

Reading 6

Required Reading

Kinship and classrooms: An ethnographic perspective on education as cultural transmission

Sally Lubeck

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This set of excerpts from a research article compares the ways in which two different preschools (or early learning centres) construct order through different arrangements of time and space. The two preschools are in the same city in the United States of America. One is a white middle-class preschool; the other a centre which serves a black working class community. The two are similar in that both are closely related to the family lives of the children who attend them. Please consult the Learning Guide for this module for reading guidelines and activities related to Sally Lubeck's article.

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Notes

6.1 Culture and classrooms

Reading

[...]

The present study

This article presents results of an ethnographic study that focused on differences in the ways children are taught – that is differences in the ways in which adults transfer their values and life-experiences to children in school settings. The study is a comparative *ethnography* of two preschool settings located in the same Midwestern community. One is a middle-class preschool in which teachers and students are white; the other is a Head Start centre – in which teachers and students are black. The study is concerned with schools that are continuous with family life and therefore special as schools.

ethnography: the scientific description of peoples and cultures with customs, habits and mutual differences

Excerpts from Sally Lubeck 'Kinship and Classrooms: An ethnographic perspective on education as cultural transmission', in **Sociology of Education**, 1984, Vol 57, 219–232.

The settings are looked at not so much as classrooms as they are windows through which to observe the child-rearing practices of two sets of women who have grown up in different circumstances. Though the intent of the article is to inform our understanding of black child rearing practices, in fact, insight is gained into practices in both settings as a result of the constant comparative method.

In both cases the adults are mothers in families very like those of the children they teach. Their values and attitudes reflect different cultural heritages based partly on belief but importantly based on the historical, economic, and logistical conditions of their lives. These same realities continue to influence their behaviour during the school day. Beliefs about what is best for children and what is expected of them are partially born out of these experiences. Yet there are also structural differences in the job definitions of the two sets of teachers that press them in the same direction as the logistics of their lives at home.

This article presents the argument that based on these differing experiences, the Head Start teachers' structure an environment that is consonant with a collective orientation to life, and the preschool teachers create an environment that reinforces middle-class values of individualism and self-expression. The Head Start teachers live in extended families; the pre-school teachers live in nuclear families.

Following a discussion of the research design, there are detailed descriptions of the ways in which the teachers construct order in the respective settings through the delineation of time and space. A summary analysis then relates these findings to environmental constraints that appear to influence adult behaviour toward children.

6.2 The research design

Two early education programmes were selected for comparative study. Both of the classrooms are located in an integrated inner suburb of a major Midwestern city and are less than one mile apart. The classrooms suited the research design because they differed in racial and *socio-economic* class composition. The preschool had 23 children, aged 2½ to 5, and 3 teachers; the centre had 21 children in the morning, another 20 in the afternoon, and 2 teachers. All but one of the children were between 4 and 5 years of age. The preschool children and teachers were white; the Head Start children and teachers were black. The two classrooms were approximately the same size.

socio-economic: relating to or concerned with the interaction of social and economic factors

The community

Forest Hills (all place and person names are fictitious) is perhaps the most successfully integrated community in the metropolitan area, yet the difference in racial composition between the two schools reflects larger

community residential patterns. A wealthy, predominantly white corridor runs east to west along the city's southern flank. The predominantly black, predominantly working-class section of the city runs east to west along the northern border. A 'grey' corridor, integrated and stable, runs through the community's centre.

The sites

The Harmony Preschool is located in the central corridor but borders the wealthiest section of the city and draws a number of pupils from this area. The children typically come from middle- and upper-middle-class families. Families pay to send their children to the school. The Irving Head Start centre is located in the northern section of the city, and the children come mainly from working class, often single-parent (extended) families. The Head Start programme is federally funded and children attend free of charge.

Role

For the first two months of the study, I visited the classrooms on alternate days. On some days I would follow particular children throughout the morning. All of the children were 'charted' in this way; the four examples included here are roughly typical of the two schools. Each day I would make note of the times at which activities shifted. I also duplicated maps of the classrooms so that each week I could fill in how the rooms were altered by noting changes in specific areas. Frequently I would sit with children and write a running account of their words and actions. Each day I put pen and pad aside to assist at snack time, take the children to the restrooms, set the tables, accompany the children and teachers outside, etc.

The purpose of these activities was to devise a point-counterpoint account. As I moved back and forth between the settings, differences between them became increasingly apparent, leading to new observations and to the formulation of more general patterns that took into account the teachers' actions and explanations.

After two months I changed my research design. Since I had taught in preschools similar to Harmony and had done my pilot study in a similar preschool nearby, I decided to work solely in the Head Start centre for the remainder of the school year, though I did return to the preschool several times during the year and collected life-history information from teachers in both settings.

During the succeeding weeks at the Head Start centre, I moved from being an observer to being a participant, gradually taking on many of the responsibilities that the teachers themselves faced daily. I stopped taking notes in the classroom but frequently typed eight to ten pages when I returned home. The teachers knew I was keeping notes, and after March, I brought my field notes back to them each morning as a validity check. They found it remarkable that I would record information they

thought trivial. Several times the notes were lost in the mass of paperwork on the desks.

