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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Push-Ups Versus Clean-Up: Preschool Teachers' Gendered Beliefs, Expectations for Behavior, and Disciplinary Practices

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Abstract

Using data from observations in three U.S. preschools (nine classrooms total) and interviews with nine preschool teachers observed, the present qualitative study examines moments of gender socialization through disciplinary interactions in preschool classrooms. I ask: How do teachers' expectations for children's behaviors and use of disciplinary practices contribute to gender inequality in preschool? And, how do preschool teachers transmit and "do gender" through disciplinary practices and interactions? Using a grounded theory approach to data analysis, I find that in preschool, teachers discipline boys and girls differently and create gendered stories about why these differences exist. Teachers tell these gendered stories to account for, and justify, their gendered beliefs, expectations, and differential treatment of children during disciplinary interactions. Preschool teachers' gendered beliefs are also associated with gendered disciplinary responses to children's misbehavior in preschool classrooms. My data suggest that teachers' gendered beliefs and expectations for behavior are related to how boys and girls are disciplined differently for engaging in the same behaviors. I argue that teachers' gendered beliefs and gendered disciplinary interactions with children in preschool classrooms contribute to the embodiment and enforcement of gender and gender inequality in early childhood. My findings suggest that in preschool, gender differences continue to be constructed and reified as natural in young children.

Keywords Gender socialization · Children · Classroom discipline · Preschool teachers · Qualitative research

Educational settings are one context through which an unequal gender system is reproduced because interactions between teachers and students organize and define boys and girls differently (Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin 1999). Children learn about gender and how to be a "proper" boy or girl through explicit and implicit rules they receive from their teachers and peers. Teachers also enforce these rules about gender through disciplinary interactions in which students receive sanctions and disciplinary consequences for behaviors that violate gender norms or gendered expectations for classroom behavior (Blaise 2005; Gestwicki and Bertrand 2011; Jordan 1995; Martin 1998; Paechter 2007; Thorne 1993). The present qualitative study focuses on U.S. preschool and the disciplinary practices of preschool teachers. Preschool is frequently children's first exposure to the institution of schooling, providing most children the foundation of their educational careers and setting the stage for children's expectations of schooling and teacher interactions (Gansen 2017a).

Preschools are also important sites for children's early gender socialization. Gender socialization refers to the process through which children learn codes of conduct, rules, beliefs, and socially determined notions of masculinity and femininity that are associated with their biological sex (Gansen 2017a; Meyer 2010). Preschool is an ideal site to examine gender socialization because gender is a salient organizing principle in preschool classrooms (Bigler and Liben 2007; Thorne 1993). Unlike later years of schooling, teachers establish and increase the salience of gender in preschool classrooms through using gender as a grouping criteria embedded in classrooms routines like saying, "Good morning boys and girls," or as a part of their classroom organization (e.g., calling children to line up by their gender) (Bigler and Liben 2007; Thorne 1993). Establishing the salience of categories like gender and categorizing individuals based on these salient categories increases the importance of gender and reifies gender difference in preschool classrooms.

In preschool classrooms, gender socialization is most visible around disciplinary interactions because if boys and girls

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are doing what they are supposed to be doing and behaving appropriately (i.e., abiding by gender norms), their behavior is not disciplined. Through disciplinary interactions with their teachers, preschool children learn the rules for appropriate classroom behavior, and these rules are often enforced in gendered ways (Martin 1998). Therefore, analyzing gender differences in when and how teachers discipline boys' and girls' misbehaviors may illuminate how the gender system is (re)produced in preschool classrooms. Although much extant research has examined the gender socialization young children receive from interactions with peers and teachers regarding gender norms and appropriate play or toy preferences (Bredekamp and Copple 1997; Granger et al. 2016; Lamb et al. 1980; Thorne 1993), little recent research has documented how teachers' beliefs, expectations for children's behaviors, and application of disciplinary practices guide children's gender socialization in preschool classrooms (Martin 1998).

Teachers' utilization of disciplinary interactions (both verbal corrective reprimands and disciplinary consequences) are interactional processes through which gender roles, norms, and expectations are transmitted to children. Preschool is an appropriate age group to ask these questions because gender segregation is at a high point there because boys and girls are defined in contrast to one another in preschool (Bigler and Liben 2007). As a result, gender socialization and gender enforcement is more direct and obvious for young children in preschool than in later years of schooling. Might teachers' gendered beliefs and expectations for students' behaviors be associated with when and how they discipline boys and girls in preschool classrooms?

In my qualitative analysis, I examine moments of gender socialization through disciplinary interactions in preschool classrooms to illuminate how gender differences are constructed, as well as reified as natural, with young children at the ages of 3–5 years-old. I ask: How do teachers' expectations for children's behaviors and use of disciplinary practices drive the gender system in preschool? And, how do preschool teachers transmit and "do gender" through disciplinary practices and interactions? I find that preschool teachers' gendered beliefs and expectations for behavior are associated with gendered disciplinary practices and gendered responses to children's misbehavior in preschool classrooms. My study contributes to notable literature (e.g., Blaise 2005; Chick et al. 2002; Martin 1998) on preschool teachers' utilization of gendered teaching practices by examining whether there have been changes in gendered teaching practices in the years since these influential studies.

Specifically, I find that gender continues to be accomplished in preschool through disciplinary practices in which teachers hold children accountable for appropriate gendered displays of behavior (Martin 1998). Additionally, my data fill a gap in extant research by demonstrating how teachers' beliefs about gender and gender difference are related to their disciplinary responses to children's misbehavior in preschool. Schools are influential sites of socialization. Gendered teaching practices reproduce and reify gender stereotypes and unequal gender relations between boys and girls and, later, between men and women (Connell 1987). The present findings will influence early childhood teacher trainings by identifying gendered disciplinary responses to children's behavior that hold children accountable to rigid conceptions of gender norms. Additionally, my data will assist early childhood teachers by educating teachers on best and effective disciplinary practices that result in boys and girls receiving equal disciplinary treatment from their teachers.

Gendered Teaching Practices

Classroom disciplinary interactions play a significant role in children's early socialization. By *disciplinary interactions*, I am referring to moments when teachers either verbally reprimand a child for their behavior (e.g., "Stop, that is not okay") or moments when teachers issue a child a disciplinary consequence (e.g., timeout). Therefore, through disciplinary interactions teachers enforce normative behaviors that follow classroom rules by correcting children's inappropriate or disruptive behavior through verbal reprimands or punitive disciplinary consequences. Preschool teachers emphasize preparing children for the student role through teaching them self-control and how to abide teachers' requests and follow classroom routines (Gracey [1975] 2008). As such, preschool teachers discipline children for behaviors that are inappropriate or disruptive to the classroom. Classroom management may lead to gendered behaviors if teachers rely on shortcuts in directing children's behaviors. Gilliam et al. (2016) state that teachers' needs to manage a classroom and control children's behavior can result in teachers using gender stereotypes to regulate boys' and girls' behaviors. Therefore, through discipline, teachers convey gendered (and different) expectations for appropriate classroom behaviors for boys and girls (Erden and Wolfgang 2004; Martin 1998).

