

DOING SCHOOL: LEARNING BEHAVIOR, CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS, AND THE
RACIAL ACHIEVEMENT GAP

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ABSTRACT

Karen Phelan Kozlowski: “Doing School:” Learning Behavior, Classroom Interactions, and the Racial Achievement Gap
(Under the direction of Karolyn Tyson)

The racial achievement gap in education is one of the most longstanding and perplexing racial inequalities. No matter the measure or level of schooling, white and Asian students achieve at significantly higher levels than black and Hispanic students at every level of the educational experience. Since education matters so much for future opportunities and success, the causes of the achievement gap remain one of the most significant unsettled educational phenomena. Prior research suggests that significant portions of the racial achievement gap could be explained by ways that students “do” school, or racial differences in student learning behaviors. However, why and how learning behaviors are patterned by race remains unclear. Two possible mechanisms are *cultural capital mis/match* and *teacher bias*. Do students and teachers share or differ in their expectations of what it takes to “do” school successfully? If so, students and teachers may be matched or mismatched on what sociologists call “cultural capital,” or familiarity with dominant but unspoken norms and standards of a particular context, in this case, the classroom. Conversely, it is possible that teachers evaluate students’ behaviors differently on the basis of imagined or stereotyped racial differences. If so, teacher bias may better explain why students’ behaviors appear racialized.

This dissertation examines whether cultural capital mis/match and/or teacher bias best explain racialized patterns of student approaches to learning. To do this, I conduct classroom

observations over the course of nine months in racially diverse first grade classrooms, as well as interviews with teachers, students, and parents. Observations and interviews examine: 1) what kinds of schooling strategies are necessary for success 2) how students and teachers view those strategies similarly or differently 3) how students develop their sense of what it takes to be successful 4) how students make sense of interactions with and messages from their teachers 5) how teachers interact with, assess, and evaluate students on the basis of their skills and 6) how these interactions vary by race.

There are three key findings from this study. First, I find that regardless of race, lower SES students learn and demonstrate knowledge of classroom rules (procedural knowledge) better than academic skills. Higher SES students demonstrate their academic skills more than procedural knowledge, which I argue is a form of cultural capital that is rewarded in the classroom. This occurs because (1) lower-SES students come to school with fewer academic skills than higher-SES peers and (2) teachers give less explicit and continuous instruction for academic tasks than for classroom rules and behavior. Second, despite teachers' best intentions to create unbiased learning environments, the teachers I observed disproportionately privileged the voices of white higher-SES students over those of higher-SES students of color, white lower-SES students, and lower-SES students of color. At the same time, some teachers disproportionately reprimanded black students (regardless of SES or actual misbehavior) and reprimanded them more harshly than students of other racial/ethnic groups. And third, SES-patterned ways that students demonstrate knowledge (procedural vs. academic), along with racialized teacher-student interactions, signal to all students who is seen as smart, deviant, well-liked, or disliked. These signals foster students' construction of peer networks that are segregated by race and SES. As time progresses, more

privileged students will continue to influence one another and share cultural resources that are rewarded in schools, while less privileged students will fail to benefit from those same resources.

This dissertation offers an intersectional approach to the study of cultural capital and teacher bias in contemporary elementary schools, and it demonstrates how each mechanism contributes to racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic inequality in students' educational experiences and outcomes. It uncovers new kinds of cultural capital that have the potential to directly affect achievement disparities, shows what unconscious bias looks like in contemporary first grade classrooms, and shows how teachers favor certain students over others based on real and imagined differences between them. These interactions will likely shape students' long-term notions of success, perception of their capability, ability to be academically successful, the kinds of people they perceive to be similar to them on the basis of those characteristics, and how they do or do not share cultural resources about how to be academically successful.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	xii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	
THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP AND DOING SCHOOL	1
Doing School as a Key Factor in Achievement Differences	5
Cultural Capital and Teacher Bias as Explanations for Racial Differences in Doing School	6
The Study	9
Key Findings	9
Summary and Outline of Dissertation	12
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	
TEACHER BIAS, CULTURAL CAPITAL, AND RACIALIZED STUDENT BEHAVIOR	15
Teacher Bias	15
Limitations of Current Teacher Bias Research	22
Cultural Capital	24
Limitations of the Current Research on Culture and Cultural Capital	29
The Relationship Between Cultural Capital and Teacher Bias	33
The Study	35
Key Findings	37
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS	
CLASSROOMS AND COMMUNITIES OF FOXCROFT AND CUMBERLAND ELEMENTARY	40
Cumberland Elementary	40
Foxcroft Elementary	47
Doing Ethnography	56
Interviews and Participants	57
Analysis	63

Inequality at Cumberland and Foxcroft	64
CHAPTER 4: INEQUALITY AT THE STARTING GATE	
HOW AND WHY SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS MATTERS FOR	
DEMONSTRATING KNOWLEDGE AND DECODING INSTRUCTIONS	67
Classroom Behavior and Following Rules—Explicit Instructions	75
Demonstrating Knowledge of Classroom Rules and Procedure—Lower SES	
Students	78
Academic Expectations—Inexplicit	83
Decoding Instructions for Academic Tasks —Higher SES Students	92
Demonstrating Academic Comprehension and Competence—Higher SES	
Students	97
Parent Coaching	100
Higher-SES Parents	105
Lower-SES Parents	113
Lower-SES Exceptions	118
Summary and Conclusion	120
CHAPTER 5: TEACHERS’ UNCONSCIOUS RACIALIZED TREATMENT AND	
INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS.....	125
Teacher Bias.....	129
Racialized Treatment in the Construction of Classroom Knowledge.....	132
Calling on Students	134
Other Ways Students Are Invited to Construct Knowledge—Contributing	
More and Blurting Out Without Reprimand	139
Racialized Behavior or Racialized Teacher Responses to Student Behavior?	146
Following (Or Not) Classroom Rules	150
Racialized Discipline and Unconscious Teacher Bias.....	158
Were Reprimands Warranted?	164
Misbehavior and Reprimands: Differences in Practice	169
Summary and Discussion.....	181
CHAPTER 6: I GET BY WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS	
THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF CULTURAL CAPITAL DIFFERENCES AND	
RACIALIZED TEACHER INTERACTIONS	187
Peer Segregation	190

Which Peers Tend to Be Friends?.....	191
“You’re my best friend.”	195
Selecting Partners and Friends During Class Activities	197
Segregation at Lunch and Recess	201
Why Certain Students “Flock Together”	205
Academic Competence and Peer Segregation	208
How Students Become Friends: Similarities Based on Demonstration of Competence.....	209
How Students Avoid Becoming Friends: Peer Avoidance Based on Regular Reprimands	217
Student Segregation and Information-Sharing About “Doing School”	225
Alternative Explanations.....	230
Summary and Conclusion.....	232
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION	235
“Doing School” as Cultural Capital	236
“Doing School” and Teacher Bias	241
How Cultural Capital and Teacher Bias Shape Peer Perceptions, Interactions, and Resources	251
Doing School, Achievement, and Moving Forward	255
Limitations and Directions for Future Research.....	257
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE	260
A.1: Interview with Student Script	260
A.2: Interview with Parent Script	263
A.3: Interview with Teacher Script.....	265
APPENDIX B: SURVEY	268
REFERENCES	273

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Black-White Achievement Gap.....	2
Figure 2. Hispanic-White Achievement Gap.....	3
Figure 3. Asian-White Achievement Gap.....	4
Figure 4. Achievement Levels by Socioeconomic Status Scale, by Racial and Ethnic Group.....	30
Figure 5. Conceptual Model of Cultural Capital, Teacher Bias, and Its Impacts.....	34
Figure 6. Cultural Capital, Teacher Bias, and Peer Relationships.....	38
Figure 7. Percent of Students Called on At/Above and Below Average Relative to Student Population in Ms. Jennifer's Class, by Race.....	136
Figure 8. Percent of Students Called on At/Above and Below Average Relative to Student Population in Mrs. Miller's Class, by Race.....	137
Figure 9. Percent of Students Called on At/Above and Below Average Relative to Student Population in Ms. Janwari's Class, by Race.....	139
Figure 10. Percent of Students Invited to Construct Knowledge Relative to Student Population in Ms. Jennifer's Class, by Race.....	142
Figure 11. Percent of Students Invited to Construct Knowledge Relative to Student Population in Mrs. Miller's Class, by Race.....	143
Figure 12. Percent of Students Invited to Construct Knowledge Relative to Student Population in Ms. Janwari's Class, by Race.....	144
Figure 13. Percent of Students Misbehaving Relative to Student Population in Ms. Jennifer's Class, by SES.....	154
Figure 14. Percent of Students Misbehaving Relative to Student Population in Mrs. Miller's Class, by SES.....	155
Figure 15. Percent of Students Misbehaving Relative to Student Population in Ms. Janwari's Class, by SES.....	155
Figure 16. Percent of Students Misbehaving Relative to Student Population in Ms. Jennifer's Class, by Race.....	156
Figure 17. Percent of Students Misbehaving Relative to Student Population in	

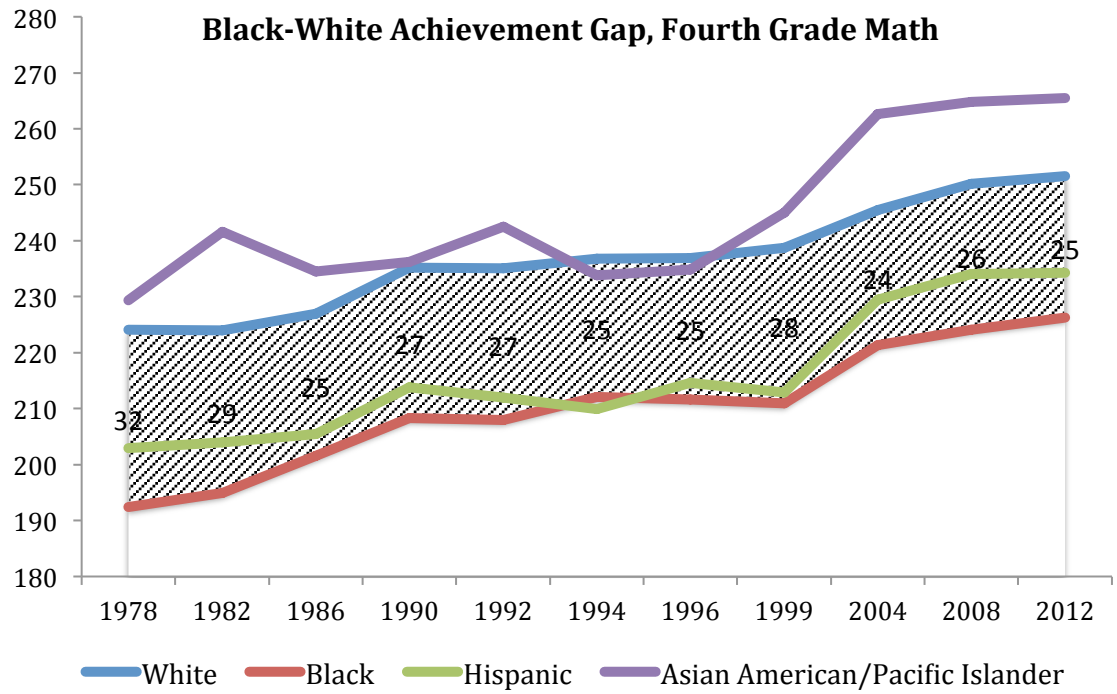
Mrs. Miller's Class, by Race.....	157
Figure 18. Percent of Students Misbehaving Relative to Student Population in Ms. Janwari's Class, by Race.....	157
Figure 19. Percent of Students Reprimanded Relative to Student Population in Ms. Jennifer's Class, by Race.....	159
Figure 20. Percent of Students Reprimanded Relative to Student Population in Ms. Janwari's Class, by Race.....	161
Figure 21. Percent of Students Reprimanded Relative to Student Population in Mrs. Miller's Class, by Race.....	163
Figure 22. Friendship Network, Ms. Jennifer's Class.....	191
Figure 23. Friendship Network, Mrs. Miller's Class.....	192
Figure 24. Friendship Network, Ms. Janwari's Class.....	194