When I stopped bringing them in, they were neither asked about nor missed. The teachers had good reason to mistrust me: I was white, they were black; I was the observer, they were the observed. Both role differentials have had a history of abuse. What was ultimately important, however, was that we were all single parents, sharing daily tasks and speaking openly about our lives both in and out of school. [...]

6.3 Classroom organization of time

The use of time

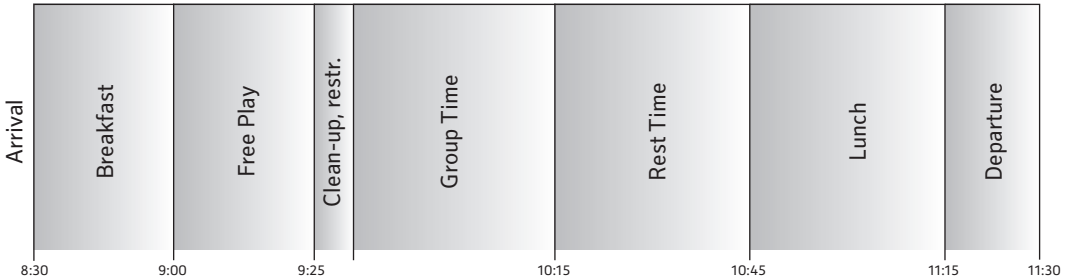
Time is structured differently in the two settings. To some extent, the two programmes allocate different amounts of time to education because 'they' have different purposes. The Harmony Preschool is, in purpose and design, a preschool, an educational programme for the very young that operates five mornings per week. The head teacher describes it as 'an open classroom with a linear family grouping.'

Embedded in the phrase are certain oft-repeated assumptions: (1) an open classroom where children can play is the most appropriate educational environment for young children; (2) children develop and therefore different activities are appropriate at different ages; and (3) preschool is, or should be, like a family and should provide the same nurturance and support (i.e., mothering) that children are likely to receive at home.

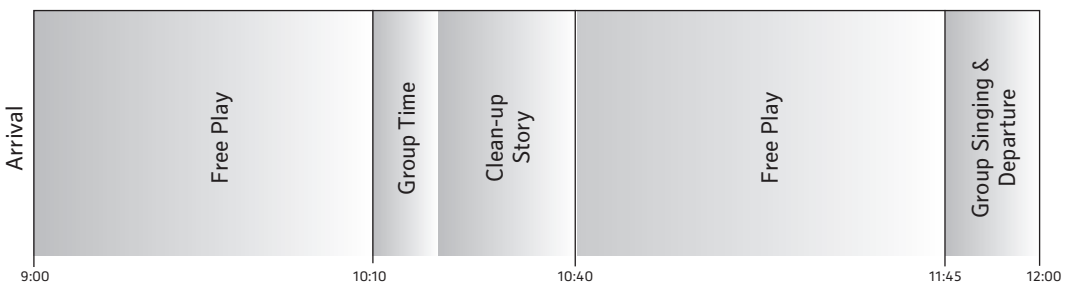
At the Head Start centre, the head teacher attempts to define the classroom as a preparation for school, but her efforts are constrained by Head Start legislation and policy. Because the centre is defined as a social service, rather than as a purely educational programme [...], time is necessarily diverted to care for the 'total child.' The children are given both educational and hearing tests at school. The van regularly picks up groups of children during school hours for their medical, dental, and lead-poisoning check-ups. The children attend school only four days a week so that the teachers will have one day to make home visits and tend to records (of absences, check-ups, inoculations, home visits, expert and ancillary personnel, etc.). In addition, children are off for all public school closings (for example, when there is no school for parent conferences) and for public holidays [...], when the public schools are in session. The sum total of these policies, procedures, and contingencies means that the Head Start children have considerably less school time than their preschool peers.

Given a set amount of time in the immediate settings, however, other differences are apparent. The most obvious is the allocation of scheduled time. Time allocations shown in Figure A are based on a random sampling of schedules over time. Though both programmes run for nearly

three hours, time frames differ and the types of activities within the frames are strikingly dissimilar.



Schedule at Irving Head Start Centre



Schedule at Harmony Preschool

Figure A. Comparison of Schedules

Meals. Because Head Start legislation guarantees children two meals per day, time is necessarily allotted for breakfast and lunch in the morning and for lunch and snack in the afternoon. These meals frequently take about one third of each group’s total time at school. The preschool children eat breakfast and lunch at home, but time is allotted at school for snack. During snack time, teachers introduce children to a variety of foods, which are then discussed and described. Also during snack time, children are divided into groups according to age.