Teachers affect the construction of gender in preschool through implementing hidden curricula (Giroux and Purpel 1983) which construct and reconstruct gendered bodies (Martin 1998). The hidden curriculum implicitly (and occasionally explicitly) teaches students lessons about their gender, race, and class (Anyon 1980; Orenstein 1994). Hidden curricula are also evident in how schools and teachers regulate students' bodies (Martin 1998). Controlled and disciplined bodies create the context for social relations, and our bodies are one site of gender (Martin 1998). Preschool routines require teachers to have control and order within the classroom

because teachers are often managing many children at once (Corsaro 2014).

Past research finds that teachers discipline boys and girls differently (Best 1983; Eccles and Blumenfeld 1985; Erden and Wolfgang 2004; Martin 1998; Serbin et al. 1973; Wooldridge and Richman 1985). Martin (1998) finds that classroom practices—such as dressing up, controlling voices through verbal reprimands, gendering verbal and physical instructions, and gendered physical interactions among children—create bodily differences between genders that make gender difference feel natural and normal in preschool. For example, Martin (1998) found that preschool teachers are more likely to allow boys to speak without raising their hand, participate in rough play, and talk more loudly than girls. She argues that these gendered teaching practices shape children's bodily practices by producing gender-specific mannerisms in boys and girls that make gender differences appear natural and biological (Martin 1998). Browne (2004) concluded that preschool teachers assume that boys and girls have different classroom needs. Teachers are gentler with girls and tend to administer more disciplinary consequences to boys than to girls (Erden and Wolfgang 2004). Erden and Wolfgang (2004) argue that teachers' stereotypical beliefs (such as girls are emotional, and boys are tough) may impact their disciplinary practices in classrooms. Teachers in their study reported that, when disciplining children, they are more likely to use reasoning strategies with girls and consequences with boys (Erden and Wolfgang 2004).

These studies suggest that disciplinary interactions may be a site of gender construction—a way in which gender differences and stereotypical gendered behaviors are reinforced and maintained (Cahill and Adams 1997; Erden and Wolfgang 2004; Martin 1998). However, recent work on preschool teachers' beliefs about gender, and how these beliefs are related to teachers' disciplinary practices, is lacking. It is important to address these gaps in the literature because teachers are significant socializing agents who impact the construction of children's gender identity. Identifying teachers' gendered beliefs may help to eliminate gender-typed teaching practices in preschool classrooms that maintain an unequal gender system centered on gender difference.

Teachers' Beliefs

Researchers have long explored individuals' beliefs and attitudes as they relate to their behavior. Ajzen and Fishbein's (1977) attitude-behavior theory demonstrates the relationship between attitudes and beliefs with actual behavior, and there is an abundance of literature supporting their framework for understanding how attitudes determine behavior. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975, p. 12) argue that "a belief links an object to some attribute…the object of a belief may be a person, a group of people, an institution, a behavior, a policy, an event, etc. and the associated attribute may be an object, trail property, quality, characteristic, outcome or event." Researchers have concluded that individuals' attitudes toward an object are one of many factors that influence their actual behaviors (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975).

Educational researchers are particularly interested in examining teachers' beliefs, and there is much extant research on how teachers' personal beliefs guide classroom management and instructional decisions (Czerniak and Lumpe 1996; Jones and Carter 2007; Luft and Roehrig 2007; Pajares 1992; Richardson 1996). Most educational researchers agree that teachers' beliefs are connected to their teaching practice, classroom interactions, and decision-making (Arnett and Turnbull 2008; Borg 2011; Fang 1996; Guskey 1986; Hashweh 1996; Isikoglu et al. 2009; Pajares 1992; Wallace and Kang 2004). Structural and situational constraints may inhibit teachers from acting according to their beliefs (Borg 2011; Fang 1996). Therefore, to understand teacher's practice and behavior, one must critically examine their beliefs (for reviews see Calderhead 1996; Clark and Peterson 1986; Kane et al. 2002; Pajares 1992). There is disagreement in the literature regarding whether changing teachers' beliefs will result in changes to their everyday teaching practice (e.g., Sanger and Osguthorpe 2010). However, Richardson (1996) found that teacher preparation programs that require prospective teachers to acknowledge and reflect on their beliefs are more likely to change pre-service teachers' beliefs before they begin teaching on their own.

In the present study, I ask: What are U.S. preschool teachers' beliefs about gender and gender differences between boys and girls? And, how are teachers' gendered beliefs related to teachers' disciplinary practices in preschool classrooms? Using Ajzen and Fishbein's (1977) attitude-behavior theory as a framework, I examine the link between preschool teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices. I find that disciplinary interactions are a primary mechanism guiding the construction and enforcement of the gender system in preschool classrooms. Although some extant research focuses on the role of gender in preschool or early elementary school, little work examines preschool teachers' gendered expectations for boys' and girls' behaviors alongside of teachers' gendered disciplinary practices and interactions. My findings contribute to gaps in the literature by demonstrating: (a) the relationship between teachers' expectations of gender difference and the distribution of gendered disciplinary reprimands and consequences in preschool classrooms and, (b) how teachers' expectations for gender and gendered distribution of disciplinary consequences jointly constitute a gendered social structure of difference and inequality in preschool classrooms.

Method

Participants

I conducted intensive participant observations from July 2015 through April 2016 in three preschools in Michigan (USA): Imagination Center, Kids Company, and Early Achievers (Gansen 2017a). All names are pseudonyms, including the names of preschool centers, directors, teachers, aides, and students. The present research was reviewed and designated exempt by a university institutional review board. Preschool directors provided written consent to the institutional review board, and I received teacher assent at the beginning of my classroom observations. I conducted over 400 h of observation in three preschools (nine preschool classrooms total). All three preschools received four of five stars through the Great Start to Quality rating system, and they ranged in total capacity from 86 to 138 children (see Table 1 for study overview). Early Achievers was nationally accredited through the National Association for the Education of Youth Children, whereas Imagination Center and Kids Company participated in Michigan's Great Start Readiness Program—Michigan's state-funded preschool program for four-year-old children who experience risk factors for educational failure.

