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Indirect Socialization in Preschool: How Teachers Harness Children's Ability to Shape Peer Behavior

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Abstract

How do teachers use children to shape the behaviors of their peers, and which students benefit? In this qualitative case study of a half-day preschool classroom, I find that teachers encourage children to shape one another's behavior in ways they regard as classroom-appropriate in order to prepare them for the student role in kindergarten and beyond. At the beginning of the school year, children use varying techniques to shape peer behavior, with some employing rudimentary strategies which may be effective but regarded as inappropriate for the classroom. To encourage preschoolers to influence their peers to behave in more appropriate ways, the teachers sequentially introduce three sets of strategies—simple communication, situational exclusion, and rewarding inclusion strategies—which prescribe increasingly nuanced rules for the children's provision or denial of attention and inclusion as a means of influencing their peers to comply with classroom expectations. When, in their own peer interactions, the children interpretively reproduce the strategies learned in creative and occasionally excessive ways, the teachers intervene to provide coaching or more effective classroom-appropriate strategies. I show that this manner of teaching and learning school norms and rules advantages children who begin the year demonstrating classroom-appropriate behaviors and disadvantages those whose behaviors are initially less appropriate. These differential advantages have implications for students' future interactions with the school disciplinary system.

Keywords Early childhood education · Preschool · Peer influence · Socialization · Teaching · Learning

Socialization, the process by which individuals acquire the cultural knowledge necessary to competently participate in their communities and by which culture is transmitted from one generation to the next, has been of longstanding interest to sociologists (Clausen 1968; Guhin

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et al. 2020). The socialization that takes place within schools has garnered particular sociological attention, given its importance for understanding the persistence of social cohesion (Dreeben 1968; Parsons 2013) and the reproduction of social inequalities (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Willis 2017) on the collective level, and for understanding the development of interactional competence (Mehan 1980) on the individual level.

While researchers have comprehensively documented the ways school socialization occurs vertically (e.g., from teacher to student), reciprocally (e.g., teachers and students simultaneously socializing one another), and horizontally (e.g., classmates socializing one another) (Mortimer and McLaughlin 2014), they have not yet focused on how school socialization occurs indirectly: that is, by teachers enlisting the help of children in socializing their peers to comply with classroom expectations for appropriate behavior. Such indirect socialization has the potential to confer advantages to students whose expectations at home align with those of the preschool.

In this paper, I draw on ethnographic observations conducted over the 2017–2018 school year in a private, suburban preschool classroom to examine how teachers socialize children into the role of student. In particular, I focus on one set of strategies preschool teachers use to prepare students for kindergarten and future learning: harnessing peer influence to encourage classroom-appropriate behavior and discourage classroom-inappropriate behavior among children. I also examine which students are advantaged and disadvantaged by this socialization process and how this social learning takes place. I illustrate that though children begin school with rudimentary strategies for influencing peer behavior, many students' strategies are not regarded as appropriate for the classroom. As a result, their teachers introduce, model, and encourage three increasingly sophisticated peer-influence strategies for the children to apply independently and collectively: simple communication strategies, generalized exclusion strategies, and selective inclusion strategies. Once the majority of children in the class become proficient at using each strategy, the teachers introduce the next strategy in the sequence to help refine the children's responses to one another's behavior. Throughout this process, teachers give license to the preschoolers who demonstrate appropriate behavior early on to creatively interpret and apply these teacher-provided strategies of selectively using attention and inclusion to discipline and reward their peers. Those students who continue to struggle to display classroom-appropriate behavior are subject to not only the negative feedback of their teachers, but also to the exclusion of their peers. In short, children who begin preschool better prepared to display classroom-appropriate behavior are privileged by the indirect socialization process that teachers employ to prepare children to take on the role of student in kindergarten and beyond. I argue that, because indirect socialization is not always effective in preparing students with initially inappropriate behavior for kindergarten, and in fact, may damage those students' relationships with peers, the process may contribute to the reproduction of early inequalities among students.

Because indirect socialization in the preschool classroom privileges students who begin the school year already capable of demonstrating classroom-appropriate behavior, it may contribute to the reproduction of the social inequalities in broader society which make it possible for some, but not all, families to provide their children with advantageous preparation for school before they begin. Sociological research has shown that teachers often unintentionally compound the advantages of privileged students through the process of cultural matching (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Children enter school differently prepared to navigate the classroom learning environment (Lareau 2011), and those with the privilege of more relevant preparation—those with a cultural "match" between home and school—enjoy ongoing

advantages in the classroom (Calarco 2018). Children vary in their pre-literacy, pre-numeracy, and social skills upon preschool entry by their race (Barbarin et al. 2010; Heath 1983) social class (Anders et al. 2012; Streib 2011), and gender (Son et al. 2013; Walker et al. 2002), and these differences are often attributed to the presence or absence of a cultural match between the home and the school. In schools with certain characteristics, students whose expectations in the home more closely align with those of the school tend to receive higher teacher ratings on social and academic skills (Banerjee 2018; Egalite et al. 2015), and are reported as having fewer behavioral concerns (Carter Andrews and Gutwein 2020; Blake et al. 2016). Later, I discuss the conditions under which indirect socialization into the role of student is more likely to reproduce inequalities in student preparation for kindergarten, and when it might reduce behavioral gaps.

Indirect socialization also has important implications for children's peer acceptance, self-concept, and school behavior. Given that classroom behavior problems are associated with peer rejection from a very early age (Coie et al. 1990; Wood et al. 2002), and early peer rejection has a lasting effect on peer acceptance despite later changes in the child's behavior (Miller-Johnson et al. 2002), it is important to understand how socialization into the role of student impacts children's beliefs about which behaviors warrant rejection and what classroom-appropriate rejection looks like. Moreover, given the extensive evidence that school discipline policies and practices often reinforce existing social hierarchies, with working-class and poor children, children of color, and boys the recipients of more frequent and harsher consequences than their middle-class, white, and female peers (Rocque 2010; Skiba et al. 2002, 2018; Verdugo 2002; Welch and Payne 2010), it is important to understand how children themselves are trained to participate in school disciplinary systems.

This study contributes to sociological scholarship on socialization processes, peer socialization, and education. First, it contributes to theoretical work on socialization by describing a previously undocumented socialization process: the indirect socialization which occurs when savvy adults harness children's ability to influence their peers by supplying them strategies for encouraging classmates to adopt a student role. Second, while scholarship on peer socialization shows that students feel pressured to follow peer group norms and that they derive a sense of belonging and fitting in from the group (Adler and Adler 1995; Eder et al. 1995; Goodwin 2006; MacLeod 2018; Milner 2013; Willis 2017), this study extends research to the peer socialization that occurs in preschool, a liminal educational space between the home and the more academically focused kindergarten classroom. Finally, this study has implications for sociology of education scholarship on cultural matching and the school-to-prison pipeline.

Socialization in Schools

As early as 1968, Clausen specified the goals of socialization as follows: "If the general goal of socialization is to prepare the individual to function as a full-fledged, competent member of society, who perceives, feels, and acts in ways appropriate to his personal characteristics and his placement within society, there are many subsidiary or more limited goals. Some relate to developmental phases and the preparation of the individual to define and meet the demands of specific situations, as in the preparation of the child for school" (140–141). Initially coming to prominence with Parsons in the 1950s and '60s as a key mechanism in structural-functionalist explanations of social cohesion, the concept of socialization was central to Dreeben's landmark book, *On What Is Learned In School* (1968), which explains how structural differences

between families and schools enable schools to inculcate the values of working independently, achieving as much success as possible, and applying universal criteria, which are necessary for full adult participation in modern western society.

Due to criticism of this perspective for its under-acknowledgement of child agency and for its association with "culture of poverty" arguments of the late '60s, which blame racial gaps in achievement and resources on the culture of the poor, the term 'socialization" fell out of favor among sociologists (Guhin et al. 2020; Valentine 1968). Still, the concept is central to a number of theoretical understandings of what schools do, even if those who study what happens inside schools at a cultural level have tended to avoid the term.

Socialization processes are generally categorized as occurring vertically, reciprocally, and horizontally (Mortimer and McLaughlin 2014). In schools, vertical socialization occurs when culture is passed from teacher to student. Socialization in schools also occurs reciprocally, when teachers and students simultaneously socialize one another (Snyder and Purdy 1982). Horizontal socialization occurs in schools when classmates socialize one another (Adler and Adler 1995; Eder et al. 1995; Goodwin 2006; MacLeod 2018; Milner 2013; Willis 2017).

Research on vertical socialization occurring in schools has emphasized teachers' goals for socializing students and the social interactions through which teachers transmit values and provide help, advice, and instruction (Wentzel 2015). At the preschool level, teachers foster the achievement of developmentally appropriate milestones, such as those assessed by California's Desired Results Developmental Profile (California Department of Education 2015). To achieve the milestones related to prosocial behavior, preschool teachers model and encourage prosocial interactions, discourage social exclusion, and create cooperative activities (Elliott et al. 2002; Hagens 1997). Teachers foster the development of behavioral competencies through classroom management (Doyle 1989; Emmer et al. 1994) and use cooperative learning strategies to make learning goals more salient (Cohen 1994).

Teachers are not the only agents of socialization in schools. In fact, children's beliefs and behavior are also strongly influenced by their peers (Adler and Adler 1995; Eder et al. 1995; Goodwin 2006; MacLeod 2018; Milner 2013; Willis 2017) through a process often referred to as horizontal socialization (Mortimer and McLaughlin 2014). "New" sociology of childhood theories provide useful conceptual tools for understanding child agency and peer influence. Within the "new" childhood paradigm, peers and peer culture are important socializing agents which contribute to children's learning "a stable set of activities or routines, artifacts, values, and concerns that children produce and share in interactions with peers" (Corsaro 2017, 18; Corsaro and Eder 1990, 197). According to Corsaro, peer socialization involves a process of interpretive reproduction, in which children are active agents who use elements of the adult culture surrounding them to construct their own cultures. Through their interactions with peers and adults, children contribute to the production of the adult world (Corsaro 1992, 2017). In this way, interpretive reproduction models of socialization provide an alternative to the deterministic models used by Dreeben and Parsons which envision children as passive recipients of adult culture and training, as well as to constructivist models which posit children as active appropriators of environmental information who build their own interpretations of their physical and social worlds from scratch.

Peer socialization processes are well-documented among elementary (Fine 1987; Pugh 2009), middle- and high-school (Adler and Adler 1995; Coleman 1961; Eder et al. 1995; MacLeod 2018; Milner 2013), and college students (Binder and Wood 2012; Castillo-Montoya and Reyes 2018). School adjustment is one domain in which children are subject to the influence of their peers. Depending on their friends' characteristics and the quality of

their friendships, children's attitudes towards school, behavior in class, and academic achievement can be influenced positively or negatively (Berndt and Keefe 1995). For instance, among seventh and eighth graders, students whose friends describe themselves as more disruptive become more disruptive themselves throughout the school year, with girls' disruptive behaviors more subject to peer influence than boys' (Berndt et al. 1999; Berndt and Keefe 1995). On the other hand, students with high-achieving friends tend to participate more in classroom decisions, which leads to a greater sense of self-reliance and social status, and ultimately to improved later test scores (Epstein 1983).