Free Play. Perhaps the most striking difference between programmes is in the amount of time spent in ‘free play’. The term itself is used in both settings but, in fact, has different meanings. At the Head Start centre, the head teacher assigns children to specific areas for the 25- to 30-minute block of time. Thus, a child assigned to the block area can play only with

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blocks during that time. ‘Free time’ is a time for teachers to tend to other duties and to be free of responsibility for the group. During this time teachers generally retreat to teacher space, make phone calls, do paper work, fill the refrigerator, or prepare materials



Figure B. Time Allocations for Activities

At the Harmony Preschool, during free play children move about freely and freely choose the activities that interest them. Within these two extended blocks of time children can make their own decisions, define their own activities, and work at them until they lose interest or reach closure. During the first free-play period, as many as 12 centres are available. The three teachers sit at the centres and talk with individual children. During the second free-play period, the group frequently walks to a nearby park, where swings, slides, tunnels, and other playground equipment are available.

The head teacher at Harmony explains that the teachers’ main function is first to orchestrate the environment and then to maximise the use of it for individual children. The free-play time is, in effect, the purpose of the morning, a time for children to choose freely from a variety of activities that the teachers value.

Group Time. At Irving, an extended period of time is set aside each day for group instruction. Typically the teacher begins by taking roll; each child responds ‘here’ as his/her name is called. For most of the year, three lessons predominate. In one lesson, children are asked to recite their address, phone number, and birth date; in another, they are asked to identify their printed name on a card held up by the teacher; in a third, they are familiarised with the calendar. Each day, children are expected to know the month, day, and year. After individual children are asked what the date is, the group recites the date in unison several times. Generally, if one child is asked a question, the same question is asked of every child in the class.

During group time, children are expected to listen attentively and

when appropriate, to converge on the correct responses to the teacher's questions. The head teacher believes that group time is the time when children learn. Field notes record a frequent remark: 'You are not here to play; you are here to learn something'. The teacher is critical of the supervisor's encouragement of play because she believes it is 'just babysitting'. She believes that what children really need is to know something. She likewise sees group time as a preparation for kindergarten, as 'getting the children ready to listen to the teacher.'

At Harmony, group time is relatively brief and cut up into three even shorter segments because 'the children have such short attention spans.' At the first group time, a teacher takes roll silently or tells the children to count heads with her. She points to individual children and counts slowly, and then asks the children who is missing.

The teachers plan the year in terms of units – for example, units on colour, holidays, the sea, dinosaurs, and living things. Each week early in the year, one colour is stressed, and group time is used to introduce things related to that colour. For example, during 'green week,' Elizabeth introduces a variety of vegetables:

Does anyone know what this is called?...

Yes, a cucumber. Is it light green or dark green? This looks like a cucumber, but it has a name all its own-squash. There are so many kinds of squash. What special name does this have? [No response.] This is zucchini. This is – yes – lettuce. And these?... These are green beans. Is this one cooked or not cooked? If it was cooked, it would be softer... Can anyone think of another word for 'not cooked'? Yes, 'raw.'

Often, science topics are introduced at this time – for example, a kind of insect or a pineapple plant.

When the weather is inclement, the children meet after story time and snack to discuss a special topic, for example, an upcoming fire drill. Children are separated according to age so that the teachers can engage them in what they consider developmentally appropriate tasks. Finally, the children gather to sing songs late in the morning as the mothers arrive.

Rest Time. At the [Head Start] Centre, though rest time is posted as a 10-minute block of time (on the official schedule), in fact, it lasts an average of about 30 minutes. Lights are turned off and the children stretch out on rugs, towels, or mats on the floor. No time is allocated for resting in the pre-school.

I was told that children would be required to rest in kindergarten and that it was important that they get used to the expectations that they would encounter in school. As the year progressed, however, I realised that this time was also a much-needed break for the teachers, who were responsible for 40 children in the course of their 8-hour work day and for their own children and extended families in their 'off' hours.

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Group time or individual time

The Head Start children spend considerably more time grouped than the [Harmony] preschool children. They eat as a group, wait as a group, sit quietly together for an extended group time, and rest together. They line up and go to the restrooms and to the cafeteria as a group as well. Approximately 2 hours and 15 minutes are spent each day doing what others do. Approximately the same amount of time is spent by the preschool children 'doing their own thing.'

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Children's time at task: scheduled or fluid

At the Centre, time is like a series of containers. In each time frame, a specified activity is scheduled. Though the head teacher was required to post a lesson plan each week, events within each time frame seldom changed much. The supervisor was treated much like a land-lord or a social worker. Her power was acknowledged, and surface attempts were made to do what was expected. A schedule was posted, lesson plans were made, and certain activities were ostensibly provided; but such plans on paper did little to regulate the daily life of the classroom. In fact, whenever the supervisor arrived an 'open classroom' was created before our eyes and was maintained until she left.

Generally, school days were composed of activities that were repeated day after day: breakfast, free play, restroom time, group time and rest time. The materials available for free-play time changed only a little during the year, and group time focused on the same lessons for weeks at a time. Each time frame, in short, had characteristics of what anthropologists call ritual events.