I observed 116 children, primarily 3–5 year-olds, and 22 teachers (15 teachers and 7 part-time aides). Aides provided additional support for teachers during their lunch breaks, teaching meetings, vacation time, or when their classrooms ratios exceeded the state licensing ratio of eight children to one adult for this age range (see Table 1 for additional information on the number of teachers and aides observed at each preschool). As such, aides rotated between the classrooms I observed based on need. Aides' disciplinary practices and disciplinary interactions with children closely resembled the classroom teachers', and aides often redirected children to teachers to settle conflicts. Twenty of the teachers I observed were women; two of the teachers were men. Two of the teachers were Filipino, two teachers and two aides were African American, and 16 were White. At Imagination Center, four teachers and one part-time aide held bachelor's

Table 1 Overview of study and samples

	Study Locations		
	Imagination Center	Kids Company	Early Achievers
Classrooms Observed	5 Classrooms (~8 students and 1 teacher each)	2 Classrooms (~20 students and 2 teachers each)	2 Classroom (~16 students and 2 teachers each)
Tuition Rate	$205 per week	$230 per week	Free or sliding scale
Preschool Rating	4 of 5 stars	4 of 5 stars	4 of 5 stars
National Accreditation	No	No	Yes, National Association for the Education of Young Children
Participation in Michigan Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP)	Yes	No	Yes
Curriculum	HighScope Curriculum	Creative Curriculum	HighScope Curriculum
Teachers			
Mean years of experience	3 years	17 years	6 years
Range	1–4 years	6–27 years	2–10 years
Education			
BA	4 teachers, 1 aide	1 teacher	2 teachers
CDA	3 teachers, 2 aides	3 teachers, 2 aides	2 teachers, 2 aides
Demographics of Children			
Race	38 (84%) White 4 (9%) Black 3 (7%) Indian	26 (67%) White 9 (23%) Black 2 (5%) Middle Eastern 2 (5%) Asian	3 (9%) White 13 (41%) Hispanic 9 (28%) Black 3 (9%) Middle Eastern 2 (6%) Asian 2 (6%) Indian
SES	39 (87%) Middle-Class 6 (13%) Low-SES	39 (100%) Middle-Class 0 (0%) Low-SES	0 (0%) Middle-Class 32 (100%) Low-SES

BA Bachelor's degree, *CDA* Child Development Associate Credential

degrees in Early Childhood Education, whereas three teachers had Child Development certificates (one to two-year degree programs). At Kids Company, one teacher had a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood, and three teachers and two part-time aides had Child Development certificates. Finally, at Early Achievers, two teachers had bachelor's degrees in Early Childhood Education and two teachers and two part-time aides had child development certificates.

Fifty-two percent of the children I observed were girls (n = 60), 48% (n = 56) were boys. Teachers provided the author with information about children's demographics based on their personal knowledge of the child and the information about each student contained in their classroom family information binder. Across the three preschools, I observed 22 African American children (10 girls and 12 boys),13 Hispanic children (6 girls and 7 boys), five Middle Eastern children (0 girls and 5 boys), five Indian children (1 girl and 4 boys), and four Asian children (4 girls and 0 boys). The remaining children were White. The children I observed at Imagination Center and Kids Company came from middle-class families, whereas the children I observed at Early Achievers were identified as low income because they received free or sliding scale tuition. Additionally, most of the children observed at Imagination Center were White, at Kids Company two-thirds of the children I observed were White, one-third were Children of Color, and at Early Achievers most children observed were Children of Color (see Table 1). None of the children observed had behavioral disruptions or emotional behavior disorders known to the observer.

I also interviewed seven preschool teachers and two directors who were representative of the larger population of preschool educators from the sample observed. All 15 of the head teachers I observed were asked to participate in an interview at the conclusion of my observations at their center. Two directors and seven teachers agreed to be interviewed, and the remaining head teachers declined interviews for time and scheduling reasons. The interviews were conducted by the author and took place in private rooms at the interviewees' place of work. Interviews followed a semi-structured schedule and the questions largely focused on challenging behaviors and teachers' views towards behavior management or disciplinary approaches, including their effectiveness in classrooms. The interviews were recorded, professionally transcribed (with personal identifying information removed), and the interviews lasted 45 min on average. All but one of the interview respondents were women. Additionally, most interview respondents (n = 7) were White and held (at minimum) bachelor's degrees in Early Childhood Education (n = 5). Teachers interviewed had on average 5 years of experience working in early childhood education. Preschool directors interviewed averaged 24 years of experience in early childhood education range = 20–27 years), and both worked as preschool teachers for 15 years before transitioning to roles as preschool directors.

Procedures

On average, I observed 2 days a week at each preschool: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30–13:30. This was much of children's school day prior to their nap. At Imagination Center, I observed five classrooms with eight children and one teacher in each classroom. At Kids Company, I observed two classrooms with approximately 20 children and two teachers in each classroom. Finally, at Early Achievers, I observed two classrooms with 16 children and two teachers in each classroom.

During observations, I carried a small notebook and recorded extensive fieldnotes and verbatim dialogue when possible (Emerson et al. 1995). These jottings were later turned into extensive fieldnotes. Most of the teachers introduced me to children as a visitor, and I confirmed my role as a non-sanctioning adult during my interactions with children. I was a "reactive observer" (Streib 2011); I sat with children and joined in their play, when they invited me, and I listened intently to their conversations. During observations, I also embodied a middle manager role (Gansen 2017b; Mandell 1988). A middle manager role is performed when a researcher seeks to establish rapport with teachers and children simultaneously, instead of only positioning oneself with teachers or children (Gansen 2017b). As an adult woman in the classroom who observed their behavior, it is possible that children first perceived me as a teacher with authority. In the beginning of my observations, if I were near children when they were breaking a class rule such as taking a toy from someone else or fighting, children would stop, pause to see if I would intervene, and when I did not intervene in their dispute or discipline them, the children would continue to engage in the behavior or activity. Children and teachers soon viewed me as a normal part of their daily routine. This positionality allowed me to write jottings throughout classroom activities and to stay near children physically to fully observe their behavior (Emerson et al. 1995). I realized how much rapport and trust I had gained with teachers when they shared opinions about children and parents who got on their nerves and my level of rapport with children when they shared opinions about their peers, invited me to join in their play, and taught me about classroom jobs or rules. I varied my approach between holistic observations and more structured techniques in which I observed one area of the classroom, particular children, or particular teachers (especially if a child was receiving a verbal reprimand or a disciplinary consequence from a teacher). During observations, I also heeded Thorne's (1993) caution about "big man bias," making sure to not only observe "popular" and active children in the classrooms.

My observations primarily centered on disciplinary interactions. Preschool teachers do not spend their whole day disciplining children. However, given that preschool children are still developing social skills, self-regulation, and learning

the rules of appropriate classroom behavior, the teachers I observed were frequently reprimanding or correcting children's behaviors and solving peer conflicts. I define *disciplinary interactions* as moments when teachers either verbally reprimanded a child for their behavior (e.g., "Stop, that is not okay") or moments when teachers issued a child a disciplinary consequence (e.g., timeout) for their behavior in the classroom.

Data Analysis

I used Charmaz's (2006) grounded theory approach to data analysis, which involves inductive analysis through focused and thematic coding. I started with the data I collected and aimed to theorize about what was occurring within my data (Charmaz 2006; Glaser and Strauss 1999). Fieldnotes and interview transcripts were imported into NVivo 11.0, a software program for qualitative analysis. Coded categories emerged from my data and were not predetermined (Glaser and Strauss 1999). I began analyzing observational data by conducting line-by-line focused coding and thematic coding of my fieldnotes within NVivo (Charmaz 2006). Interview transcripts were coded first by question and then analyzed for emerging patterns and themes (Glaser and Strauss 1999). I wrote memos after each observation and interview, as well as while coding, about the relationships, patterns, and themes becoming visible across interviews and observations which allowed for theoretical sampling (Charmaz 2006). As I identified these themes I continued to collect data and conduct analysis through coding and memoing to follow-up on the emergent themes and to test their prevalence within the observational and interview data. I also noted linkages between the emergent themes and prior research. I reorganized my analytic memos according to emergent themes, processes, and relationships. I ended data collection when my themes were saturated and gathering new observation data no longer revealed new properties of my core themes or generated new theoretical insights (Charmaz 2006; Glaser and Strauss 1999). Upon completion of data collection, I conducted an additional round of focused coding within the initial codes to further explore the themes around teachers' gendered beliefs and gendered disciplinary practices that had emerged through data collection, analytic memos, and the initial rounds of coding. After I coded the fieldnotes and interview transcripts, a trained research assistant conducted a second round of coding to ensure inter-coder reliability. After, the research assistant and I went through fieldnotes and transcripts together to discuss if each code properly represented the data.

