of describing how the classroom teacher makes him feel followed by explaining what the teacher does to make him feel that way. He stated feeling happy when "[Mrs. Alice] gives me a green light". As children discussed five specific

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procedural classroom components, four sub-themes emerged: (1) lining-up after outdoor play;

(2) morning arrival procedures; (3) learning center procedures; and (5) discipline procedures,

which will be further discussed.

Table 5. Children's Responses Referencing Classroom Procedures

	Interview	Story Stem	Drawing
Gaston	Mrs. [Alice] says time to clean up and I sit on the carpet and then she learns me stuff / Mrs. [Alice] fusses at them and they go sit in the moment area.	The teacher tells her don't spill it then she gets her in time out. / The teacher cleans it.	
Sally	When it's time to go inside [Mrs. Alice] tells everybody line up / when it's time to clean up and we have a little bell and one of our friends are the mess monitor / They get a green light / They get a red light / If they're being bad they are getting a red light	They go line up. The teacher goes right here and all the other kids go like this. / The teacher has to clean it up / The teacher she still doesn't let the girl go in time out / She has to sign in / This is where the sign in table is and then she gave her her sheet.	(no reference to classroom procedures)
Lionel	We go in line. / [Mrs. Alice] puts a check mark / You get a red mark / [Mrs. Alice] says [Lionel] time to go ring the bell	They line up / The teacher said ring the bell and then they clean up. / They wash hands then he writes his name then he goes find a center	(no reference to classroom procedures)
Robert	[Mrs. Alice] gives them a green light / They get a yellow light that means you made bad decisions / If you said bad words she gives you a yellow light.	He puts his backpack in the cubby then they wash their hands and they sign in./They put the backpack in the cubby then the teacher says wash the hands and then the teacher gets the sign in paper then the kid signs in/They're	[Mrs. Alice] gives me a green light.
(Table Ccont'd)		only 2 people wait they're only 3 people so he can come in/They line up and	

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	Interview	Story Stem	Drawing
		then they go inside.	
Chrissy	When someone hits a friend and Mrs. [Alice] gets very mad and puts them in the time out. / When Mrs. {Alice} teaches us, we do it.	Kids time to line up! / the teacher is gonna clean it up / You are going in the time out.	(no reference to classroom procedures)
Brittany	It makes Mrs. [Alice} sad. She has to fuss.	I wanna do a girl line and a boy line like we do in our classroom / This is the boy line and this is the girl line then when we start walking we start getting together / She needs to wash her hands before class. / She [wrote] her name now she can go play in centers. / Sorry you can't only two people in one center./ I'll go to the block center cause there's only one people in there.	(no reference to classroom procedures)

Sub-theme 2.1: Lining-up after outdoor play. Sally, Lionel, Robert, Chrissy, and

Brittany described the use of lining-up procedures. Lionel and Robert described the actions of

the children after outdoor play. Lionel stated, "We go in line" while Robert stated, "They line up

and go inside". Sally's response during the verbal interview described the directives given to the

children by the classroom teacher to line up. She stated, "When it's time to go inside, [Mrs.

Alice] tells everybody to line up". Sally also repeated her response during a story stem activity

by stating, "They go line up. The teacher goes right here and all the other kids go like this" as

demonstrated line-up procedures with the given manipulatives. Chrissy modeled the teacher's

voice during the story stem activity as she stated, "Kids, time to line up"! Brittany extended her

response even further to include the method in which the children are expected to line-up. She

stated, "This is the boy line and this is the girl line then when we start walking we start getting together".

Sub-theme 2.2: Morning arrival procedures. The responses of Sally, Lionel, Robert and Brittany provide data describing morning arrival procedures. Robert, providing the most comprehensive description, stated, "He puts his backpack in the cubby, then they go wash their hands, and then they sign in". Lionel and Brittany also discussed the procedure of washing hands followed by writing their names on a sign-in form. Lionel, however, discussed Mrs. Alice giving directives rather than the child performing the action. Changing his voice tone, he stated, "Come wash your hands", followed by stating, "Then he writes his name; then he goes find a center". Similarly, Brittany stated, "She needs to wash her hands before class", followed by "She [wrote] her name, now she can go play in centers". Sally limited her response to the sign-in form by stating, "This is where the sign-in table is and [Mrs. Alice] gave her her sheet" while using the story stem manipulatives to demonstrate.

Sub-theme 2.3: Learning Center Procedures. Gaston, Sally, Lionel, Robert, and Brittany also described learning center procedures as Gaston, Sally, and Lionel described expected behaviors at the completion of learning centers. Sally and Lionel discussed the responsibility of one child to be the "mess monitor" who is to ring a small bell at the end of learning center play. Sally stated, "When it's time to clean up and we have a little bell and one of our friends are the mess monitor". Lionel stated, "[Mrs. Alice] says [Lionel], time to go ring the bell, and then they clean up". Although Gaston did not mention the role of the "mess monitor", his response did describe that the expectations were for children to sit on the carpet to prepare for the daily lesson. He stated, "When [Mrs. Alice] says it's time to clean up, and then I sit on the carpet and then she learns me stuff". On the other hand, Robert's and Brittany's responses were

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in reference to the number of children simultaneously allowed within one learning center. When given the same prompt within a story stem activity, Robert demonstrated children's responses to a child attempting to enter a learning center. Robert replied, "They're only two people...wait they can have only three people so he can come in". Referencing a different learning center, Brittany also provided a demonstration and stated, "Sorry you can't [come in] only two people in one center", followed by the child's response, "I'll go to the block center cause there's only one people in there".

      Sub-theme 2.4. Discipline Procedures. The children described two types of discipline strategies implemented for positive and negative behaviors. Based on the responses of Sally, Lionel, and Robert, children receive a green when they do what the teacher asks and receive a yellow or red light when they do not. When prompted to describe what happens when someone is making a right choice, Sally stated, "They get a green light", while Robert stated, "[Mrs. Alice] gives them a green light". Lionel stated, "[Mrs. Alice] puts a check mark". When prompted to describe what happens when someone is making a wrong choice, Sally replied, "If they're being bad, they are getting a red light", while Lionel forcefully replied, "You get a red mark". Robert responded, "They get a yellow light that means you made bad decisions", while later providing the example of receiving a yellow light if a "bad word" is stated.

      Gaston, Chrissy, and Brittany did not mention the use of a light system for disciplinary purposes; however, they did discuss the use of time-out procedures to address behaviors. Gaston referred to this area of the classroom as the "moment area" when prompted to describe what happens if someone is making a wrong choice. He replied, "[Mrs. Alice] fusses at them and they go sit in the moment area". When given the same prompt, Chrissy explained, "When someone hits a friend and Mrs. [Alice] gets very mad and puts them in the time out". Brittany did not

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mention the use of a light system or time out. She simply stated, "It makes [Mrs. Alice] sad. She has to fuss". She did not elaborate further when prompted.

Theme 3: Quality of Teacher Engagement in Free Play Activities

~~Across children, responses included discussing~~All children discussed ~~the~~ behaviors exhibited by ~~actions of~~ Mrs. Alice during free play activities (see Table 6). Interestingly, majority of children shared examples of Mrs. Alice engaging in play with children and not engaging in play. For instance, during verbal interviews, Sally explained that Mrs. Alice "does stuff that kids are not supposed to do" while she is playing in learning centers. However, in response to a story stem scenario, Sally states, "The teacher wants to play with them" as she demonstrates Mrs. Alice playing in the home center with children. Similarly, Chrissy stated, "She just stands and stands and stands and doesn't move" when asked to describe what Mrs. Alice does during learning centers. On the other hand, when given a story stem prompt, Chrissy states, "Well, she is gonna play with the girls". Majority of data providing evidence of Theme 3 were collected within verbal interviews and story stem activities. Brittany shared a more clarified description of the frequency of Mrs, Alice's engagement in play as she stated in the verbal interview, "Sometimes she plays with us in centers". Robert's responses also relate to the frequency in Mrs. Alice's engagement as he stated, "sometimes yea" when asked if Mrs. Alice plays in centers as a follow-up prompt.

Children also shared a mixture in examples of Mrs. Alice's behavior during outdoor play. In response to one story stem prompt, Sally stated, "She watches them play by walking around", while responding, "She plays hide and seek" in response to another story stem prompt. Lionel's responses were similar to Sally's. He stated, "Her climb up here and hers slide", while later responding, "Hers just watch them". Additionally, Gaston shared examples only of Mrs. Alice's

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engagement in play. The variation in responses regarding Mrs. Alice's behaviors during free play

activities led to the identification of Theme 3. Children described the teacher's behaviors during

play resulting in the emergence of A children described the teacher's behaviors during two different types of free play two subthemes emerged: (1) quality of engagement in

outdoor play; and (2) quality of engagement in learning centers, which will be further discussed.

Table 6. Children's Responses Referencing Teacher Engagement in Play

	Interview	Story Stem	Drawing
Gaston	She plays with me when no one is here when I'm here first.	The teacher says, hello Bob. Do you want to go play in blocks? Then he says yes and then they build something	Mrs. [Alice] and me playing in blocks. / I love playing in blocks with her.
Sally	She talks to Mrs. [Rachel] and she does stuff that kids are not supposed to do that are teacher stuffs and she like cuts things out while we are playing in centers. / She tells us when it's time to clean up after. / She tells people to stop and come play with us if outside if we're sad and nobody is playing with us.	**Outdoor Play:** She's gonna tell the little kids to go on the slide again cause it was fun. / She's watching the kids play. / She watches them by walking around. / Now she wants to go play and she likes climbing up the stairs and she knows how to walk on here then she goes down the slide. / Now the teacher is playing with the little boys cause she played with the little girls but now she's playing with the boys. / She plays hide and seek. / Now one one of the kids are gonna go hide and the teacher and her are gonna find her.	(Drew Mrs. Alice and center materials - however, provided no verbal nor visual evidence of Mrs Alice engaging in play.)
(Table ~~C~~cont'd)		**Center Play:** The teacher wants to play with them. / The teacher cooks stuff and there's some and this is a table and she gets all the dinner ready and she	

Interview	Story Stem	Drawing
	puts it on the stove and then when it's done cooking she just puts it right there and the other food right under there and she closes that and when it's done she just puts it in that drawer to cool it off. / Now she's going walk to play with the other kids. / She says, ‑I want to play with first I played with those girls now I'm playing with y'all. / She wants to go get the drawing thing and draw on the smartboard so the kids know they have to do stuff. / She says, I'm gonna play with you for a little while but make sure you don't stand on this table.	
Lionel	Her calls me and we go in line. / Her calls someone to go at the carpet.	**Outdoor Play:** Her climb up here and hers slide. / The teacher climbed up the slide. / Hers just watch them./ From right there. **Center Play:** Hers just watch them.	(focused on drawing physical features of classroom teacher)
Robert	Mrs. [Alice] stands by the door forever cause they go to the bathroom. / (shakes head no) Some (shakes head yes) sometimes yea	**Outdoor Play:** She like watches the kids. / She just watches them. / Yes she watches us. **Center Play:** They watch / from the carpet / She just stands there.	(focused on drawing physical features of classroom teacher)
Chrissy (Table	She plays with us in centers. / She just stands and stands and stands and doesn't move. (outdoor	**Outdoor Play:**:She is going to climb up. / The children play and the teachers gonna play with	(focused on drawing physical features of classroom teacher)

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	Interview	Story Stem	Drawing
cont'd)	play)	them. / She's gonna go down the slide. There she goes! / They could go through the tunnel like the teacher is. / Come on kids. Time to time to play on the slide! **Center Play:** All of the children in [centers] with the teacher. / Well she is gonna play with the girls. / Now she is in the dollies house and the teacher is gonna close that oven up. / They play games together.	
Brittany	Sometimes she plays with us in centers. / I was playing in a center with Ms. [Alice]. / Just plays with the other kids when I'm washing my hands.	**Outdoor Play:**:She watches them to see if they bees bad/She can come play if she wants/She can go up here, stand here, then she can climb down and she can go on the merry go round. / All four kids on the merry go round the teacher going down the slide. / The teacher she can go down the slide after. / She can play by herself. **Center Play:** She's working on some stuff. / Like this on the computer. / The teacher just walked in and says, whoa how did y'all get here so fast – well our mom brought us so fast cause we always early – Ok, can I play in the kitchen center with y'all? – sure	She plays with us so I wanna build the playing toys and we have the magnets and I wanna draw one of the magnets. / I wanna draw Mrs. [Alice] playing with me with the magnets.