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP AND DOING SCHOOL

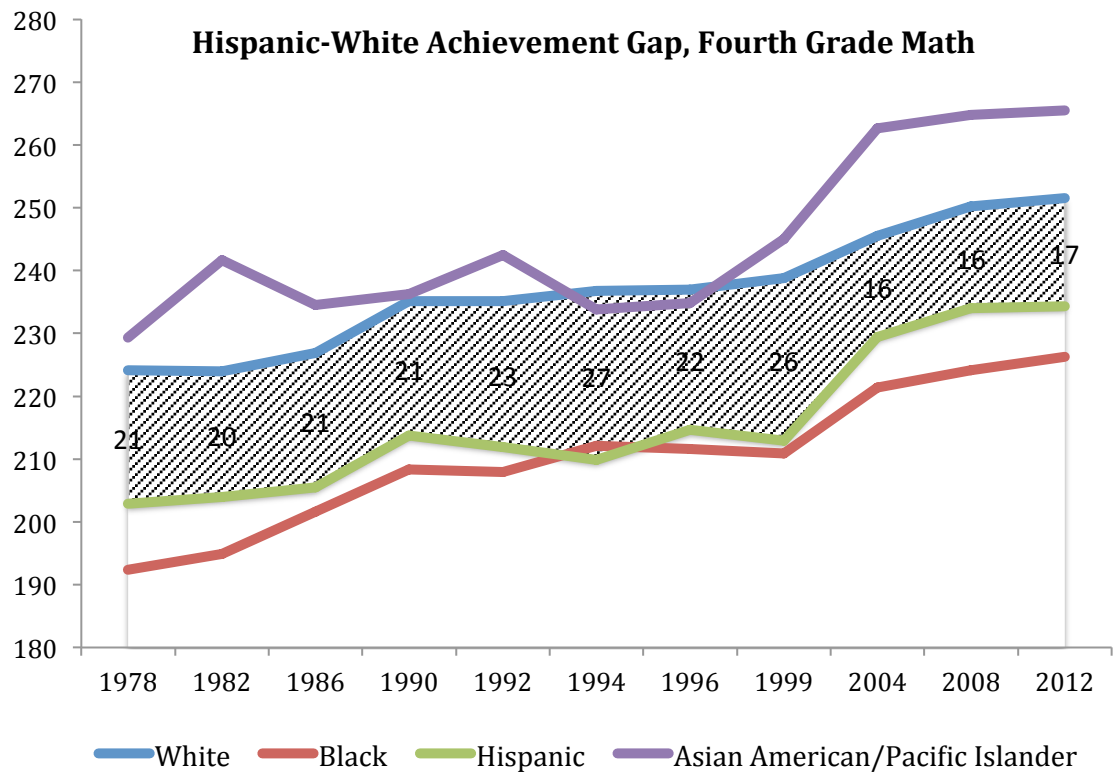
One of the most persistent patterns of educational inequality in the U.S. is the racial achievement gap. On average, white and Asian students tend to dominate the top of the educational outcome distribution, and black, Hispanic, and Native American students tend to fall behind (NAEP 2015; Kao and Thompson 2003). This gap exists at every level of education from kindergarten through college, for every tested subject area, and for every educational achievement outcome from standardized test scores to grades (National Assessment of Educational Progress 2015). Moreover, the persistence of this gap is stunning, particularly since U.S. society is 60 years removed from overt and state-sanctioned discrimination in schools. Yet today, the racial achievement gap has not closed dramatically from where it was in the 1980s and shows few signs of closing in the near future (See Figures 1-3 below, also National Assessment of Educational Progress 2015; Jencks and Phillips 1998; Vanneman et al 2009; Hemphill et al 2011).

Figure 1. Black-White Achievement Gap



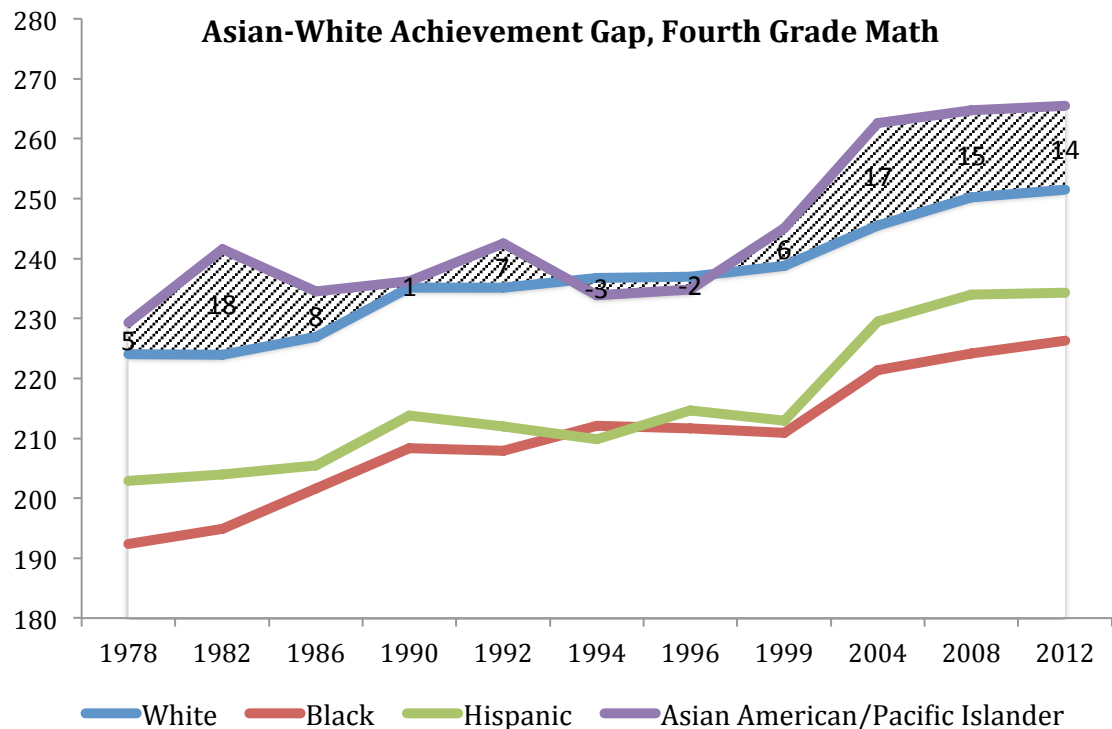
Data Source: National Center for Education Statistics. 2015. Data represents fourth grade math scores.

Figure 2. Hispanic-White Achievement Gap



Data Source: National Center for Education Statistics. 2015. Data represents fourth grade math scores.

Figure 3. Asian-White Achievement Gap



Data Source: National Center for Education Statistics. 2015. Data represents fourth grade math scores.

The achievement gap is a social problem because it leads to unequal racial differences in life chances. Differences in achievement lead to differences in who does and does not graduate with the degrees required for well-paying occupations, for example. These unequal educational qualifications lead some American men and women of color to be disproportionately concentrated in low-wage, economically precarious occupations with little opportunity for social mobility (or out of the formal labor market altogether) (Kalleberg 2013). White men and women, on the other hand, tend to be concentrated in higher-skill, higher-wage occupations with more opportunity for advancement (Kalleberg 2013). Unequal occupations lead to unequal opportunity for income. Black households currently make 59 cents to every dollar that white households earn, while Hispanic households currently make

71 cents to the white household dollar (DeNavas-Walt and Proctor 2015). Over time, these disparities mean a lifelong loss of \$300,000 to \$1,000,000 dollars, which is a considerable amount of lost income (Carnevale, Rose, and Cheah 2011). Beyond the economic consequences, inequality in education can impact other adult outcomes as well, including criminality, violence, health, and stress (Frisvold and Golberstein 2011; Goosby and Walsemann 2012; Paulle 2013). It is therefore critical, if we are to understand and ameliorate racial and ethnic inequality in broader society, to understand and ameliorate racial and ethnic inequality in schools.

Doing School as a Key Factor in Achievement Differences

Recent research suggests that students' schooling behaviors, or what I call "doing school," may explain substantial portions of the achievement gap because white and Asian students are perceived to behave better in class, work harder, and generally be better "classroom citizens" than black and Hispanic youth (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey 1998; Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell 1999; Carbonaro 2005; Harris & Robinson 2007; Lleras 2008; Kelly 2008).¹ However, it is unclear from the research exactly what behaviors are most important for student achievement or how other cognitive and interactive aspects of doing school matter as well. In other words, what does it mean for students to "work hard?" What kinds of learning strategies and behaviors are most or least effective for achievement? How do students understand and interpret teacher instruction? How do they interact with their teachers when they do or do not understand instruction? How do they interact with and share information or questions with their peers? All of these processes constitute "doing school,"

¹ Note that this pattern is based on teacher perception of differences; it is unclear if those differences are real or imagined. I will return to this point in the subsequent section.

and it is important to understand if and how race corresponds to them so we can understand how they impact achievement.

Cultural Capital and Teacher Bias as Explanations for Racial Differences in Doing School

In addition to this need for understanding what “doing school” effectively looks like, it is also important to understand *why* “doing school” may matter for the achievement gap. Prior research suggests the possibility of two theoretical mechanisms: *cultural capital* and *teacher bias*. First, if there are indeed real differences in how groups “do school,” then racial and ethnic groups who are disproportionately overrepresented in higher socioeconomic status groups (i.e. whites, some Asians) could have the *cultural capital* that teachers value and reward in classrooms and schools. Cultural capital refers to the knowledge of and ability to perform according to the unspoken norms, standards, and rules of the classroom context (Lareau and Weiniger 2003). The cultural know-how that people have comes from their immersion in class culture, but institutions like schools tend to be middle class entities, so successfully navigating them requires familiarity with middle class culture (Farkas et al 1990; Lareau 1987; 2003; Bodovski and Farkas 2008). Several researchers have found that families’ socioeconomic status is connected to how well students and parents engage with institutions like schools. For example, middle class parents instill in their children a sense of entitlement that leads to more advocacy for students’ needs and desires by “any means necessary” while working class parents instill in their children a sense of constraint that leads to discomfort engaging with authority figures like teachers (Lareau 2003; Calarco 2014).

More importantly, these researchers suggest that these kinds of cultural behaviors and strategies are connected to socioeconomic status regardless of racial background. In other words, middle class black and white families, for example, share similar kinds of behaviors

and engagement with institutions, but black families of working and middle class backgrounds are not at all similar in these characteristics (Lareau 2003). Because certain racial and ethnic groups tend to be disproportionately represented in different social class groups, the cultural capital that comes from those social class groups may help explain average racial differences in “doing school.”

Alternatively, *teacher bias* may better explain how we come to see “racialized” differences in the way students “do school.” There are two ways teacher bias might impact how students “do school.” First, there may not actually be racial differences in the way students do school, only teachers’ perception that there are differences (Alexander, Entwisle, and Thompson 1987; Downey and Pribesh 2004). If teachers perceive white and Asian students to behave better and work harder than black and Hispanic students, it may be because they harbor conscious or unconscious racial stereotypes that cloud their perceptions. When teachers perceive students differently on the basis of race, even if they “do school” similarly, some groups will not be able to have the same returns on their cultural capital as others (Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell 1999). In other words, teachers may reward some students with higher marks and others with lower ones--despite equal approaches to “doing school”--because of their conscious or unconscious racial bias.