Peer socialization practices begin to influence children's adherence to classroom rules and norms as early as the early childhood level. Indeed, much of Corsaro's scholarship, in laying bare the processes by which children creatively reinterpret elements of school culture in constructing their own peer cultures, sheds light on how children socialize one another to adopt or transgress classroom rules and expectations (Corsaro 1985, 1988, 2017). In one study, for instance, he examines how children make sense of their student role through communal attempts to gain control over their lives by confronting adult authority, and relatedly, he demonstrates how children, through communal sharing during recess, construct the identity of the peer or friend (1988). In this case, he illustrates that the transgressive elements of peer culture – revealing to friends the forbidden objects like Matchbox cars or candy secreted to school in one's pocket, whispering to a friend during silent time, or making faces behind a teacher's back – are instrumental in constructing the student identity.

Despite the lack of scholarly focus on teachers' actions to influence peer culture or to shift interpersonal dynamics among students, several studies of preschoolers provide evidence that teachers play an important role in determining which preschoolers are allowed to influence their peers and in what ways. For instance, children are known to interpretively reproduce messages from teachers who reinforce gender roles (Martin 1998; Thorne 1993) and heteronormative attitudes and behaviors (Gansen 2017). This interpretive reproduction is encouraged by teachers who allow children to engage in interactions with preschool peers which reinforce traditional gender roles and heteronormativity, but who frequently sanction children who challenge these norms. Preschool teachers encourage children to behave in ways that reinforce social class privilege as well. Streib (2011) shows that children agentively reproduce class divisions and classed power relations through linguistic differences, both during play and structured classroom activities. She argues that upper-middle class students are permitted to secure differential advantages in the classroom such as more frequent opportunities to practice language. Taken together, these studies illustrate that by interpretively reproducing sexist, classist, and heteronormative cultural norms and practices implicitly and explicitly endorsed by teachers, children unwittingly reproduce broader social inequalities.

It is critically important to understand how teachers, recognizing their students' agency and influence, use the greater authority of their social role to shape the power dynamics of child peer relationships in order to prepare them to take on the role of student required in subsequent years of schooling. This is particularly important because indirect socialization has the potential to contribute to the reproduction of existing social inequalities.

Cultural Matching

To understand how school socialization is implicated in social reproduction, it is helpful to examine the theoretical framework elaborated by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Critical of the

functionalist framing of the role played by schools in socializing children, Bourdieu posited an alternative account detailing how schools were implicated in the intergenerational transmission of social class status. He argued that embodied and discursive cultural knowledge and behaviors, which he called habitus, are first learned early on in the home. The habitus consists of different beliefs and values, habitual ways of speaking and interacting, and cultural tastes and aversions which vary depending on the socioeconomic class an individual is born into. Because the ways of being which are cultivated in privileged homes are valued more highly by society's elites and gatekeepers, they function as cultural capital, granting differential access to the institutions which have the power to confer wealth and prestige. In schools, this means that children born to wealthy and highly educated parents are more likely than their less-advantaged peers to demonstrate the types of behaviors recognized by teachers as "merit" and rewarded by the education system. As individuals move among various cultural domains, or fields, such as those of literature, art, sports, music, etc., they associate different types of cultural products with the social class of the people who enjoy them, an act of classification which allows them to distinguish the cultural forms "appropriate" for people of their own social class. It also enables them to classify others, based on the style those others exhibit: for instance, when teachers grade the essays of their students and judge some to be highly refined and eloquent, it is because of the essays' similitude to what the teacher recognizes as prestigious literary style. Because these fields are arranged homologously, the individual's habitus enables them to apply the same logic of distinction across multiple domains.

U.S. scholars have applied Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction to explain how classrooms compound the advantages already enjoyed by children from families with socio-economic or racial privilege. Because teachers and schools tend to embrace white middle-class standards of behavior and academic ability, many sociologists argue that a "cultural match" between the school and the home advantages students who are white or middle class, whereas a "mismatch" poses a disadvantage for lower-socioeconomic-status and nonwhite students (Carter 2003; Morris 2005; Villegas 1988). Research on the effects of cultural matching arose in response to provocative "oppositional culture" explanation for racial gaps in educational achievement: that historically marginalized groups, whom they call involuntary minorities, signal their antagonism toward the dominant group by resisting the achievement goals of the school which they identify with whiteness (Fordham and Ogbu 1986). Though the oppositional culture hypothesis has been contested (Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey 1998; Horvat and Lewis 2003), it also sparked a wave of research demonstrating that students from diverse backgrounds often have more learning opportunities and greater achievement if classrooms are organized in ways that are more culturally congruent, compatible, and responsive to their home cultures (Achinstein and Aguirre 2008; Egalite et al. 2015).

A key study providing support for cultural matching is (Lareau 2011) *Unequal Childhoods,* in which she examines differences in how working-class and poor parents on the one hand, and middle-class parents on the other, raise their children. Lareau finds that, whereas working class and poor parents use a parenting logic she calls the "accomplishment of natural growth," in which they care for their children and allow them to grow, middle class parents use a parenting style she calls "concerted cultivation," which involves actively fostering and assessing their children's talents, opinions, and skills. Concretely, working-class and poor children are allowed spend a lot of time hanging out with kin; they are given directives and discouraged from talking back or questioning authority; their parents rely on institutions to make decisions regarding their child; and they often experience conflict between expectations at home and at school. In contrast, middle class children spend a lot of time in organized, adult-

led activities; they are encouraged to use reasoning and to negotiate with their parents; their parents often intervene with teachers on their behalf and train them to self-advocate. The differences in parenting strategies result in differential benefits for middle class children. Equipped with comfortability with an organized and busy daily schedule, the language skills needed to negotiate and reason with adults, and familiarity with navigating institutions, middle-class children feel entitled to receive what they desire from institutions like schools. Lacking those advantages, working-class and poor children develop a sense that their ability to access the goods provided by such institutions is constrained.

Building on Lareau's work, Calarco (2018) describes specific strategies working- and middle-class parents use to equip their children to effectively navigate the middle-class environment of the school, and she identifies teacher practices and classroom processes that advantage middle class children with particular skills. Focusing on third and fourth grade classrooms, she shows how working-class students are less willing than their middle-class peers to ask for help, self-advocate, and initiate interactions with teachers and other school authority figures. Teachers, in turn, provide more help, personalized instruction, and positive feedback to students from middle-class families. Other scholars have described similar patterns of teacher interaction with students in the classroom which unintentionally reinforce existing social hierarchies, such as those of gender (Stromquist 2007; Thorne 1993), sexuality (Gansen 2017; Martin 1998), race (Carter 2003; Heath 1982), and social class (Streib 2011). They find that, by approving of certain behaviors and sanctioning others in ways that differ depending on a student's social identity, teachers reinforce the message that privileged groups are entitled to engage in certain behaviors and have access to learning opportunities denied to other students. Students in turn are socialized to adopt social identities and to perform social roles particular to their social identities in order to successfully navigate the classroom environment.

Indirect socialization may operate in a similar manner to reinforce existing social hierarchies. Moreover, as the process by which teachers deliberately use children to shape peer behavior with regard to classroom rules, indirect socialization has the potential to engender harmful beliefs among students about which of their peers, and by extension which sorts of people, are "bad." Moreover, because preschool is for many children the point of initial entry into institutionalized education, it sets the stage for students' later interactions with the school discipline system. For these reasons, understanding this previously undescribed school socialization process is of paramount importance.

Research Methods

Field Site: Mrs. Marshall's Half-day Preschool Classroom at St. Cecilia Catholic School

Ethnography reveals the voices of children more directly than other research methods make possible, allowing them to participate in the production of sociological data (James and Prout 2003). Because of this, I use ethnography to investigate the teachers' role in introducing the strategies preschool children use for shaping one another's behavior in the classroom. I focus on preschool, as the site of children's initial institutional exposure in which they must learn appropriate ways to get along with a large number of their peers. This context of forced interaction provides an ideal opportunity for observing the strategies children learn to use to shape their peers' behavior. Though some children enter institutionalized care environments at a younger age, preschoolers are permitted more autonomy in class, they have a more-

developed social sense of self, and they are engaged in developing the ability for cooperative play.

I conducted ethnographic research at a half-day, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday three- and four-year-old preschool class at a private, Catholic school which I call St. Cecilia. (St. Cecilia is a pseudonym, as are all the names of individuals and places described in this study.) St. Cecilia is located in a wealthy suburb of a major city that serves children in preschool through eighth grade, with a total enrollment of 530 students and an average class size of 18. As a private school, the annual tuition is nearly $5500 per student. All students who apply are accepted. The school is adjacent to St. Cecilia Church, and has high intergenerational closure among families—children's parents tend to know their friends' parents—and this characteristic of school social structure has been linked to lower dropout rate and higher achievement in Catholic schools (Coleman 1988; Morgan and Todd 2009). Because of these factors, St. Cecilia's teaching resources are plentiful, the physical classrooms are large and well-maintained, and class sizes are small; these characteristics are all known to facilitate student learning.

The preschool classroom I observed was taught by Mrs. Marshall, a veteran teacher of over 20 years, and her assistant, Mrs. Jill, a former children's librarian who had been assisting in various classrooms at St. Cecilia for two years. Both are white, Catholic women. Mrs. Marshall's classroom includes 18 students: 10 girls and eight boys. Three of the students are bilingual; in addition to English, one student speaks Polish, one speaks Hindi, and one speaks Chinese. One student is Asian, one is Black, and one is Indian. The rest are white. All of the families seem to be securely in the middle-class, with a few in the upper middle class, based on their zip codes of residence, as well as on my observations of their possessions, and their mentions of vacations and leisure time activities. Only three of the 18 students have more than two siblings, and all but one have one parent who stays at home during the day. (For more details, see Appendix A.)

Mrs. Marshall's classroom is multi-aged, and, at the beginning of September, her students ranged in age from three years, three months old to four years, nine months old. This structure provides students the opportunity to remain in the same classroom for up to three years, depending on how early they begin and whether their parents decide to "redshirt" them, by waiting an additional year after they become age-eligible to enroll them in kindergarten. In the MWF class that I observed, four of the children were returnees, and among those, one, Vann, was going on his third year in Mrs. Marshall's class. This diversity in the children's levels of experience provided a unique opportunity for me to observe how relative newcomers learned from their more-seasoned peers.

This classroom is expertly managed by Mrs. Marshall and Mrs. Jill, who are experienced teachers with comprehensive classroom management skills and outstanding reputations among parents. As competent teachers who buy into St. Cecilia's institutional mission, they uphold the relatively strict behavioral standards conventionally identified with Catholic schools. The strict standards and high parent involvement and expectations put children at St. Cecilia's under pressure to learn and adhere to classroom expectations. During my observations, they provided students with both high quality teaching and care (Pruit 2018).