Sub-theme 3.1: Quality of engagement in outdoor play. When discussing outdoor play, Sally, Lionel, and Chrissy, ~~verbally~~ described Mrs. Alice's engagement in various play activities - the most common being sliding down the playground slide. Sally stated, "She likes climbing up the stairs and she knows how to walk on here then she goes down the slide", while Chrissy replied, "She's gonna go down the slide". Lionel's response incorporated the story stem manipulatives to demonstrate the children asking Mrs. Alice to play, to which Mrs. Alice responds by climbing the ladder to the slide and sliding down. Lionel stated, "Her climb up here and hers slide". When asked if Mrs. Alice does anything else on the playground, Sally described Mrs. Alice and the children playing hide-and-seek together. She stated, "She plays hide and seek and then the kids come find her", followed by verbally describing the child hiding while Mrs. Alice searches for her. Given another prompt, Sally also described which children Mrs. Alice engages in play with on the playground. She stated, "Now the teacher is playing with the little boys cause she played with the little girls but now she's playing with the boys".

Sally, Lionel, Chrissy, and Brittany also discussed teacher engagement in behaviors other than play. During one session, Lionel was prompted to discuss Mrs. Alice's actions on the playground while the children play. He responded, "Hers just watch them". When prompted within another session using different terminology, Lionel repeated the same statement and similar responses were obtained from Sally and Brittany. Sally and Brittany both stated that Mrs. Alice watches the children play while Sally expanded her response by stating, "She watches them by walking around" and Brittany stated, "to see if they be bad". Within another session, Chrissy stated, "She just stands and stands and stands and doesn't move". Within some of Brittany's responses, Mrs. Alice does engage in play activities; however, Mrs. Alice is playing apart from the children. In responses to one prompt, Brittany stated, "She can play by herself",

followed by "I want to put all four kids on the merry-go-round and the teacher going down the slide" in response to another prompt. Brittany did not elaborate further.

      Sub-theme 3.2: Quality of engagement in learning centers. When prompted to discuss Mrs. Alice's behaviors during learning center play, Sally, Chrissy, and Brittany discussed Mrs. Alice's engagement in play activities with children. During separate sessions, Chrissy and Brittany described Mrs. Alice's engagement in play as Chrissy shared they "play games together" and Brittany stated, "I was playing in a center with Mrs. [Alice]". Brittany further described teacher engagement in learning center play. Within a story stem prompt, Brittany demonstrated Mrs. Alice's behavior upon arrival in the morning as she stated Mrs. Alice "just plays with the other kids when I'm washing my hands". Sally and Chrissy shared similar responses using the same manipulatives. Sally accompanied her demonstration by stating, "The teacher cooks stuff …...and then when it's done cooking she just puts it right there", while Chrissy stated, "Now she is in the dollies house and the teacher is gonna close that oven up". In a later prompt during the drawing activity, Brittany described Mrs. Alice's engagement as she drew the classroom teacher "playing with me with the magnets".

      In contrast, Sally, Brittany, and Lionel also described Mrs. Alice's engagement in other activities while children are engaged in learning center play. When asked what Mrs. Alice does during learning center play, Brittany responded, "She's working on some stuff", followed by "like this on the computer". In response to another prompt regarding a learning center, Sally stated, "She talks to Mrs. [Rachel] and she does stuff that kids are not supposed to do". Sally expanded her response to include an example of Mrs. Alice cutting materials for the daily lesson while children are playing in learning centers. When given the same learning center prompt,

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Lionel stated, "Her calls someone to go at the carpet" but did not provide an extension of his response.

The majority of Robert's responses also refer to Mrs. Alice's engagement in activities other than play with children. During one session, Robert was prompted to describe Mrs. Alice's behavior during outdoor play. He stated, "She like watches the kids", followed by "She just watches them". To probe further, Robert was asked if Mrs. Alice does anything else on the playground to which he shook his head no and repeated his previous response. During a separate session, Robert described Mrs. Alice's engagement in learning center play; however, he quickly changed his response. When asked if Mrs. Alice plays with him in learning stations, Robert shook his head no, briefly paused, and then shook his head yes while stating, "sometimes yea". However, even when prompted, he did not discuss further. During a third session, Robert was given another learning center prompt to which he stated, "She just stands there" and at a later time was asked yet again to discuss Mrs. Alice's actions while he plays in learning stations. Robert replied, "[Mrs. Alice] stands by the door forever cause [the children] go to the bathroom".

Contrary to Robert's responses, Gaston's responses describe his personal play experiences with Mrs. Alice. Gaston explained that Mrs. Alice engages in play with him when he is the first to arrive in the morning. He stated, "She plays with me when no one is here when I'm here first". He repeated this explanation during a later session accompanied by a demonstration with given manipulatives. Gaston also created a visual representation of him and Mrs. Alice playing in the block center. When asked to discuss his drawing, he responded, "[Mrs. Alice] and me playing in blocks" followed by "cause I love playing in blocks with her".

Theme 4: Quality of Formed Relationships

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~~Across the three measures,~~ Cchildren shared information in all three measures of the relationships formed between the children and Mrs. Alice as well as among the children themselves (see Table 7). For instance, within verbal interviews, Gaston stated, "[Robert] plays with me a lot and I play space with him and [Thomas] comes play with me" and "I don't want to play with [John] cause he always doesn't make the right choice" while responding, "I love playing in blocks with her" as he referenced Mrs. Alice within the drawing activity. Sally's responses contained the same pattern as she stated, "Me and [Megan] are best friends" and "[John] always gets red lights cause he always bes bad" within verbal interviews, and also referenced Mrs. Alice within the drawing activity by stating, "I'm drawing me and [Mrs. Alice] together". The same pattern continued across children as Lionel stated, "[John] is mean to people" and "[Mrs. Alice] makes me feel better", Robert stated, "[Mrs. Alice] says hi to everybody when they walk in" and "We read books and build things" in reference to his peers, and Chrissy stated, "[Mrs. Alice] is going to take care of you when your mom leaves". Brittany stated, "I like more when people make the right choice and not wrong choices" along with feeling happy when Mrs. Alice "plays with [her]". As children discussed their classroom teacher and their peers, two sub-themes emerged: (1) quality of teacher-child relationships; and (2) quality of child-child relationships, which will be further discussed.

Table 7. Children's Responses Referencing Formed Relationships

	Interview	Story Stem	Drawing
Gaston	I like when nobody's being mean to me / I am sad when my friend [John] be mean to me / when nobody shares with their toys / When [John] tells on me / [Robert] plays with me a lot and I play space	You can't until you say please – pleeeease – Ok you can cook. But just be careful to not get your hands hot. I'm gonna put these gloves on	Mrs. [Alice] and me are playing in blocks / I love playing in blocks with her / I love to play with her

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	Interview	Story Stem	Drawing
(Table Ccont'd)	with him and [Thomas] comes play with me / they not making the right choice I don't want to play with [John] cause he always doesn't make the right choice		
Sally	[Mrs. Alice] lets us play in centers for a little while and she lets us play with table toys. She um even lets us play with our stuffy animals for a little but but not everyday but for a little bit of days/ [Mrs. Alice] lets us play outside / When doesn't give me hugs / [Max] doesn't really doesn't play with me / She tells people to stop and come play with us / me and [Megan] are best friends / we're all best friends in our class / [John} always gets red lights cause he always bes bad	The girls are girls and the boys are boys so and they the girls are their friends and the boys are friends. / And the girls say no / cause we want to play by ourself	I'm drawing me and Mrs. [Alice] together / I need pink again to draw / I like to play in centers and [Mrs. Alice] let's us play in there everyday
Lionel	[John] is mean to people / [Mrs. Alice] puts a check / Mrs. Alice makes me feel better.	mmm…..they say no	I want to draw happy / Look at my happy face / I want to draw Mrs. [Alice] too / Look at Mrs. Alice. Hers so funny/ In the classroom I play in centers and centers make me happy
Robert	Somebody doesn't give you the toy / someone doesn't listen to you / [Mrs. Alice] always helps me / We read books and	[Mrs. Alice] says hi to everybody when they walk in	That's Mrs. [Alice] / she makes me feel happy / So I drawed me and Mrs. [Alice] and we have happy faces because we are both

	Interview	Story Stem	Drawing
	build things / [John] makes bad choices		happy
Chrissy (Table Ccont'd)	[Mrs. Alice] is going to take care of you when your mom leaves / they say I don't want to play with you / The teacher will get mad if someone hits you / When I'm sad, Mrs. [Alice] says what's wrong	They were asking if they would have some blocks in the dollies house so that was very kind of them / I wanted to play but then the black girl with the ponytail just pushed me / [Child voice] The black girl with the ponytail just pushed me. [teacher voice] Come over here! [Child voice] Ok. [teacher voice] Why did you push him? [Child voice] Cause [teacher voice] Cause why? [child voice] Well he says he wasn't my best friend! [teacher voice] Why did you say that Bob? [child voice] Cause I did!	I am going to make all of my friends and my teachers / I'm gonna draw Mrs. [Alice] my teacher / we are all having dress up fun
Brittany	I like more when people make the right choice and not wrong choices / [Mrs. Alice] bees nice to me / Sometimes she gets my name for me and sometimes she picks my name out for me / She doesn't fuss whenever I come in / I'll play a lot in centers with them	She says good morning	I wanna draw Mrs. [Alice] playing with me with the magnets / I feel happy sometimes she plays with me so that's me and that's her and the new magnet toys are in the box

Sub-theme 4.1: Quality of teacher-child relationships. All children described positive

perceptions of Mrs. Alice based on classroom experiences. When asked how Mrs. Alice makes

them feel when they come to school, Lionel responded, "[Mrs. Alice] makes me feel better"

while Gaston, Sally, Robert, Chrissy, and Brittany shared equally positive responses and Sally

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indicating a desire to "give the teacher a hug" upon arrival. Supporting responses shared by Robert and Brittany describe their observation of Mrs. Alice during morning arrival routines. Robert stated, "She says hi to everybody when they walk in" while Brittany stated, "She doesn't fuss whenever I come in", followed by "She says good morning". Both children also described Mrs. Alice's willingness to help them with different tasks. When asked to describe Mrs. Alice's response when asking for help, Robert replied, "She always helps me", while Brittany shared feeling happy when Mrs. Alice is nice to her like when Mrs. Alice assists her in finding her name on the class sign-in form. Brittany stated, "[Mrs. Alice] bees nice to me" followed by "sometimes she gets my name for me and sometimes she picks my name for me". Equally positive, Sally and Chrissy shared examples of Mrs. Alice's attention to children's needs. Sally's responses include a playground experience in which Mrs. Alice "tells people to stop and come play with us if we're sad" while Chrissy's responses include "Mrs. [Alice] says what wrong" when she is sad. Chrissy also extended her responses by stating, "She takes care of you when your mom leaves". All children shared that Mrs. Alice allows them to engage in free play activities often with Sally stating, "She lets us play with our stuffy animals for a little bit of days" and "She lets us play in [learning centers] everyday".