The second way teacher bias could affect the way students “do school” is the self-fulfilling prophecy that occurs from interactions with biased teachers (Dweck and Repucci 1973; Dweck 1975; Eccles 1984; Ferguson 1998; Wigfield and Eccles 2000). According to this perspective, if students believe that their teachers have high expectations for them, they may engage with and essentially “do” school more effectively. Similarly, when teachers have low expectations of students and interact with them accordingly, students may pull back

from, rebel against, or essentially “do” school less effectively. To the degree that students of particular racial and ethnic groups engage with biased teachers similarly, racialized patterns of “doing school” may emerge.

Cultural capital and teacher bias are often positioned as distinct and at times, opposing. Those who claim that teachers are racially biased suggest that teachers favor or discriminate against students on the basis of their race (consciously or unconsciously), often regardless of other characteristics like their socioeconomic status, personality, or other skills (Casteel 1998; Ferguson 2003). In contrast, cultural capital theorists suggest that student differences in behavior come not from biased perceptions of teachers, but from differences in skill sets that students learn at home and bring with them to school (Lareau 2003; Condrón 2007). This perspective suggests that socioeconomic status, not race, is the key axis of differentiation, and to the degree that we see racial differences in student behavior, they most likely reflect average socioeconomic differences between racial groups.

Additionally, much of our knowledge on the role of teacher bias and cultural capital comes from studies of older elementary or adolescent black and white students (Casteel 1998; Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell 1999; Ferguson 2000; Lareau 2003; Calarco 2011). Yet the achievement gap exists before kindergarten even begins, so it is important to understand how cultural capital and teacher bias matter and may explain patterns of “doing school” among younger students who are experiencing the earliest years of education. Further, the U.S. is far more diverse than black and white, and the achievement gap is present among other racial and ethnic groups, too. It is therefore important for Hispanic and Asian students’ experiences, in particular, to be represented in the literature on cultural capital and teacher bias as well.

The Study

This dissertation examines what “doing school” looks like and whether and how cultural capital and teacher bias explain racialized patterns of “doing school” in contemporary elementary schools. Rather than positioning cultural capital and teacher bias as distinct and opposing, this study demonstrates how both mechanisms contribute to racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic inequality in students’ educational experiences and outcomes. To do this, I conducted classroom observations over the course of nine months in four racially diverse first grade classrooms at two elementary schools: Foxcroft and Cumberland Elementary (one classroom at Cumberland, three classrooms at Foxcroft). Each school was located in a different school district. In addition to ethnography, I conducted interviews with 3 teachers and 20 families. The observations and interviews examined the following:

- 1) what kinds of learning strategies are necessary for success
- 2) how students and teachers view those strategies similarly or differently
- 3) how students develop their sense of what it takes to be successful
- 4) how students make sense of interactions with and messages from their teachers
- 5) how teachers interact with, assess, and evaluate students on the basis of their skills
- 6) how these interactions vary by race and SES

Key Findings

Ultimately, I find that there are differences in the way that students “do school” that tend to fall primarily along socioeconomic lines, though teachers do not respond to the way that students “do school” equally by race. Specifically, SES corresponds to students’ ability to decode inexplicit teacher instructions as well as the kind of knowledge that they exhibit in the classroom. Higher-SES students decode and demonstrate academic instruction and

knowledge much better than lower-SES students, who most ably demonstrate procedural knowledge (i.e. knowledge of classroom rules). I find that these differences exist because higher-SES students are coached by their parents in the academic skills teachers require, and lower-SES parents either do not have the knowledge to coach their children in these same skills, or they are limited by other structural constraints (e.g. they have to work two jobs and do not have time to coach children after school) to effectively pass their skills and knowledge on to their children. At the same time, while teachers spend the majority of their day offering curricular instruction, their instruction is more explicit for procedure and classroom rules than it is for academic content. When academic instruction is vague or unclear, higher-SES students can draw on their outside knowledge to make sense of their academic work, while lower-SES students are left behind. I argue that the ability to decode and demonstrate academic instruction and knowledge is a previously unidentified form of cultural capital that benefits higher-SES students. While it is not new for higher-SES students to be privileged in the classroom, I find that this form of cultural capital may be more directly connected to achievement than affective characteristics commonly described as cultural capital, like senses of constraint or entitlement, comfort engaging with authority figures, or willingness to ask for help (Lareau 2003; Calarco 2011).

Contrary to what cultural capital theory would predict, however, I find that student race also matters for the way teachers engage with students. White, higher-SES students tend to be rewarded most by teachers, while black students, regardless of SES, tend to be disproportionately reprimanded. Additionally, regardless of SES background, the few Asian and Hispanic students I observed in these contexts tended to be disproportionately ignored

altogether (i.e. they were not regularly called on to participate nor consistently over-reprimanded).

This evidence points to three conclusions about cultural capital and teacher bias. First, it supports some researchers' contention that students of color have a harder time translating their cultural capital into classroom rewards because teachers may succumb to unconscious racial bias, even if they do not mean to do so (Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell 1999; Lewis-McCoy 2014; Lewis and Diamond 2015). Second, it suggests that teachers may evaluate students and their behavior unequally, though it is not clear from these data whether those evaluations lead to higher or lower student achievement. Third, in line with prior research, teacher interactions also seem to affect how students see themselves and engage with coursework (Rist 1977; Tyson 2003). With more teacher support and encouragement, some of the students I observed tended to be more engaged with school, liked to be there, and showed clear academic growth. When students did not appear to be supported, they seemed to withdraw, misbehave, and/or make less academic progress over the course of the year.

Finally, I find that cultural capital differences, as well as racialized teacher interaction with students, do not just directly impact students and their propensity for achievement. There are indirect consequences of cultural capital differences and teacher bias that may also have meaningful impacts on achievement. Specifically, I found that students' cultural capital and the positive or negative bias students face from teachers facilitates their construction of segregated peer networks. While peer segregation is not new, the connection that I draw between segregation, cultural capital, teacher bias, and achievement is. Specifically, I find that students who are most educationally advantaged tend to hoard knowledge of how to be academically successful within their friendship groups, while students who need to benefit

from such knowledge are divested of those resources. This likely *reinforces*, rather than creates, achievement gaps and could further impact how students “do school” throughout their school careers. Together, all of these findings challenge the notion that cultural capital *or* teacher bias explain racial achievement gaps and instead suggest that both matter and even impact one another in students’ early learning experiences.

Summary and Outline of Dissertation

In sum, while education may be necessary for social mobility and opportunity, differences in achievement make social mobility and opportunity more possible for some than others. Because these differences fall along racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines, it is critical to understand why and how achievement gaps emerge and grow in the earliest stages of student education. Student learning behaviors and work habits have been identified as key factors in explaining some of the achievement gap. However, it has been less clear up to this point exactly what kinds of learning behaviors matter for student success and why they might be patterned by race and ethnicity. This dissertation therefore asks what it takes to “do school” successfully, whether and how race corresponds to “doing school,” and why.

Because cultural capital and teacher bias are two frameworks that may explain how race could be connected to “doing school,” I provide a theoretical review of both frameworks in Chapter Two. I discuss the recent work in each area, the limitations of each literature, and how this dissertation addresses those limitations.

Chapter Three describes how I conducted this study. I introduce Foxcroft and Cumberland Elementary, the two racially and socioeconomically diverse schools I selected for this study. I also describe the teachers, students, and families I observed and interviewed. Finally, I discuss interview and ethnographic methods, my role as a participant observer, and

my analysis process.

Chapter Four describes the first key finding—that SES corresponds to differences in “doing school” with respect to the kind of knowledge that students regularly demonstrate in the classroom. I describe how, regardless of race, lower SES students learn and demonstrate procedural knowledge better than academic skills, whereas higher SES students demonstrate their academic skills more than procedural knowledge. I situate this discussion in the cultural capital framework and ultimately argue that class-based patterns in demonstration of knowledge are different forms of cultural capital that are more or less advantageous for academic achievement.

Chapter Five describes the second key finding, that teachers disproportionately privileged the voices of white higher-SES students over those of higher-SES students of color, white lower-SES students, and lower-SES students of color. While teachers did this to varying degrees, most seemed to privilege white, higher SES voices over others by calling on them more frequently and inviting their ideas and opinions. Aside from showing evidence of bias in calling on students, some teachers showed evidence of bias toward and against students by disproportionately reprimanding particular groups over others. Specifically, some teachers reprimanded black students (regardless of SES or actual misbehavior) more frequently and/or more harshly than students of other racial/ethnic groups. Additionally, all the teachers I observed tended to ignore Hispanic, and to a lesser extent Asian, students altogether. Like other recent scholars of bias in desirable suburban schools, I find that teachers do not interact with students in racialized ways because of overt or malicious intentions (Lewis-McCoy 2014; Lewis and Diamond 2015). Rather, well-meaning teachers seem to succumb to unconscious biases, and their interactions with students seem to impact

how students engage with school.

Chapter Six describes the last key finding, that the SES-patterned ways that students demonstrate knowledge (procedural vs. academic), along with racialized teacher-student interactions, impact student perceptions of one another, peer friendships, and shared knowledge about how to “do school.” I situate much of this chapter in the research on peer segregation and social capital and discuss these outcomes as a consequence of student cultural capital and teacher bias. Specifically, I argue that differences in the kinds of knowledge students demonstrate, along with positive and negative teacher interactions with students, create opportunities for students to identify shared characteristics with one another. The peer networks that emerge from these shared characteristics tend to be segregated by race and SES because race and SES are so connected to cultural capital differences and biased teacher interactions. As time progresses, I suspect that more privileged students will continue to influence one another and share cultural resources that are rewarded in schools, while less privileged students will fail to benefit from those same resources.

Finally, the Conclusion summarizes the study’s key findings and considers more broadly what these findings mean for the perpetuation of racial and socioeconomic inequality in schools, particularly for such young students attending schools that appear to be of excellent quality. I offer suggestions for how educators might address some of these inequalities and offer directions for future research. While the inequality that students bring with them to school may never be fully erased, schools can and ought to do more to reduce these disparities so that students can have as equal an opportunity to be academically successful as we believe they should.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW TEACHER BIAS, CULTURAL CAPITAL, AND RACIALIZED STUDENT BEHAVIOR

The racial achievement gap is one of the most long-standing educational inequalities, and recent research suggests that group differences in student behavior may help explain it (Farkas et al 1990; Shouse et. al. 1992; Rau & Durand 2000; Carbonaro 2005; Kelly 2008; Kelly 2008; Lleras 2008; Domina et. al 2011; Georges, Brooks-Gunn, and Malone 2012). Specifically, Asian and white students are found to be better “classroom citizens,” work harder, and behave better in class than black and Hispanic students (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey 1998; Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell 1999; Carbonaro 2005; Harris & Robinson 2007; Lleras 2008; Kelly 2008). In other words, race seems to matter for how students “do school.” At least, this appears to be true when student behavior is measured from the teacher perspective. Why would there be such differences in the way students “do school,” and how or why might this help explain the achievement gap? Theory suggests two reasons why: *teacher bias* and *cultural capital*.

Teacher Bias

Given the history of race relations in the United States, it would not be surprising to find that teachers rate black and Hispanic students more negatively than white and Asian students,² leading to biased estimations of student behavior. Though in recent decades many

² Though Asians in the U.S. have also had a history of negative treatment based on stereotypes, since the publication of two articles in 1966 (one in the *New York Times Magazine* and one in the *US News & World Report*), Asians in the U.S. have been depicted

have learned not to openly discuss their true feelings about particular groups (often for fear of being labeled “racist”) (Bonilla-Silva 2006), surveys and interviews reveal that people still harbor racial stereotypes and animosity and make judgments of others based on race (Dovidio and Gaertner 1998; Casteel 1998; Herring 2002; Bonilla-Silva 2006; McKown and Weinstein 2008; Pager and Shepherd 2008; Hannon, DeFina, and Bruch 2013).