This site is well-suited for observing how children learn to shape their peers' behavior. First, Mrs. Marshall describes her curriculum as play-based, explaining that she believes play provides students with strategies to facilitate peer interaction. Research has shown that play-based curricula are developmentally effective in preschool and early elementary classrooms (Niland 2009; van Oers and Duijkers 2013; Walsh et al. 2010; Weisberg et al. 2013). Second,

for at least some of the students in Mrs. Marshall's class, preschool provides the first opportunity to interact with a large group of other children close to their age. Whereas some enter preschool having previously attended daycare or extracurricular activities or having interacted with older siblings, others are learning adults' expectations for interacting with peers for the first time. This diversity of student experience was further enhanced by the multi-aged structure of the classroom, and the presence of students returning to Mrs. Marshall's class for a second or third year. In contrast to the students who had already had an entire school year or two to learn Mrs. Marshall's particular behavioral expectations, newcomers to her classroom needed to learn them from scratch, though their own experiences may have been generalizable to varying extents (Calarco 2018; Dunn et al. 1990). Finally, one of the developmental milestones Mrs. Marshall uses to identify kindergarten readiness is children's ability engage in cooperative play (Parten 1932). Because Mrs. Marshall's curriculum and instruction aim to equip students with the skills necessary to shape one another's behavior in ways appropriate for a school setting, her classroom is an ideal site for studying how children learn and use these strategies.

Because St. Cecilia's is a well-resourced school, employing highly qualified teachers, and attended overwhelmingly by students from middle-class families, I treat it as an extreme case for studying how preschool peer socialization occurs in a highly controlled environment. The low student-to-teacher ratio and high parent involvement provide strong socializing pressures on children to adopt behaviors regarded as "school appropriate." Moreover, because St. Cecilia's adheres to the Catholic school tradition of maintaining high standards for student conduct, and low tolerance for disobedience, it is an ideal place to observe how that culture is formed and maintained. Because Mrs. Marshall's class only met three half-days per week, the students likely had fewer opportunities to address one another's disruptive behaviors than they would, for instance, in a larger class that met more often, or which contained students whose parents were not so actively involved in their schooling. Thus, it is an extreme case with regard to the context in which indirect socialization is occurring, though student exposure to indirect socialization has not been maximized.

Data Collection

Over the course of the 2017–18 school year, I spent 112 hours observing Mrs. Marshall's half-day MWF class. From September through December, I observed each Monday and Friday that school was in session. From January through May, I conducted monthly follow-up visits. During each visit, I arrived half an hour before school began, observed the full duration of the class, and remained for about half an hour after dismissal to informally interview the teachers while helping with lesson preparation or clean up. While observing the children, I generally took on the "least adult" role, as a responsive, interactive, participant observer who neither dictated nor corrected their action (Mandell 1988).

I also interviewed both Mrs. Marshall and Mrs. Jill formally twice during the semester. These semi-structured interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes each, during which I inquired about each individual student's strengths and weaknesses and how each child has changed over time. I conducted two additional follow-up interviews with Mrs. Marshall during the spring semester, in February and in late April, to better understand how she perceived each child's peer relationships, social learning, and growth. I recorded, then fully transcribed, each interview. Each day, after leaving St. Cecilia, I translated my jottings from the field into comprehensive field notes.

To analyze these notes, I first repeatedly read through these field notes and transcripts and coded them thematically by hand. After identifying major themes and patterns, I used NVivo qualitative coding software to identify examples of children's strategies for encouraging and discouraging peer behaviors. I grouped these examples into four categories: initial responses to peer behavior, simple communication strategies, situational exclusion strategies, and rewarding inclusion strategies. In describing these categories, I share Dreeben's goal of pointing out "modal patterns and common elements believed to exist despite known variations" (1968, 4).

Fieldwork and Analysis

In an early conversation with the teachers, I ask Mrs. Marshall to describe her teaching philosophy, including her goals for what she'd like the preschoolers to learn by the end of the year, and the teaching methods and curriculum she uses to facilitate that development.

> Mrs. Marshall: Well, my teaching philosophy is that every child learns differently…. I mean, I think parents just have to be very conscious about what works for their child and what doesn't. I think some children need more structure, some children don't. I think, Montessori is your choice on what you choose to do. Which I think is great for children's special interests. But as they get older, they also need to start doing things that they might not be interested in. Like math, or math concepts, or those kinds of things. Or if they don't like to read or write. Well, eventually, you have to do that. Right? But I think in terms of preschool- age [children], I think the, uh, play-based learning is probably more of a little bit of a balance between a Montessori program and maybe a preschool that is more academic. That's what I feel like the play-based is: more in between. You can have that free-play and build on the children's interest, but you can also incorporate more of the academic stuff here and there while they play. So that's my philosophy. I think play-based is great….
>
> Mrs. Marshall: Also, with the sense of why I think play-based is a little bit better than Montessori... Montessori is more, like I said, rigid, and independent. Yeah, they really work, basically a lot of the time, alone. But they're learning, occasionally, they can work with a partner on stuff. But they're really not working as a group a lot of times. It's a little bit more individual, and maybe with a partner. And so they really also don't have that free play and exploring around the room, a lot of different things in the classroom.… And I don't feel like they get that social interaction of how to share. Taking turns. Problem solving with a conflict. I don't know if they get as much of that conflict resolution as they have in play-based. You'll get that here and there, but it's not as present."

As Mrs. Marshall states, there are some academic advantages to a play-based curriculum being more structured, but the primary reasons she prefers it to either a Montessori or an academic-based curriculum is the social learning opportunities permitted by free-play. Because of the great importance she attaches to the students' development of their abilities to share, take turns, solve problems, and resolve conflicts—which she regards as necessary socialization for future schooling–she sets up free play stations and activities that allow them opportunities to practice each skill.

Mrs. Marshall and Mrs. Jill both make it clear that they see their job as cultivating their students' social skills in order to prepare them for the student role in kindergarten and future schooling. Continuing the conversation, they elaborate on the relationship between their play-based curriculum and the development of the social skills necessary for to continue learning in kindergarten and elementary school.

> Mrs. Jill: [My teaching philosophy] is very similar [to Mrs. Marshall's]. That play-based learning is just kind of phenomenal. I think the most important thing, 'cause kids do learn at different rates and different styles, but I think to be successful, to be ready to learn, I really believe that that social component is the most vital thing. It sets them up, they can always get caught up cognitively, with the cognitive skills, and things like that, you know the other stuff, but you know, that social is so important.
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> Mrs. Marshall: I agree with that.
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> Mrs. Jill: And they learn so much through play. Getting along. And you know, all that is just so important. And I see kids come through St. Cecilia that are like, totally, like they'll be aggressive or aversive to other children, or they'll be withdrawn, and if they continue [in preschool], you know, throughout the year, they come out of that. You know, I've just seen, just miracles. Just kids, and it sets them up for life to be successful. To be able to learn. 'Cause if you're unhappy and you have no friends, then how can you even? And those other kids come in... And then, you know, I think all that play is part of that early literacy.

As they explain to me here, preschool teachers like Mrs. Marshall and her assistant Mrs. Jill believe that it is their job to teach their young students the social skills they see as necessary to be successful students: that is, to be able to learn, get along with each other, be happy, and have friends. As Mrs. Jill notes, because Mrs. Marshall employs a play-based curriculum, children have frequent opportunities to practice learning these skills through play in their classroom, and in some cases, the results are transformative. Children who initially strike the teachers as aggressive, aversive, or withdrawn seem to miraculously "come out of that" and demonstrate the ability to participate effectively in classroom learning.

In the sections that follow, I show that in order to teach children the behavior expected of them as students, preschool teachers foster their development of an increasingly sophisticated arsenal of strategies involving the provision or denial of attention and inclusion as a means of influencing their peers. While all of the children begin preschool with at least the ability to communicate strong feelings in response to peer behavior, they do not always do so in ways that are deemed classroom appropriate by Mrs. Marshall and Mrs. Jill. For that reason, Mrs. Marshall introduces three sets of increasingly nuanced behavior-shaping strategies which she considers classroom-appropriate: basic communication strategies, situational exclusion strategies, and rewarding inclusion strategies. After introducing each set of strategies, she allows time for the students to practice it and receive feedback from both teachers and peers. When the majority of students demonstrate understanding of the strategies and the ability to effectively apply them, or when she notices early adopters of the strategies beginning to adapt them in creative but potentially problematic ways, she introduces the next set. Throughout the year, children progressively learn to encourage peer behaviors by attending to them and engaging in social interaction with their enactors, and they learn to discourage peer behaviors by denying them their attention and excluding the peers engaging in them. These strategies systematically empower children who demonstrate classroom-appropriate behavior and

disempower those whose behaviors are considered inappropriate. That is, Mrs. Marshall and Mrs. Jill encourage students demonstrating appropriate behavior to agentively intervene to influence the noncompliant behaviors of their peers by ignoring or excluding those individuals. Further, they permit students with consistently appropriate behavior to be the arbiters of when their peers' behavior merits inclusion or exclusion.

When the children first begin preschool, they express their emotions in response to peer behaviors in rudimentary ways which I call *initial response strategie*s. These include responses like laughing at amusing peer antics, or throwing tantrums in response to bothersome peer behaviors. While these behaviors are frequently effective in swaying peer behavior, they are often considered inappropriate in the classroom setting because they distract other learners.

Because initial response strategies tend to be disruptive of the learning environment, Mrs. Marshall introduces *basic communication strategies,* which are more classroom-appropriate and often more effective. Basic communication strategies include shouting, "No!" or covering one's ears when a peer behavior is undesirable, and giving directives to encourage peers to engage in desirable behaviors. While basic communication strategies are less disruptive than initial response strategies, they quickly become patterned. After experiencing the same types of interaction with particular classmates repeatedly, individuals begin to preemptively disengage from those peers, reacting before they have the chance to interact. In other instances, the use of basic communication strategies provoked backlash against the students who use them by the students who are on the receiving end. Rather than resolving peer conflict, they sometimes escalated it.

To address these issues, Mrs. Marshall introduces a new set of strategies. She begins by teaching her students how to recognize and name their own emotions and those of others, how to express those emotions in classroom-appropriate ways, and how to react when others fail to do so. In short, she equips them with a new type of response: *situational exclusion strategies*. Her lesson emphasizes that the strategies of naming a peer's emotion, physically distancing oneself, and telling the teacher are to be used in specific situations where a peer's behavior is dangerous. Putting the lesson to immediate use, the children apply the new terminology to label peers they perceive to be emotionally out-of-control, but they use the labels not only while their peers are engaging in inappropriate classroom behavior, but also when talking to each other or their parents about the students' behavior later on. Following this shared recognition of inappropriate behavior, the children begin to *collectively* distance themselves and exclude those peers even when they are behaving appropriately. In these ways, students develop collective recognition of behaviors that are desirable and undesirable, and they also begin to cooperate in their efforts to sanction negative behaviors.

Because Mrs. Marshall is eager to discourage students from stigmatizing their peers and reifying patterns of exclusion, she then revisits her previous lesson to highlight the importance of reacting to classmates' behaviors without generalizing from those behaviors to draw negative conclusions about their peers. In particular, she emphasizes the last key point of the lesson – how to welcome students back into the group once they've recovered control of their emotions. Thus, Mrs. Marshall encourages the students to use the *rewarding inclusion strategies* of telling classmates, "We missed you when you were in the Red Zone," "We're so glad you're back," and inviting them to play. As students selectively ignore behaviors they wish to discourage and exclude the peers engaging in them, and as they engage with and include individuals when they display behaviors they wish to encourage, Mrs. Marshall provides them with positive feedback.

Based on my observations of this teaching and learning, I argue that preschool teachers encourage students with appropriate behavior to influence the behavior of their peers through their provision of attention and inclusion as a reward and through the use of ignoring and exclusion as a punishment. In the sections that follow, I illustrate in greater detail how Mrs. Marshall equips the students with these increasingly sophisticated strategies and how the students learn to put them to use to shape the behavior of their peers in the classroom, occasionally in creative and unanticipated ways.