The [Harmony] preschool teachers likewise scheduled events at certain times. However, the two extended blocks of free-play time made variety within an established order possible. During the first period, this variety, as conceptualised by the teachers, was continuous. There was general agreement that there was an overall plan that would be implemented as the year progressed. Early in the year the teachers introduced one colour each week. For example, during 'green week,' children were shown green vegetables; but they also cooked vegetables, cooked 'green eggs,' and the teacher read the well-known Dr. Seuss book *Green Eggs and Ham*. That week, the play-dough was green, and dark green and white paint and light-green paper was at the easels. Children helped make green yam necklaces – one day with green triangles affixed, another day with green construction-paper fringe. The science table contained some limes, a celery stick in water, and another celery stick in water dyed with red food colouring. Snack each day featured something green: green eggs, green apples, green jello, limeade, etc. Flavour (lime) was distinguished from colour (green). These activities took place in an environment that was familiar yet subtly changing in ways that the children themselves could discover. A year-long plan thus introduced children to an environment that became, increasingly complex and differentiated.

Children were also perceived as developing. As explained above, children were grouped according to age so that teachers could further individualise instruction. One needs to focus even closer, however, to see how the teachers constantly made judgements about where a child was (in terms of interest and ability) and where he or she might go. Elizabeth, especially, had a knack for individualising at the puzzle table.

Elizabeth to Joey: 'This is called a 'Tumble Tower', Joey. We need to make a marble sit in the hole ... Now the way you work this is to turn it till one slips in the hole. Come on, Sara, I'll find something just right for you.' (She hands Sara, a three-year-old, a simple puzzle.) To David: 'An ear is missing. The poor man won't be able to hear. Find his ear.' Glen comes over to help Chris match coloured squares. 'You match it here, okay?' he says. 'Okay, now you match the orange one.' Elizabeth: 'You are really being helpful to another person.' 'Yeah, we're sharing.' He turns back. 'Now match this one.' (He takes Chris's arm and moves it to the light-orange square.) Chris proceeds to match others, and Glen slips away. Chris is so absorbed he appears not to notice. When he finishes, he is very pleased. Elizabeth exchanges the coloured squares for numbered squares. 'Hey,' Chris says, 'this is all mixed up.' Elizabeth responds, 'It is mixed up. Can you find the numbers?' (Earlier, Chris had repeatedly counted the colours and the holes.)

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Within the group, children were perceived by the teachers as different people, in 'different places,' and developing at different rates; but development could be facilitated through multiple interactions in the ongoing course of classroom events.

Adults' time at task: peer-centred or child-centred

As I worked daily in the centre, I became aware of a tremendous social support system among the teachers. If one teacher left the room, the other would move quickly but quietly to complete the task that had been interrupted. I frequently commented on this in my notes.

Early in the year, the teachers attempted to teach me how to participate in the group. I spent weeks watching people and taking profuse notes, but as Beverly, the head teacher, later told me, I was 'not much use to anybody.' In those first weeks, the social worker confided, 'We all have problems. We all have times when we need others to cover for us.' Candi, the aide and second teacher, overheard and immediately chimed in, 'Like when you're not here. I tell people you just left. I always tell them that, so they think you're on the job.' Later she gave the summative statement, 'My momma taught me long ago that we gotta stick together. No matter what, just stick together.'

It was many weeks before I came to realise the import of these words. Throughout the year I was taught how to 'cover' for the others, how to throw up a smoke screen that gave the appearance of conforming to authority, while behind the scenes, the peer group maintained a quite different social order.

But there were other manifestations as well. Candi was frequently ill but always came to school, so as 'not to let [us] down.' Beverly came one morning and immediately became ill. 'I knew I was sick,' she moaned, 'but I thought I could make it through the day.' Personal concerns frequently gave way to group needs.

By the same token, the group focus in the classroom appeared to have a broader socialising function. Teachers were constantly busy but spent most of their time working together. The primary focus of attention appeared to be on other adults who shared the same concerns, responsibilities, and frustrations. In this context, it seemed appropriate that children should also be encouraged to perceive themselves as group members.

Unlike the Head Start teachers, who value and establish reciprocal relations among peers, the [Harmony] preschool teachers assume that their primary function is to establish relationships with the children and to facilitate their growth. This different orientation is not a result of their educational training nor of their knowledge of psychological principles. Rather it reflects their own socialisation; each of the preschool teachers is the product of a nuclear family in which the mother did not work outside the home.

The teachers provide activities that require them to spend a good portion of the morning with children and, conversely, to be separate from other adults, thereby re-creating in the classroom the isolation of the middle-class American housewife. Ten to twelve distinct areas are evident in the classroom and the three teachers are stationed at different centres. Teachers typically help children clean up in different areas of the room; they sit with different age groups of children at 'small group time' and walk to the park leading three different ropes of children. Only at the park, where children play with only occasional assistance, is it possible to carry on a somewhat extended conversation with other adults. Thus, in the context of the classroom, the middle-class nuclear family is re-created.