The construction and understanding of race and the attributes associated with particular groups is a social process. Perceptions of racial groups may be learned from parents and other influential adults, constructed or “concluded” based on personal experience and interactions with peers, and o/r shaped by other social forces, like media (Van Ausdale and Feagin 2001). Media, from commercials and TV shows to print articles and advertising, are particularly important in constructing race because they make racial stereotypes ubiquitous (Dirks and Mueller 2012; Littlefield 2012; Merskin 2012). This in turn normalizes the “reality” of those stereotypes.

The consequences can be very real and very harmful for non-whites. For example, studies show that men and women of color often receive worse treatment in restaurants and stores (Feagin and Sikes 1994), are discriminated against in housing and labor markets (Pager 2003; Turner et al 2002), and have fewer returns to education credentials (Bowen and Bok 1998; Gaddis 2014). Even when individuals claim that they themselves are not prejudiced, the pervasiveness of these representations can unconsciously color the lens through which individuals view and even treat others (Quillian 2008). Teachers are no

as “model minorities,” who have successfully overcome immigrant hardships and achieved success. In fact, Asians have achieved near to full parity with whites in enough outcomes, that some ask whether Asians have “become white” (Zhou 2003).

exception to these processes; conscious or unconscious biases can affect the way they rate students' behaviors.

Some research indicates precisely this--that students' race affects teachers' assessments of students' classroom behavior (Baron, Tom, and Cooper 1985; Alexander, Entwisle, & Thompson 1987; Deyhle 1995; Ferguson 1998; Ferguson 2000; Downey & Pribesh 2004; Morris 2005; McKown & Weinstein 2008; Lewis and Diamond 2015). For example, Ferguson (2000) finds that black middle school boys are suspended, detained, and punished in-class more frequently than white boys who exhibit the same behavior. By high school, black and Hispanic students tend to be selected more for punishment than white students (Lewis and Diamond 2015). Further, because of teachers' symbolic associations between race, behavior, and punishment, black and Hispanic students face different "processing" of punishment (white students can assert innocence and lessen or be relieved of the punishment altogether) or may be targeted for punishment for exhibiting a non-white cultural style (in terms of dress or hair, for example) (Lewis and Diamond 2015). Though some find that teachers do not hold racial bias against students once student achievement and other background characteristics are controlled (Madon et al 1998; Farkas 2003), others find that teachers are biased in their assessments of students--particularly, that teachers hold white and Asian students in higher regard than black and Hispanic students (Alexander, Entwisle, and Thompson 1987; Valenzuela 1999; Downey & Pribesh 2004; Lee 2009).

Some argue that white teachers are the primary culprits of racial bias. Downey and Pribesh (2004) find that teachers' evaluations of student behavior are partially accounted for by student-teacher racial matching. In other words, black teachers are likely to rate black students more favorably than white teachers are, so any general negative "effect" of being

black on teacher assessment of behavior could easily be a function of the high percentage of white teachers in the profession.³ These results were consistent across two cohorts of students, suggesting that no matter the age of the student, white teachers are more likely to rate black students' behaviors lower than black teachers are.

Other evidence, however, suggests that teacher class might be more important than race in predicting teacher bias. For example, some find that teachers from higher class backgrounds, regardless of race, tend to rate black students less favorably (Alexander, Entwisle, and Thompson, 1987). Additionally, when students themselves are perceived as middle class, they are often characterized as "good" students, whereas "bad" students are often thought to come from lower class backgrounds (Anyon, 1981; Morris, 2005). This is not to say, though, that class is unrelated to race or the bias associated with it. In Morris' (2005) study of students in a racially and socioeconomically diverse junior high school, black teachers from lower class backgrounds characterized white students as "middle class" and extraordinarily bright, whereas white teachers from higher class backgrounds characterized the same white students as "trailer trash" and not particularly smart. Taken together, evidence from these studies suggests that black students' propensities for lower teacher ratings might be driven by teachers' class or status backgrounds rather than their racial ones, per se.

Teacher bias is not always negative, however. Asian youth, for example, are often beneficiaries of positive bias as "model minorities." The model minority stereotype is driven by the perspective that East Asian minorities are paragons of American immigrant work ethic, values, and achievement ideology. Stacey Lee's (2009) ethnographic study of a highly populated Asian and Asian American school reveals not only the heterogeneity of the Asian

³ White teachers account for approximately 80% of all teachers (National Center for Education Statistics 2008).

population (as well as heterogeneous approaches to learning), but the homogeneity of the lens through which teachers view Asian students. White respondents (students and teachers alike) in her book cannot seem to tell the difference between unique sub-populations of Asians and Asian Americans in the school, but because of the positive stereotypes that are associated with being Asian, most Asian and Asian American students benefit from the stereotype. For example, one teacher admits that even when some Asian students seem to not perform well, the teacher gives them a boost in their grade because they are so respectful, attentive, and well-behaved in class. Quantitative research confirms this trend; a study of teacher and student assessments of hard work reveal that even when Asian students do not think they work hard, teachers think Asian students do work hard, regardless of their test scores (Kozlowski 2015).

It is important to note that bias may not always come from intentional, overt, or even conscious prejudice. In recent years, it has become increasingly popular to claim “not to see race” or to be “colorblind” (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Gallagher 2003). This means that people claim not to think about or treat people differently on the basis of race and that any outcome that favors whites or disadvantages people of color is the result of other characteristics instead. This perspective is adopted by teachers, too, especially in predominantly white schools that do not regularly contend with, teach about, or discuss race (Lewis 2003). However, even when teachers claim not to see race or have the best intentions for racial equality, their interactions with students and families are anything but “colorblind” (Lewis 2003; Lewis and Diamond 2015). Educators sometimes ignore racialized interactions that occur between students, harbor resentment at incorporations of multiculturalism into their curriculum, disproportionately target students of color for violations of dress code or

behavior, or make inaccurate assumptions about student academic ability because of unconscious racial stereotypes (Lewis 2003; Lewis and Diamond 2015). Teachers do these things even when they do not mean to do so (Lewis and Diamond 2015). It is not hard to imagine that these unconscious biases could affect teachers' evaluations of student work or achievement.

In sum, what appears to be racialized differences in achievement could actually be the effect of teachers unfairly judging student achievement due to conscious or unconscious stereotypes. However, this could only be true when examining racialized differences in grades, where teachers exert control over the final outcome. Racial differences in standardized test scores, an outcome teachers do not completely control, cannot clearly be attributed to stereotype-induced evaluations. To understand how and why biased teachers might impact student achievement—even standardized tests—we must turn to social psychological processes that affect how students view their own academic ability and worth. When students perceive others' opinions of them (positive or negative), they tend to internalize those messages, and it affects their engagement and behavior.

In particular, how students engage with school is in large part determined by students' expectations for their own success or failure (Dweck and Repucci 1973; Eccles, 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 1992; Wigfield, 1994; Fredricks & Eccles, 2002; Jacobs, Hyatt, Osgood, Eccles, & Wigfield, 2002). Social psychologist Carol Dweck and her colleagues (1973; 1975) find that students can learn academic “helplessness” when they are conditioned to expect failure at school-related tasks. In their experiment, one adult gave participants solvable block puzzles and another gave them insolvable ones. Many participants continued to fail at the puzzles given to them by the “insolvable” puzzle administer, even when they

were given puzzles they had previously solved with the “solvable” administer. These findings suggest that students can learn to associate particular types of tasks, people, or environments with debilitating failure.

However, not all students become conditioned to failure. What Dweck and Repucci (1973) found is that the students who learn to expect failure have one of two characteristics: either they a) attribute their failings to outside circumstances (i.e., it is the teacher’s fault or the problem is impossible) or b) they think their achievement abilities are fixed and unalterable (i.e., “I’m not smart enough” rather than “I didn’t work hard enough”). These findings suggest that students’ ability to be successful in the face of academic challenge hinges on the belief that persistence and effort can overcome difficulty and that “intelligence” is something that can be developed. However, as Dweck (1975:675) notes, since students who learn academic helplessness “tend to attribute failure to lack of ability, they would be less likely to respond to failure with increased effort or perseverance.”

If teachers are biased toward or against particular students on the basis of race, students will perceive and internalize this bias in similar ways to the students who learn academic helplessness. Racial patterns of student achievement tend to match the differing expectation levels of their teachers (McKown and Weinstein 2008), and not because teachers always predict student potential accurately. When teachers have high or low expectations of students, they interact with students in subtle ways that signal to the student whether they are “smart” or not (for example, by grouping all the “smart” students together at one table and grouping all the “less smart” students together at a different table, or by reprimanding some groups of students more than others) (Rist 19; Ferguson 2000). Students then come to understand how teachers perceive them, internalize those messages to the point that they

believe them, and engage with their schoolwork and those around them accordingly (Rist 1977). In other words, student achievement becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that reflects the expectations of teachers (Brophy and Good 1970; Weinstein and Middlestadt 1979; Darley and Fazio 1980; Ferguson 1998). Further, this process is particularly salient for stigmatized students, like students of color and those of lower-socioeconomic background, because stigmatized students tend to be more concerned with pleasing teachers than nonstigmatized students are (Ferguson 1998). Stigmatized students should therefore respond even more dramatically to unconscious or conscious teacher bias. In sum, biased teachers would impact considerably how students of different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic background “do school.”

Limitations of Current Teacher Bias Research

However, there are several problems with much of our understanding of teacher bias in classrooms. First, teacher bias is hard to see and hard to measure, particularly in quantitative studies that try to establish baseline patterns of teacher bias in education. These studies often use teacher background characteristics (i.e., race, class) as proxies for being biased or not biased (Alexander, Entwisle, and Thompson 1987; Downey and Pribesh 2004), but proxies like these mask heterogeneity in degrees and types of biases. Qualitative or experimental work tends to be more helpful in determining whether and how teacher bias matters for students.

Yet, the qualitative and experimental studies that offer the best evidence for teacher bias in classrooms are also limited. They draw heavily on black-white differences, both in terms of student and teacher race (i.e., how white teachers perceive black and white students versus how black teachers perceive black and white students). With growing immigrant and

non-immigrant Asian and Latino student populations, it is important to understand how teachers are perceiving and engaging with diverse groups of students. Therefore, research must be expanded to include educational spaces that are both racially and socioeconomically diverse, which would provide an excellent laboratory for understanding if and how teacher bias emerges in interactions with students of different racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds.

Additionally, many of the studies about teacher bias focus on interactions between middle or high school students and teachers. By middle or high school, students have already had at least five or six years' experience in schools, which means that their engagement with school could have been the result of previous years of cumulative perception and internalizing of teacher bias. In this case, if teachers had negative or positive perceptions of students, those perceptions may have been validated, which only continued to contribute to the problem. Therefore, research on teacher bias should pay particular attention to the early elementary school years, to uncover what unconscious teacher bias and interaction looks like in the beginning school years and provide clues for how later student engagement with school could also be affected.

Third, much of the compelling work on teacher bias is at least a generation (or two) removed from the contemporary educational environment, and now more than ever, teachers are exposed to training and professional development about the importance of multiculturalism and racial sensitivity in their classrooms. This study seeks to uncover the subtle interactions of teachers and students in contemporary classrooms to paint a more accurate picture of what racial bias can look like in progressive, contemporary classrooms.