Initial Responses to Peer Behavior: Tantrums and Mimicry

At the beginning of the year, Mrs. Marshall's preschoolers varied substantially in their ability to shape the behaviors of their peers. Though some of the older children and those who had been in Mrs. Marshall's class the year before began the year already capable of using the more sophisticated simple communication and situational inclusion strategies, many preschoolers demonstrated only rudimentary skills for shaping peer behavior.

However, in the classroom, these younger and less-experienced children often faced situations in which peers' behaviors bothered them. To prompt their peers to desist from irritating, annoying, or jealousy-inducing behaviors like making noises and invading personal space or monopolizing the use of a desired toy, these students employed disruptive strategies like yelling at one another unintelligibly and throwing full-blown tantrums. In these instances, children angry at their peers for engaging in a particular behavior called attention to their own distress by screaming and crying. Consider this example in which Jimmy wants to participate in an activity with his peers, but there isn't enough room for him to join in.

> *John, Jake, Asher, and Ethan are seated at a table, independently sifting and sculpting a greyish-purplish substance Mrs. Marshall calls kinetosand.*
>
> *Jimmy approaches the boys and tries to join in. But, since there are only four chairs at the table, and only four placemats piled high with kinetosand, there is no room for him.*
>
> *Jimmy screams angrily because there isn't an empty seat.*
>
> *Ethan, looking anxious about Jimmy's shrieks, gets up and leaves the table, opening up a spot for Jimmy to play.*
>
> *Jimmy quiets down quickly and sits in the spot Ethan vacated.*

Here we see Jimmy screaming because there are no more open seats at the kinetosand table. Because he is new to the preschool environment, he is unaccustomed to dealing with situations in which his peers are engaging in behaviors he wants them to stop. As a result, he resorts to producing loud, unintelligible complaints. Disturbed by Jimmy's volume, Ethan leaves the table, essentially giving Jimmy his way. In this case, when Jimmy produces his initial response—angry screams—to the other boys occupying seats at the kinetosand table, he is effective in changing Ethan's behavior. Nonetheless, yelling at classmates is not a behavior regarded as classroom appropriate by Mrs. Marshall or Mrs. Jill, and the interaction left Ethan visibly shaken.

Other incidents like this occurred frequently during the first few weeks of school, but students were not always as successful in prompting other children to alter their behavior. Consider this example from mid-September, in which Asher gets upset first at Faith, and then at Vann for helping him to clean up the room before Recess.

> *Mrs. Marshall announces, “10 wiggly fingers in the air!” She implores the class to “clean up fast, so we can get at least 20 minutes outside to play!”*
>
> *Asher drops his ketchup and mustard. Maggie puts the mustard away and Jimmy takes the ketchup to play with. Asher meanders toward the stamps, examines one slowly, and places it into a Tupperware bin.*
>
> *Mrs. Marshall asks Hadley and Faith to help clean up the stamps. She asks Brandon, Jake, and Jimmy to clean up the sand.*
>
> *Asher starts shouting at someone, but his words are unclear.*
>
> *Mrs. Marshall tells him, “You don’t scream. That scares your friends and it tells me you’re in trouble. You need to use your words and say, ‘Faith, I can do that.’ Otherwise, your friends will be scared of you and they won’t want to play.”*
>
> *Shortly thereafter, Asher and Vann get into a yelling match.*
>
> *“Asher, use your words,” Mrs. Marshall says.*
>
> *He mutters something to Vann.*
>
> *“Vann, are you listening to Asher? It sounds like he’s putting that away and he doesn’t need any help.”*
>
> *Vann nods and looks for something else to clean.*

In this example, Asher is slow in putting the stamps and stamper pads away, so Mrs. Marshall directs Hadley and Faith to help clean up the art supplies. Asher, determined to put them away himself, gets angry with Faith for trying to help, and screams loudly. Instead of using his words, Asher leaves the art table and goes to clean up a different area. But, again, when Vann tries to help him, he gets angry and yells. Mrs. Marshall directs Asher to communicate that he wants Vann to stop helping him, and when he tries, she helps communicate his desire to Vann. Only after Mrs. Marshall instructs Vann does he understand the cause of Asher’s displeasure and change his behavior.

Young preschoolers also begin school with the ability to encourage their peers to repeat behaviors they enjoy. In doing this, they provide the initial response of paying attention to the behavior. When children react to a peer’s behavior with laughter or mimicry, that peer often repeats his or her action, in the same way or with minor variations. For example, here Asher, Maggie, Ethan, and Brian play with glurch, a home-made gooey, starchy ooze, at a table during Play Time. The children encourage one another’s playful behaviors by paying attention to them and copying. Mrs. Marshall pauses nearby to check in with them and monitor their level of silliness.

> *Mrs. Marshall sits at the Glurch table, picking lumps of glurch off of Asher’s shirt. As she does this, she asks him, “Did your mom and dad ever go to Turks & Caicos? Do you know? “No. They didn’t go,” Asher says matter-of-factly. “Have you ever been to Pizza Land?” he asks her, referencing a local restaurant.*
>
> *Mrs. Marshall says she has, and stops picking at his clothing for a minute to announce five minutes until clean up.*

Asher still has glurch stuck on his head. Maggie holds her glurch up, then cuts it. Asher laughs as he sticks more on his face.

"Asher, not on your face, please."

Asher takes the globby purple glurch off his face using a pair of plastic scissors. He raises it up high on the tip of his scissors. Brian sees what Asher's doing and starts copying. So does Maggie. They get louder and louder as this becomes more amusing with all three of them doing it together. Kayleigh sits silently playing with her glurch alone in the middle of the melee.

"Brian, inside voice," Mrs. Marshall reminds.

In this example, Asher's peers provide his antics with sustained attention, demonstrating amusement through their smiles and laughter, and furthering the interaction by engaging in mimicry. The children take turns entertaining one another and being entertained, as they repeatedly exchange attention in their interactive play. Each time a child participates successfully in the exchange, his or her social inclusion is reaffirmed by the others' continued amused responses. Kaleigh, the youngest student in the class, observes the silliness of her peers, but seems a bit too shy to actively get involved. She remains focused on her own glurch, neither contributing to the ongoing silliness nor discouraging it. Mrs. Marshall encourages this sort of play, but monitors the volume level and issues gentle reminders to Asher not to put the glurch on his face, and to Brian to lower the volume of his voice.

As these examples show, when children begin preschool, they engage in initial response strategies as a way of influencing their peer's behaviors. When peers do something they do not like, children stop paying attention to the bothersome behavior and cry loudly, directing their own attention inward, and calling the attention of other class members to their distress. This ends the social interaction between the child and the peer who is bothering him. When peers do something children find amusing, they often continue attending to the peer and their diverting behavior, or imitating it, which furthers the social interaction. While children's initial responses of crying and copying can be effective in prompting peers to desist from bothersome behaviors and to continue engaging in amusing ones, they are not consistently effective. Moreover, they can be bothersome to other children. As a result, Mrs. Marshall encourages the children to adopt simple communication strategies to let their peers know what behaviors are bothering them and what they'd like them to do instead.

Sometimes the initial response strategies used by some students are effective in prompting a classmate to modify their behavior, such as when Jimmy screamed and Ethan, upset by the screaming, vacated his spot at the kinetosand table. Other times, it results in an escalation of conflict, like when Asher yelled at Vann to get him to stop helping clean up, and Vann yells back in his own defense. Still other times, the mimicry of a group of children prompts a trendsetter to engage in increasingly inappropriate behavior, as we saw when Asher, Maggie, and Brian played with the glurch. In instances like the three examples, Mrs. Marshall intervenes to redistribute social power among the peer group by reminding the students whose behavior is acceptable in the classroom and whose is not. In interactions like the one between Jimmy and Ethan, Mrs. Marshall is generally quick to intervene on behalf of the student who is targeted by a peer's outcry. In the conflict between Vann and Asher, Mrs. Marshall doesn't as clearly take a side because both Asher and Vann were demonstrating inappropriate behavior: before Asher yelled at him, Vann was initially trying to be helpful, but he responded to Asher by yelling back. As a result, Mrs. Marshall gently remonstrates both Asher, whom she reminds to "use his

words," and Vann, whom she encourages to listen to Asher. Finally, at the glurch table, as Asher, Maggie, and Brian engage in mimicry that approaches, and then crosses the threshold of classroom indecorum, Mrs. Marshall intervenes to remind Asher not to put the glurch on his face and Brian to use his inside voice. She does not scold Maggie, who has managed to engage in the mimicry without violating classroom behavioral expectations—she has neither used an outside voice nor gotten glurch on her face. In each of these examples from early in the school year, the teacher uses her authority to intervene in peer interactions to support the students demonstrating classroom-appropriate behaviors and to discredit the actions of classmates behaving inappropriately.

Simple Communication Strategies – Shouting NO! And Directing

Because students' initial responses of yelling and mimicry often lead to greater disruptions, Mrs. Marshall introduces a new approach to shaping peer behavior, which I call simple communication strategies, to increase classroom-appropriate behavior. She encourages the children to use simple communication strategies to indicate which peer behaviors they like and which they do not. Two tangible strategies Mrs. Marshall suggests for communicating displeasure with a peer's behavior include demonstratively blocking one's ears, as well as shouting "Stop!" The strategy Mrs. Marshall endorses for encouraging peers to engage in particular behaviors is to provide simple, explicit directives clarifying the desired behavior. After these strategies are introduced by Mrs. Marshall, she acknowledges and praises children for using them. The students then continue to employ them on their own without prompting.

Consider this example, which illustrates how Mrs. Marshall introduces these strategies. After Bella, one of the older students, initially covers her ears with her hands to let Jimmy know that he is being too loud during Circle Time, Mrs. Marshall calls attention to her use of particular iconic signs. She explains to the class that when Bella covers her ears, she sends the message to Jimmy that he's hurting them with his loud voice.

> *As soon as Mrs. Marshall begins to read All About Me, Jimmy tries to get Jake's attention. Jake is trying to listen to the story, but Jimmy has his hands up in his face. "Let's get our friend Jimmy a chair, Mrs. Jill." She continues to read.*
>
> *Mrs. Jill tries to keep Jimmy focused on the story, but he keeps paying attention to her instead. He makes clicking noises with his mouth.*
>
> *Even seated away from the children in the circle, and with Mrs. Jill's undivided attention, Jimmy begins to scream.*
>
> *Mrs. Marshall has no choice but to stop reading. "That hurts my ears," she says. "Look at Bella? She's got her hands over her ears. Your voice is hurting her ears too. Is that an inside voice? No, I don't think so."*

In this example from the first week of school, when Jimmy fails to be a good listener while Mrs. Marshall reads a story to the group, she calls attention to his classmate Bella who is blocking her ears. She implicitly praises Bella's ear-blocking strategy by pointing out to Jimmy that it communicates Bella's feelings. She appeals to Jimmy's empathy by indicating that his voice is hurting Bella's ears.

After this incident, Bella's ear-covering strategy catches on like wildfire. Over the next few weeks, the children begin to employ it independently whenever a peer's self-expression

becomes disturbingly raucous. Here, in an example that shows students learning to use this technique as well as other strategies introduced by Mrs. Marshall, we see how Jake covers his ears when Asher has an angry outburst during Snack Time.