6.4 Classroom organization of space

The use of space

The way in which space is utilised reflects the predominant mode of adult-child interaction in each setting. Adults in the two settings define space differently, and the children in the two settings use the space differently[...]. Children at the [Harmony] preschool, to a large extent, individualise the curriculum (within the options available) by moving freely through space; children at the Head Start Centre spend most of the morning in shared space.

Adults' definition of space. The Harmony Preschool is a large, open room sectioned into different areas thought to be conducive to the develop-

ment of physical and cognitive skills. The environment is carefully planned and modified slightly each week. For example, a balance beam in use during one week is pushed against the wall to make room for a water table the next week.

Notably, teachers and children share the same space. This utilisation of space appears to be a physical manifestation of the form of social interaction practised in the classroom. Each teacher sits at a small table with in a group of children, and the children move in and out of groups at will. Though the Irving Head Start centre has approximately the same amount of space as the preschool, there is an overall different configuration. The room is divided, not quite in half, into two domains, delineating through the placement of a desk, shelves, and bulletin boards a distinct space for the teachers and one for the children. Though the teachers enter the children’s space, children intuitively appear to regard the teachers’ area as off limits. The division appears to be a visual manifestation of the type of teacher-student, adult-child interaction that prevails in the classroom.

The teacher role, as defined by Head Start administrators, is not confined to educating children, just as in many black homes, women are not only child-rearers and trainers but are also the persons primarily responsible for maintenance, management of resources, etc. In the classroom the teachers are constantly busy, but their efforts are spread out across an array of tasks. Time is spent preparing food, cleaning up, stocking the refrigerator, talking with parents and supervisors on the telephone, writing notes to parents, maintaining records, speaking with health and nutrition officials, speaking with one another, decorating bulletin boards, and preparing materials. Many of these activities are carried out in ‘teacher space.’ When teachers enter ‘children space,’ the specifically educational tasks prescribed tend to take place through teacher directives to the group.

Children’s use of space. At Harmony, although the teachers create the setting (and thereby determine and delimit the choices available), chil-

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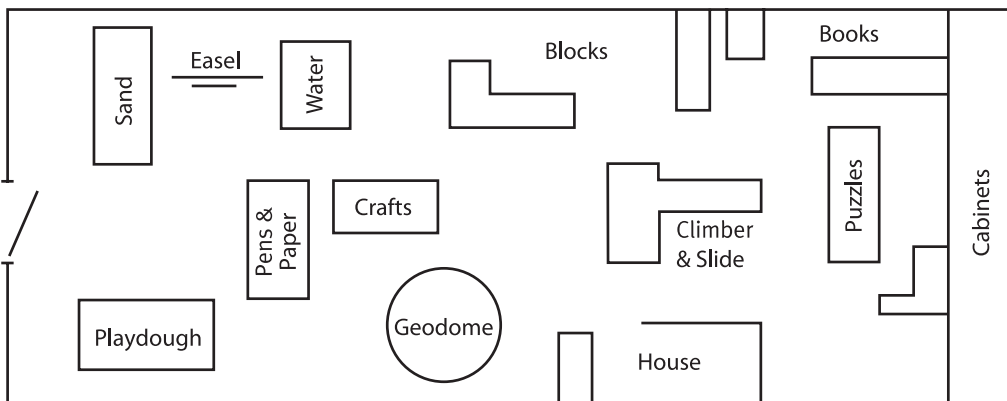


Figure C. Floor Plan of Harmony Preschool

dren are allowed to choose what they will do for a good portion of the morning. The following excerpt from field notes illustrates how one child, a four-year-old girl, utilised the space one day early in the year:

Sue begins the morning working at the puzzle table with Elizabeth (Teacher 1). Here she works an eight-piece puzzle, a shape-form board, a five-piece table-setting puzzle, and, finally, an eleven-piece 'Big Bird' puzzle, which Elizabeth provides. After about fifteen minutes she spies a baby buggy and leaves the table. (She has completed the puzzle and put it away.) She briefly pushes the buggy, then runs again to Elizabeth: 'I want to paint.' Elizabeth tells her that Roxanne (Teacher 2) is by the easel and that she will help her. Roxanne helps Sue put on her smock. Four minutes later, Sue announces to Roxanne, 'I'm finished.' Roxanne then helps her remove her smock and hang her painting on the bulletin board under her name. She then moves to the scissors table and begins cutting small paper with a pair of scissors. Suzanne (teacher 3) is stationed at this table. In a very short time Sue makes contact with her as well. She holds up a square and grins, 'Look, a triangle!' She has been in the classroom less than one half hour, yet she has already completed approximately seven different activities and interacted with all three teachers.

Ten minutes later Sue moves to the playdough table just as Elizabeth begins to talk with a small group of children there. She says something to her, but I don't hear the full statement. In the next few minutes Sue describes what she makes ('a plum pie,' 'a nest') and chats with the group. She frequently vies for the teacher's attention. 'I went to the farm and saw a pink egg,' she tells Elizabeth. 'Look at my big snake!' she says, laughing; and shortly after, 'Look at my big ball!' She, like numerous other children in the room, seems to have apprehended that the way to get an adult to notice her is to produce frequent, seemingly unique responses.