Focused codes, definitions of codes, and additional examples from the data that correspond with each code, are provided in Table 2. I identified three focused codes within the interview data: gender differences in teachers' perceptions of children's behavior; challenging behaviors; and gender differences in disciplinary needs (see Table 2a). I identified four focused codes within the observational data: cleaning; exercises; ignoring, interrupting, talking back; and physical behaviors (see Table 2b). Each of the focused codes was sub-coded by the child's sex to examine potential gender differences within the data. For example, the code "challenging behaviors" was sub-coded based on the behaviors teachers identified as most challenging with boys and most challenging with girls during our interview. Additionally, the code "cleaning" was sub-coded by instances involving girls and instances involving boys to examine how cleaning as a form of punishment was (or was not) used similarly with boys versus girls.

Results

How are teachers' expectations for children's behaviors and use of disciplinary practices related to the gender system in preschool? How do teachers transmit and "do gender" through disciplinary practices and interactions in preschool classrooms? The teachers I observed and interviewed (nine teachers total) had different expectations for boys' and girls' behaviors and disciplinary "needs." Overwhelmingly, teachers saw gender difference instead of gender sameness between boys and girls. Teachers' differential expectations were associated with their gendered disciplinary practices (e.g., cleaning for girls, push-ups for boys), and gendered discipline was the most prevalent type of discipline I observed. In accounting for their differential treatment of children, teachers told gendered stories regarding their gendered expectations and disciplinary practices. Preschool teachers' gendered beliefs were associated with gendered disciplinary practices and responses to children's misbehavior in these nine preschool classrooms, but the causal relationship of this association was not directly tested. In the sections to follow, I demonstrate how teachers' gendered expectations for children's behavior were related to how gender was constructed and enforced through disciplinary interactions. I argue that teachers' expectations for behavior and gendered disciplinary practices contribute to the embodiment and enforcement of gender and gender inequality in preschool classrooms.

Preschool Teachers' Gendered Expectations for Behavior

Teachers' expectations for boys' and girls' behaviors act as the cultural rules of gender in their classrooms. Additionally, these expectations shape how teachers view appropriate and inappropriate behavior, and therefore they are associated with who, how, and why teachers discipline children. During my observations, the teachers I observed expressed gendered stories about why differences in children's behaviors exist.

Table 2 Focused codes, definitions, and examples from the interview and observational data

Focused codes	Definitions	Examples from codes
(a) Interview data: Teachers' gendered beliefs and expectations		
Gender differences in behavior	Participants described differences in behavior and behavioral needs between boys and girls.	Ms. Amanda, Teacher, Imagination Center: "The boys typically are more rambunctious than the girls. Like boys are roughing and toughing all the time and then girls are more fighting and upset because someone took their toy."
Challenging behaviors	Participants described differences between boys' and girls' challenging behaviors.	Mr. Corey, Teacher, Kids Company: "With boys, when they always have to flop on top of one another. They're always jumping on one another or rolling around on the ground, like tussling. Like they're just boys being boys. And so what's the most challenging is getting them to like just keep their hands to themselves."
Gender differences in disciplinary needs	Teachers' interview responses regarding how children's gender impacts their disciplinary practices.	Ms. Donna, Teacher, Early Achievers: "Imani is very emotionally immature. She does everything just perfectly, but she can't handle any kind of conflict. So, it's challenging because she's constantly in a squabble with somebody and she doesn't understand you can't always get your way. Willie, argues with his peers; sometimes is physical and that's a problem. And again, safety problems end up developing there because he'll just swing sometimes."
(b) Observational data: Observed gendered disciplinary responses		
Cleaning	Observed gendered disciplinary practice of teachers using cleaning as a form of punishment when girls were not following teachers' instructions to clean up.	Ms. Tina: "Time to clean up. I'm watching who is cleaning and who is not. Matias, it's time to go outside, go line up. [Jamal is still playing]. Clean up, Julia. Sofia, we are cleaning. Trinity, time to clean up. [Terrell continues playing.] Come on busy hands. Julia, stop playing. Jada, you too." Ms. Christine: "Some of you will stay and finish cleaning and I'll take all those who cleaned." Ms. Tina: "All the girls will stay with me and clean. Boys go outside with Ms. Christine." (Fieldnotes, Early Achievers)
Exercise/push-ups	Observed gendered disciplinary practice of teachers using exercises like push-ups and the punching bag when boys were engaging in physical behaviors.	Fieldnotes, Kids Company: Carter punches Luke, and Luke and jumps on Carter. Carter and Luke roll around on the floor wrestling each other. Ms. Sara looks at the boys and says, "Carter and Luke, you guys seem kind of restless. Come over here and let's do some exercises." Carter and Luke come to the carpet, and Ms. Sara instructs the boys to do 10 sit ups, followed by 10 push-ups. After the exercises, Carter and Luke are dismissed, and told to go play.
Ignoring, interrupting, or talking back	Observed gender differences in teachers' disciplinary responses when children ignored, interrupted or talked back after a teacher's requests.	Fieldnotes, Kids Company: Outside play time. Ms. Monique sits Amelia at the picnic table for a timeout. Ms. Monique says to Amelia: "Why are you giving me a hard time and not listening to me? That makes me really sad. You need to listen to all your teachers. You should not give me a hard time or not listen to me. There is a reason behind why I ask you to do something okay?"
Physical behaviors	Observed gender differences in teachers' disciplinary responses to children's engagement in physical behaviors, including incidents that did and did not result in injury.	Ms. Brittany: "Woah Kayla, excuse you, that was really rude. You shoved Reagan out of the way. Look at her face, what could you say instead? Move please, yeah, that was very rude. You can go play somewhere else. No more block area for you today." (Fieldnotes, Imagination Center)

To further identify and analyze teachers' behavioral expectations for boys and girls, I conducted interviews with nine of the teachers I observed. Teachers viewed socialization and nature (biology) as factors impacting children's behavior,

and overwhelmingly teachers perceived boys and girls as more dissimilar than similar (Friedman and Waggoner 2010). That is, teachers expressed explicit gendered ideologies that viewed boys' and girls' expected behaviors and behavioral needs as (often biologically) different. Through analyzing interview responses and interview codes, I found minimal differences in teachers' gendered beliefs across teachers with different educational backgrounds, or between female and male teachers. These patterns were also true of teachers' gendered disciplinary responses during observations, which I discuss in the next section. Of the teachers interviewed, only one teacher stated views that boys and girls are similar in their behaviors and needs. However, this teacher's disciplinary practices and responses to children's misbehaviors were gendered and closely resembled those of the other teachers observed.