> *Overhearing a Snack Time conversation between Mrs. Jill and Sam, Asher gets up to share that he watched the Packers' game too. Afterwards, he returns to eating his napkinful of goldfish crackers. At this point, Kayleigh is helping herself to another small scoop of goldfish out of the communal bowl.*
>
> *Asher shouts at her. She looks terrified. Her eyes go wide and she gets out of her chair to physically move away from him. He stands up and gets closer. He continues to yell angrily in her face, "No! Those aren't yours!"*
>
> *Mrs. Marshall says sternly, "Asher. That's not okay. We don't yell at our friends in preschool. We don't want our friends to be scared of us. Look at Jake." Jake's covering his ears with his hands and turning away. "Use your words."*
>
> *Asher calms down and resumes eating his goldfish. Kayleigh regards him warily as she munches on her fish.*

This example captures Kayleigh, Asher, and Jake at different stages in their development of peer influence strategies, with Kayleigh still using initial responses, and Asher and Jake working to master simple communication strategies. In this example, Asher shouts loudly at Kayleigh, "No! Those aren't yours!" to let Kayleigh know that he is not pleased with her behavior. Though he is mistaken – she has not, in fact, stolen his goldfish – he communicates his anger with loud, but intelligible words. Kaleigh, in response, acts as though she feels threatened and moves away, in a manner similar to Ethan's response to Jimmy described above. Though Asher is effective in influencing Kaleigh's behavior, and he is following Mrs. Marshall's instructions by communicating to her why he is angry, he is doing so too loudly for his behavior to be considered classroom appropriate. It is clear that Asher is trying to apply Mrs. Marshall's strategy of using his words, but he is failing to heed her admonishment to use an "inside voice" in the classroom. In response to Asher's outburst, Jake, sitting nearby, covers his ears with his hands. After covering his ears, Jake turns away, reluctant to engage with Asher. In deploying this ear-covering strategy just as Mrs. Marshall had directed, Jake communicates to Asher that his angry outburst is bothering him.

The children also practiced applying simple communication strategies when they wish to stop their peers from touching them or getting too close. In situations like the one described here, some students firmly state, "Stop!" to dissuade their classmates from continuing particular behaviors, whereas others only did so after receiving reminders from the teachers. Here, Brian uses this strategy to discourage Jimmy from touching him, and Mrs. Marshall encourages Noelle to do the same.

> *Mrs. Marshall plays the "Tootie Ta" song on the Smart Board speakers and all the kids stand up to dance. When the music starts, Jimmy is quick to start dancing with everyone else.*
>
> *Pretty soon, Jimmy gets really close to Brian. He raises his hands up and tries to touch Brian's face. Brian, moving to avert Jimmy's increasing proximity, declares, "Stop!"*
>
> *Thus dissuaded, Jimmy starts chasing Brandon around, reaching out to grab him. Brandon dodges right and left, trying to get away. Brandon proves too fleeting a target, so Jimmy homes in on Noelle instead.*

Noelle whines and puts her hands up in front of her face, looking around uncertainly. Mrs. Marshall tells her, "Noelle, if you don't like what Jimmy is doing, tell him, "Stop!" Say, 'I don't like that!'"

Noelle tells Jimmy, "Stop!"

In this situation, Brian demonstrates competence at communicating directly to Jimmy that his attempts to interact are unwanted. Brian's strategy is successful, and Jimmy instead tries to interact with Brandon. By running away, Brandon indicates that he doesn't want Jimmy to touch him either, though his intentions are more ambiguous, and initially Jimmy tries to chase him. When Brandon successfully manages to evade Jimmy, Jimmy tries to dance with Noelle instead. Noelle, an only child, seems averse to Jimmy's touching her, too, but, seeming not to know how to make Jimmy stop, she cries. Mrs. Marshall coaches her to communicate her displeasure by saying "Stop! I don't like that!" referencing a previous Circle Time lesson, in which she had explained that when a student does this, he or she expresses negative emotions such as anger or disapproval with the behavior, as well as reluctance to continue interacting with that peer. Noelle heeds this advice and tells Jimmy to stop. This example shows that verbally saying "Stop" is a more effective strategy than simply moving away, because it unambiguously communicates a child's displeasure with a peer's behavior. It is also the strategy that Mrs. Marshall instructs Noelle to use, which indicates that it is preferred as a classroom strategy over running away.

Mrs. Marshall also encourages the children to use simple communication strategies to tell their peers what behaviors they'd like them to engage in. Mrs. Marshall's acknowledgement and praise of successful attempts at using the verbal strategy of issuing directives to influence peer behaviors, as with the children's shouting "Stop!" to discourage peer behaviors, encouraged children to use these strategies more frequently. Over time, some children began to use them in creative and problematic ways.

To prevent silliness from getting excessive and bodies from getting out-of-control, Mrs. Marshall teaches the children simple communication strategies for monitoring and influencing one another's behavior. Building on the strategy of saying, "Stop!" to discourage one another's inappropriate behavior, she encourages the students to tell their peers what to do instead. In the following situation, Mrs. Marshall encourages the students to verbally encourage peers to perform specific desirable behaviors. Here she exhorts veteran preschooler Vann to remind Asher to pay attention during Circle Time.

Back in the classroom, the children all find a spot on the carpet. They sing the good morning song. Mrs. Marshall has to remind Asher twice to keep his hands to himself. "Look at my eyes," she says the second time. He does. "Let's keep our hands by our own bodies," she repeats.

Then she asks the whole class. "Who should we give thanks to?"

Dekari raises his hand, "God!" Many of the children call out the answer simultaneously.

"Asher, hands to yourself," Mrs. Marshall reminds. Then she turns to Vann, the classmate with whom Asher had been repeatedly trying to interact. "Vann, be a leader. You've been in this classroom for two years already. Show him how we do it in here. If Asher is talking, tell him 'Ssshhhh. Mrs. Marshall is talking.' It's my turn, Asher."

In this example, Asher tries to interact with Vann while Mrs. Marshall is presenting the Circle Time lesson. Mrs. Marshall calls upon Vann to help manage Asher's unruly behavior during Circle Time. She encourages him to remind Asher to be quiet when the teacher is talking, and to model good behavior by ignoring Asher's interruption. In so doing, Mrs. Marshall communicates to the class that when children are engaging in inappropriate behaviors, their peers—and in particular their peers with greater classroom experience—have license to remind them what they should be doing instead.

In Mrs. Marshall's class, some children are quicker to understand and apply the strategies than others, likely due to differences in students' prior experience in her classroom, or to the similarity or lack thereof between Mrs. Marshall's expectations and the adult expectations they've encountered for interacting with siblings or peers in the home, or in daycare, babysitting groups, or extracurricular activities. Some children quickly adopt the simple communication strategy of directing one another to ensure their peers' compliance with classroom rules. When directing, children provide their sustained attention to the peer whose appropriate behavior they are trying to promote. Consider this example in which Claire prompts her classmates to share by reminding them of the classroom rule about sharing.

> *John plays with plastic geometric blocks. Next to him is Dekari, who's building a wooden racetrack.*
>
> *Lily joins Brandon and Jake at building massive towers out of large cardboard "bricks." Bella and Claire come over to watch. "That's a great idea!" Bella exclaims.*
>
> *"Mrs. Marshall says we have to share," Claire says. Lily, Brandon, and Jake continue building without sacrificing any of the bricks they've used already to Claire or Bella. They do, however, allow Claire and Bella to take bricks from the unused scatter on the floor.*

Here, Claire observes Lily, Brandon, and Jake building impressive brick towers and wants to join in. She announces to her peers Mrs. Marshall's rule about sharing, as a way of forcing them to include her and Bella. In this instance, Claire's assertiveness is effective in prompting her peers to include her in stacking the blocks.

Children occasionally overgeneralized their permission to remind their peers how to behave. Surprisingly, peers were often willing to comply with their classmates' directives. When they did as they were directed, the interactions developed into reciprocal, albeit asymmetrical play. Consider this interaction between Bella and Claire.

> *Bella comes over by Faith and Claire, who are playing with their dolls in the book corner. She says, "Oh, hi guys." Noticing that they're playing dolls, she goes over by the dramatic play area to find another doll. Bella chooses a baby doll and returns to play with Faith and Claire. Bella joins in with Claire and Gracie, announcing, "My baby is pink."*
>
> *Claire replies, describing the exceptional qualities of her baby doll. "Well, my baby…[something unintelligible]."*
>
> *"My baby is…" Bella's voice fades, and I can't hear her last words.*
>
> *Claire says, "We're playing school, right, Faithie?"*
>
> *"Yeah," Faith says.*

"My baby holds the bottle," Bella says.

"The babies don't get to hold the bottle," Claire says. "We're the moms. We hold the bottles, right, Faithie? Bella, you can be the baby. We'll be the moms and you can be the baby."

Bella goes along with the first part, but her way of "being the baby" doesn't completely align with Claire's expectations. She says, "Okay, I'll feed my baby some baby food."

"It's not time to eat," Claire says.

"Well, go to sleep, baby," Bella says.

"No, no, you're the baby. You can't be the mom and the baby. Just one or the other, right, Faithie?" Claire says.

Faith says, "Uh huh," and continues to tuck her and Claire's babies under a cover.

"Bella, Bella, you should be sleeping. 'Cause you're a baby," Claire says.

In this case, we see Bella trying to join in imaginative play with Claire and Faith. Claire allows her to participate, but she assigns her the role of the baby. Because Bella is willing to play along in this role, Claire and Faith continue to pay attention to her and include her in their mealtime narrative. In this case, though Claire continues to tell Bella that she's playing the role of baby incorrectly, Bella's compliance manages to sustain the cooperative play for several minutes.

Here we see children learning to use simple communication strategies to influence the behavior of their peers. When they wish to discourage peers from being too loud, they demonstratively cover their ears and turn away. When they wish to discourage peers from doing something that bothers them, they shout, "No!" or "Stop!" and often go somewhere else. On the other hand, when they want to encourage peers to behave in a desirable way, they learn to give them directives. While issuing directives is not always effective (as we will see below), it sometimes prompts peer compliance and extends interactions between children, as in the interaction between Bella and Claire. Though initially these strategies are learned from and encouraged by Mrs. Marshall, the children adapt them in creative ways on their own to influence their peers' behavior.

Over time, students find themselves repeatedly telling the same individuals to "Stop!" engaging in inappropriate or undesirable behaviors. When children recognize this pattern, they begin to preemptively exclude the peers who bother them, even when those individuals are not engaging in the bothersome behavior. Here, we see Asher interacting appropriately with peers while working on a project set up at one of the tables. Because the class is learning about the differences between preschoolers and babies this week, Mrs. Marshall has incorporated a fine motor skills lesson requiring the children to use eye droppers to "wet" clean diapers.

At the baby diaper table, Bella, Jake, Vann, Asher, and Hadley studiously apply eye droppers full of yellow-dyed water to clean diapers.

Brian comes over and watches them.

"Brian, you can do that. There's an eyedropper here. You can share with Hadley," Mrs. Marshall says.