Sue returns briefly to the puzzle table to work on a graduated-shape puzzle. No adult is in the area, however, and this time she does not complete the task. Leaving after two minutes, she returns to the easel. Roxanne again helps her on with her smock. She runs to Elizabeth: 'I don't want my barrett.' After painting, she removes her own smock and returns to the playdough table, though to a different seat. Again, she directs her comments to the teacher 'Ann ate some playdough!' This time she is intent on what she is doing and speaks less, though she does move to a seat closer to Elizabeth. When I get up to leave, she makes eye contact with me: 'Look at my giant ball!'

By 10:25, a meeting is called briefly. It quickly dissolves into cleanup time. Sue participates half-heartedly and ends up bouncing and giggling with Jennifer on the trampoline. This is virtually the first time she has paid much attention to another child in the room. The children are called to the book area for a 'quiet book time.' Some children

go to the restrooms. Soon a teacher reads the group a story. At 10:40, snack time, Sue sits next to Jennifer[...]

Sue has learned to work independently. She can select, begin, and end activities on her own initiative. Although there are 23 children and only 3 teachers, Sue has learned to maximize her interaction with the adults in the classroom. Much of her behaviour and spoken language is directed toward getting adult attention and approval. Her statements tend to express what she wants and what she did: 'I want...'; 'I'm finished.' 'I don't want...'; 'I made...'. When her actions do not result in teacher comment, she verbally directs adults to notice: 'Look, a triangle!' 'Look at my giant ball!' Sue, I was told, is naturally *gregarious*, the middle child of an active, outgoing family. She uses the space expansively, in part, perhaps, because she attended the school the previous year. Such was not the case with Chris, a three-year-old, new to the school, whose actions I followed on the same day:

gregarious: sociable, fond of company

Chris is a large child with reddish blond hair and sallow eyes. He has some difficulty separating from his mother when he arrives at school. Finally he settles in at the puzzle [...] table with Elizabeth (Teacher 1) and begins working on a geometric-shape board. After fifteen minutes he briefly runs to Suzanne (Teacher 2) at the crafts table. Immediately he runs back. He works with graduated cups and appears confused when two are left over. He begins building with unit cubes. He turns to me: 'See what I made!' I say, 'Tell me about it,' and he replies, 'It's a building.' Chris moves over to work with flat geometrical shapes and sorts them into a Playschool caddy. After five minutes he leaves to paint at the easel. Roxanne (Teacher 3) asks him which colours he wants and he responds, 'the blue and the green.' Shortly after, he returns to the puzzle table to work on the geometric-shape board again. Although he has spent most of the morning here, he has sat in several different seats, moving to the materials rather than moving the materials to himself.

After about twenty minutes he leaves the table and moves to the block area. He rides a small tractor that had been in the corner. Seeing me, he says, 'I'm waiting for the man!' Then, 'I'm waiting for that boy. This is broken. The wheel doesn't turn.' I say, 'What should we do?' He answers, 'We shouldn't play with it. It doesn't work' (while seated on it). 'How could we fix it?' I ask. 'It needs a new steering wheel. I should put it away.' At this he runs off, saying, 'I want to play with something.' He comes back riding a bus, then notices a child building. He steps on his hand and asks him what he is doing. He begins stacking blocks on top of the child's structure. (This is the first time all morning that I have observed him interacting with another child.)

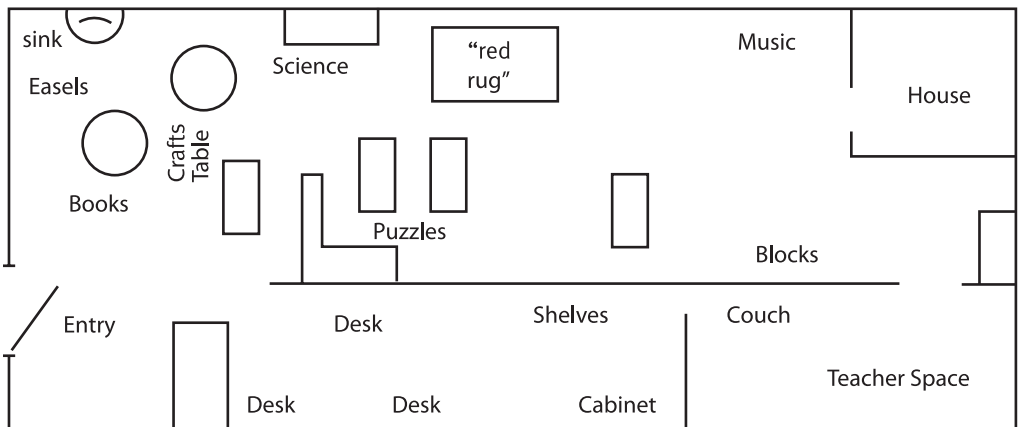
After a brief time he runs again to Elizabeth, stopping on the way to chase another child. He repeatedly pushes his face into the other

child's face, laughing antagonistically. On arrival, he tells Elizabeth, 'I'm thirsty.' She answers, 'We will have a snack very soon.' He briefly stands by Danny and watches him, though he directs his comments to Elizabeth. Then he begins working with the geometric board again. [...]