When given with the prompt within the drawing activity, Sally and Brittany immediately stated they were going to draw themselves engaged with Mrs. Alice. Sally stated, "I'm drawing me and [Mrs. Alice] together", while Brittany stated, "I wanna draw [Mrs. Alice] playing with me with the magnets". When asked to describe their drawings, Gaston and Chrissy identified drawing Mrs. Alice engaged in learning centers with them. Gaston stated, "[Mrs. Alice] and me are playing in blocks", while Chrissy stated, "We are all having dress up fun". When asked to identify why they selected to draw Mrs. Alice engaged in learning centers, Gaston's and

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Brittany's reasoning included feeling happy when playing with Mrs. Alice in learning centers. Gaston stated, "I love playing in blocks with her" followed by "I love to play with her", while Brittany stated, "I feel happy sometimes she plays with me so that's me and that's her and the new magnet toys are in the box". Sally, on the other hand, stated, "Mrs. Alice lets us play in there every day" rather than describing the activity in which they are engaged with in her drawing. Lionel's response simply described feeling happy playing in centers but did not mention Mrs. Alice's involvement during play.

       Sub-theme 4.2: Quality of child-child relationships. Children's responses suggest a mixture of positive and negative experiences with peers and provide valuable information into daily peer interactions contributing to the development of the children's perceptions of their peers. When asked to describe activities completed with peers in the classroom, Gaston, Brittany, and Robert described formed relationships among children. Gaston stated, "[Robert] plays with me a lot and I play space with him and [Thomas] comes play with me", while Brittany stated, "I'll play a lot in centers with them". Robert discussed building and reading books with his peers. He stated, "We read books and build things". Similar to Gaston, Sally also identified a specific peer, Megan, with whom she has developed a relationship. Sally stated, "Me and [Megan] are best friends"; however, when prompted to extend her response, she stated, "We're all best friends in our class". Gaston and Chrissy also discussed cooperative collaboration among peers as Gaston shared an example of a peer asking permission to enter a learning center. He stated, "You can't until you say please" followed by, "Ok, you can cook but just be careful to not get your hands hot." Similarly, Chrissy's example included children within one learning center asking children within another learning center for materials. She stated, "They were asking if they would have some blocks in the dolly's house so that was very kind of them".

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Despite the indication of some positive peer-peer occurrences, the children also discussed negative peer-peer occurrences. While demonstrating with given manipulatives, Chrissy shared the following scenario:

> [Child voice] The black girl with the ponytail just pushed me. [Teacher voice] Come over here! [Child voice] Ok. [Teacher voice] Why did you push him? [Child voice] Cause [teacher voice] Cause why? [Child voice] Well he says he wasn't my best friend! [Teacher voice] Why did you say that Bob? [Child voice] Cause I did! (Chrissy, 2018)

Sally also discussed negative interactions. When prompted with the scenario of a child asking permission to enter a learning center, Sally forcefully stated, "The girls say no". When prompted further, Sally stated, "We want to play by ourself". Furthermore, Lionel discussed children being turned away from engaging in learning centers by peers. However, he simply stated, "They say no" without elaboration.

Additionally, Gaston, Sally, Lionel and Robert described the disruptive behaviors of a specific peer, John. Although examples of specific behaviors were not identified, Sally stated, "[John] always gets red lights cause he always bes bad", while Robert simply stated, "[John] makes bad choices". Gaston described how the behaviors of John influenced how Gaston felt toward John. In response to one prompt, Gaston stated, "I don't want to play with [John} cause he always doesn't make the right choice" while also responding, "I don't like [John] because he doesn't make the right choices" in response to another prompt. Lionel also indicated that John was mean by stating, "[John] is mean to people" but did not provide specific examples.

Connection of Themes and Findings to ECERS-R Framework

Once themes, sub-themes, and findings were identified, data was examined once more to see how what children shared relate to the ECERS-R Interaction dimension. The findings that emerged from the themes and sub-themes were used to examine this relationship, resulting in the identification of a correlation between the findings of the study to the subscales within the

ECERS-R Interaction dimension (see Figure 5). The subscales include: (1) *Supervision*, (2)

Discipline, (3) *Staff-Child Interactions*, and (4) *Interactions among Children*.

Supervision
Finding three: Children are cognizant of teacher behaviors during free play.

Discipline
Finding two: Children are aware of classroom procedures.

Staff-Child Interactions		
Finding one: When prompted, children can describe their emotional experiences.	Finding three: Children are cognizant of teacher behaviors during free play.	Finding 4: Children can provide evidence of interactions that contribute to their perceptions of others.

Interactions among Children	
Finding one: When prompted, children can describe their emotional experiences.	Finding 4: Children can provide evidence of interactions that contribute to their perceptions of others.

Figure 5. Alignment of Findings to ECERS-R Interaction Subscale

ECERS-R consists of two separate indicators addressing *Supervision*. One indicator refers to supervision of gross motor activities while the other refers to general supervision of children. For the purpose of discussion, both indicators were viewed as one component. Based on data analysis, finding three most aligns with the supervision of children (see Table 8). Within finding three, data indicates periodic teacher engagement within play as four children discussed engagement and disengagement, one child discussed engagement with him alone, and one child discussed Mrs. Alice's actions of simply standing and watching or engaging in lesson planning activities during play.

Table 8. ECERS-R Supervision Alignment

			ECERS-R Indicator
Finding 3: Children are cognizant of teacher behaviors during free play.	"Now the teacher is playing with the little boys cause she played with the little girls but now she's playing with the boys." "She watches them by walking around"	"She talks to Mrs. [Rachel] and she does stuff that kids are not supposed to do that are teacher stuffs and she like cuts things out while we are playing in centers."	Supervision of Gross Motor and Non-Gross Motor Activities

Based on data analysis, evaluators could potentially provide a score for *Supervision*.

Finding two most aligns with the ECERS-R *Discipline* indicator (see Table 9). According to the ECERS-R scale (2005), general consistency in the way situations and children are handled must be consistent. As previously discussed, three children mentioned the use of time-out procedures, two children indicated the use of a light system for discipline, and one child simply indicated Mrs. Alice "fusses" the children.

Table 9. ECERS-R Discipline Alignment

			ECERS-R Indicator
Finding 2: Children are aware of classroom procedures.	"Mrs. [Alice] fusses at them and they go sit in the moment area." "They get a yellow light that means you made bad decisions."	"When someone hits a friend and Mrs. [Alice] gets very mad and puts them in the time out." "She has to fuss."	Discipline

As data suggests the use of multiple discipline strategies, ECERS-R evaluators could potentially provide a score for *Discipline* aligned with inconsistencies in discipline procedures.

Findings one and three most align with the ECERS-R indicator *Staff-Child Interactions* (see Table 10). Throughout the study, children's responses described the occurring interactions between staff and children. As the findings suggest children were able to distinguish between happiness, sadness, and anger, ECERS-R evaluators could potentially develop interview prompts to elicit the emotional experiences of children in reference to teacher-child interactions. The children presented examples of such experiences as evidence of the first finding one.

Table 10. ECERS-R Staff-Child Interaction Alignment

			ECERS-R Indicator
Finding 1: When prompted, children can describe their emotional experiences.	"She takes care of you when our mom leaves."	"I feel happy sometimes she plays with me."	Staff-Child Interactions
Finding 3: Children are cognizant of teacher behaviors during free play.	"Sometime she plays with us in centers."	"She's gonna tell the little kids to go on the slide again cause it was fun."	Staff-Child Interactions
Finding 4: Children provide evidence of interactions that contribute to their perceptions of others.	"I love playing in blocks with her" "[Mrs. Alice] let's us play in there everyday"	"[Mrs. Alice] makes me feel better." "[Mrs. Alice] says hi to everybody when they walk in"	Staff-Child Interactions

The interactions between staff and children can be further examined within finding three of this study as the children indicated inconsistent engagement of adults in outdoor play and center play.

The ECERS-R indicator *Interactions among Children* can be examined within the first finding of this study as the children's responses described interactions among peers (see Table

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11). The children shared statements such as "my friend [John] be mean to me" (Gaston, 2018), "I play a lot in centers with them" (Brittany, 2018), and demonstration of peer conflicts.

Table 11. ECERS-R Interactions Among Children Alignment

			ECERS-R Indicator
Finding 1: When prompted, children can describe their emotional experiences.	"I like more when people make the right choice and not wrong choices."	"You are sad if somebody doesn't give you the toy."	Interactions among Children
Finding 4: Children provide evidence of interactions that contribute to their perceptions of others.	"I don't want to play with [John] cause he always doesn't make the right choice." "Me and [Megan] are best friends."	"[Robert] plays with me a lot and I play space with him and [Thomas] comes play with me."	Interactions among Children

ECERS-R evaluators can use these descriptions to provide a score for the Interactions among Children indicator.

Through three measures of data collection, children were provided the opportunity to share information of their classroom teacher. Mrs. Alice, and her classroom practices. Analysis of children's responses led to the identification of multiple themes, sub-themes, and findings based on similarities across children's descriptions within all measures of data collection. Related to children's continuous descriptions of their emotional experiences, classroom routines and procedures, teacher engagement during free play activities, and their perceptions of the classroom teacher and peers, four main findings emerged that were then related to the ECERS-R Interaction dimension. The findings suggestChildren in the present study: (1) when prompted, children can describe their emotional experiences; (2) children are aware of classroom procedures; (3) children are cognizant of teacher behaviors during free play; and (4) children can

provide evidence of interactions that contribute to their perceptions of others, leading to the

value of considering children's perceptions within formal evaluation systems.

CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Classroom scores on ECERS-R have a great impact on the identification of quality teaching practices within early childhood classrooms (NAEYC, 2009; Tout et al., 2014). However, some researchers question the ability for instruments such as ECERS to conceptualize classroom quality (Gordon et al., 2013; La Paro et al., 2012; Pianta & Hambre, 2009). To address this concern, the examination of children's perceptions can provide evaluators with another perspective of the classroom's infrastructure (De Lair & Erwin, 2000) as the children are the individuals consistently embedded within the daily operations of the classroom - making them important stakeholders in the examination of quality teaching practices.

In the effort to promote further research in examining preschool children's perceptions of the school climate as one of multiple measures of evaluation of quality teaching practices (Cook-Sather, 2002; English & Burniske, 2015; and Kragh-Müller & Isbell, 2011), the primary goal of the study was to examine four-year-old children's perceptions. Three video-recorded measures of data collection, including verbal interviews, story-stem interviews, and drawing activities, were implemented with six four-year-old children to examine following areas of inquiry: (1) What kind of verbal and visual information is provided by four-year-old children within interviews, story stems, and drawing activities that describe their classroom teacher and the teacher's classroom practices; and (2) how does what children shared relate to the ECERS-R Interaction dimension.