> *John and Jake and Kayleigh come over and want to play at the sand table. Maggie has all the sand in her cupcake pans. I tell John to ask Maggie for a cupcake. Asher comes over and shows me his diaper, filled to capacity with yellow water.*
>
> *I appreciatively nod and say, "Nice! You really filled it up!" He shows it to Maggie and John, who smile approvingly. Then Asher takes his diaper carefully over to show Makayla at the art table.*
>
> *"Stop!" Makayla says to Asher. Makayla preemptively tells Asher to stop when he's just showing her what he made.*

In this instance, Asher successfully follows the directions and completes a tabletop activity geared toward improving fine motor skills. Proud of his work, he shows it to me and several classmates, who provide him with positive feedback for his efforts. However, when he tries to show Makayla, she generalizes from past interactions with him to anticipate another unpleasant encounter. To prevent an interaction with Asher, she tells him to stop before he says a word, even though in this instance, he is simply showing off his work.

As these examples show, Mrs. Marshall introduces simple communication strategies as a way to reduce some of the problems associated with students' initial responses to peer behaviors. Students learn at different paces to use the simple communication strategies of saying no or stop, or covering their ears, and issuing directives. Mrs. Marshall facilitates this learning by coaching them through situations in which such strategies are warranted. While the children use these strategies largely effectively to shape one another's behavior, they sometimes give rise to complications. For instance, Makayla's preemptive use of the "Stop!" strategy is the harbinger of a trend toward the more general exclusion of peers who frequently engage in disruptive behaviors. In addition, the strategy of issuing directives begins to prompt backlash from students on the receiving end as they become more comfortable and assertive in expressing their own feelings about being directed.

As Mrs. Marshall teaches these classroom-appropriate strategies for influencing peer behavior, she confers more social influence to students who are behaving in appropriate ways, and she diminishes the influence of students who are not. For instance, when Mrs. Marshall highlights Bella's ear-covering behavior and explains to the rest of the class that it's an appropriate reaction to Jimmy's loud voice, and when she intervenes during Asher's angry outburst over his goldfish, she shifts the balance of power among students by redirecting their attention and praising particular students and behaviors and sanctioning others. In the first example, Mrs. Marshall diffuses the influence Jimmy's loud voice is having on the students' ability to focus during Circle Time by praising Bella for expressing her displeasure in a classroom-appropriate way. Later, when Asher thinks Kaleigh has taken his goldfish and expresses his anger in an inappropriate way, Mrs. Marshall very firmly tells him, "It's not okay." By encouraging him to look at Jake, who is communicating his fear and displeasure by covering his ears and turning away, Mrs. Marshall is demonstrating her approval of Jake's behavior, not only to Asher, but to Kaleigh, Jake, and Sam as well.

Mrs. Marshall also works to ensure that students demonstrating more appropriate behavior have the ability to influence their peers directly. She instructs the class that not only should they remind one another to follow the classroom rules, but that it is their obligation to do so, especially if, like Vann, they were in the classroom last year. By publicly identifying Asher's Circle Time antics as an example of inappropriate behavior worthy of a classmate reminder, Mrs. Marshall reinforces the message that students following the rules have the right to tell

students who are not what to do. Taking this directive to heart, Claire asserts the classroom rule, “Mrs. Marshall says we have to share,” and effectively influences Lily, Brandon, and Jake allow them to join in their tower-building play.

Not long after the simple communication strategies are introduced, Mrs. Marshall observes that some students have not only learned the strategies, but have begun to overgeneralize when they should be used. Claire, for instance, has learned from her interactions with peers like in the building example that reminding them of what they’re “supposed to” do often results in getting her way. Subsequently, she overapplies the strategy of giving directives to control imaginative play with Bella. This is not a classroom-appropriate use of the strategy, however, because Claire is not reminding Bella of a rule, but rather coopting Bella’s agency by instructing her in the “proper” means of playing the role of baby. Other students, like Makayla, overgeneralize the application of simple communication strategies by applying them to classmates, rather than to their classmates’ undesirable behavior. For Makayla to preemptively “cancel” Asher on account of their past interactions is an inappropriate classroom behavior.

Situational Exclusion Strategies

Observing student progress toward mastering the art of simple communication strategies, and noting the new issues beginning to emerge, Mrs. Marshall implements a Circle Time lesson introducing a more sophisticated way of thinking about and interacting with peers. To encourage empathy for classmates’ feelings and to discourage preemptive dismissal from becoming patterned and habitual, Mrs. Marshall provides a new strategy for the children to use to influence the behavior of their peers: situational exclusion. Encouraging children to distinguish between the child and their behavior, this strategy requires children to name the emotional state of the student engaging in dangerous or undesirable behaviors, physically distance themselves, and tell a teacher. This message provides children with the license to participate in teaching their peers to stop engaging in disruptive and inappropriate behaviors.

Mrs. Marshall introduces the new strategy to her Monday-Wednesday-Friday class as part of a concept called “Emotional Zones.” The “Zone” concept is designed around colors and emojis, and encourages children to recognize that one another’s emotions and behavior fluctuate, and to interact with their peers differently depending on how they behave.

Using large flashcards, Mrs. Marshall indicates that she and children are in “the Green Zone” when “we’re happy, we’re calm, we’re focused on the person who’s talking or the work that we’re doing.” People are in the Yellow Zone when they are excited, or silly, or worried. Mrs. Marshall explains that “sometimes when we get excited we can get too silly. This can be a little dangerous. That’s why the next face on the Yellow Zone card looks worried. When we’re rolling around on the carpet, I get worried that someone might get hurt.” Mrs. Marshall explains that people are in the Blue Zone when they are tired or sad, but adds, “We can still be sad without crying a lot.” Finally, people are in the Red Zone when they are angry or out-of-control. She explains what the children should do if one of their friends is in the Red Zone:

Mrs. Marshall asks the class, “What can we do if one of our friends is in the Red Zone and we’re afraid they might hit us?”

“Walk away,” someone shouts out.

“Do something else,” somebody else says.

"That's right," Mrs. Marshall says, "We can stop playing with them and quickly walk away. Tell Mrs. Jill or I. And we can go do something else."

Here, Mrs. Marshall emphasizes that everyone is capable of feeling every emotion, and therefore, of being "in" any one of the Zones. She notes, too, that people's feelings do not mean they must act in certain ways; for example, "we can still be sad without crying a lot." Nonetheless, some feelings, like anger, are hard to control. She teaches the students that when people are angry and we become scared of how they might behave, we can say they're "in the Red Zone," and we can do certain things to stay safe. These sanctioned behaviors for dealing with a peer's Red Zone behavior include avoidance, telling a teacher, and playing with something else.

Mrs. Marshall's primary goal for this lesson is to provide the students with an effective strategy for helping to discourage their peers' Red Zone behavior and deescalating peer conflict. By immediately removing their attention from their angry peer and conditionally excluding that peer on the basis of their behavior, students can ostensibly help to manage behavior without stigmatizing particular classmates. Though the Zones Lesson also encourages reintegration of peers who have resumed residence in the Green Zone, that lesson takes the children longer to internalize.

The immediate consequence of this lesson, however unintended, is to provide the children with language for labeling the behavior of their peers. Not only do they use the labels to make sense of their own behavior or to empathize with others, they also put it to use in discussing among themselves their opinions of certain peer behaviors and which classmates were likely to engage in them. For instance, the students in Mrs. Marshall's class quickly put to use the "Red Zone" language to talk about peers' disruptive behavior almost immediately. During the Play Time on the same day of the Zones Lesson, I observed students discussing a meltdown they witnessed using "Red Zone" language.

Asher, playing at the cafe with Brian, has a major meltdown. Mrs. Jill intervenes and tries to talk to him. This only makes his emotions flare up more, and he tries to hit her to get her away from him.

"He's in the Red Zone," Makayla says.

I marvel at how quickly she's picked up the new terminology. (I'm sitting at the Apple Jack table now, helping Mrs. Marshall affix scotch tape aglets to the ends of the fraying string.) I ask Makayla, "Have you ever talked about the Red Zone before? Or did you just learn about it today?"

"I just learned it today," she said.

I nod. "Well, you're right. Asher's in the Red Zone."

Mrs. Marshall, seeing that Asher was not calming down for Mrs. Jill, tells him they're going to take a walk.

Claire comments, "She's taking Asher on a walk."

Makayla adds, "She's taking him out of the class. So we can stay safe."

Dekari quips, "It might even take like a year."

Lily agrees, "Yeah, it will."

Dekari adds, "It might even take like a week."

Lily apparently wasn't talking about Asher. She says, stringing her cereal, "It might take like a month to get them all on here."

Dekari says, "It might even take like 12 weeks!"

"Look how many are on here!" Lily announces, holding up her necklace.

Here, we see the children discussing Asher's behavior with their new "Zones" vocabulary. Makayla and Claire repeat the language they've heard Mrs. Marshall and Mrs. Jill use about the need to remove a person in the Red Zone in the interest of everyone else's safety. Dekari jokes about how long it might take Asher to calm down. Lily is the exception; she remains very focused on her work at the moment, and doesn't realize that her peers are not similarly absorbed in making their Fruit Loop necklaces. However, in initiating this conversation, Makayla implicitly signals that she includes Dekari and Lily among those capable of recognizing Asher's inappropriate behavior. By joking with her about how long it will take Asher to return to the Green Zone, Dekari likewise acknowledges the difference between their behavior and Asher's. In this way, children who have already come to conclusions about their peers' behavioral tendencies, use the Red Zone language to share their generalizations with others. By participating in these conversations, the children come to a verbal consensus about one concrete meaning of "Red Zone" behavior, its dangers, and the appropriate treatment for the perpetrator. They also come to a verbal consensus about their opinion of one particular peer.

At other times, the children overgeneralized the "take-away" message of the Zones Lesson by overapplying its directive to avoid peers when they're in the Red Zone. Rather than selectively distancing themselves from peers who were experiencing extreme emotional distress and behaving dangerously, they tended to identify peers who repeatedly engaged in behavior that bothered or scared them and to collectively avoid them altogether. Here, we see several of the children refusing to include Jimmy in a game with the parachute.

When we get to the courtyard, Mrs. Marshall instructs the children to join hands and make a circle. For some, it seems like they've never done this before. Many of the early circlers don't want to let go of their neighbor's hand to let newcomers into the circle. Jimmy is one who is repeatedly denied entry. Mrs. Marshall announces, "There's a spot next to me!" and Jimmy runs over to take her hand. Once the circle is made, she has the children step back to even it out, and then they sit to listen to the rules.

In this example, the children exclude Jimmy by deliberately ignoring his attempts to enter the circle. Because none of the other children will admit him, Mrs. Marshall makes a space for him. In conversation, Mrs. Marshall admits her concern about the other students' behavior toward Jimmy. In conversation after school one day, she confides that she has overheard children in the Monday-Wednesday-Friday class saying, "I don't like Jimmy" on several occasions. Moreover, one girl asked her what Jimmy's name was so she could tell her mommy about him. In this way, encouraged by the Zones Lesson to talk openly about their classmates' appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, students do so frequently with one another, with the teachers, and with their parents.

The examples in this section illustrate how Mrs. Marshall's introduction of the Zones lesson bolsters the social influence of the students who are quick to apply the situational exclusion strategies. It also informs the students that when their behaviors violate classroom expectations, they will be subject to peer sanction and labeling. Although Mrs. Marshall introduces the

concept of Emotional Zones specifically to help the children understand that everyone has emotions and can choose whether to express them in ways that are appropriate for the classroom or not, some children are more capable of doing so than their peers. Indeed, Mrs. Marshall's efforts to quell this systematic exclusion are initially coopted by the children, who use the language provided by the Zones Lesson to label the individuals who frequently engage in disruptive behavior. For instance, when Asher's behavior falls squarely within the parameters of the Red Zone, Dekari, Claire and Makayla immediately use their new language to talk about his long-lasting angry spells. Additionally, when many students recognize that Jimmy frequently has trouble controlling his behavior, they begin to collectively exclude him even when his behavior is appropriate, as we see occurring during the parachute game.