Finally, the work on teacher bias seems to be unidirectional—teachers impact the student the bias is directed toward, or the target of the bias. However, as I will show in

Chapter 5, biased interactions, particularly when they are done in public, affect other students as well. Peers of those who are bias targets learn just as much about who is deemed smart or not from teacher-student interaction, and peers can complicate targets' process of internalizing perceptions and "doing" school. In sum, while our understanding of teacher bias in education is fairly established, this study adds more richness and complexity to the way teacher bias matters for diverse students, their peers, and how they "do school" early in their educational careers.

Cultural Capital

A second framework for understanding how different students might "do school" is the cultural capital framework. Cultural capital theory is a concept introduced by Pierre Bourdieu,⁴ and has come to suggest that people who share the culture of a group or institution will be more naturally familiar with the ways of interacting, behaving, dressing, talking, etc. that are accepted in that context. This matters for education because, as Lamont and Lareau (1988:155) note, schools and classrooms are not "socially neutral" institutions. Because the people who make the rules about what is acceptable or appropriate in school (i.e. administrators and teachers) tend to be members of higher social classes, schools and classrooms therefore reflect dominant class values, ideologies, experiences and perspectives

⁴ Though cultural capital has been defined and measured in different ways since Bourdieu introduced the concept (Bourdieu 1977 [1971]; Bourdieu and Passeron 1979 [1964], DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985; DeGraaf 1986; Ganzeboom, De Graaf, and Robert 1990; Katsillis and Rubinston 1990; Mohr and DiMaggio 1995; Kalmijn and Kraaykamp 1996; Aschaffenburg and Maas 1997; Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell 1999; De Graaf, De Graaf, and Kraaykamp 2000; Sullivan 2001; Dumais 2002; Eitle and Eitle 2002; Wildhagen 2009; Dumais & Ward 2010), I adopt Lareau and Weiniger's (2003: 569) definition, which "emphasizes micro-interactional processes whereby individuals' strategic use of knowledge, skills, and competence comes into contact with institutional standards of evaluation. These specialized skills are transmissible across generations, are subject to monopoly, and may yield advantages or 'profits.'"

of what is “normal.” However, students often have different understandings of what is “normal,” “appropriate,” or “necessary” for school because socialization into particular ways of thinking, acting, or interacting is different by social class (Lareau 2003). Children from dominant social class groups are socialized by their parents into middle class values, behaviors, ideologies, so these students come to school naturally familiarized with social and cultural cues that are consistent with what schools expect (Lamont and Lareau 1988; Lareau 2003; Calarco 2011). In short, these students might be said to have “cultural capital” required for the educational context. Working class and lower SES students, who are not socialized into these same ways of thinking, behaving, or interacting, do not have this same cultural capital (Lamont and Lareau 1988; Lareau 2003; Calarco 2011). Because ways of thinking, behaving, and interacting are all part of “doing school,” we can think about “doing school” as a form of cultural capital as well.

Having the cultural capital that is consistent with what schools expects is important, because it yields academic advantages for students (Lamont and Lareau 1988). Students who can demonstrate the cultural competencies required for school tend to be rewarded with higher evaluations, grades, and achievement; students who are unable to demonstrate these cultural competencies tend to be academically penalized (Lamont and Lareau 1988). Some may argue that academic reward or penalty should not be associated with students’ different cultural competencies because one of the primary purposes of schools is to equalize opportunity and socialize all students into responsible and appropriate citizens (Durkheim 1956; Gracey 1975; Brint, Contreras and Matthews 2001). In practice, however, this is rarely the case, because schools do not regularly make their expectations explicit (Dumais 2002), and when students are able to demonstrate the cultural competencies required by

schools, it is because they have learned those cultural skills at home through class-based socialization (Dumais 2002). Working class and poor students can and do try to acquire cultural capital, particularly from school (Lamont & Lareau 1988; Dumais 2002); however, to fully acquire it requires not only receiving the information, but internalizing it (Dumais 2002). Students without socially rewarded cultural capital can try to acquire it, but they will never achieve the “natural familiarity of those born to [dominant] classes,” and when students fail to meet their teachers’ inexplicit expectations, they are academically penalized for it (Lamont and Lareau 1988: 155). Yet few recognize that this is occurring in schools, because differences in achievement tend to be attributed to ability and not to cultural competency per se. So this transmission of class privilege becomes legitimized in schools (Lamont and Lareau 1988).

Even prior to the findings of this study, it was clear that some aspects of “doing school” may be patterned in classed ways; for example Annette Lareau (2003) finds that students from middle class homes are more comfortable with teachers and authority figures, participating in class, and using critical thinking and logic skills than are poor and working class students, a pattern that has been recently confirmed in research using nationally representative data (Bodovski & Farkas 2008). Similarly, Calarco (2011) finds that middle class students are more likely than poor/working class students to ask for help from the teacher or interrupt others to advocate for themselves. To the extent that teachers expect these behaviors as evidence of engagement or appropriate styles of learning, middle class students are inadvertently more rewarded in classrooms--perhaps allowed more to flourish, become more comfortable in classroom settings, believe they can be successful, or even increase their learning and achievement. Indeed, the following example from a first

generation college student suggests that there could be detrimental consequences to incorrectly or insufficiently interpreting teacher expectations:

I transferred from [community college], and chemistry is taught in a different way here [at the university]. And what I noticed the first time I went to the class, the teacher was nice, and I said I like this class. So I followed every single step, I tried to figure out what she wanted me to learn. I didn't know the tests were done on the basis of mathematical skills, because my experience is half and half--multiple choice and mathematical skills--so when I did the first quiz I almost failed because I didn't understand the way she put the questions. The way she taught the class was different than what I saw on the test. We went like that the whole term. *I thought I worked hard, and even though the exams were fair, I did not pass, and it was difficult for me to understand why.*" (Collier & Morgan 2008: 440-1) [emphasis mine]

Cultural capital theorists might argue that it was difficult for this student to understand why s/he did not pass because s/he did not have enough familiarity with the standards and rules of the university classroom--standards which were never made explicit by the instructor (Dumais 2002).

Others suggest that social class, at least in terms of what parents are doing to transmit cultural capital, might not matter for achievement as much as we thought. Harris and Robinson's (2014) recent book, *The Broken Compass*, examined 7 measures of parent involvement across six groups that presumably not only impact achievement, but vary by social class. Of those 42 estimates (seven measures by six groups), among them "talking about school experiences" and "helping with homework," only three had any positive impact on reading achievement for moderate to minimally educated families and only one had positive impact on math for minimally educated families. In fact, there are more negative and insignificant consequences of parental involvement on achievement for all of the class groups than positive ones, and this is true for multiple data sources as well. However, what quantitative studies like these miss is the micro-interactional process that differentiates cultural capital from families of higher and lower socioeconomic background. "Talking about

school experiences” or “helping with homework may look qualitatively different in higher and lower-SES families, so quantitative measures of doing or not doing these things may be missing important variation in socioeconomic cultural capital that leads to null effects.

Most research on cultural capital has studied why and how class cultures can matter for educational success; however, it is possible that similar processes might produce patterns of learning strategies, or “doing school” that are racialized in meaningful ways. One study by Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998) used data from NELS to assess racial differences in a number of school outcomes. They found that Asian students reported completing significantly more homework than whites, and African American students reported completing significantly less (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey 1998). Students’ rates of homework completion were consistent with how teachers rated students’ effort; that is, teachers rated Asian students as working harder than whites and black students as working less hard. Yet interestingly, and paradoxically, when the survey asked whether students thought they were trying hard, African American students, but not Asian students, claimed to be doing so at significantly higher rates than whites (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey 1998). What this study suggests is that there might be some learning strategy expectations mis/match between students and teachers on the basis of race or ethnicity in similar ways that expectations are mis/matched between students and teachers on the basis of class.

Recent evidence suggests that there indeed might be ethnic cultural explanations for mis/matches that mirror class-based cultural mis/match. A review by Brooks-Gunn and Markman (2005), for example, finds that black and Hispanic parents read and speak less to their children than white parents, which may lead to differing levels of verbal skill and overall school readiness in the skills that teachers reward. This is very similar to the findings

of Hart and Risley (1995), which makes the same argument about school readiness and verbal skill for children of low versus middle class families. Many researchers have examined the extent to which racial cultures exist and the effects they have on student outcomes (Matute-Bianchi 1986; Portes and Zhou 1993; Kao and Tienda 1995; Deyhle 1995; Boykin & Allen 1998; Kim 2002; Sankofa et al 2005; Lee 2009), and many of these studies do suggest that ethnic cultures matter for school outcomes.

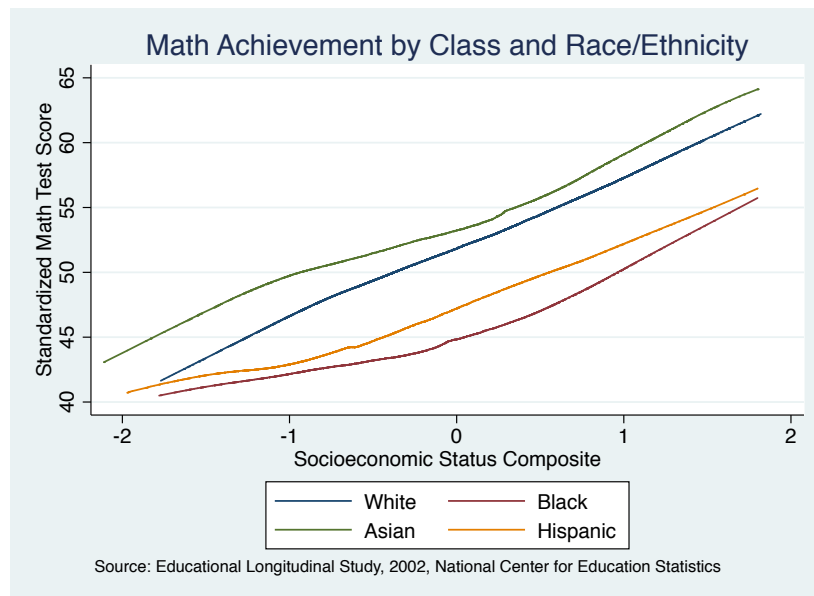
Limitations of the Current Research on Culture and Cultural Capital

Studies of the role of racial and ethnic “culture” tend to fall short of explaining racial achievement gaps because the role of racial and ethnic “culture” in students’ educational outcomes is still unsettled (O’Connor, Lewis, and Mueller 2007; Tyler et al 2008). This is particularly so because monolithic “cultural” explanations do not allow for the heterogeneity of racial and ethnic group members’ experiences (O’Connor, Lewis, and Mueller 2007). Additionally, researchers that have identified some of the most important mechanisms of cultural inequality reproduction have been limited in their contributions to racial and ethnic culture debates because many of these studies (Clark 1983; Hart and Risley 1995; Lareau 2003; Condrón 2009; Calarco 2011) examine class differences among whites or small samples of black-white comparisons only. This has allowed for little systematic investigation of racial or ethnic cultural capital differences outside of the black-white dichotomy. There are other growing populations of racial and ethnic groups that experience educational inequality in unexplained ways--some of which may be cultural--suggesting a need for research that comparatively examines more members of diverse racial and ethnic groups.

A second limitation of the current work on cultural capital is that studies cannot often account for racial achievement disparities because they often find no differences in cultural

capital on the basis of race, only social class (Lareau 2003). To the extent that many minorities are disproportionately represented in lower classes, this might help explain the lower achievement of some students of color. However, most nationally representative studies find an effect of race on the achievement gap that is significant and separate from class (Phillips, Crouse, and Ralph 1998; Duncan and Magnuson 2005; Yeung and Pfeiffer 2008; Condron 2009. Also, see Figure 4 below). Additionally, whereas class gaps tend to grow during the summer months, race gaps tend to grow during the year (Condron 2009). These findings could suggest that something is occurring inside classrooms for students of color that cannot be accounted for by class-based cultural capital.