Discussion of Findings

According to researchers, consistently positive classroom interactions can provide behavioral expectations, cognitively stimulating tasks, and consistent feedback that assists children in effectively regulating behavior while enhancing social and emotional development

(Connors-Tadors & Harorqitz, 2014; Martella et al., 2014; Williford et al., 2013). As "children's early engagement predicts later achievement" (Williford et al., 2013, p. 3), the ability of preschool teachers to recognize and examine what the child believes is a positive environment could impose significant implications on the developmental progression of children's academic and social skills (Berg & Aber, 2015; Kragh-Müller & Isbell, 2011; Pierson et al., 2015). This includes the ability for children to express their emotions as discussed within Theme 1, the ability for children to understand classroom routines and procedures as discussed in Theme 2, the quality of teacher engagement in play as discussed in Theme 3, and the quality of formed relationships within the classroom as discussed in Theme 4. Based on the data presented within each theme, four major findings were identified: (1) when prompted, children can describe their emotional experiences; (2) children are aware of classroom procedures; (3) children are cognizant of teacher behaviors during free play; and (4) children can provide evidence of interactions that contribute to their perceptions of others. Each finding will be discussed in further detail with supporting evidence.

Finding 1: When prompted, children can describe their emotional experiences.
According to Borke (1971) and Thompson (1991), children three years of age are able to identify simple emotional constructs such as happiness, sadness, and fear. Findings from the study support this notion as data indicates four-year-old children have developed the ability to recognize and appropriately identify experiences that elicit happiness, sadness, and anger while providing examples of personal experiences inside the classroom that elicit each emotion. Providing information into daily classroom occurrences and teaching practices, children can describe the emotional experiences that could influence their perceptions of classroom interactions. However, according to some researchers, the challenge is to elicit this information

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as children four to five years of age have short attention spans, motivational biases, and limited language skills (Measelle et al., 2005; Measelle et al., 1998).

Although some responses across children were not directly related to classroom interactions, they did suggest that children's emotional experiences may influence their perceptions of the immediate environment. For instance, referring to Mrs. Alice, Brittany stated, "She doesn't fuss when I come in". This suggests that Brittany may experience negative interactions outside of the classroom that may have influenced her level of happiness when attending school. This could lead to a more positive perception of the classroom teacher if Brittany experiences an increase in negative home-based interactions in comparison to classroom interactions. Similarly, Sally described that playing with her mom, dad, and siblings made her happy but expressed feeling angry when her classroom friend does not want to play with her. In this case, the positive interactions Sally experienced in playing with her family could affect how she perceives the interaction with her classroom friend during classroom play. Data also indicated some similarities between responses of sadness and anger among the children, which suggest a variance of emotions experienced by each child. For instance, when a toy was not shared with him, Gaston felt angry while Robert felt sad. Similarly, Sally felt angry when her friend did not want to play with her while Chrissy felt sad. This indicates that, although the behaviors and facial expressions exhibited align with the emotion each child was attempting to convey, each child experienced different emotional reactions within the same situation.

Researchers also suggest children as young as two years of age are able to create mental representations through spontaneous and random non-linear scribbling (Cherney, Seiwert, Dickey, & Flichtbeil, 2006; Dyson, 1982; Literat, 2013; Rosenblatt, & Winner, 1988; Wilson, & Wilson, 1977). In fact, some researchers believe that young children's internal motivation when

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drawing is to strive for a realistic portrayal of emotions and perceptions revealing how they perceive their environment (Cherney et al., 2006; Literat, 2013). Providing children the opportunity to draw provides a co-constructive activity that is often interactive and engaging for the child as well as allows for expressiveness of thoughts (Literat, 2013). Children's responses within the drawing activity support this research as children drew how Mrs. Alice makes them feel as well as something that Mrs. Alice does that makes them feel that way. Responses shared by the children suggest a consensual view across all children that the classroom teacher has created an enjoyable environment in which the children often feel happy. The children were also able to provide rationales supporting their visual representations. This supports researchers' idea the children do possess the ability to express their emotions through the visual representation of drawing. The children described a consensual view of happiness within verbal responses as they described Mrs. Alice greeting them upon arrival and attending to their individual needs. These data describe additional support that the children have developed an overall positive perspective of their classroom teacher.

Finding 2: Children are aware of classroom procedures. Data collected across children suggest an acute awareness of daily classroom procedures and routines. Most of the children's responses included a robust description of procedural activities that occur upon morning arrival. Based on the children's responses, Mrs. Alice seems to have established clear expectations as the children seemed to understand they must put their backpacks away, wash their hands, and then sign-in on the sign-in form before engaging within learning centers. Additionally, responses indicated the implementation of classroom jobs assigned to each child as responses included descriptions of a "classroom mess monitor". Based on the children's responses, there is a clear understanding of the responsibilities of the mess monitor as well as the

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expected behaviors of the children when the mess monitor rings a bell to signal the end of learning centers. However, no children shared descriptions of expected behaviors during clean up. This did not insinuate children do not understand how to clean-up or know where they are expected to be after clean up, but rather suggest further investigation may be required to identify if the children understand the expected behaviors during clean-up procedures. This lack of description could be a result of the framework of interview protocols that did not provide the opportunity for further investigation.

Data also indicates four-year-old children are able to perceive connections between positive or negative actions and the consequences of those actions (Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000; Posner & Rothbart, 1998) including disciplinary actions imposed upon their peers. Children were able to discuss and demonstrate Mrs. Alice's responses to specific behaviors exhibited within daily activities such as correcting inappropriate behaviors and placing children in a specified area as described by Gaston and Lionel. However, analysis of data also suggests inconsistencies in the implementation of consequences for behaviors. Based on the data, three children indicated a use of time-out procedures, two children indicated the use of a light system for discipline, and one child simply indicated the classroom teacher "fusses" the children. Children's responses suggest an understanding of each disciplinary measure in isolation; however, it is unclear if a specific strategy is implemented for specific behaviors or if the strategy implemented is randomly selected. This inconsistency may hinder children's understanding of overall classroom procedures. However, despite these inconsistencies, there is no evidence to suggest disciplinary actions are not delivered in a supportive capacity as aggressive corrective behavior was not demonstrated or discussed by any of the children.

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Finding 3: Children are cognizant of teacher behaviors during free play. According to Vygotsky (1978), play is the driving force behind the development of the zone of proximal development. This includes the engagement of classroom teachers within play activities. However, according to Bodrova, Germeroth, & Leong (2013), early childhood teachers do not often provide the support needed for effective play. This was evident within the study's findings as children's responses indicate differing perspectives in the level of engagement from Mrs. Alice within different activities. For instance, responses shared by Sally, Lionel, Chrissy, and Brittany suggest periodic teacher engagement with children during outdoor play as she plays hide-and-seek with children while Robert's responses suggest Mrs. Alice only engages in the monitoring of children during outdoor play rather than physically engaging in play. The same pattern emerged from the children's descriptions of teacher engagement in center play activities. The examples shared by some children described a high level of teacher engagement in center play while other children described a low level of teacher engagement with children as Mrs. Alice completes duties aligned with managerial tasks during learning center play. Interestingly, Gaston's responses are limited to Mrs. Alice's engagement with only him during learning center play. These data suggest inconsistent behaviors of teacher engagement in play that are frequently noticed by the children and do not provide consistent and continuous support for children's development nor enhance potential opportunities for scaffolding of learning concepts during play. Furthermore, the fact that children notice these behaviors could affect children's motivation for play as well as change their perception of Mrs. Alice.

Interestingly, the differences in children's responses could also be due to differing conclusions drawn from the ways in which each child interprets events within his/her immediate environment. Much like adults, each child could develop different interpretations of a given

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situation leading to the development of different situations. According to Gibson's theory, young children's perceptions continuously change, as they "perceive different cues with varying degrees of sensitivity" (Suchman & Aschner, 1961, p. 453). Although Gibson's theory suggests this to occur within one child, the study's findings suggest the same can be aligned across children. For example, in response to one prompt Robert described Mrs. Alice standing by the classroom door while children went to the restroom. Brittany suggested playing with the classroom teacher in a learning center. The possibility exists that while engaged in a learning center with Brittany, a child requested to use the restroom to which Mrs. Alice left the learning center to monitor the doorway, noticed by Robert. This is not to suggest inaccuracies in children's accounts of classroom events but rather suggest a greater complexity of understanding how children view their immediate environment leading to the development of their perceptions that can be further explored.

   Finding 4: Children can provide evidence of interactions that contribute to their perceptions of others. The versatility of narrative assessments has allowed researchers to develop more multidimensional approaches to obtaining young children's perceptions about key contributions of their individual experiences (Measelle et al., 1998; Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton; 1976). Throughout the study, the children were able to provide their perceptions within other measures of examination allowing them the opportunity to provide personal narratives that reference internal states of emotion (Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000; Reese et al., 2010; Thompson, 1991). For instance, during verbal interviews and story stem activities, children's responses suggest a feeling of happiness toward Mrs. Alice and attending school. To elaborate and provide examples, Sally shared the flexibility of Mrs. Alice in allowing them to play with their stuffed animals brought from home and the amount of time Mrs. Alice allows them to play in learning

centers. Robert, Brittany, and Sally also shared Mrs. Alice's acknowledgement of their arrival each morning as well as the assistance she provides when asked for help or when they are feeling sad. These descriptions provide support that children are "unique reporters of classroom interactions" (Wallace et al., 2016, p. 1858) as they draw on vocabulary to verbalize their perceptions (Domitrovich, Cortes, & Greenberg, 2007; Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000; Reese et al., 2010; Thompson, 1991; Vallotton & Ayoub, 2011) to provide reliable information in regard to their ongoing classroom experiences (Wallace et al, 2016).

Overall, Mrs. Alice seems to have established a welcoming environment as she greets children upon arrival and provides assistance when required as identified by Robert and Brittany. Sally and Chrissy's descriptions of the way in which Mrs. Alice attends to their needs suggests Mrs. Alice has developed awareness and sensitivity to children's individual needs. Interestingly, the female children shared the most descriptive experiences as Sally and Chrissy described Mrs. Alice's actions when they feel sad. Although Robert did state that Mrs. Alice acknowledges everyone upon arrival and does help when asked, most of the male children's responses included simply stating that they feel happy with Mrs. Alice. According to the data, Mrs. Alice seems to have established an overall warm and welcoming environment in which the children feel valued. This is not to suggest that the children may develop negative perceptions of her on occasion, but rather suggest an overall positive experience within interactions with Mrs. Alice.

Referencing peer interactions, the most common response across children seems to refer to engagement in, what Vygotskian researcher Daniel Elkonin termed, mature play with peers rather than the parallel play often observed among very young children (Bodrova et al., 2013). These relationships can have significant effects on school readiness as children who experience positive peer interactions "tend to have higher academic achievement" (Williford, Maier,

Downer, Pianta, & Howes, 2013). However, it is equally important to acknowledge the independent desires of children as Sally demonstrated the children aggressively stating "no" when asked by a peer to join them in play. This suggests the possibility of the development of stronger relationships with some peers rather than others as suggested by Gaston and Sally. For instance, there seems to be a consensus across the majority of children that one peer, John, tends to engage in disruptive behaviors. This has caused some children such as Gaston to avoid engaging in play with John while other children have simply developed a negative perception of him as they describe John as "mean" and "bad" (Sally, Gaston, Robert, and Lionel). However, as only four children discussed John's behaviors, it is difficult to identify if the other children of the classroom perceive John the same way as it is highly unlikely the same child treats all children the same way.

The data regarding John could have profound implications as behaviors exhibited by one child toward different children may contribute to differences in the way the children view their peer. Furthermore, apart from Gaston's and Lionel's implication that John was "mean", children's responses indicate perspectives of John based on observed occurrences rather than direct personal experiences with John. This is not to suggest direct personal experiences leading to a negative perception of John did not occur but rather indicate an additional complex level of examining how four-year-old children develop their perceptions of others within their own views of reality.