Ms. Connie was the director at Imagination Center and worked as a toddler room teacher. She had been teaching for about 20 years and was also as an early childhood education trainer. At multiple points in her interview Ms. Connie discussed the influence she sees DNA [genes] having on children's gender differences in behavior:

> It's basically just their DNA and unless you understand their DNA, you're not going to get it. Girls are going to be whiney, that's how they are. Boys are going to shove each other, that's what they do. You just have to teach them appropriate ways to do it. You know I tell my girls, "You are in charge of yourself. That's who you're in charge of." Or I give them things to be in charge of during the day. "You're in charge of setting the table. You're in charge of pouring the milk." And with the boys I got to give them places to push. "We're going to go outside, go push each other, knock yourselves out. Just don't push faces. Push from shoulders to knees and you're okay." You know, it's just a matter of understanding their DNA.

In this excerpt, Ms. Connie shares several of her ideas about the innateness of gendered behavioral differences as biological components of children's DNA. Ms. Connie also expresses her gendered expectations for behavior; that boys need to be physical and should be given an outlet to do so and that girls are bossy and need something to oversee. In discussing her gendered expectations for behavior, Ms. Connie illustrates how her practices were constructing and reifying gender differences as she imagined them.

Other teachers and directors at the preschools I observed shared similar views of gender differences between boys and girls. Ms. Stacey, a teacher at Kids Company, articulated views that boys have a more aggressive nature than girls:

> It does seem to be a whole different dynamic with boys. Boys are much more aggressive than girls. I don't think it's a hurtful thing most of the time, I think it's just rough and tough play, that's what they do, that's who they are, that's their nature.

Ms. Heather, a teacher at Imagination Center, also shared gendered differences in her perceptions of girls' and boys' behaviors:

> Boys are challenging because often they are more hands on physically and it's not because they want to hurt somebody, that's just how they bond. I think that a lot of times what happens is a lot of times girls are perceived to be quieter or more focused or not as interested in the roughhousing and the physical stuff. And boys are perceived to be physical and rowdy.

These teachers told gendered stories about differences in children's "nature," behaviors, and disciplinary needs. These teachers' accounts reveal their assumptions that boys and girls are different and that boys and girls do different "bad" things.

Teachers also held gendered expectations for children's behaviors and gendered views on which behaviors warranted discipline in their classrooms. Teachers found the most challenging behaviors they faced with boys and girls to be different sets of behaviors. The behaviors teachers found most challenging and hardest to deal with for girls were not listening, "attitude," "helplessness," and whining or pouting:

> What I see as far as challenging from girls; girls tend to be whiney, fussy, "mean girls." Again, it's not really that it's anything out of the norm. We are working with one girl that is having that social problem of being bossy with her friends and not being very respectful and compromising of what they want to do and it's kind of always her way or no way (Ms. Sara, Teacher, Kids Company).

Disrespectful behaviors were also frequently mentioned by teachers when discussing girls' challenging behaviors. Ms. Amanda, a teacher at Imagination Center, used Alexis, a girl in her class, to describe the behaviors she found most challenging with girls:

> Alexis. She's probably my most challenging. She likes to laugh at me when I am telling them something. Like if they as a group are doing something they know they're not supposed to do and I tell them as a group, she thinks it's funny. So that's probably my biggest challenge with her is she challenges me and she has an attitude. She'll roll her eyes at you and she'll hurt her friends' feelings.

Ms. Brittany, a teacher at Imagination Center, articulated that although girls' behaviors are not physically aggressive, their behaviors are still inappropriate:

> The helpless, "I don't know how to do it," type of thing with girls. Hannah with her coat and, "I don't know where that is." But you do know where it is, it's right there. Today, we were getting ready to go outside and she's just standing in front of me. And I'm like, "Hi." She's like, "You need to zip my coat." I'm like, "Excuse me!" Yeah, so that really made me mad. None of Hannah's behaviors are aggressive or bad behaviors, they are just inappropriate. So, when she said, "You need to zip my coat." I said, "Excuse me." She said, "Well we're going outside." And I was like, "I know and you're going to be really cold if your coat isn't zipped." And she's like, "Well you need to zip it." And I was like, "I don't like when you talk to me like that. You could ask me." And she said, "Please will you zip my coat." "Oh sure, I don't mind. But I don't like when you say, you need to do this because I don't need to do that. I will if you ask me nicely, but I don't need to." So yeah, those bossy and helpless types of behaviors with girls are challenging and frustrating (Ms. Brittany, Teacher, Imagination Center).

Teachers described very different behaviors that they found most challenging and hardest to manage with boys. Specifically, teachers viewed boys' physical behaviors that they understood as "unsafe" as most challenging. Ms. Brittany used James, a boy in her class, to describe the behaviors she found most challenging with boys:

> James and Trent always wrestle when they're outside, which is fine, boys totally need to wrestle. They're three. But when it starts turning into fighting, that's when I'm like, nope, can't do this anymore. I'm fine if they're rolling around on the ground; they got to get it out. But I looked over and James hit Trent in the face intentionally; they were fighting. And I'm like, "James, I'm fine if you want to wrestle, but you may not hit anyone above the shoulders or punch them like that." I went over, got down to his level and said, "James, do you understand that could really hurt Trent? I know you guys are playing and I know it's fun right now and he's not hurt, but it really could hurt him." And he goes, "Okay, okay." And so, I said, "If I see you hit him again in the face like that, you're gonna have to be all done with wrestling." Sure enough, he did it again. So, totally different challenging behaviors from a boy and a girl; I mean, punching [with boys] to helplessness [with girls] (Interview, Ms. Brittany, Teacher, Imagination Center).

Teachers' gendered expectations were evident in their descriptions of boys' and girls' challenging behaviors. In these excerpts, we see how these preschool teachers expected boys and girls to misbehave in different ways.

Teachers also expressed how gender predicts their disciplinary practices with boys and girls in the classroom. Ms. Donna, a teacher at Early Achievers, expressed a desire for equality in her disciplinary treatment of boys and girls, but she recognized differential treatment in how she disciplined girls and boys:

> There tends to be a softer approach for me towards the girls. I'm not as soft with the boys, I don't know why. I have a harder time with a softer approach with the boys and I need to. It needs to be equal.

Ms. Monique, a teacher at Kids Company, also shared that she uses softer approaches to discipline with girls than she does with boys. Ms. Monique shared examples of how she utilized these gendered disciplinary practices in her classroom:

> With girls, you have to use a more pleasant approach, more soft approach, versus with a boy you may be able to use a louder approach. I think overall with a girl you kindly step in more softly and slowly versus with a boy you may be able to say, "Come here for a minute. Can I talk to you?" So that's a softer approach because I know if I say girls' names with some sternness they may start to cry. So, I try to not have a stern voice, but instead more gentle and soft like I'm talking now. Sometimes with boys I'll say, "You know what, we're just gonna go outside. We're going to go run, jump, and play because we're not listening and we need something different to do." So that allows me to meet their needs. Maybe they need to go and run. Maybe they need to go and use the bopping toy and hit the wall. So sometimes with boys they're having a conflict together, but they need to just go run it out, versus the girls who need to separate, like, "Okay so you go play with the Barbie dolls over there, but then she will go play with the Polly Pockets over here."