Figure 4. Achievement Levels by Socioeconomic Status Scale, by Racial and Ethnic Group



Alternatively, these findings suggest that a more intersectional approach to thinking about race and socioeconomic status is needed among cultural capital theorists. It is well-

documented that the structural, economic experiences of families of color are markedly different from the structural, economic experiences of white families (on average) (Oliver and Shapiro 2006; Conley 1998, Pattillo-McCoy 1999). For example, “middle class” black families (typically defined in terms of occupation) have 1/13 of the wealth of white “middle class” families, which limits their ability to purchase homes in neighborhoods with desirable schools, limits their ability to save for college, and limits safeguards against health and other costly family emergencies. While earning “middle class” wages in some higher-status occupations (e.g. doctors, lawyers) may be enough to offset minimal wealth, many of the “middle class” occupations that people of color are concentrated in (e.g. nursing, teaching, government work) accrue far fewer wages (Kalleberg 2011). The economic precariousness of families of color makes comparisons across “average middle class families” by race nearly impossible. This study offers an examination of “doing” school that pays attention to both race and socioeconomic status to determine if and how these characteristics are associated with specific behaviors that do or do not align with institutional requirements of educational success--the kinds of behaviors that do or do not provide institutionally-rewarded cultural capital.

As with studies in teacher bias, a third limitation of the work on cultural capital is that it examines the educational experiences and outcomes of pre-teens and adolescents (DiMaggio and Mohr 1995; Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell 1999; de Graaf et al 2000; Dumais 2002; Carter 2006; Collier and Morgan 2008). However, we know that achievement gaps exist prior to the start of kindergarten and grow the most in the school years up to seventh grade (Fryer and Levitt 2004; 2006; Duncan and Magnuson 2005; Yeung and Pfeiffer 2008). By high school, achievement gaps tend to reflect cumulative skills lost over

the course of previous years. To explore how cultural capital may contribute to achievement gaps early in students' educational experiences, we need studies that examine these processes among elementary school students.

A fourth limitation of current work in cultural capital is that few studies extend analysis of the role of students' cultural toolkits into the classroom. While scholars like Clark (1983) and Lareau (2003) help us see how parenting practices may advantage or disadvantage students as they engage with institutions, these studies stop short of examining exactly how students engage their toolkits in the classroom itself--how they approach class assignments and problems, how they engage with their teachers and peers, how teachers assess and evaluate them--in short, how students are able to turn their cultural capital into achievement outcomes through the evaluative lens of the teacher (O'Connor, Hill, and Robinson 2009).⁵

Fifth, though many cultural capital studies identify variations in students' cultural toolkits, few studies of cultural capital account for variation in teachers' cultural toolkits. In cultural capital studies, teachers are represented as agents of one unidimensional "middle class hegemony," (Farkas et al 1990; Lareau 2003); however, variation in teachers' backgrounds and their commitment to culturally-sensitive learning not only exists, but affects the achievement and engagement of students from non-dominant cultures (Ladson-Billings 1994). To the extent that schools are more or less composed of such teachers, there might be important variations in cultural-institutional standards for success that could affect achievement.

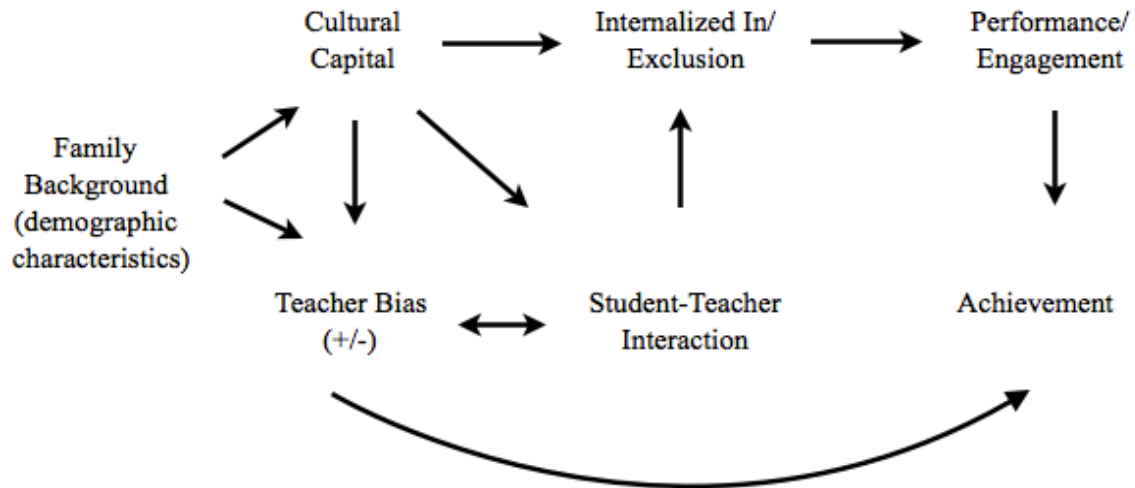
⁵ While Calarco (2011) examines these processes in her recent study, her focus is on social class differences among white students.

Finally, cultural capital studies tend to gloss over the role of teacher bias. Variation in teacher backgrounds might not only produce differences in institutional standards for success, but it might also produce different biases toward and against particular students. Generally, teachers who have higher status backgrounds tend to have a harder time relating to students of lower status backgrounds, which seems to affect their assessments of and interactions with those students (Alexander, Entwisle, and Thompson 1987; Ferguson 2000; Downey and Pribesh 2004). For example, Downey and Pribesh (2004:277) find that white, but not black, teachers rate black students as “poorer classroom citizens” than white students, which they attribute to white teachers failing to “appreciate[e] black students’ unique cultural style” or to unsuccessful classroom motivation strategies. Additionally, when students perceive teacher bias, they seem to internalize it in ways that might be counterproductive to achievement (Dweck and Repucci 1973). Since teachers are the gatekeepers to students’ success, it is important to understand how teachers’ perceptions, biases, and expectations affect students’ classroom engagement and strategies for learning.

The Relationship Between Cultural Capital and Teacher Bias

Each of these mechanisms--teacher bias and cultural capital--could explain why students’ learning behaviors are patterned by race/ethnicity, but it is important to note that I think of these mechanisms as neither mutually exclusive nor contradictory (See Figure 5, below).

Figure 5. Conceptual Model of Cultural Capital, Teacher Bias, and Its Impacts



Cultural capital directly impacts the skills that students bring with them to school, which then directly affects academic performance and achievement (Lamont and Lareau 1988). At the same time, cultural capital affects the way teachers perceive and treat students. Teachers can develop positive or negative opinions of students on the basis of the skills they bring with them to school (Rist 1977; Lamont and Lareau 1988). Teachers then interact with students in accordance with those opinions, which can signal to students how included or excluded from the educational setting they are (Lamont and Lareau 1988; Rist 1977). Students begin to understand whether teachers perceive them as capable or not, which then affects how the students engage with school. Engagement responses may vary; for example, some students without educationally-valued cultural capital may adjust their expectations and behavior on the assumption of failure (Bourdieu and Passeron 1964). Others may try to work twice as hard (Bourdieu and Passeron 1964). Regardless, teachers' interactions with students affect

their performance and engagement (or in other words, “doing school”), which then impacts achievement.

The Study

This dissertation examines whether and how cultural capital and/or teacher bias explain racialized patterns of how students “do school” in contemporary elementary schools. I spent nine months observing four racially diverse first grade classrooms at two schools—Foxcroft Elementary and Cumberland Elementary—each of which was located in a different school district. In addition to ethnography, I conducted interviews with 3 teachers and 20 families to learn what kinds of learning strategies are necessary for success, how similarly or differently students and teachers view those strategies, how students come to understand what it takes to be successful, how students make sense of interactions with and messages from their teachers, how teachers interact with, assess, and evaluate students on the basis of their skills, and how these interactions vary by race.

This study fills a number of gaps in the cultural capital and teacher bias literatures. First, by focusing on first graders, I am able to discern how cultural capital differences and teacher bias contribute to unequal educational experiences and outcomes at an early stage of schooling when achievement gaps grow the most. First grade students are particularly well-suited to a study of “doing school” because they are young enough that patterns of behavior, feelings toward school, and perceptions of ability--all factors that might contribute to achievement--are still developing. Additionally, according to developmental psychologists, first graders (ages 6-7) begin to become particularly excited about “process” and “hard work” at their age (Wood 2007), which suggests that they are likely experimenting with different

strategies for accomplishing educational tasks. Additionally, students at this age are also becoming attuned to patterns of inequality, including those regarding race (Wood 2007).

Second, Foxcroft and Cumberland Elementary are both racially and socioeconomically diverse, which means that they provide an excellent laboratory for understanding if and how cultural capital differences and teacher bias exist in the learning experiences of students who are not only black and white, but Hispanic, Latino, Middle Eastern, Asian, native, and immigrant—all in the same educational space.

Third, few studies of either cultural capital or teacher bias follow teachers with diverse backgrounds. At Foxcroft and Cumberland, the teachers and teaching assistants I observed are black, white, and Middle Eastern. They also range from decades of experience to novice. Observing and interviewing this group of teachers adds some complexity and variation to the “hegemonic” white, middle class profession often depicted by researchers (Farkas et al 1990).

Fourth, by focusing on classroom interactions and processes, I can examine the banal, everyday behaviors, interaction, and strategies that comprise students’ cultural toolkits and teachers’ evaluation of them, which is a needed addition to the cultural capital literature in particular.

Finally, observations of classroom interactions between not only teachers and students, but between students themselves, allow us to see how cultural capital differences and teacher bias affect students directly as well as indirectly. Students are not only directly impacted by teacher bias and/or cultural capital similarities and differences with teachers; because these processes occur in public classroom spaces, students’ relationships with other students are impacted by teacher bias and cultural capital mis/match as well.

Key Findings

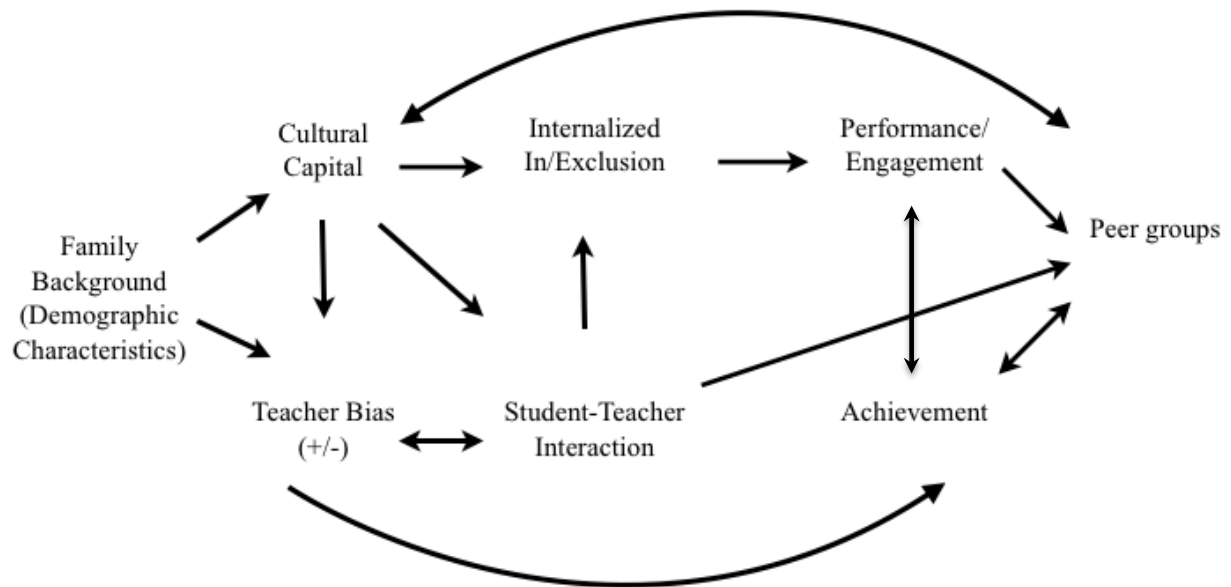
There are three key findings that emerged from this study. First, I find that regardless of race, lower SES students learn and demonstrate knowledge of classroom rules, or “procedural knowledge,” better than academic skills. Higher SES students demonstrate their academic skills more than procedural knowledge. I argue that these are different forms of cultural capital that are differently rewarded in the classroom. While teachers value and appreciate students’ ability to demonstrate both forms of knowledge, demonstrating academic skills translates more directly to academic achievement than demonstration of procedural knowledge. SES differences in these skill sets occur because (1) lower-SES students come to school with fewer academic skills than higher-SES peers and (2) teachers give less explicit and continuous instruction for academic tasks than for classroom rules and behavior.