Rewarding Inclusion Strategies

Prompted by the students' overapplication of situational exclusion strategies, Mrs. Marshall reteaches the Zones Lesson, reinforcing the portion of the lesson that focuses on reintegrating children into the group after they have returned to the Green Zone. In this way, she introduces what I call *rewarding inclusion strategies,* the third type of strategy taught to children to influence the behavior of their peers. When using this strategy, children are encouraged to welcome their peers back to the Green Zone and include them in play, provided they are demonstrating appropriate behavior. Arguably, this is the most important part of the Zones lesson.

Mrs. Marshall teaches these strategies by modeling the way to treat a peer who is no longer in the Red Zone with acceptance and affirmation. In the example that follows, Mrs. Marshall demonstrates how to include Asher after he has rejoined his classmates in the Green Zone.

> *Later on, Asher calms down, and Mrs. Marshall welcomes him warmly and enthusiastically back to the group: "Oh, Asher, we missed you when you were in the Red Zone! We're so glad you're back in the Green Zone with us now." She encourages him to play house with a small set of human figures, an activity he often engages in independently on his own.*

By helping to reintegrate Asher back into the community of his peers, Mrs. Marshall reinforces to the class that the disruptive behavior—not Asher himself—is deserving of the Red Zone stigma. In this way, Mrs. Marshall enlists the help of the children to encourage Asher's desirable behaviors—calming down and resuming a "Green Zone" emotional state—by providing peer inclusion and positive peer attention.

The children learn this third strategy of rewarding inclusion and put it to use in setting their own rules of participation. In the next example, children make explicit how their peers will have to behave to be included in their play. Here, Claire and Lily refuse to include Bella unless she stops trying to take the puzzle away for herself.

> *Claire and Lily are working on a puzzle together. Bella is doing a more desirable one nearby.*
>
> *Lily turns to Bella and says, "Bella, you're my best friend. Let's do this one together."*
>
> *Bella tolerates this. But then Claire, having been deserted by Lily, goes over by them to join in. Bella leaves them and takes the puzzle with her. Claire and Lily start doing a different puzzle.*

Bella comes back to play with them, not wanting to be left out. She brings her puzzle with.

"We're not letting you play, right, Lily?" Claire says to Bella.

Lily sits criss-cross with her arms folded across her chest, seeming uncomfortable during Claire's standoff with Bella.

Claire goes to tell Mrs. Marshall that Bella's still not letting them play with the puzzle.

Claire tells Bella, "Bella, we'll let you do it with us if you be nice and don't try to take it away."

Bella cries. She mumbles something about wanting to do the puzzle.

Mrs. Marshall hears and comes over to soothe her, "I know. But we've got to share. It's Lily's turn now."

With Mrs. Marshall's help, Bella waits until it's her turn. Then she puts her piece in the puzzle.

"There you go!" Mrs. Marshall encourages.

In this situation, Claire makes her expectations clear to Bella. In order to play the puzzle with Claire and Lily, Bella has to "be nice" and "don't try to take it away." Because Bella struggles with this, Mrs. Marshall provides her with attention and encouragement as she waits her turn and praises her when she successfully does her part to complete the puzzle. Mrs. Marshall's involvement conveys approval of Claire's rewarding inclusion, by helping Claire to reinforce Bella's compliance with the expectation that she share nicely.

Indeed, as the children began to play together in larger groups and to set and enforce rules of participation with regularity, Asher exhibits "Red Zone" behavior less and less often. Seeming to realize that screaming and pushing are likely to result in his being excluded by his peers, Asher more and more often plays gently and earns their rewarding inclusion. During one particular playtime, he goes along with Lily and Claire's game and actively participates. Bella, who still struggles with sharing, wants to control their game and is not satisfied with simply joining in. When she throws a temper tantrum because she doesn't get her way, Lily, Claire, and Asher ignore her and continue playing. In this example, we see how the children cooperatively include Asher, who demonstrates behavior they condone, but cooperatively exclude Bella, whose behavior they wish to discourage.

Toward the last five minutes of play time, there's a dispute over who gets to play with the mailbox next. Noelle comes and gets me. She says the timer's already out and it's supposed to be Bella's turn. I ask Noelle if she's waiting, too.

She shakes her head and says, "It's him and her." She points at Bella, who's lying in a fetal position on the floor under a desk, and Asher, who's eagerly engaged in playing with the mailbox with Lily and Claire. My understanding is that the other kids had been playing with the mailbox, and instead of joining in with them, Bella wanted it all to herself.

Asher graciously presents the mailbox to the girls with a dramatic flair. Claire opens it up and Lily reaches inside. She brings out the red cell phone and both she and Claire gush over what has come to them in the mail.

> *"Oh, Lily, it's a phone!" Claire exclaims. She jumps up and down in her dress-up heels.*
>
> *"Yeah! It IS a phone!" Lily smiles. Lily's wearing a string of gold Mardi Gras beads and her toilet paper-tube binoculars from the class bear hunt.*
>
> *Before a moment has passed celebrating Asher's gift, Claire and Lily are eager to mail something back to him. Maggie comes over. Claire tells her, "Maggie, you can be with me and Lily. Asher, you stay over here and wait for us!"*
>
> *Brian comes over and wants to play, too.*
>
> *"Brian, you wait with Asher! Maggie's coming with me and Lily!" Claire directs.*
>
> *Brian doesn't quite know what's going on. After a minute, he gets impatient waiting with Asher, and goes to see what the girls are up to.*
>
> *Hadley notices that something fun is going on in the corner and joins in with the girls. The five of them huddle in the dramatic play area, around the play kitchen. When they've decided what to mail to Asher and stuffed it in the mailbox, Lily, Claire, and Hadley carry it over, followed by their entourage of Maggie and Brian. Other kids from around the room take note and follow them, too, to see what's happening.*
>
> *Asher sits across the room patiently waiting for them to return with his mail.*
>
> *As the procession moves across the floor, Mrs. Marshall flicks the lights. She announces, "Clean up time!"*
>
> *Some of the group disperses at the teacher's command, including Hadley and Lily. But Claire runs to finish the game; she presents the mailbox to Asher. He opens it up and laughs hysterically when he sees it's a hamburger.*
>
> *Then they work together to clean up. Asher puts the mailbox back in its spot, and Claire takes the hamburger back to its cabinet.*

Here, classmates include Asher, but exclude Bella from their play. Asher earns their inclusion by refraining from externalizing behaviors like yelling and pushing that have been identified by Mrs. Marshall as "scary." In this same situation, the students exclude Bella, communicating to her that her efforts to control the game were unacceptable. When Bella creatively tries to adapt the sand timer rule to a scenario in which several classmates are cooperatively playing with the same toy, the other students refuse to yield up the mailbox, but invite Bella to play with them instead. When she cries because her attempts to control the others' behavior is unsuccessful, they invoke the ritualized procedure of blocking their ears to her cries, and eventually ignore her altogether to continue their play. By working together to collectively deny attention to Bella, the children—as a group—designate her tears and sobs as a socially inappropriate "outburst." This sends the message that if she refuses to participate in the group activity, her friends will withdraw their attention from her and she will be left out.

Here, we see that the children have learned the rewarding inclusion strategy introduced by Mrs. Marshall and that they use them to collectively communicate to potential playmates which peer behaviors they will tolerate, and which they will not. Using inclusion as a reward, they incentivize others to comply with their shared standards of conduct. Through the students' repeated, collective use of rewarding inclusion, the children reached consensus about which peer behaviors should be discouraged and which should be encouraged. In turn, children

gradually became more consistent in their adoption of behaviors that prompted the attention and inclusion of their peers. Children gradually desisted from demonstrating behaviors that received little attention from their peers.

Even the rewarding inclusion strategies privilege students who exhibit classroom appropriate behavior over their peers who do not. By modeling the way to reintegrate Asher back into the group after he experienced an interlude in the Red Zone, Mrs. Marshall communicates to the class that it is the responsibility of students who understand and demonstrate behaviors that are classroom appropriate to decide when others have violated behavioral norms and deserve exclusion, and when they are in compliance and deserve inclusion. When Claire tells Mrs. Marshall that Bella is not sharing the puzzle, and Mrs. Marshall agrees that Bella needs to share and helps her to wait her turn to insert her piece, Mrs. Marshall is reinforcing that Claire, who is trying to reinforce class expectations, is correct in doing so. And, when Lily, Claire, and Asher collectively ignore Bella's emotional outburst after they reject her efforts to take over control of the mailbox, they define her behavior as inappropriate and just grounds for exclusion. Conversely, Lily and Claire approve of Asher's cooperative behavior, and grant him inclusion into their game, as well as into the peer group which, secure in its compliance with classroom behavioral rules and norms, has the power to confer or deny inclusion to those who misbehave.

Discussion and Conclusion

The Indirect Socialization Process

In this paper, I have illustrated a new socialization method which preschool teachers use to prepare children to take on the role of student required of them in kindergarten and beyond: indirect socialization. This process of indirect socialization complements the vertical, horizontal, and reciprocal processes of socialization previously theorized by sociologists. Unlike vertical and horizontal socialization, in which culture is directly passed from teacher to student or from peer to peer, respectively, and unlike reciprocal socialization, in which teacher and student simultaneously socialize one another, indirect socialization involves the transmission of cultural knowledge from teacher to student, through the intermediary of the student's classmates.

Specifically, indirect socialization occurs when teachers encourage children to shape their peers' behavior by providing or withholding attention and inclusion. That is, children are encouraged to pay attention to and include peers who are demonstrating classroom-appropriate behavior and to ignore and exclude classmates who are behaving inappropriately. Children learn these strategies through a process of interpretive reproduction in which adult culture is intentionally taught, monitored, and coached by adults. In learning these strategies, children often employ them in innovative ways unanticipated by the teachers. Teachers react to the potentially problematic usage of each set of strategies by teaching more nuanced and sophisticated strategies.

In the sections above, I have shown that some children begin preschool with rudimentary strategies for prompting peers to desist from bothersome behaviors. These strategies, like yelling and mimicking, are often effective, but regarded as inappropriate for the classroom. To encourage children to influence their peers' behaviors in less disruptive ways, Mrs. Marshall introduces *simple communication strategies* like saying "Stop!," covering their ears, or issuing

directives. The children apply the strategies, often creatively altering their purpose or tailoring their implementation to meet the needs of particular situations. On occasion, they sanction one another's behavior preemptively or react negatively to peer directives. To combat these unintended consequences, Mrs. Marshall introduces *situational exclusion strategies* embedded in a lesson on Emotional Zones, to encourage empathy for others and distinct reactions to peers depending on whether their behavior is appropriate for the classroom or not. The children quickly adopt these techniques, but use their new language to develop consensus about which peers are frequently "in the Red Zone" and to collectively exclude them from play. To address this issue, Mrs. Marshall encourages the children to pair situational exclusion strategies with *rewarding inclusion strategies*, modeling how to welcome students back to the group after they have ceased engaging in inappropriate behaviors. The children, in turn, apply these rewarding inclusion strategies in a variety of situations to establish rules of play among their classmates.