Ms. Monique and Ms. Donna both shared gendered stories about the differences in boys' and girls' needs and how these differences are associated with their disciplinary practices.

In the next section, I incorporate observational data on preschool teachers' use of gendered disciplinary practices during micro moments of gender socialization. These data show how teachers' gendered expectations for behavior were associated with their differential (and gendered) treatment of children during disciplinary interactions. When boys and girls engaged in different types of behaviors, these differences in behavior substantiated teachers' gendered expectations and

disciplinary practices. That is, teachers' expectations and disciplinary practices were associated with teachers' perceptions of gender differences in boys' and girls' (mis)behaviors as natural, innate, and unchangeable.

Observing Gendered Disciplinary Practices in Preschools

In the three preschools I observed, children's gender was associated with teachers' expectations of "appropriateness" and therefore which behaviors teachers disciplined and how children were disciplined. Teachers expected girls to behave more passively than boys, and boys to behave more aggressively than girls. Teachers enforced and emphasized listening, manners, and respectfulness with girls more than with boys (Martin 1998). During my observations, teachers reiterated manners with girls (such as saying please and thank you) more than twice as often as they did with boys.

At Kids Company, teachers also emphasized the importance of girls cleaning up quietly. When boys cleaned up they would bang toys around and throw them into their bins withut reprimands from teachers. However, when girls cleaned up at Kids Company teachers frequently asked them, "Can you put those toys away a little softer?" or "Do you need a little practice in how to clean those up softly and quietly." Here we see how teachers' expectations of politeness and respectfulness for girls guided what teachers viewed as norm infractions and therefore when teachers' reprimanded girls.

Across all three preschools, teachers also disciplined girls for interrupting, for ignoring their teachers and classmates, or for telling teachers no. Girls' participation in these behaviors warranted a timeout or threat of discipline and exclusion away from the rest of the class:

> Ms. Shelby: "Ella!"
> Ms. Monique: "Ella want snack?"
> [Ella does not respond to Ms. Shelby or Ms. Monique.]
> Ms. Shelby to Ella: "Then you can go sit by the door. I am your teacher and I don't appreciate you not listening to me."
> Ms. Monique: "Ella get up. Ms. Shelby is a teacher."
> Ms. Shelby: "I need to talk to you and you are not listening."
> [Ella gets up and washes hands for snack.]
> Ms. Monique: "Ella you can go to the chair by the door, I see you, come out and talk to Miss Monique. Look at me I'm right here, why are you not talking to Ms. Shelby?"
> Ella: "I'm getting sleepy out of my head."
> Ms. Monique: "What does that mean?"
> [Ella turns her head and shuts her eyes like she is sleeping.]
> Ms. Monique: "That's not okay, you are not gonna do that to teachers, look at me Ella. You need to go talk to Ms. Shelby."
> Ella goes to Ms. Shelby: "I'm sorry." (Fieldnotes, Kids Company).

Similar incidences also frequently occurred at Imagination Center and Early Achievers. One day while observing group time at Imagination Center the teachers asked the children, "Who woke up for the storm last night?" The children were sitting on the carpet in front of Ms. Heather. Katie was not sitting still and began quietly singing to herself. Ms. Amanda asked Katie, "Katie do you need to be excused from the activity and go outside with the toddlers? That is very rude. Katie if I need to talk to you again you're going outside." Katie continued singing to herself and not sitting still. Ms. Amanda stood up and while escorting Katie outside to the playground with the toddlers said, "You are not listening and I've asked you several times" (Fieldnotes, Imagination Center). Teachers' expectations that girls be respectful, polite, and studious were associated with when and why girls were disciplined. Girls were disciplined when they engaged in behaviors that violated teachers' gendered expectations of appropriate and respectful behavior (such as interrupting, ignoring their teachers and classmates, or telling teachers no).

Teachers' response to girls' ignoring was different than their response to boys' ignoring. Girls were disciplined for ignoring their teachers; in fact, it warranted being excused from the activity or group and receiving a timeout. Sometimes when girls ignored teachers' requests it resulted in a parent-teacher conversation where teachers informed parents that their daughter refused to do what the teacher asked. However, when boys ignored teachers, teachers first made sure boys were "listening" and that they understood what teachers were saying or asking of them. One day at Imagination Center, Ms. Brittany instructed the children to go and stand by the door if their lunch spot was clean. Landon (a boy in her class) did not begin cleaning up his spot as instructed. Ms. Brittany yelled across the room, "Hey Landon, I said if your spot is clean go stand by the door." Landon did not respond to Ms. Brittany's request. Ms. Brittany turned to me and said, "I think I need to be by his face." Ms. Brittany then walked over to Landon, got at eye level with him and asked him again to clean up his spot. Landon immediately got up and began cleaning his spot.

When boys did not listen, or respond to teachers' requests, teachers assumed it was because boys did not hear them, not that boys were ignoring them like teachers assumed with girls. Instead, teachers asked boys, "Do you hear my words" or "Look at me, I want to make sure you can hear me." Boys received more reminders than girls did before they were disciplined by teachers. Teachers expected boys to need reminders to complete requested tasks, but teachers did not

expect girls to need reminders. Even when boys and girls engaged in the same behaviors through ignoring teachers' requests, boys received reminders from their teachers whereas girls immediately received disciplinary consequences. Teachers' expectations of gender differences validated their differential (and gendered) disciplinary treatment of children's behaviors in these instances.

In all three preschools I observed, when girls were not following teacher instructions to clean up, they were disciplined by having to clean up an area by themselves. In one classroom at Kids Company, if there was nothing left for girls to clean up, teachers would have a child or teacher dump a container of toys on the floor. These dumped out toys were then girls' "responsibility" to clean up on their own. For example, one day during clean up time at Kids Company I witnessed this interaction:

> Ms. Stacy: "Amelia, I've got a job for you. Can you get the blocks that open and shut and dump them on the floor in block area? Ella that pile is for you to clean up. Then, Amelia, can you get the little people box and dump them in the book area for Harper. Ella and Harper, you guys were not listening, so those piles are now your responsibility." [Amelia dumped each box of toys out in the areas Ms. Stacey designated. Ella and Harper began to individually clean up their toy piles.]

At Imagination Center and Early Achievers, girls were frequently held back from the next activity to finish cleaning up whereas boys were allowed to transition to the next activity on time. At all three preschools, teachers double-checked girls' "work" (or cleaning), especially in the house or dress-up play area of the classroom. If everything was not put away, girls would have to work together to clean up the space before they moved on to the next activity. However, in all nine classrooms I observed, boys were never forced to clean up without teacher or peer assistance. For example, Ms. Stacey (Kids Company) frequently asked other children (almost always girls) to help boys out because they "needed a little extra help cleaning."