Cultural capital researchers often suggest that SES trumps race when it comes to structural characteristics that can matter for engagement with school. While I found that SES did indeed seem to produce more common patterns of “doing school” among students than race or ethnicity did, my second key finding is that despite teachers’ best intentions to create unbiased learning environments, the teachers I observed disproportionately privileged the voices of white higher-SES students over those of higher-SES students of color, white lower-SES students, and lower-SES students of color. At the same time, some teachers disproportionately reprimanded black students (regardless of SES or actual misbehavior) and reprimanded them more harshly than students of other racial/ethnic groups. This suggests that in racially diverse contexts, some higher-SES students of color may have a harder time translating their cultural capital into favorable teacher evaluation; conversely, lower-SES

white students can benefit from their racial privilege.

Finally, I found consequences of students' cultural capital differences and interactions with biased teachers beyond direct influence on students' concept of self and school engagement. (See Figure 6, below.)

Figure 6. Cultural Capital, Teacher Bias, and Peer Relationships



Because much student-teacher interaction occurs not in private conversation, but in public instructional settings where other students can see and interpret the interaction, teachers seem to have much influence over how students perceive one another. Additionally, the kinds of skills students bring with them to the classroom (i.e. their cultural capital) also seem to impact how students perceive one another, even as early as first grade. The combination of SES-based differences in student cultural capital, along with race-based teacher interactions, combine to affect which students are likely to become friends with one another. And these friendship networks are very often segregated along SES, racial, and/or ethnic lines. When peers are segregated like this, the cultural capital these groups have about how to “do school”

successfully becomes shared primarily with those who are most similar to them already. For the more advantaged peer networks, advantageous knowledge about how to “do school” successfully begets even more academic advantages for members of those groups. For less-advantaged peer networks, less-advantageous knowledge of how to “do school” successfully continues to reproduce academic disadvantages. In other words, learning how to “do school” successfully is not just about students’ individual process of translating skills they learn at home into rewards from teachers. It is also a social process that involves sharing knowledge and skills between friendship groups as well.

I base these findings on my observations and interviews with teachers, students, and families at Foxcroft and Cumberland Elementary—two racially diverse schools in North Carolina. The next chapter introduces Foxcroft and Cumberland Elementary, as well as the teachers, students, and families I interviewed and observed. I also describe my role as a researcher in these communities and the methods I used to inform these findings.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

CLASSROOMS AND COMMUNITIES OF FOXCROFT AND CUMBERLAND ELEMENTARY

This study examines how young students learn how to “do school,” and how those processes correspond to students’ socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. To do this, I conducted an ethnography of students and teachers in four first grade classrooms over the course of an academic year (from September 2013 to April 2014). I observed one classroom at Cumberland Elementary, a school in a small urban district, and three classrooms at Foxcroft Elementary, which is a magnet school in a larger urban district.

I selected two different school districts because I wanted to see if patterns of “doing school” were common across different districts and schools. While Cumberland and Foxcroft might both be considered “desirable” schools in their respective districts, each school is demographically and organizationally different. This allows me to see whether patterns identified in one space are unique to that school or classroom, or whether there are common characteristics or interactions that occur across those different educational spaces.

Cumberland Elementary

Cumberland Elementary is located in a small, wealthy urban school district. There are about 12,000 students who attend school in the district, many of whom come from comfortable economic backgrounds. About 54 percent of families in the district have an income of \$100,000 or more, and about three-quarters of the adult population have a bachelor’s degree or higher. The neighborhoods near Cumberland feature large, stylish new

constructions tucked away in wooded lots valued at upwards of half a million to three quarters of a million dollars or more. Despite the amount of advantage in the district, there is still a considerable amount of disadvantage as well. Eleven percent of families live below the poverty level, and communities filled with dilapidated trailer parks line major thoroughfares just miles away from secluded, wealthy neighborhoods. The students at Cumberland reflect this socioeconomic dynamic as well, with about 18 percent of their students qualifying for free or reduced priced lunch.

While the majority of students in the school are socioeconomically homogeneous, Cumberland is racially diverse. White students comprise 45 percent of the school's population, Black students 12 percent, Hispanic students 7 percent, Asian students 31 percent, and Multiracial students 6 percent. The classroom I observed (Ms. Jennifer's class) reflects this ethnic diversity as well. The ethnic diversity of the school was something that several parents from Ms. Jennifer's class noticed, though opinions about what that diversity meant for their children varied. For some of the parents, ethnic diversity was something that they specifically sought for their children, though one white parent preferred Cumberland to another nearby school because it was still majority white. Another white parent in the classroom was skeptical of the diversity in the school and felt that it reflected an overall "liberal" approach to education with which she was not particularly comfortable.

The school itself is nestled in a wooded lot at the edge of town, its remote seclusion belying its urbanicity. The narrow, speed-bumped parking lot forces drivers into a slow, one-way traffic pattern that allows for ease and safety when parents drop off or pick up their kids from school. Signs for seasonal events such as the Book Fair, Bingo Night, and 5Ks to raise

money for the school, are often positioned along the grass that separates the academic buildings from the parking lot.

The school is most accurately described as a campus, consisting of several architecturally mismatched buildings. In front are the portable classrooms built to look like log cabins. Located directly behind the portables is a picnic area for the students to eat lunch or do school activities on warm, sunny days. Next to the picnic area, a covered walkway, which is painted with the handprints of children, attaches the portables to the central brick building which houses the main office and cafeteria. One would know this is where the office is located by the large sign that says “Office” in English, Spanish, and about six other languages--many of them East Asian, indicated by the characters. To get inside the office requires ringing a doorbell. The locked doors can only be unlatched by a staff member with an electronic keycard or by the administrative assistant inside.

Inside the office is a small foyer with a computer that visitors must sign into before being allowed access to any other part of the building. The “identity-checking” computer software that manages those who come in and out of the school appears to intend to both systematically track the number of and reasons for visitors and prevent offenders of child-related crimes from entering the building. It is used in schools throughout North Carolina as the primary check-in system for visitors. The feeling of being policed by the computer software is juxtaposed completely with the surroundings of the office foyer, which is covered, floor to ceiling, in hand-painted murals of green grassy meadows, pastel-colored flowers, green trees, blue sky, and the animals that might live in those various habitats.

Right next to the covered walkway that leads from the portables to the office is a “critter corner,” where chickens, rabbits, goats, and ducks are sheltered outdoors. It is not

uncommon to hear the rooster crowing early in the morning as students and visitors arrive for the day. Care for the “critter corner,” including purchasing animal food, feeding the animals, sweeping the coops and small barns, and removing the animal waste, is organized almost entirely by the Parent Teacher Association at the school.

Behind the office building are three separate buildings. One is the library and media center, a small one-story building that opens to a basketball court on one side and a playground on the other. Another, the largest building on campus, includes the gymnasium/auditorium and the majority of the school’s classrooms. Inside, the building feels sterile and clinical with its white walls and white vinyl flooring opening to long, narrow hallways. The third and final building on Cumberland’s campus is the first grade building.

There are four first grade classrooms inside, but only one interior wall separates the building, leaving two classrooms on either side of the wall open to one another. One can enter Ms. Jennifer’s room directly from the outdoors, the glass door serving as one of the three primary windows to the outside from the classroom.

Inside, visitors are met with an abundance of color and things to observe. The bright yellow walls are covered in posters, calendars, and student art. There are stacks of papers and folders atop various tables. Shelves with tubs of Legos, blocks, miniature animals, art supplies, and paper line every open wall. The room reflects Ms. Jennifer’s bright, vivacious personality. Ms. Jennifer is a short, white woman in her early 30s whose voice carries an energy, confidence, and firmness that commands respect from those who are listening; yet her warm southern charm makes those she is speaking with feel like a friend. She talks fast and animatedly, not lingering long on any one person or conversation. She often does something else, like pat a student on the back, walk from one side of the room to another, or

pull a resource from her computer, all while continuing to make eye contact and listen to what is happening directly in front of her. Her mind often seems to be in four or five different places at once, and the organized chaos of her classroom reflects this aspect of her personality.

The room itself is compartmentalized into different spaces that are used for different activities. To the right is a small “library” whose bookshelves serve as a barrier between Ms. Jennifer’s space and the classroom next door. The books are organized into small plastic tubs by themes such as “Nature,” “Friends and Feelings,” “Animals,” “Holidays and Seasons,” and “Poems” within each shelf. Other tubs of supplies, like scales, cubes, dominoes, and vocabulary cards are housed there as well. Atop each bookshelf, books are displayed vertically, similar to the way they are often displayed in public libraries. Some of the books on display in this classroom include *Sesame Street*, *The Colors of Us*, *Something Beautiful*, *Dear Dr. Rosenweld*, *Together*, *What Can I Be?*, and *All the Colors of the Earth*. Several of these books have covers with multiple characters of different ethnicities. *Something Beautiful*, for example, features an image of a young black girl, and *All the Colors of the Earth* seems to be Native-American themed. Inside this library space also lays a multicolored carpet, which features large squares in rows of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple, along with the different letters of the alphabet. This carpet is the only soft floor space in the room, which is otherwise hard and cold from the vinyl tile.

Behind the library is a row of four desktop computers, which Ms. Jennifer and the teacher next door, Ms. Helen, share. However, these desktops are rarely used by the students in either class, as Ms. Jennifer prefers the students use laptops or iPads (there are about four

of these that students share). Instead, the table that holds the desktops serves as another space to pile papers, folders, and snacks.

At the front of the room is a small amphitheater-like space with rows of steps that dip down into a small platform. This is what Ms. Jennifer refers to as “home base.” The students spend much of their time at home base, sitting on the hard steps in their designated “spots” when Ms. Jennifer is giving a lesson. Ms. Jennifer, when she teaches, sits on a stool in the “stage” area of the “amphitheater.” A flip-chart stands to her left, which she commonly uses to illustrate the lesson. Behind where Ms. Jennifer sits is a white board for using magic markers. The board also serves as a projection screen on which Ms. Jennifer projects videos, websites, and images from her Mac laptop.

When the students are not sitting in home base, they are sitting at their tables, which are spread throughout much of the open space in the classroom. There are five tables, four of them circles and one of them long and rectangular. Each table is named after a color and a shape so that students may be sitting at the “yellow triangle” or “blue parallelogram” table, for example. In the middle of each table is a supply caddy, which includes items like pencils, colored pencils, crayons, scissors, and glue sticks to share. The shared supplied caddies are reflective of a philosophy that Ms. Jennifer once told me Cumberland adopts: “First School.” First School, she says, is an idea about how resources available in a school for students aged pre-K through second grade correlates with students’ later achievement outcomes. First Schools attempt to eliminate inequities between students by providing supplies for them instead of requiring students to bring their own.