Connection of Findings to ECERS-R Framework

Including seven subscales that examine the care and education teachers provide for children, the ECERS-R instrument has been the leading instrument used in the examination of classroom quality within multiple early childhood programs. (Clifford et al., 2010; La Paro et al.,

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2012). However, Gordon et al. (2013) and La Paro et al. (2012) suggest further research is required in assessing the validity and reliability of the instrument as the instrument "fails to capture the depth needed" (La Paro et al, 2012, p. 5) to understand classroom factors that directly affect children. As the ECERS-R does not consider the perceptions of children, the findings previously identified could provide insight into how classroom interactions actually affect children rather than limit consideration to what evaluators assume about classroom interactions. To provide further detail, each indicator within the ECERS-R Interaction subscale is further discussed referencing Cryer, Harms, and Riley (2003).

Supervision of gross motor activities. According to Cryer et al. (2003), this indicator targets the supervision of children during "outdoor physical play or indoor gross motor play" (p. 299) and does not include generalized gross motor behaviors that may occur during non-gross motor activities. Within this indicator, observers assess the behaviors of staff during supervision of children through multiple indicators targeting "watching, guiding, or intervening as needed" (p. 300), the type of interactions occurring between staff and children, the number and positioning of staff members in the area appropriate for the number of children, the initiative taken upon staff to prevent dangerous situations, scaffolding of skills among children such as teaching children how to use new equipment, and assisting children engage in social interactions with peers.

Based on the findings from the study, the third finding aligns with this indicator as children described the engagement of Mrs. Alice during outdoor play. Based on the collected data, children shared mixed perceptions indicating some instances of engagement in play while indicating other occurrences of engagement in more monitoring procedures rather than play. For instance, Sally, Lionel, and Chrissy described Mrs. Alice's engagement as Mrs. Alice slides or

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plays hide-and-seek. On the other hand, Sally, Lionel, Robert, and Brittany also suggested Mrs. Alice simply monitors children's behaviors by walking around the playground while Chrissy suggested Mrs. Alice simply stands in one spot. Although periodic engagement may initially seem like a negative occurrence, adequate monitoring of children is a component of this indicator. In further examination of responses, it seems Mrs. Alice does provide adequate supervision during the times in which she is not engaged in play; therefore suggesting a possible positive rating for some indicators within this indicator.

   General supervision of children. The third finding also aligns with this indicator as observers assess the behaviors of staff targeting the same basic indicators as gross motor supervision with the addition of cleanliness of areas, adjusted activities based on developmental ability of children, and responsiveness to children's attempt to complete activities. Again, the children also shared mixed perceptions indicating some instances of engagement in learning center play while indicating other occurrences of engagement in activities other than play. For instance, Chrissy and Brittany described playing games in learning centers with Mrs. Alice while Sally described how Mrs. Alice engages in the home learning center as Mrs. Alice "cooks stuff". On the other hand, Sally, Brittany, and Lionel described Mrs. Alice's engagement in activities besides learning center play such as preparing lesson materials and speaking with the other adults in the classroom. These perceptions suggest a lack of sufficient supervision during learning center play that could influence ECERS-R ratings if considered within evaluation.

   Discipline. Based on children's responses, the second finding most aligned with the ECERS-R indicator of *Discipline*. Within this indicator, "the methods used by staff to manage children's behavior" (p. 317) is evaluated. Indicators within this indicator target the ability for classroom teachers to maintain control of behaviors, maintain appropriate expectations for

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behaviors among children, react consistently to behaviors by applying the same rules and the same methods, and actively involve children in solving conflicts. Based on collected data, Mrs. Alice seems to have implemented consistent expectations for behaviors during morning arrival procedures as Sally, Lionel, Robert and Brittany described explicit morning procedures within their responses. Additionally, Gaston, Sally, Lionel, Robert, and Brittany described behavioral expectations at the completion of learning centers as the "mess monitor" rings the bell signaling for children to clean up. Furthermore, Robert and Brittany discussed the number of children allowed within a specific center during learning centers indicating consistent implementation of learning center rules and procedures.

Some children's responses indicated inconsistent implementation of discipline procedures for unacceptable behaviors as it seems two strategies of correction are implemented within the classroom, which may hinder children's understanding of classroom discipline procedures. This could potentially result in a lower score within this indicator when considering children's reports of inconsistent implementation of discipline procedures whereas if children's reports were not considered, inconsistent discipline strategies may not have been observed. Although classroom teachers strive to achieve higher scores on evaluations, bringing attention to inconsistent behaviors among classroom teachers could address unintentional occurrences and provide guidance for improving classroom practices.

Staff-child interactions. Findings one, three, and four provide support for this indicator of ECERS-R. Within this indicator, observers target "the ways in which staff relate to the children" (p. 329) including responsiveness to children's needs, physical and verbal interaction between teacher and child, respect for children, respond sympathetically to upset or angry children, and encouragement of mutual respect. All children enjoy attending school and express

an overall happiness feeling towards Mrs. Alice. Sally shared the flexibility of Mrs. Alice in allowing them to play with their stuffed animals brought from home and the amount of time the classroom teacher allows them to play in learning centers. Robert, Brittany, and Sally also shared the classroom teacher's acknowledgement of their arrival each morning as well as the assistance she provides when asked for help or when children are sad. Responses within finding three also describe interactions as the children discussed Mrs. Alice engages in play-based activities with children. The culmination of these responses suggest an environment has been established in which the children may feel valued and respected as their individual needs are met.

      Interactions among children. Findings one and four provides support for the child-child interaction indicator of ECERS-R. Within this indicator, observers target "the relationships children form with one another" (p. 341) including how well they play together, communication with each other, cooperation, and appropriate social behaviors. Data indicates an overall appropriate environment in terms of interactions among children. Based on children's responses, children engage in high levels of group play rather than parallel or solitary play indicating the formation of positive relationships among peers. Children also provide examples of peers respectfully asking permission to enter a learning center indicating enhanced social behaviors. Unfortunately, reports did include some negative interactions among peers. However, most of the data indicated typical behaviors expected from four-year-old children including a child not allowing a peer within a learning center. Interestingly, there were consistent reports of one specific peer who seems to exhibit continuous problematic behaviors within the classroom. Many of the children suggested John is mean and makes negative choices leading to their desire to not include him in play. This could have implications on the scoring a classroom teacher would receive within this indicator. However, similar to the general supervision of children

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indicator, awareness of how the children perceive John could encourage Mrs. Alice to investigate underlying causes and obtain further support to address John's behaviors.

The majority of data collected aligned with the observational behaviors notated by the ECERS-R evaluator with the exception of components within the *Discipline* indicator (see Table 12). This exception can be contributed to the differing descriptions by children of two different discipline strategies implemented within the classroom as the most recent evaluator mentioned the use of one method within her notations. As an item within the ECERS-R *Discipline* indicator states, "staff react consistently to children's behavior" (Cryer et al., 2003), it is plausible for the evaluator to provide an acceptable score if only one discipline strategy was observed. However, as children discussed two different strategies of discipline strategies, inconsistent reactions to children's behaviors may occur on a daily basis unbeknown to the evaluator.

Within all other indicators within the Interaction subscale, the observational notations provided by the most recent ECERS-R evaluator are relatively similar children's descriptions within the study. For instance, in terms of general supervision of children, the evaluator notated consistent monitoring of children on the playground as well as the staff's ability to provide encouragement and assistance to children as needed. This aligned with children's descriptions of Mrs. Alice walking around the playground to watch the children. Additionally, the evaluator notated Mrs. Alice monitors children from one area of the classroom, which aligns with children's descriptions of Mrs. Alice engaging in managerial activities during learning center play.

In terms of *Staff-Child Interactions*, the evaluator's notations of consistent use of eye-level, calm voice tone, attentive listening, questioning techniques during play, and attentiveness align with children's descriptions of being taken care of and Mrs. Alice's engagement and

encouragement in play leading to children feeling happy and cared for. In reference to
Interactions among Children, the evaluator's notations of observing positive interactions within
cooperative play as well as observing one child's difficulty in socializing with peers aligns with
children's descriptions of playing with specific peers, identifying specific friends within the
classroom, and the perceptions developed of John. ~~Table 12 reflects the alignment of the~~
~~ECERS-R evaluator's notations and children's descriptions from the study.~~

Table 12. ECERS-R Evaluator Notations Versus Children's Descriptions

	Most Recent Evaluator's Notations	Children's Descriptions
General Supervision of Children	**Gross Motor**: Consistent monitoring in all areas of playground Encouragement and assistance provided as needed **Non-Gross Motor Activities**: Monitors from one area away from centers - need to walk around more Encouragement and assistance provided as needed	**Outdoor Play**: Now the teacher is playing with the little boys cause she played with the little girls but now she's playing with the boys. She watches them by walking around. **Center Play**: She talks to Mrs. [Rachel] and she does stuff that kids are not supposed to do that are teacher stuffs and she like cuts things out while we are playing in centers.
Discipline	Remained calm and used consistent voice tone when correcting Good use of the classroom green light / red light system	Mrs. [Alice] fusses at them and they go sit in the moment area. They get a yellow light that means you made bad decisions. When someone hits a friend and Mrs. [Alice] gets very mad and puts them in the time out. She has to fuss.
Staff-Child Interactions	Consistent use of eye-level, calm voice tone, and attentive listening	She takes care of you when our mom leaves.

	Most Recent Evaluator's Notations	Children's Descriptions
(Table ~~C~~cont'd)	Used good questioning techniques during play to scaffold learning	I feel happy sometimes she plays with me.
	Attentive to children's needs (restroom, hurt feelings, etc)	Sometime she plays with us in centers.
		She's gonna tell the little kids to go on the slide again cause it was fun.
		I love playing in blocks with her.
		[Mrs. Alice] let's us play in there everyday.
		[Mrs. Alice] makes me feel better.
		[Mrs. Alice] says hi to everybody when they walk in
Interactions among Children	Many positive interactions through cooperative play	I like more when people make the right choice and not wrong choices.
	One child exhibits difficulty in socialization skills – child engages in parallel play rather than cooperative play	You are sad if somebody doesn't give you the toy.
		I don't want to play with [John] cause he always doesn't make the right choice.
		Me and [Megan] are best friends.
		[Robert] plays with me a lot and I play space with him and [Thomas] comes play with me.

Important to consider, as children's responses do not directly align to each indicator within each

subscale, utilizing children's perceptions, as the sole method of ECERS-R evaluation would be

unethical and inconsistent. On the other hand, the described alignment does provide further

support for researchers to consider the insight children's perceptions could provide regarding

daily interactions rather than rely solely on the events occurring within the minimal time ECERS-R evaluators are present within the classroom.

Limitations of the Study

      Although the study did provide valuable data, there were many components of the study that would benefit from further evaluation and adjustment. Components such as the study's framework, data collection measures, and the validity and reliability of the data collected.

      Study's framework. One limitation includes the period in which the study was conducted. The study was implemented across a five-week period during the middle of the academic year in which a prolonged holiday break forced a closure of the facility. The limitation was addressed by conducting consistent interview sessions prior to the holiday break and allowing an adjustment period upon children's return after the break before implementing the remainder of the study. However, this break caused a two-week span in which children were not engaged within daily classroom activities potentially changing their perceptions upon their return. For future implementation, extended periods of closure should be taken into account when developing the study's implementation time-line as extended breaks from the classroom could potentially influence children's perceptions.