This description of the indirect socialization process advances knowledge of peer socialization by focusing on preschoolers as opposed to older children. By focusing on this early stage of learning, this study helps to explain how children learn that their attention and inclusion can be used as a form of power within peer networks. For example, Mrs. Marshall teaches the children that the removal of peer attention—such as when children cover their ears to block out a classmate who is annoying them—is to be interpreted as a form of sanction, and that peer attention—like when a student is thanked for sharing a toy with a peer —is to be valued as a reward. These strategies form the basis of those used by middle and high school students to create and reinforce social distinctions depicted in studies of adolescent and youth culture (Adler and Adler 1995; Eder et al. 1995; Fine 1987; Milner 2013). Thus, this study helps us to understand the origins of the peer socialization processes which have been well-documented among elementary, middle, and high school students. Undeniably, children who begin developing the ability to selectively include and exclude their peers in preschool will build a powerful arsenal by the time they reach the status disputes of middle school and beyond.

The Beneficiaries of Indirect Socialization in the Classroom

The indirect socialization strategy of engaging peers to encourage classroom-appropriate behavior seems to further the teachers' objectives of socializing children into students. As the year continues, my field notes show that as more and more peers participate in collectively discouraging the same types of behaviors—like throwing temper tantrums or refusing to share—these behaviors gradually decrease over time, as we saw with Asher. Conversely, as more children encourage the same types of behaviors—like, for example, sharing—using attention and inclusion, peers come to exhibit them more consistently, as we saw with Bella. While certainly other forces that simultaneously promote social learning and development are at work both in the home and at the school, indirect socialization seems to facilitate the development of classroom-appropriate behavior—at least for some students.

When thinking through the implications of the indirect socialization process, it is important to consider who is being effectively transformed into a student through the process, and at what cost. Through the examples of Claire, Lily, Makayla, and Dekari, we see that students who begin the school year well-prepared to demonstrate classroom-appropriate behavior are systematically privileged by the peer-influence strategies that Mrs. Marshall teaches the class. The strategies give students who understand and follow the rules receive positive

reinforcement for their appropriate behavior as well as license to remind their peers what they should be doing and to request teacher intervention when their peers do not heed their directives. When they experience conflicts with classmates, the teachers generally take their sides and help their peers to understand why. Their influence is labeled as "helpful" and they are viewed by teachers as leaders and role models.

Conversely, for students like Asher, Jimmy, and Bella, who begin the year struggling to demonstrate classroom-appropriate behavior, these strategies are sources of systematic disadvantage. Classroom lessons target their behaviors as the ones in need of remediation. Their behaviors are labeled as "dangerous" and "scary," and peers are prompted to discourage them. Moreover, indirect socialization does not appear to be effective enough—at least over the course of one school year—to help them close the behavioral gap between children who struggle at the beginning of the year, and their peers who regularly demonstrate classroom-appropriate behavior from day one.

Implications: Compounding (Dis)Advantage?

While it is apparent from these findings that children differ upon preschool entry in their ability to comply with classroom behavioral norms and expectations, this study was not designed to weigh in on the origin of these child differences. It is possible that the students who initially begin the school year demonstrating behaviors the teachers deem more classroom-appropriate may do so because they come from middle-class families with expectations for child conduct that are similar to those of schools instructed by predominantly middle-class teachers, or because they come from white households with cultural expectations similar to those of a classroom with white teachers in a school wherein the majority of teachers are white. This study did not set out to identify links between children's demographic characteristics and their preparedness upon preschool entry, and due to the lack of socioeconomic and racial diversity among the children in this particular case study, it cannot.

Nonetheless, this study does demonstrate the differential effects of indirect socialization for children who begin the school year less or more prepared to understand and follow classroom behavioral rules and norms. Prior research tells us this is because some children have experienced prior and ongoing socialization in homes which are culturally better "matched" to the preschool environment in terms of their expectations for appropriate behavior when interacting with other children (Calarco 2018; Lareau 2011). This study shows that more relevant preparation in the home yields benefits for children in preschool in terms of social standing with peers and teacher perceptions of readiness, but whether those early differential advantages translate to ongoing patterns of advantage throughout further schooling depends upon whether or not preschool socialization processes are effective enough to close the behavioral gaps among differently prepared students; that is, whether they are effective enough to enable all children to take on the role of student.

A closer look at the development of the students who initially struggled with classroom-appropriate behavior helps to clarify how much ground they were able to make up. Though while playing mailbox game, Bella's crying does not seem influenced by her peers' collective refusal of their attention, later observations suggest that over time, her desire for inclusion causes her to engage in more frequent sharing and less frequent meltdowns. However, by late April, Mrs. Marshall acknowledges that Bella is "getting better at [sharing]" and "no longer really butting heads with Claire," but she worries that she still she might struggle with peers and developing friendships in kindergarten, and recommends that she spend another year in

preschool, though technically she is old enough and demonstrates the cognitive readiness to move up. And Asher, despite his progress in demonstrating classroom-appropriate ways to express frustration with peers, still too frequently exhibits "Red Zone" behavior for Mrs. Marshall to consider him kindergarten-ready by the end of the school year. Jimmy's consistently inappropriate behavior prompts Mrs. Marshall to refer him for special needs testing, and he begins to receive additional support services toward the end of the school year. For these students, one year of exposure to preschool socialization is not enough to develop competency in the role of student.

In assessing the implications of indirect socialization within a cultural reproduction framework, it is not enough to merely consider the compounding of advantages through the differential awarding of benefits. We must also take into account the compounding of disadvantages through the differential delivery of negative consequences. Here, we must consider the long-term repercussions for the children who struggle to demonstrate classroom-appropriate behavior of being the targets of negative peer labeling and exclusion.

In recent years, sociologists of education have examined a number of different behavior management and disciplinary strategies ranging from "no excuses" policies (Golann 2015) to restorative justice practices (Hopkins 2002; Payne and Welch 2015), focusing largely on where and how these policies are implemented in middle and high schools and their divergent consequences for students by race, gender, and social class. Evidence overwhelmingly indicates that children who are male; Black, Hispanic, or American Indian; or who come from working-class or poor families receive consequences of disproportionate number and severity within the school punishment system as compared to their female, White, and middle- or upper-middle class peers (Skiba et al. 2002; Verdugo 2002; Welch and Payne 2010).

Teachers, in harnessing the power of peer influence to promote compliance with classroom rules, may be teaching and reinforcing students' beliefs about what behaviors constitute deviance and which students or types of students are likely to commit them. Though it was clearly not Mrs. Marshall's intention to generate stigma towards particular students among their classmates, it did occur, and while she made repeated efforts to encourage the children to reintegrate their peers into the classroom community after episodes of negative behavior, some students remained wary of peers with whom they'd had unpleasant encounters in the past. More concerningly, the students whose behaviors are considered inappropriate in the classroom environment and therefore were on the receiving end of peer stigma and exclusion, may be at increased risk of identifying with negative labels; developing a negative feelings about the self, school, and authority figures; and engaging in acts of secondary deviance (Goffman 2009).

Because preschool for many students functions as the nexus of home and the system of institutionalized education, children who begin school with the advantage of coming from a home in which expectations for conduct are similar to those of their teachers—most frequently, White students from middle-class families (Banerjee 2018; McGrady and Reynolds 2013), as well as those with siblings or prior experience interacting with peers under adult supervision as suggested here—are less likely to make mistakes in learning and applying classroom behavioral expectations and to be stigmatized by their peers as a consequence. Given these patterns, it would seem that preschool is the place wherein this cultural capital of "knowing the rules" is first translated into the specific institutional advantage of avoiding interactions with the school discipline system.

In this particular field site, the multi-age structure of the preschool classroom may mitigate its potential to reproduce initial behavioral advantages. Because this structure provides many

students the opportunity to spend multiple years in a classroom with the same teachers and different peers, children may begin with little or no knowledge of or experience following the rules. In their first year, they may be subject to peers' helping to "teach them how we do it in here," and in extreme cases be the victim of stigma and exclusion. But upon beginning their second or third year, they would have an advantage over many of the newcomers and more likely to be cast in a leadership role, as we saw with Vann. In effect, by using preschool as an intervention of variable duration depending on child preparedness, it could in fact have an equalizing function by ensuring that, prior to beginning kindergarten, all students were equipped with the classroom behaviors necessary to learn.

On the other hand, the fact that Mrs. Marshall's classroom was part of a half-day, three-day-per-week preschool program may have reduced the efficacy of indirect socialization in prompting all children to develop classroom-appropriate behavior. If students were exposed to pressure from their peers for more time each school day or for more than three days per week, they may have been more likely to modify their behavior during the course of the school year.

Limitations of this Study and Recommendations for Future Research

While this study is useful in illustrating the process by which children learn to influence one another's behavior in the preschool classroom, it has limitations. First, the relatively homogeneous student body of Mrs. Marshall's classroom, while useful for observing general trends in the behaviors of white, middle class students, precludes observing patterned race and class differences among student behaviors. Second, my fieldwork was conducted in a private, Catholic school attended by children from predominantly middle-class families and stay-at-home parents, with a high student-to-teacher ratio, making the children more heavily monitored by adults than children in other preschool settings. Thus, the children I observed were likely under more pressure from adults to encourage one another to conform with teacher expectations than children might have in other settings. They likely discouraged one another from engaging in disruptive or unruly behavior more frequently as well.

Third, this study focuses on the instructional methods used by one teacher with a great deal of experience and an extremely competent assistant, both of whom already had strong relationships with and support from students' parents. Not only was Mrs. Marshall well-positioned to influence student behavior, she also implemented a curriculum that included a lesson on Emotional Zones. Moreover, when she perceived that students were overapplying the exclusion strategies, she retaught the lesson, with an emphasis on the reintegration and inclusion of peers. While it may be common for preschool teachers to discuss emotions and to discuss what to do if a child is behaving in a scary or "out-of-control" way, they may not explicitly teach the concepts as linked. Likewise, they might not encourage children to uncouple feelings and behaviors, as when Mrs. Marshall reminded her class, "We can be sad without crying a lot." In those other settings, students might be more likely to essentialize feelings and behaviors as key parts of the people who demonstrate them, and consequently be more likely to stigmatize children who break classroom rules governing peer interactions.

Future work should explore how differently advantaged children may use these strategies of peer influence to unequal effect in more diverse preschool classrooms. Comparative research examining how teachers in different types of preschools, such as Head Start, Montessori, Reggio Emilia, and Waldorf programs, encourage children to influence one another's behavior would help to determine the generalizability of this study, and could potentially suggest

different or better ways for teachers to enlist children in the maintenance of classroom order. Future work should also explore how this process plays out for different groups of children as they progress through elementary school to better understand how peer influence on behavior influences students' likelihood of receiving office discipline referrals.

Understanding the strategies taught by Mrs. Marshall and Mrs. Jill in the half-day preschool class at St. Cecilia School is a first step toward better understanding teachers' efforts to use children to shape one another's behavior in the classroom more generally. In demonstrating how preschoolers in this site selectively use their attention and inclusion to influence the behavior of their peers, this study contributes to sociological research on peer socialization, school discipline, and child agency. Understanding this process is important because it sheds light on how children compel peers to behave in ways that matter significantly for future interactions with the school discipline system.

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