[...]Chris moves through space in a somewhat *circumscribed* manner. Most of his time is spent at the puzzle table, but he makes brief forays to the crafts table (only to say something to a teacher and then return), to the paint easel (for five minutes), and to the block area, where he rides a tractor, speaks with me, and briefly interacts with a child who is building. He spends most of his time in 'parallel play.' His comments are directed towards the adults in the room. He works primarily in an area where an adult is present, and during the transition time (clean-up to story), he carefully watches what the adult does and tries to do the same.

circumscribed: restricted manner

Figure D. Floor Plan of Irving Head Start



At Irving Head Start, the movement of children through space has a different rhythm and flow. After breakfast, during free-time, children play, generally without adult interference, while the teachers tend to other duties. The following examples, though written during the weeks before children were assigned specific areas for freeplay, are nonetheless typical of the way in which space was used by the Head Start children throughout the year:

Sanford uses most of free-play time to run behind a large, wooden truck. He and several other boys run over and over in the same general pattern. Sanford briefly climbs into the rocking boat where three other children sit. He smiles frequently and tells the children what his 'mama' said, then quickly returns to his truck. The teachers' view of this area is blocked by a line of bulletin boards.

Jeannine uses this 25-minute block of free time to play with six other girls in the house area. She arranges a cabinet, sweeps, and cares for a 'baby' until clean-up time is signalled by the dimming of the lights. During this time she doesn't speak.

The choices of activities on this day are two puzzles, trucks, a rocking boat, a punching bag, and the dolls, utensils, and furniture present in the house area. Most of the children are playing with things in the back of the room. Since blocks are available but located in the same area, it is not possible to construct anything with them. For the remainder of the morning, Sanford and Jeannine use space in much the same way because they are involved in group activities. They listen to the teacher, line up to go to the restrooms, return for group time, rest for 25 minutes, and then have another group time. They line up again to go to the cafeteria for lunch; and when they return, they wait on the red rug until the van arrives to take them home.

The organisation of space: object-oriented or person-oriented

Space is defined and used differently in the two settings. At the preschool, one open space is shared by adults and children, and few outside demands interrupt their time. At the centre, space is divided into two distinct areas – one for children and one for adults. Since the Head Start teachers need time to deal with responsibilities *extraneous* to the children, they also need space wherein these tasks can be accomplished.

The separate space also provides a kind of retreat, a place where adults can have some privacy. Both the Head Start teachers work full time and have more diverse responsibilities at work and at home. They are surrounded by children for seven hours while working and go home to more of the same. The ubiquity and constancy of these demands seems to create a need to get away and be away for some portion of the day. Free space, like free-time, means something quite different in each setting.

Within the spaces in which children's activities occur, different contexts for learning are created. At the [Harmony] preschool, separate spaces are defined by different transformational materials, (paint, sand, water, clay, blocks), materials that allow children to make unique constructions and that likewise reinforce the changing nature of things. Throughout the morning, children move from space to space and from thing to thing, selecting activities of interest. They frequently interact with the adult closest to their chosen activity, and much of the conversation is related to what the child has done to the materials: 'Look at my big ball!' 'It's a nest.' Social interaction is informal and adults are called by their first names.

The classroom at the Head Start centre is also sectioned into different areas (book area, puzzle area, block area, house area); but blocks are the

extraneous: unrelated to the children

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only transformational materials regularly available throughout the year. For most of the year, the children are assigned to an area for 25 minutes each day. The objects available keep the children occupied until instruction can begin. For the rest of the day, children are grouped together, doing what others do or gathered around the teacher.

Instruction focuses on social knowledge that can be transferred verbally from adult to child. The teachers appear to have a deep sense of equality; at group time a teacher will typically ask the same question of every child in the group. Differential treatment is frowned upon. And activities, when provided, require the children to follow directions, to perform the same actions, and to produce the same product (e.g., a yellow duck or orange pumpkin people). Such practices reinforce the commonality of experience among group members and stress the importance of authority. In the Head Start centre, teachers are called by their last names.

The organisation and use of space gives rise to and reflects different kinds of social interaction [...]. In her study of a southern Georgia community, Young (1970) found that white parents provided their children with many different objects, which they were encouraged to manipulate. Black parents, in contrast, encouraged their children to focus on people; for example, when a child reached for something, parents would sometimes take the child's hand and place it on their face. In the classrooms described here, such distinctions were apparent. In the preschool, space is organised to maximise the children's use of objects, which provides an opportunity for unique production and conversation with adults. At the Head Start centre, children typically occupy space with others and learn by listening and by giving correct convergent responses to the teacher's questions.

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Analysis of the use of time and space in the two settings suggests that culture influences the way teachers organize meaningful activity for children.