      Another limitation was the voluntary withdrawal of one child during the study while another child withdrew from the center. This reduced the number of children within the study. Although generalizations to the population cannot be made due to the study's framework, future inclusion of children from multiple sites could provide additional data and allow for comparisons across a greater number of participants. This could also allow for comparisons across sites as well as classroom teachers.

An additional limitation was the involvement of the researcher within ABC Learning Center outside of the study's implementation despite her best efforts to limit the amount of time spent within the center. As an administrator of the facility, the researcher is viewed as an authoritative figure among children. Therefore, this may have influenced the depth and specificity of information shared by the children. For instance, if children were to discuss an action of the classroom teacher that caused them to feel sad or angry, they may not disclose the information in fear of causing trouble for the classroom teacher.

To address this limitation, the researcher restricted visits to the center to occur only for implementation of the study. Additionally, during each session, the researcher attempted to maintain neutral reactions verbally and physically to children's responses to avoid the potential of influencing the information children chose to discuss. For future implementation, the researcher could spend additional time engaging with children in play prior to implementation of the study in the attempt to develop a more trusting relationship. This may allow children to feel more comfortable in sharing additional experiences.

Data collection measures. A fourth limitation of the study was the inability to effectively test the created interview protocol prior to the project. While efforts were made to check the validity of the tool, including working with others in the field, getting feedback on the protocol and some piloting, the previously untried protocol might not be as effective for engaging children's discussion and gaining their perspective. Additionally, separating the implemented protocol into two separate protocols can assist is streamlining data collection and analysis. For instance, one protocol can be directed towards how children define each emotion while a separate protocol implemented at a different time can be directed toward discussing experiences that have elicited each emotion. Implementing the same protocol with the same

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children later would also assist in the establishment of validity as responses to the exact same prompts can be examined for each child.

An additional limitation was the implementation of story stem protocols as the number of story stems implemented was time consuming in some sessions and did not fully engage some children as originally expected. Although engagement of research and training was conducted prior to the study's implementation, further adjustments to the implemented story stem protocol could be beneficial in order to elicit the most information from the children. Further adjustments include: (1) piloting multiple story stem techniques prior to implementation of the study, (2) reducing the number of story stem activities presented within one session to maintain children's attention, (3) designing more specific storylines for each story stem, and (4) reducing the number of characters within each story stem as the children seemed to engage with only two or three characters for each scenario. Additionally, more awareness should be placed on the selection of manipulatives to be used during implementation, as some playground equipment representations did not replicate equipment on ABC Learning Center's playground. For example, a merry-go-round was included within story stem manipulatives but the center's playground does not contain a merry-go-round. This caused a brief distraction for some children.

Validity and reliability of data collected. A final limitation would be the validity and reliability of the data collected due to the design of the interview protocols. This is not to insinuate the collected data should be disregarded; but rather suggest modifications to the interview protocols to provide more clarity to children and consistency across the study.

Implications for Practice

The intent of the study was to examine what kind of verbal and visual information is provided by four-year-old children within interviews, story stems, and drawing activities that

describe their classroom teacher and the teacher's classroom practices as well as how the information shared by children relate to the ECERS-R Interaction dimension. Are teachers able to assess that the practices implemented are affecting children's development in a positive manner through the consideration of the children's perceptions? The findings that emerged from this study could enhance teaching practices including the ways in which teachers interact with children, engage in self-reflective practices, and increase self-awareness. The findings also provide data that can be used to enhance pre-service teaching programs. The ways in which the findings contribute to teaching practices and pre-service teaching programs will be further discussed.

Contribute to the ways in which teachers interact with children. American Psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner worked to describe the connections between development and multiple external environmental influences (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). According to Bronfenbrenner's idea, there exists a correlating nature of relationships within cross-system interactions, affecting the quality of personal relationships. By establishing an environment of positivity through these relationships, classroom teachers use varying techniques described by Gibson (2000) as modeling expected behaviors, using appropriate voice inflection, and arranging the existing classroom to assist children in the extraction of information through sensory data (Gibson, 2000; Gibson & Pick, 2000; Miller, 2011) within a social framework as suggested by Vygotsky. These interactions enhance children's ability to expand regulatory processes of attention, retention, and reproduction of behaviors that contribute to processes such as emotion regulation (Bandura, 1977; Miller, 2011). Evidence from the study supports the idea that children are able to discuss their emotional interactions inside and outside of the classroom environment

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that could contribute to ways in which teachers interact with children, encourage peer-peer interactions, and examine developing relationships across children.

Encourage self-reflective practices. According to a study published by W.S. Gilliam (2005), an estimated 5,117 preschoolers across the nation are expelled each year, a rate that is 3.2 times higher than the national expulsion rate for K-12 students. Another study examining the quality of discipline policies within NAEYC accredited programs believed that these results "indicate that the children with the greatest need of support and intervention are in fact having that intervention and support removed" (Garrity, Longstreth, & Linder, 2016, p. 1) which impacts teachers' own social-emotional functioning (Brown, Jones, LaRusso & Aber, 2010) within the classroom. According to Ullrich, Lambert, McCarthy, and Zimber (2012), "behavior problems are one of the most stressful components in educating young children" (p. 121) as teachers experience diverse cultural beliefs, values, and traditions among children. These factors cause teachers to experience a diverse range of behaviors that are exhibited in multiple forms across children. These challenging behaviors have great impact on the physical, psychological, and emotional development of children as well as the teacher. However, the ways in which teacher identify challenging behaviors could vary, leading to inconsistencies in the ways in which teachers address problematic behaviors across situations as well as across children.

Evidence from the second finding indicate that children are able to understand and describe classroom procedures including disciplinary processes. As the descriptions within this study indicate inconsistencies in the implementation of disciplinary procedures, the data could guide teachers in examining potential patterns in which classroom procedures and expectations are implemented across children, implementation of consistent consequences for behaviors, and potential interventional needs for children exhibiting constant problematic behaviors such as in

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the case of John. Additionally, the data could also encourage teachers to participate in self-reflective practices in order to analyze their own behaviors, which may positively or negatively influence children. These include the teachers' physical behaviors, verbal terminology, voice tone or inflection, body language, and classroom management techniques such as rewards and consequences. Furthermore, the data could also prompt administrators to develop a universal system of accountability that would parallel national accreditation processes. Teachers would then be held accountable for becoming familiar with and effectively implementing procedures, including discipline procedures, aligned with best practices.

Encourage self-awareness. Through a child-centered framework, children construct their own knowledge by exploring and manipulating their natural environment (Bredekamp & Coople, 1997) within play-based activities. Within these activities, teachers are given the opportunity to enhance children's learning by becoming, what Vygotsky termed, the MKO as they scaffold children's play through reciprocal conversations and collaborative activities. However, many preschool teachers tend to lack the motivation, knowledge, or awareness required to understand the importance of engagement within developmentally appropriate practices and embrace the responsibility of engaging in active play with children (Bodrova et al., 2013). By considering the perceptions of children, teachers can become more aware of their own behaviors and behavior patterns in the presence of children and how those behaviors may affect child development.

Enhance pre-service teaching programs. In recent years, a progressive movement in education policy has emphasized the importance of examining preschool children's perceptions of the school climate (Cook-Sather, 2002; Kragh-Müller & Isbell, 2011). This movement influences pre-service teaching programs in guiding pre-service educators to develop teaching

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practices that are culturally responsive to children's needs (Pierson et al., 2015). Unfortunately, many teachers have established an instructional framework that abides by more traditional teaching practices related to current tasks rather than promoting innovative thinking and creativity (Blackbourn, Bunch, Fillingim, Thomas, Schillinger, & Dupree, 2011; Cook-Sather, 2002; Dutro, 2009; MacSuga & Simonsen, 2011). According to Blackbourn et. al. (2011), this reproductive thinking lends itself to solutions that are "repetitive, standard, and predictable rather than original, novel, innovative, and prescriptive" (p. 141) and does not meet the demands for pre-service teaching programs to produce quality educators. Pre-service teaching programs are now tasked with the challenge of providing collaborative, problem-oriented and open-ended instruction that supports the development of innovative thinking and evidence-based practices among teacher candidates (Blackbourn et. al., 2011; MacSuga & Simonsen, 2011; Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008; Thomson & Nietfeld, 2016). However, much of training remains grounded in the concept of traditional teaching practices rather than delivering instruction based on children's relationships and perceptions that span from social interactions to cultural and institutional influences (Klein, 1988; Dutro, 2009; Moore & Oklahoma State University, 1972).

According to the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and National Research Council (NRC) (2015), there seems to be a lack of effective training into the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of young children (Ackerman, 2016) as early childhood educators are traditionally not required to engage in post-secondary education prior to being employed. According to IOM and NRC, this structure diminishes the significant contributions made by early childhood professionals to the long-term success of children and calls for a more cohesive infrastructure that strengthens competency-based qualifications and comprehensive pathways for

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early childhood professionals. However, the findings of the study can assist in the examination of adjusting the pedagogy and traditional methodological methods of pre-service teaching programs to programs that are inclusive of best practices within early childhood education. This will not only assist in the development of an effective classroom climate (Berg & Aber, 2015; Kragh-Müller & Isbell, 2011, Pierson, Schultheis, & Myck-Wayne, 2015) for children of all ages, but expand our own understanding of the meaning of effective teaching practices to assist early childhood educators in developing additional developmentally appropriate practices that benefit the whole child (NAEYC, 2009). The findings of this study can also guide pre-service teachers in strengthening self-reflective engagement and modification in order to implement quality teaching practices based on how children truly perceive their environment rather than how teachers think children perceive their environment.

Implications for Future Research

The culmination of data within this study lends support for policymakers and researchers to include the examination of children's perceptions within evaluation systems designed to examine teacher quality. How can teachers, administrators, researchers, and policymakers come together to collaborate in the development of more effective measures of classroom quality? How can young children's perceptions be continuously obtained through developmentally appropriate measures to provide accurate information into daily classroom interactions? Does one developmentally appropriate method of data collection provide more reliable data than another method? How can young children's perceptions be incorporated within formal assessment instruments such as ECERS-R? These questions remain unanswered and lend themselves to further research.

The use of ECERS-R leads to highly important implications for further research. However, as each state is granted the flexibility to select the assessments within their own QRIS system (Farran, 2016), there exists inconsistencies in assessment implementation across states causing great difficulty in comparison of quality across states' preschool programs. Additionally, ECERS-R assessments are often implemented by professionals who are not consistently within the classroom environment under evaluation leading to questions of accuracy in assessment results in relation to providing a clearer picture of the classroom's infrastructure. To address this concern, some researchers believe children's perceptions should be evaluated as one of multiple measures within a comprehensive teacher evaluation process rather than in isolation (English & Burniske, 2015; Goe, Bell, & Little, 2008; MET Project, 2012) to provide a more comprehensive view of teacher effectiveness and avoid the formation of underdeveloped measures (Wallace et al., 2016). According to Wallace et al. (2016), "adolescent students are unique reporters of classroom interactions" (p. 1858) and provide reliable information in regard to their ongoing classroom experiences that outside observers are typically unable to obtain. These ideas support the notion that children be granted the right to be heard in matters directly affecting their developmental progress and actively participate in the development of practices that directly influence their development (UN Commission on Human Rights: 46th Session, 1990; Kragh-Müller & Isbell, 2011; Mirtschewa & Djambazova, 2016). However, the measurement of how preschool children's emotions and perceptions directly affect evaluations of teaching effectiveness remain comprehensively unexplored (Aleamoni, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Ellett & Teddlie, 2003; English & Burniske, 2015; Farran, 2016).