Teachers also disciplined boys and girls differently for engaging in physical or aggressive behaviors (e.g., pushing, hitting, or kicking). These differences in disciplinary treatment occurred even when boys and girls engaged in the same types of physical or aggressive behaviors. Teachers frequently monitored boys' physical behaviors. Teachers often shared with me, and other children, that they had to "keep an eye" on some of their friends (typically, boys) (Gilliam et al. 2016). Teachers' frequently assisted boys in talking out their physical confrontations with one another, and after talking out problems with boys, boys were sometimes asked to take a break (have a timeout alone), or play in a different area.

In one classroom at Kids Company, Ms. Sara asked boys to do push-ups when they were physically fighting or being aggressive with their friends. Ms. Sara would ask the boys to take a break, come to the middle of the classroom, and do five push-ups. Besides push-ups and jumping jacks, Ms. Sara often had children take turns pushing against her hands and would frequently bring a standing punching bag into the classroom for the boys to hit and kick during free play time. Ms. Sara expressed to me that "boys need outlets like exercise, pushing, and the punching bag to get all of their physical, boy energy out." In this excerpt, Ms. Sara shares her expectations of gender differences (that boys have physical energy they need to release), and Ms. Sara acted upon this gendered expectation for behavior by implementing gendered disciplinary practices (e.g., push-ups, pushing, and a punching bag) to accommodate boys perceived behavioral "needs."

Ms. Sara never used these techniques with girls. Although Ms. Sara would frequently have all the children engage in exercises during large group activities (e.g., arm circles and jumping jacks), girls were never explicitly instructed to exercise when they were engaging in "inappropriate" or physical behaviors. Interestingly, Ms. Sara's expectation that boys are more physical and need outlets to release physical aggression resulted in Ms. Sara implementing practices that accommodated, rather than disciplined, boys when they engaged in these forms of physical behaviors.

Additionally, boys were rarely excused from an activity or sent for a timeout when they engaged in physical behaviors. Instead, teachers would discuss boys' behavior with them:

> Trent to Tyler are in hall yelling "stop" at one another.
> Ms. Mary approaches the boys: "What's the problem?"
> Trent "I want Tyler Smith to stop bothering me, he did a bad thing."
> Ms. Mary: "What did he do?"
> Trent: "He pushed me."
> Ms. Mary: "Oh, if someone's doing a bad thing to someone sometimes you have to get really loud and say 'Stop pushing me. I don't like it when you push me.' Sometimes it may help to put your hand out and signal stop too."
> Trent turns to Tyler and says: "Stop pushing me Tyler" while signaling stop. (Fieldnotes, Imagination Center).

Even when injury resulted from the physical behavior, discipline was different between boys and girls. One day while observing in a classroom at Kids Company, Xavier and Josiah were pulling back and forth on a block toy. Xavier swung his toy car at Josiah and hit him in the head. Ms. Stacey approached Xavier and Josiah:

> Xavier: "Josiah I need this," as he attempts to pull a block away from Josiah.

Josiah: "I need it."
[Xavier and Josiah are pulling back and forth on a block toy. Xavier swings his toy car at Josiah and hits him in the head. Ms. Stacey approaches Xavier and Josiah.]
Ms. Stacey: "I hear we have a problem, your snatching and saying I need it, Xavier, you all were playing there today,"
Xavier: "I hit him with a car because he was blocking my way."
Ms. Stacey: "Instead of hitting him what could you say?"
Xavier: "No."
Ms. Stacey: "Say I need you to stop blocking me."
Xavier to Josiah: "Need you to stop blocking me."
Ms. Stacey: "You learned there was another way you can use your words!" (Fieldnotes, Kids Company)

Instead of punishing boys for their physical behaviors that resulted in the injury of another child, teachers talked out conflicts with boys, often asking what the boys could have done instead of getting physical.

However, teachers handled girls' engagement in physical behaviors differently than they handled boys' engagement in physical behaviors. Unlike boys, girls were immediately "excused" from activities and/or sent to timeout for engaging in physical behaviors. One day I witnessed the following altercation at Imagination Center during clean-up time after Alexis threw a blanket at Lydia:

Lydia yells: "Hey!"
Ms. Amanda witnesses the altercation and says: "Alexis Jones that is not okay. Look at my face, I don't like when you are mean to my friends. It is not funny. Alexis you're showing me you can't handle being in house if you're hitting friends, so why don't you go have a seat in the hall and you will not be playing in the house area for the rest of the day." (Fieldnotes, Imagination Center).

Teachers talked out physical confrontations between boys, and boys were not disciplined for engaging in physical behaviors. However, when girls were physical with other children they received disciplinary consequences, mainly timeouts, from their teachers. Teachers' beliefs and expectations of boys as aggressive and girls as passive were related to teachers' differential (and gendered) disciplinary treatment regarding when, how, and what types of behaviors teachers disciplined.

Discussion

I find that disciplinary interactions are a significant mechanism guiding the construction and enforcement of the gender system in preschool classrooms. Disciplinary interactions (both classroom reprimands and consequences) act as interactional processes through which gender norms, roles, and expectations are transmitted to children. My findings suggest that U.S. preschool teachers discipline boys and girls differently and create gendered stories about why disciplinary differences exist. The teachers I interviewed and observed (nine teachers total) told gendered stories to account for and justify their gendered beliefs, expectations, and differential treatment of children during disciplinary interactions. These findings contribute to prior literature (Blaise 2005; Chick et al. 2002; Martin 1998) by demonstrating that gender differences continue to be constructed and reified as natural with children at the young ages of 3–5 years-old.

My findings are aligned with extant research on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and actions (Ajzen and Fishbein 1977; Arnett and Turnbull 2008; Borg 2011; Fang 1996; Guskey 1986; Hashweh 1996; Isikoglu et al. 2009; Wallace and Kang 2004). My findings signal that associations may be present between teachers' gendered beliefs and their gendered disciplinary practices in preschool classrooms. However, given that the associations between teachers' beliefs and their disciplinary practices were not directly tested, I am unable to determine the causal conclusions regarding the direction of this relationship. Nevertheless, I have provided several examples of the association between teachers' gendered expectations of appropriate behavior, as well as how boys and girls were disciplined for participating in similar behaviors. For example, teachers' behavioral expectation that it is appropriate for boys to engage in physically aggressive behaviors justified teachers' lax disciplinary responses when boys participated in such actions. During my observations, boys received teacher support in working out their physical confrontations, and boys sometimes received accommodations (such as push-ups or a punching bag) to meet their behavioral "need" to display aggression. Alternatively, teachers expected girls to behave passively, and girls were disciplined by their teachers when they engaged in physically aggressive behaviors (often receiving timeouts). When boys and girls participated in the same behaviors such as hitting their friends or not cleaning up, why were teachers' disciplinary responses to these behaviors different? My findings suggest that the relationship between teachers' gendered expectations for appropriate behavior and gendered disciplinary practices may help to explain the differential treatment of boys and girls in preschool classrooms.