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6.5 Summary analysis

Analysis of the use of time and space in the two settings suggests that culture influences the way teachers organize meaningful activity for children; the order and logic of each setting is better understood by comparing the two. What the teachers do in the respective settings is shown to be meaningful in context, and it is the differing contexts that condition both their behaviour and their expectations of the children. Thus, the teachers' beliefs and practices can be understood as adaptive responses to different environments.

Differences in school environments

The Harmony Preschool. The preschool teachers exercise some degree of control over their work situations; all three work part time by choice and do not provide the major financial support for their families. They have

time to set up the room before the children arrive, to purchase materials, and to speak with parents in their 'off hours.' All live in small nuclear families in single-family dwellings.

The preschool is an independent, non-sectarian organisation using space in a community church. The teachers experience some constraints within the school setting, but they have free reign in the development of the curriculum, in the scheduling of activities, and in the general organisation of the programme. Parents seem to hover in the corridor outside and enter only when the children are singing songs or when the teachers otherwise indicate that activities are winding down.

The Irving Head Start Centre. Head Start teachers experience less personal control over their situations than the preschool teachers, and they also have more extensive responsibilities both at home and at work. Both live in extended families, one in a household with her mother (who is bedridden), her father, her own two daughters, and her sister, brother-in-law, and their daughter; the other in a rented house with her son, daughter, and granddaughter. Though each makes less than \$5,000 per year, they provide major financial support for their families.[...]

A powerful bureaucracy structures the administration of local Head Start programmes, and personnel at each level are responsible for reporting on the people under them. The supervisor visits unexpectedly or calls to say that she drove by at 7:30 and did not see the teachers' cars; she, in turn, reports her findings. The teachers resent this intrusion and her imposition of values (such as the advocacy of play), for she is perceived as someone who does not help (i.e., does not work with) either the children or the teachers.

The teachers' job is likewise defined by the demands of the system; and they must go into parents' homes and 'rate' them. Their ambivalent relationship with parents is created, in part, by this extension of the monitoring role. Thus, the bureaucratic structure creates an atmosphere of vigilance and extraneous control that has a kind of 'ripple effect.' This appears to bind the teachers together, uniting them against those who neither understand nor participate in the reality that they share.

Adaptations

In both settings, the teachers' beliefs and behaviours appear to be conditioned by and continuous with their experiences outside of school. Whereas the preschool teachers recreate a setting quite like that found within nuclear families, in which women spend a great deal of time in child-centred interactions, the Head Start teachers re-enact patterns of interaction that prevail within extended family networks[...]. They work closely together, share tasks, decisions, and resources, and share also the perception that those outside are hostile to their interests and efforts. The Head Start teachers also work longer hours than the preschool teachers and have greater and more diverse responsibilities – factors that decrease the amount of time they can spend with children.

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Adaptations conveyed through interactions with children

The present article suggests that the structures of time and space are implicit forms through which adult values are transmitted to children. By focusing on individual children and by structuring an environment that maximises individual choice and action, the preschool teachers encourage children to be different from others. Free-time allows children to select activities of interest. Time is a continuum through which both children and activities change. Because children develop (or change) over time, the teachers provide different materials for children of different ages and separate the children into three different age groups for developmentally appropriate activities.

The group is a whole composed of parts ('Who is missing?'). For much of the morning it is composed of individuals moving in different directions at different rates of speed. Likewise, time can be broken up into units; and space is highly differentiated, providing different activities in different areas of the room. Transformational materials define the spaces and provide opportunities for children to have unique experiences, to make unique products, and to impose their own order onto things. Teachers spend most of their time in the classroom with the children, and they are generally responsive to the children's requests. Children frequently initiate conversations with the teachers and call the teachers by their first names. Thus, the classroom reinforces individuality and autonomy and promotes positive feelings toward change.

In contrast, the Head Start teachers structure time and space so as to reinforce collectivism, authority, and traditional (repetitive) modes of interaction that reinforce group experience. Children spend most of their time in group activities, and social knowledge conveyed through verbal exchange is more important than the manipulation of things.

The adults likewise spend much of their time together, engaged in a proliferation of tasks that are integral to the social service demands of the programme. A separate 'teacher space' is set up for the performance of these duties. The peer-centred nature of the classroom is evident not only in the bond between the women who share tasks and problems but also in the smoke screen that is maintained by the peer group to give the illusion of conforming to authority. By structuring time and space so that children do what others do, while also conforming to the directives of the teachers, the teachers thus socialise children to adapt to the reality that they themselves experience.

Since this article has dealt with the topic of what adults do, careful observation of the consequences for children's behaviour must still be detailed. It would seem, however, that children learn to conform to the patterns of behaviour in each environment and presumably to absorb some of the implicit meaning, so that they could be expected to respond differently were they presented with a single classroom form in kindergarten or first grade.

A theory of cultural transmission should work in two directions: (1) It

should relate environmental differences and differences in school environments to the adaptations made by adults and conveyed to children, and (2) it should explain how different life orientations result in different cognitive and behavioural characteristics of children[...]. This article has explored one element.[...]