As previously discussed, the framework of the interview protocols could benefit from additional modifications that may contribute to further research in the consideration of

incorporating children's perceptions within assessment measures. These included: (1) encourage the children to identify classroom components that may elicit happiness, sadness, or anger; (2) encourage the children to discuss the behaviors of the teacher when engaged in their favorite learning center followed by explaining how those behaviors make them feel; (3) provide prompts related to a specific incident within the classroom to provide clarity for the children, and (4) contain consistent follow-up questions across the protocol. These modifications can significantly influence children's understanding of the prompts provided, potentially leading to more comprehensive data sets for evaluation.

Due to the inclusiveness of multidimensional workings of young children's social and emotional development (Connors-Tadors & Harorqitz, 2014; Martella et al., 2014), broader support for forms of formative and summative evaluations using observational measures to examine *quality* environments and interpersonal interactions are beginning to be considered within Early Childhood Education (Casey, & McWilliam, 2011; Day, 2002; Darling – Hammond, 1986; McColskey & Egelson, 1997). Assessed through various assessment tools, many teachers are examined in their ability to create productive and beneficial learning environments (Downer et al., 2010; Hambre et al., 2009; La Paro et al., 2004; Mashburn et al., 2008). However, further examination of the assessments themselves are required as they do not include the direct perspectives of the children who are most engaged within the classroom. To address these concerns, continuous research in the inclusion of preschool children's perceptions in teacher evaluation methods is imperative and should continue. Duplication of this study in its entirety or duplication of specific interview protocols implemented within this study could strengthen the advocacy for providing four-year-old children a voice within comprehensive teacher evaluation systems.

Conclusion

According to some researchers, children as young as four years of age are able to provide reliable and valid perceptions (Emde, Wolf, & Oppenheim, 2003; English & Burniske, 2015; Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000; Zelazo et al., 2003) through developmentally appropriate means that provide insight into daily classroom interactions. As discussed by Clark (2005), the exploration of the way in which children perceive their experiences, interests, and concerns could allow these least powerful members of society to serve as catalysts for change. It is the responsibility of educators and researchers to actively listen to children and invasively examine children's perceptions of the classroom infrastructure in order to improve high-quality teaching practices. By providing children a distinctive and individualistic voice through developmentally appropriate methods, we can further our understanding of how children view and interpret the world in which they are engaged. This examination could strengthen current measures assessing classroom quality and lead to truly meaningful and genuine high-quality teaching practices within children's reality.

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APPENDIX A. SITE DIRECTOR CONSENT FORM

1. **Study Title:** Giving four-year old children a "voice" within a comprehensive teacher evaluation system

2. **Performance Sites:** Little Colonels Academy

3. **Investigators:**   M – F 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
                          Ms. Mistie Perry, Doctoral Candidate, (337) 781-2059

4. **Purpose of the Study:** The intent of this study is to examine four-year-old children's perceptions of the support provided by the classroom teacher through video-recorded verbal interviews, story stem techniques, and drawing activities.

5. **Subject Criteria**
   a. **Inclusion:** site director, classroom teacher, selected children
   b. **Exclusion:** substitute teachers, classroom volunteers, and all other children within the classroom

6. **Study Procedures:** Over the course of six weeks, unobtrusive observations as well as semi-structured interviews incorporating verbal prompts, story stem techniques, and drawing activities will be conducted with selected children in one-on-one sessions. The pre-designed prompts within all data collection methods will be guided by the indicators with the ECERS-R Interaction domain.

   Week one. Two unobtrusive two-hour observational sessions will occur on two predetermined days. During this time, field notes will be taken in reference to the classroom setting, observed development of relationships among children, observed development of relationships between children and the classroom teacher, teacher responses to occurring situations, emotionally driven behavior patterns of children, and emotionally driven behavior patterns of the classroom teacher. This will provide the researcher with an overall view of the classroom dynamics and contribute to the evaluation of the environment that may influence children's perceptions.

   Week two. One-on-one verbal interview sessions with each child will be conducted over the course of three predetermined days. Four children will be interviewed each day. Each session will be video-recorded and last approximately 8-10 minutes guided by the developed protocol. During each session, the child will be prompted to provide verbal responses to pre-developed prompts guided by indicators within the ECERS-R Interaction domain. Responses provided by each child as well as field notes referencing children's behaviors during the activity will be documented.

   Weeks three and four. Story stem activities within one-on-one sessions with each child will be conducted over the course of three predetermined days per week. Two children will participate each day. Each session will be video-recorded and last approximately 10-15 minutes guided by the developed protocol adapted from the MacArthur Story Stem

Battery. During each session, the child will be introduced to previously selected pretend-play manipulatives aligned with a classroom scenario involving the classroom teacher. The manipulatives will be used to model the beginning of a scenario followed by prompting the child to use the manipulatives to describe what happens next. The first scenario will be taken from the MacArthur Story Stem Battery. Five additional scenarios will be designed based on events observed within the first week of the study's implementation and guided by indicators within the ECERS-R Interaction domain. Responses provided by each child as well as field notes referencing children's behaviors during the activity will be documented.

Weeks five and six. One-on-one drawing sessions will be conducted with each child over the course of three predetermined days per week. Four children will participate each day. Each session will be video-recorded and last approximately 8-10 minutes guided by the developed protocol. Each child will be prompted to create a drawing of how he/she feels about the classroom teacher followed by a verbal description of the drawing when prompted. Responses provided by each child as well as field notes referencing children's behaviors during the activity will be documented.

7. **Benefits:** As a result of this study, researchers will further understand the significance of obtaining four-year-old children's perceptions of their classroom teacher in the examination of a quality classroom environment. This will not only assist in the development of an effective classroom climate, but expand our understanding of the meaning of high-quality teaching practices.

8. **Risks:** There are no risks associated with the study.

9. **Measure taken to reduce risks:** There are no risks associated with the study.

10. **Right to Refuse:** Participation within the study is voluntary and participants may withdraw from the study at any time. This includes parents' request to have the child withdrawn from the study.

11. **Privacy:** Data will be kept confidential unless release is legally compelled. Results may be used for educational purposes; however, no identifying information will be included within the presentation.

12. **Financial Incentives:** No incentives will be offered.

13. **Removal:** Participants will be removed from the study at their request. This includes parents' request to have the child withdrawn from the study.

14. **Signatures:** The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Dennis Landin, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. I agree to

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participant in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Director Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX B. CLASSROOM TEACHER CONSENT FORM

1. **Study Title:** Giving four-year old children a "voice" within a comprehensive teacher evaluation system

2. **Performance Sites:** Little Colonels Academy

3. **Investigators:**   M – F 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
    Ms. Mistie Perry, Doctoral Candidate, (337) 781-2059

4. **Purpose of the Study:** The intent of this study is to examine four-year-old children's perceptions of the support provided by the classroom teacher through video-recorded verbal interviews, story stem techniques, and drawing activities.

5. **Subject Criteria**
    a. **Inclusion:** site director, classroom teacher, selected children
    b. **Exclusion:** substitute teachers, classroom volunteers, and all other children within the classroom

6. **Study Procedures:** Over the course of six weeks, unobtrusive observations as well as semi-structured interviews incorporating verbal prompts, story stem techniques, and drawing activities will be conducted with selected children in one-on-one sessions. The pre-designed prompts within all data collection methods will be guided by the indicators with the ECERS-R Interaction domain.

    Week one. Two unobtrusive two-hour observational sessions will occur on two predetermined days. During this time, field notes will be taken in reference to the classroom setting, observed development of relationships among children, observed development of relationships between children and the classroom teacher, teacher responses to occurring situations, emotionally driven behavior patterns of children, and emotionally driven behavior patterns of the classroom teacher. This will provide the researcher with an overall view of the classroom dynamics and contribute to the evaluation of the environment that may influence children's perceptions.

    Week two. One-on-one verbal interview sessions with each child will be conducted over the course of three predetermined days. Four children will be interviewed each day. Each session will be video-recorded and last approximately 8-10 minutes guided by the developed protocol. During each session, the child will be prompted to provide verbal responses to pre-developed prompts guided by indicators within the ECERS-R Interaction domain. Responses provided by each child as well as field notes referencing children's behaviors during the activity will be documented.

    Weeks three and four. Story stem activities within one-on-one sessions with each child will be conducted over the course of three predetermined days per week. Two children will participate each day. Each session will be video-recorded and last approximately 10-15 minutes guided by the developed protocol adapted from the MacArthur Story Stem

Battery. During each session, the child will be introduced to previously selected pretend-play manipulatives aligned with a classroom scenario involving the classroom teacher. The manipulatives will be used to model the beginning of a scenario followed by prompting the child to use the manipulatives to describe what happens next. The first scenario will be taken from the MacArthur Story Stem Battery. Five additional scenarios will be designed based on events observed within the first week of the study's implementation and guided by indicators within the ECERS-R Interaction domain. Responses provided by each child as well as field notes referencing children's behaviors during the activity will be documented.

Weeks five and six. One-on-one drawing sessions will be conducted with each child over the course of three predetermined days per week. Four children will participate each day. Each session will be video-recorded and last approximately 8-10 minutes guided by the developed protocol. Each child will be prompted to create a drawing of how he/she feels about the classroom teacher followed by a verbal description of the drawing when prompted. Responses provided by each child as well as field notes referencing children's behaviors during the activity will be documented.

7. **Benefits:** As a result of this study, researchers will further understand the significance of obtaining four year old children's perceptions of their classroom teacher in the examination of a quality classroom environment. This will not only assist in the development of an effective classroom climate, but expand our understanding of the meaning of high-quality teaching practices.

8. **Risks:** There are no risks associated with the study.

9. **Measure taken to reduce risks:** There are no risks associated with the study.

10. **Right to Refuse:** Participation within the study is voluntary and participants may withdraw from the study at any time. This includes parents' request to have the child withdrawn from the study.

11. **Privacy:** Data will be kept confidential unless release is legally compelled. Results may be used for educational purposes; however, no identifying information will be included within the presentation.

12. **Financial Incentives:** No incentives will be offered.

13. **Removal:** Participants will be removed from the study at their request. This includes parents' request to have the child withdrawn from the study.

14. **Signatures:** The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Dennis Landin, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. I agree to

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participant in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Director Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C. PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

1. **Study Title:** Giving four-year old children a "voice" within a comprehensive teacher evaluation system

2. **Performance Sites:** Little Colonels Academy

3. **Investigators:**   M – F 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
                          Ms. Mistie Perry, Doctoral Candidate, (337) 781-2059

4. **Purpose of the Study:** The intent of this study is to examine four-year-old children's perceptions of the support provided by the classroom teacher through video-recorded verbal interviews, story stem techniques, and drawing activities.

5. **Subject Criteria**
   a. **Inclusion:** site director, classroom teacher, selected children
   b. **Exclusion:** substitute teachers, classroom volunteers, and all other children within the classroom

6. **Study Procedures:** Over the course of six weeks, unobtrusive observations as well as semi-structured interviews incorporating verbal prompts, story stem techniques, and drawing activities will be conducted with selected children in one-on-one sessions. The pre-designed prompts within all data collection methods will be guided by the indicators with the ECERS-R Interaction domain.

Week one. Two unobtrusive two-hour observational sessions will occur on two predetermined days. During this time, field notes will be taken in reference to the classroom setting, observed development of relationships among children, observed development of relationships between children and the classroom teacher, teacher responses to occurring situations, emotionally driven behavior patterns of children, and emotionally driven behavior patterns of the classroom teacher. This will provide the researcher with an overall view of the classroom dynamics and contribute to the evaluation of the environment that may influence children's perceptions.