Gendered expectations for behavior may provide teachers a shorthand for navigating disciplinary interactions throughout their workday—a guide for when teachers are to discipline girls or boys for engaging in particular types of behaviors (e.g., impoliteness or aggressiveness). Teachers' expectations may also rationalize their perceptions of gendered differences in children's behavior, and when boys and girls participate in different types of behaviors, children's behaviors may support

teachers' expectations of gender difference. Teachers' assumptions of students' ability (or inability) to change their behaviors are also visible through teachers' expectations and disciplinary practices. My data suggest that teachers' expectations may be lower for boys. For example, the teachers I observed and interviewed viewed boys as needing to learn how to manage their aggression. However, teachers' disciplinary responses to girls' physical behaviors suggested that girls know they are not supposed to participate in such behaviors and that girls do not require assistance from their teachers to learn how to avoid participating in physical behaviors. These types of differential treatment construct different expectations for boys' and girls' gendered performances that teach children rigid (and often stereotypical ways) of "doing" gender (West and Zimmerman 1987) in preschool classrooms.

There are several implications of teachers' beliefs that boys' and girls' behaviors and classroom needs are naturally (or biologically) different. Seeing boys and girls as different, rather than similar, makes teachers unaware of gender inequalities and the societal standards of masculinity and femininity from which they stem. Beliefs that view gender differences as natural also presume that boys' and girls' behaviors and traits are hardwired and therefore unchangeable. This creates a gendered learning environment where boys and girls are taught that they have different learning needs and to self-regulate their behaviors in different ways.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Observational fieldnotes provide a rich description of teachers' disciplinary practices and interactions with students in classrooms. However, the inductive theme-based coding system of the grounded theory data analysis I used in the present study has some limitations because it only captures disciplinary interactions that occur in the presence of the observer. Additionally, my qualitative study is neither quantified nor cross-lagged. Therefore, I am unable to draw causal conclusions regarding the direction of the relationship between teachers' gendered beliefs and their gendered disciplinary practices, or how these teaching practices impact child outcomes.

The central focus of my study is teacher-child discipline. Future work should examine teachers' use of gendered disciplinary practices with children in mixed-sex versus same-sex groups. Also, only two of the teachers I observed were male. Therefore, I am limited in my ability to make comparisons between the male teachers observed. Future work is needed on how male teachers' beliefs about gender difference and gendered disciplinary practices compare with those of female teachers, as well as if teachers' educational backgrounds or years of teaching experience impact their gendered beliefs and disciplinary practices. Special attention should also be given to children's intersectional identities when analyzing teaching practices and children's classroom experiences. In other work, I examine how children's race, gender, and social class are related to their experiences of discipline in preschool classrooms (Gansen 2018). Lastly, given that parents are key agents of socialization in children's lives, future research is needed on how the gendered disciplinary practices of preschool teachers compare with parents' disciplinary practices.

Practice Implications

My findings have implications for children's early gender socialization and early childhood teacher training. The data illuminate how preschool disciplinary interactions provide a crucial process through which gender differences are constructed, enforced, and viewed as natural and unchangeable in young children. Specifically, teachers' gendered expectations for behavior and use of gendered disciplinary practices reify gendered differences between boys and girls. For example, if teachers perceive girls as bossy, then when girls ask for help without "using their manners" (e.g., saying "please") their behavior reifies teacher's gender expectation of girls as bossy. Additionally, if teachers expect girls to be more responsible and engage in more respectful behaviors than boys, then teachers may discipline girls when they do not engage in such behaviors whereas teachers may let boys' engagement in these behaviors slide without disciplinary consequences. These types of differential treatment instill different behavioral expectations in girls and boys—for example, messages that boys are expected to engage in physical behaviors and that girls are expected to be responsible and respectful in classroom interactions.

There are many ways that early childhood practitioners can address these implications. Preschool teachers need to be provided more resources and training on gender biases and the negative impacts of gender-typed teaching. Our interactions play a crucial role in sustaining or modifying an unequal gender system (Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin 1999). Gendered teaching practices and expectations normalize gender difference, and they further the belief that boys' and girls' learning needs and behaviors are natural, different, and unchangeable (Martin 1998; Martin and Ruble 2009). Gendered teaching practices (re)produce gender stereotypes, gender differences, and unequal gender roles between boys and girls and, later, between men and women (Connell 1987). Early childhood educator training should focus on identifying teachers' implicit gender biases, gendered expectations, and differential classroom interactions with boys and girls (Giraldo and Colyar 2012). Teacher trainings focused on raising awareness of gender issues in the classroom may be beneficial in eliminating gendered-teaching practices by educating teachers on effective disciplinary practices that result in boys and girls receiving equal disciplinary treatment from their teachers.

Gendered teaching practices may be modifiable if teachers are provided the opportunity to reflect on their beliefs about gender during trainings focused on gender issues in the classroom and the implications of treating boys and girls differently. Blaise (2005) found that proactive interactions can help practitioners generate changes in gender norms and stereotypes. Blaise (2005) argues that teachers should actively challenge gender stereotypes by encouraging dialogue when play themes or books present non-traditional gender roles. These practices will dismantle gender stereotypes and offer children a multiplicity of gender scripts instead of reinforcing rigid gender stereotypes and norms. Allowing children to participate in many types of gendered practices and masculine and feminine activities allows for a more inclusive classroom and provides children the opportunity to develop as people rather than just as boys and girls (Blaise 2005; Giraldo and Colyar 2012).

Conclusion

Teachers' gendered disciplinary interactions provide a key way in which children become recruited to gender in preschool and learn the normative conceptions of femininity and masculinity and the risks of gender assessment. I argue that preschool teachers have a significant role in children's process of learning how to "do" gender. My data reveal that teachers transmit their gendered expectations for appropriate behavior through their disciplinary interactions with children. Preschool represents an important context of socialization in which children are learning to use gender as a tool to organize their educational interactions and activities (West and Zimmerman 1987). My findings show how preschool teachers aid children's initial experiences of "doing gender" (e.g., West and Zimmerman 1987) in educational contexts.

Preschools provide an early and foundational context in which hegemonic (or dominant) gender ideologies operate. As such, preschool offers a particularly significant context to examine the roles of gendered expectations and differential treatment in creating and maintaining systems of gender inequality. My findings indicate that despite awareness of sexism in children's early gender socialization (Maccoby 1998; Martin 1998; Risman 2004; Williams 2006), early childhood continues to remain intensely gendered. Disciplinary practices and teachers' gendered expectations for children's behaviors offer mechanisms through which gender differences continue to be perceived as natural and contribute to gender inequality in preschool. Perhaps if we change preschool teachers' gendered expectations for boys' and girls' behaviors this will spark a change in teachers' use of gendered disciplinary practices and better allow for the possibility of children's individual identities to be shaped differently (and in less gendered ways) in preschool classrooms.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest The author has no potential conflicts of interest to report.

Research Involving Human Participants and/or Animals This research was reviewed and designated exempt by a university institutional review board.

Informed Consent Numerous steps were taken to protect participants' confidentiality, including the use of pseudonyms for names of participants and preschools.

Informed consent of teachers was obtained prior to the start of interviews.

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