Week two. One-on-one verbal interview sessions with each child will be conducted over the course of three predetermined days. Four children will be interviewed each day. Each session will be video-recorded and last approximately 8-10 minutes guided by the developed protocol. During each session, the child will be prompted to provide verbal responses to pre-developed prompts guided by indicators within the ECERS-R Interaction domain. Responses provided by each child as well as field notes referencing children's behaviors during the activity will be documented.

Weeks three and four. Story stem activities within one-on-one sessions with each child will be conducted over the course of three predetermined days per week. Two children will participate each day. Each session will be video-recorded and last approximately 10-15 minutes guided by the developed protocol adapted from the MacArthur Story Stem

Battery. During each session, the child will be introduced to previously selected pretend-play manipulatives aligned with a classroom scenario involving the classroom teacher. The manipulatives will be used to model the beginning of a scenario followed by prompting the child to use the manipulatives to describe what happens next. The first scenario will be taken from the MacArthur Story Stem Battery. Five additional scenarios will be designed based on events observed within the first week of the study's implementation and guided by indicators within the ECERS-R Interaction domain. Responses provided by each child as well as field notes referencing children's behaviors during the activity will be documented.

Weeks five and six. One-on-one drawing sessions will be conducted with each child over the course of three predetermined days per week. Four children will participate each day. Each session will be video-recorded and last approximately 8-10 minutes guided by the developed protocol. Each child will be prompted to create a drawing of how he/she feels about the classroom teacher followed by a verbal description of the drawing when prompted. Responses provided by each child as well as field notes referencing children's behaviors during the activity will be documented.

7. **Benefits:** As a result of this study, researchers will further understand the significance of obtaining four year old children's perceptions of their classroom teacher in the examination of a quality classroom environment. This will not only assist in the development of an effective classroom climate, but expand our understanding of the meaning of high-quality teaching practices.

8. **Risks:** There are no risks associated with the study.

9. **Measure taken to reduce risks:** There are no risks associated with the study.

10. **Right to Refuse:** Participation within the study is voluntary and participants may withdraw from the study at any time. This includes parents' request to have the child withdrawn from the study.

11. **Privacy:** Data will be kept confidential unless release is legally compelled. Results may be used for educational purposes; however, no identifying information will be included within the presentation.

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13. **Removal:** Participants will be removed from the study at their request. This includes parents' request to have the child withdrawn from the study.

14. **Signatures:** The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Dennis Landin, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, jrb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. I agree to

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participant in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

The parent/guardian has indicated to me that he/she is unable to read. I certify that I have read this consent form to the parent/guardian and explained that by completing the signature line above he/she has given permission for the child to participate in the study.

Reader's Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX D. CHILD ASSENT FORM

The researcher will verbally gain assent by stating the following:
"I will watch you learn and play throughout the day. Sometimes, we might talk about your classroom or I may ask you to do different activities. Is this okay?"
- Child gave permission
- Child did not give permission

Witness: _____   Date: _____

APPENDIX E. INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Researcher*: Good morning! Thank you for talking with me today. We are just going to talk with each other about the way you might feel about different things in the classroom. While we are talking, you might see me writing on my notepad. I will be writing about different things that are happening in the classroom as we talk. Are you ready?*

(Follow-up prompts may be included based on the responses of the children.)

- (Place a happy face visual in front of the children) *Let's talk about being happy.*

    o *What do you think it means to be happy?*

    o *What are some things that make you happy?*

- (Take away the happy face and place a sad face visual in front of the children) *Let's talk about being sad.*

    o *What do you think it means to be sad?*

    o *What are some things that make you sad?*

- (Take away the sad face and place a mad/angry face visual in front of the children) *Let's talk about being mad or angry.*

    o *What do you think it means to be mad or angry?*

    o *What are some things that make you mad or angry?*

(Take away the mad/angry face) *Now I want us to talk about your teacher, Mrs. _____. Remember, while we are talking, you might see me writing on my notepad. I will be writing about different things that are happening in the classroom as we talk. Are you ready?*

(Guided by ECERS-R: Indicator 29: Supervision of gross motor activities)

- *Tell me what Mrs. _____ does when you are playing outside on the playground.*

- *What happens when you need help with something on the playground?*

(Guided by ECERS-R: Indicator 30: General supervision of children other than gross motor)

- *Tell me what Mrs. _____ does when you are playing inside the classroom in learning centers.*

(Guided by ECERS-R Indicator 30: Discipline)

- *What happens when someone in the class is making the right choice?*

  o *How does that make you feel?*

  o *Why does it make you feel _____?*

- *What happens when someone in the class ISN'T making the right choice?*

  o *How does that make you feel?*

  o *Why does it make you feel _____?*

(Guided by ECERS-R Indicator 32: Child-staff interactions)

- *How does Mrs. _____ make you feel when you come to school?*

  o *What are some things Mrs. _____ does that make you feel _____?*

- *What does Mrs. _____ do when she knows you are sad or angry* (point to the sad/angry faces as stated)*?*

  o *What are some things Mrs. _____ does to help you feel happy again?* (point to the happy face when stated)

(Guided by ECERS-R Indicator 33: Interactions among children)

- *Tell me about some of the things you do in the classroom with your friends.*

Researcher: *Thank you so much for talking with me today! Is there anything else you want to tell me about your teacher?*

APPENDIX F. STORY STEM INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
(Adapted from the MacArthur Story Stem Battery)

The following abbreviations are used to identify various story figures:

- T = Teacher

- S = Susan

- G = George

- J = Jane

- B = Bob

The figures identified as Susan or George will look as similar as possible to the child participating in the activity.

Good morning! Today we are going to use these items to tell stories.
(Show the figures to the CHILD as you name them.) *Look who we have here* (bring out the prompts). *Here's our teacher and friends. This is the teacher, this is Susan, this is George, this is Jane, and this is Bob. Who do we have here?* (get child to name each character, with help if necessary)

Warm-up scenario: Susan's / George's Birthday

Story Theme: Introduction, modeling of narration with figures
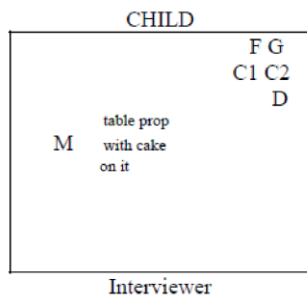
Props: Table, birthday cake

Characters: All the characters

You know what? It is Susan's / George's birthday and her/his Mom delivered this beautiful cake to the classroom (bring out cake). *It's time for the party.*

(Change voice to depict the teacher talking) *M: "Come on Susan/George, Jane, and Bob. It's*

time to celebrate Susan's/George's birthday."

Can you get everyone ready at the table?


```
                    CHILD
                         F G
                        C1 C2
                           D
               table prop
        M       with cake
                on it



                  Interviewer
```

Show me and tell me what happens now.

Let the CHILD play with the figures or tell a story if the CHILD is in need of help. Suggested

prompts (for warm-up ONLY) if the child needs assistance:

- Show me how they eat the cake.

- Show me how they blow out the candles.

- What might Susan say about her beautiful cake?

- Sing "Happy Birthday" with the child.

You told a great story. Let's do another one.

Scenario 1: Supervision of gross motor activities (ECERS-R: Indicator 29)

Story Theme: Outdoor play

Props: 2 slides

Characters: All the characters

It is time to play outside. Susan/George plays on one slide while Susan/George, Jane, and Bob

play on the other slide. The teacher is on the playground too.

Show me and tell me what happens now.

(If the CHILD does not spontaneously enact an activity) *What does the teacher do on the*

playground?

Great storytelling! Let's do another one.

   Scenario 2: General supervision of children other than gross motor (ECERS-R: Indicator 30)

Story Theme: Indoor play

Props: blocks, kitchenette, table

Characters: All the characters

It is time to play in learning centers. Susan/George and Jane play in the home center while

Susan/George and Bob play in the block center. The teacher is in the classroom too.

Show and tell me what happens now.

(If the CHILD does not spontaneously enact an activity) *What does the teacher do while the*

children play in learning centers?

Let's do another one.

Scenario 3: Discipline (ECERS-R Indicator 30)

Story Theme: Teacher's response to accident/incident

Props: Table, cup

Characters: All the characters

Everyone just came in from outside. Put the children around the table so they can have some

water. (Wait until the figures are placed.)

The teacher gives them water in a cup and says (change tone to depict teacher's voice) *"Remember to stay sitting so we don't spill our water." Susan/George gets up and reaches across the table and UH_OH! She/he spilled her/his water all over the floor.* (Make the figure spill the cup onto the floor so that it is visible to the CHILD.)

Show me and tell me what happens now.

(If nothing is done about the juice) *What happens about Susan/George spilling the water?*

(If CHILD only picks up the cup and stops) *Did anything else happen?*

Scenario 4: Child-staff interactions (ECERS-R Indicator 32)

Story Theme: Arrival at school

Props: blocks, kitchenette, table

Characters: All the characters

Susan/George just arrived to the classroom. Susan/George, Jane, and Bob are playing in centers. The teacher is on the other side of the classroom and sees Susan/George walk in.

Show me and tell me what happens now.

(If the CHILD does not spontaneously enact an activity) *What does the teacher do when she sees Susan/George walk in?*

Let's do one more.

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Scenario 5: Interactions among children (ECERS-R Indicator 33)

Story Theme: Peer to peer interactions

Props: blocks, kitchenette

Characters: All the characters

</div>

The teacher is talking to Bob in the block center but she can see everyone else playing too.

Susan/George and Jane are in the home center pretending to cook a spaghetti. Susan/George

walks to the home center and says: (S/G) "I love spaghetti! Can I cook too?"

Show me and tell me what happens next.

(If the CHILD does not spontaneously enact an activity) *What do Susan/George and Jane do?*

At the conclusion of all story stems, allow the child the opportunity to create his/her own story to allow for a positive ending to the activity.

Those were great stories! Thank you for playing with me today!

APPENDIX G. DRAWING INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

<u>Researcher</u>: *Good morning! Thank you for working with me again today!*

Today, I brought paper, crayons, colored pencils, and markers. I want you to use these materials to draw a picture of how you feel about your teacher, Mrs. _____, and something she does in the classroom that makes you feel that way.

While you are drawing, you might see me continue writing on my notepad. I will be writing about different things that are happening in the classroom as you draw. Remember, I want you to use these materials to draw a picture of how you feel about your teacher, Mrs. _____, and something she does in the classroom that makes you feel that way. Do you understand the directions?

Directions will be clarified as needed. After approximately eight minutes, the following prompts will be delivered:

- o *Tell me about your drawing.*
- o *Why did you choose to draw Mrs. _____ doing _____?*

<u>Researcher</u>*: Thank you so much for talking with me today! Is there anything else you want to tell me about your teacher?*

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VITA

Mistie Perry was born in Abbeville, Louisiana. Prior to 2012, she obtained two associate degrees, worked as a paraprofessional for Kindergarten and 12th grade inclusion classrooms for 10 years, and simultaneously worked as a teacher within a before and after school child care program for seven years while working on her bachelor's degree. She received her bachelor's degree in Early Intervention from Nicholls State University in 2014 and her master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction in 2016 specializing in Early Childhood Education from Nicholls State University in 2016. While pursuing her doctorate, she obtained a position as an Assistant Professor of early intervention in the College of Education at Nicholls State University in 2017 where she plans to stay. She plans to receive her doctorate degree in December 2019.