There are two additional tables in the classroom that are not used primarily by the students. The first is a table positioned near the “computer lab” and back edge of home base.

This table is reserved for Ms. LaToya, who is Ms. Jennifer's teaching assistant. Ms. LaToya is a large black woman with a big crooked smile and soft voice. Because of her size, she lumbers slowly throughout the room. Her slowness in pace is matched by her slowness in speech, always speaking in a soft deliberate way that by comparison to Ms. Jennifer's energetic projection, is more muted. Her disheveled piles of papers and folders are often sitting on the table, waiting to be graded, passed out, or copied.

The other table sits in the corner, next to a wall of cubbies where students hang their coats, backpacks, and lunch boxes in the morning. The table is shaped like a wide U so that Ms. Jennifer can sit in the middle and work with students sitting on the outside edge. Besides using this space to work on her own computer and paperwork, Ms. Jennifer regularly uses this space to assess students or work with them individually when they need help or removal from other distractions. Like Ms. LaToya's table, Ms. Jennifer's is always full of papers, notebooks, folders, and supplies. A clothesline hangs above her table as well, where students' work and art are displayed with clothespins.

The classroom also has its own bathroom (one toilet, unisex), sink, microwave, and drinking fountain. Students regularly go to the bathroom, get a drink of water, or grab a tissue when needed. There is a special signal that students are required to use (one finger up in the air) specifically when they need to get up to go to the bathroom during non-allowed times. According to a poster with the rules of "bathroom times," students are only supposed to get up for water or bathroom breaks during independent working activity time, between activities, at lunch, at recess, during "quiet" times, and emergencies. However, more often than not, students tend to go when they want.

In general, Cumberland feels like a school that adopts progressive educational philosophies and practices. From the “critter corner,” to shared classroom spaces, to attention to resource equality, Cumberland’s approach to education feels quite different from what I remember of my own elementary school experience. (I remember having to buy my own school supplies, sitting in individual desks, having no extra teacher assistant, and coveting the rare classroom with a pet frog or fish.) Whether one finds Cumberland’s approach familiar or not, though, they seem to be positioned as a quality school, where facilities, resources, teachers, and practice are all committed to providing the most equitable, research-based, and desirable educational experience any parent could want for their children.

Foxcroft Elementary

Foxcroft Elementary shares many of the same qualities as Cumberland, at least in terms of educational desirability, if not in geography, organization, and programming. Foxcroft is located in a large urban school district that is comparable to an average American city. Old, historic homes surround some sections of the immediate business district, but in other pockets of the city, housing projects and dilapidated convenience stores line the streets. Suburban sprawl has led to newer neighborhood developments as well, but not all of the district’s wooded lands have been cleared for these new constructions. In terms of income and education, families in the city fare better than the average family, with median family incomes reaching about \$69,000 per year and about 44 percent of the adult population holding at least a bachelor’s degree. However, the 12 percent of families living in poverty is comparable to the national family poverty average.

Students at Foxcroft came from a variety of backgrounds. About 30 percent of students qualify for free or reduced price lunch and represent the typical image of poverty.

For example, when going to recess one day, one first grade girl (Jayla) saw me put on my gloves and longingly wished for a pair herself. She said that she did not have gloves, but that at home, her mom would put socks on her hands to keep them warm. She shared that her winter coat was donated to her by a “Foxcroft pal,” a person assigned to her by the school to provide clothing and other resources when she needed them. While several students in Jayla’s class came from social backgrounds that mirrored hers, other students came from *vastly* different backgrounds. For example, one girl named Ellie, who was in the same class as Jayla, was the granddaughter of a prominent political figure in the state. She once told me when we went on a field trip to a museum that not only had she been there before, but she had also gotten to cut the ribbon at the ceremony officially opening it. Other children of prominent politicians and local celebrities also attended the school as first graders. The socioeconomic diversity of Foxcroft cannot be understated, and given that many schools in the country tend to recruit students from local neighborhoods where students come from more similar backgrounds, Foxcroft’s wide variation in socioeconomic diversity makes the school a rather unique place.

Foxcroft’s diversity can be attributed in part to it being a magnet school with an international focus. As a magnet school, this means that like any other school in the district, students can be and are assigned to Foxcroft. According to the district’s magnet office, about 60 percent of the students who attend the school are assigned there, and 40 percent of the school’s population are magnet students. Racially, white students comprise 54 percent of the school’s population, black students 24 percent, Hispanic students 10 percent, Asian students 6 percent, and Multiracial students 7 percent. However, because of the school’s international focus, there is considerable ethnic diversity at Foxcroft as well, particularly among white

students. In one class I observed, for example, four phenotypically white students had at least one parent from a different country, including Hungary, Spain, Egypt, and Cuba. Like its socioeconomic diversity, Foxcroft's racial and ethnic diversity is not typical for most schools (Logan, Minca, and Adar 2012).

Among all three first grade classes at Foxcroft, I observed a total of about 55 students regularly. About 35 of those students were white (64 percent), 13 were Black (24 percent), 5 were Hispanic (9 percent), 0 were Asian, and 3 were Multiracial (5 percent). The racial diversity of each classroom was fairly comparable, with no classroom having a vastly disproportionate number of students. However, it seemed that there were far more white ethnic students assigned to Mrs. Miller's class compared to the other two I observed. Why this was the case is unclear, though school assignment is determined to some extent by parents. Parents cannot request specific teachers for their students, but administrators ask parents to fill out a personality form for their children, explaining what type of learner the child is and what kind of teaching and learning environment their child best responds to. It is possible that parents of the white ethnic children shared characteristics of their children as learners that were most compatible with Mrs. Miller, or it is possible that the administrator felt these children (or their families) would fare better working with Mrs. Miller for other reasons. For example, many of those children had older parents who may have been more responsive to an older, more experienced teacher such as Mrs. Miller, rather than the other young, new teachers who taught first grade.

Foxcroft itself is located on a busy city street within walking distance of the city's business district and several wealthy urban neighborhoods. It is an old, red brick building built in the 1920s that towers over the streets carved out of the hill upon which Foxcroft was

built. A large concrete staircase with black metal rails leads up to double doors, completing the image of an iconic, old urban school. While from the street it would seem the main entrance is this set of double doors, most people enter the school from the back, where the parking lot and handicapped-accessible ramps are built. The parking lot is very small, with room for perhaps the teachers and a few visitors to park. So as to not take up spaces for teachers and parents, I regularly parked along the side street that wraps around the large, gated playground and grassy area where the older children play and where outdoor activities and events for the school take place.

Entering the building from the back requires walking above the extensive garden that is built on the ground below. The garden is a bit overgrown and features green plants indigenous to the South as well as a few decorative flowers and herbs. The Parent-Teacher Association is responsible for cleaning, weeding, and maintaining the garden, and while there is no trash or clutter built up along the base of the beds, there are enough weeds that it is hard to tell which plants are intentional and which plants are not.

Entering the building, visitors are met with an old, musty, yet sweet, smell. Aside from the window next to the back door, there is very little natural light, making it hard to tell whether the walls are painted a bland white or light gray. The dinginess of the building is offset by students' colorful artwork hung outside teachers' doors as well as the flags of different countries hanging from the ceiling. Like at Cumberland, all visitors are required to check in at the front office, though unlike Cumberland, there is no digitized system for doing so.

There are four first grade classrooms at Foxcroft. Three of the classes are full sized, with approximately 20 or so students, and those classes occupy regular classrooms located on

the first, or basement, floor of the building. A fourth class was added to accommodate, according to one parent, an unanticipated overflow of students who had shown up for kindergarten the previous year. This “overflow” classroom consists of 12 students and is housed in a converted storage closet on the same floor. I observed in two of the regular-sized classrooms weekly, and very occasionally in the overflow classroom.

The two regular classrooms (and most classrooms in general at this school) are equipped with Smart Boards, which are interactive white boards that can essentially act as a giant computer or tablet screen. When connected to a laptop, the Smart Board can display Word documents or PowerPoint slides like a computer, but like a tablet, touching the screen allows teachers and students to edit what is on the screen with their fingers or styluses. One can, for instance, copy a word, letter, or graphic icon and drag that item to another part of the screen. Students can play interactive games on the Smart Board. For example, students can drag different sized weights onto two sides of a balancing scale and see how different combinations of weights make the scale heavier and lighter on either side. The Smart Boards can also display web pages, so teachers and students can go directly to a source and demonstrate navigating the site or play a clip on YouTube, for example. In addition to Smart Boards’ ability to be connected to laptops, Smart Boards can also be connected to document scanners, which essentially project a magnified image of a worksheet or small object onto the screen for all to see.

In the two regular classrooms, Smart Boards are the central feature of the room. The overflow classroom is not equipped with Smart Board technology, so the teacher tends to use a dry erase white board and other kinds of interactive activities instead. Space is cleared or a rug is laid on the already-carpeted floor in front of the Smart or white Board in all three

classrooms so that when lessons are conducted with the whole group, there is a soft place for the students to sit and see. Each classroom also has a “library,” or a small shelf or two of books ranging in reading skill level from picture books to chapter books. Students often select books from this classroom library to read during independent reading time in class. Finally, most of the classrooms have a small computer station with about four desktop computers that students often use to play interactive reading and math games.

Like at Cumberland, students are organized into tables of approximately three to four students each. In two of the three classrooms, tables are named after different countries of the world so as to be consistent with the international theme. Students are assigned seats by the teachers, though each teacher’s process for assigning seats is a bit different. Whereas one teacher allows the students to pick their own seats, encouraging them to think about who they work well with and who distracts them from doing their best learning, another teacher strategically assigns students to tables to create diversity in gender, race/ethnicity, and achievement level.

The rest of each classroom is decorated according to the personality of the teacher. Mrs. Miller is a white, athletic-looking woman in her late fifties or early sixties and has been teaching for 26 years. She was even a finalist for a highly prestigious state teaching award. She is soft-spoken but stern and regularly talks to the students in the same calm and intentional tone that she does with adult colleagues. One of her signature teaching practices, she says, is to use “conscientious” thinking and choices, which means that in the morning she asks students to work on one goal for the day, such as sharing, respecting others, or listening, and reminds students to be aware of that goal throughout the day. This philosophy is apparent

in some of the messages that are always written on the side wall white board, such as “Remember your goals” and “It is OK to make mistakes.”

Mrs. Miller always appears organized and calm most of the time, even when under stress. There is little clutter throughout the room, and there are few attempts to be “cute” in décor or activity. There are a few posters, a schedule of the day, and a “your job, my job” chart posted on various walls of the room. Students’ jobs include listening, following directions, keeping hands and feet to self, share, be nice, help, learn, do your best. Teachers’ jobs include listening, keeping students’ safe, sharing, helping, learning, teaching, being nice, and following directions. Each activity, such as reading or writing, is printed on a laminated card and affixed with a magnet so that the order of the daily activities, which are lined up vertically on the front wall, can be changed. A typical daily schedule in Mrs. Miller’s class looks something like this: Morning Meeting 9:15-9:30, Reader’s Workshop 9:30-10:30, Writer’s Workshop 10:30-11:15, Recess 11:15-11:45, Lunch 11:50-12:15, 12:25-12:40 Read Aloud, 12:45-1:40 Math Workshop, 1:40-3:00 Languages and Electives, 3:00-3:25 WISE (group-level reading and math time), 3:30-3:40 Pack up, snack, afternoon meeting.

Mrs. Miller has an assistant, Mrs. Stevenson, in the room with her a majority of the day. Teaching assistants are largely responsible for materials preparation and assist the teacher in any way possible. This might include offering extra guidance or help to students, sending messages to other teachers or administrators, walking a student up to the office, or disciplining when a student is misbehaving. Mrs. Stevenson is a tall, thin white woman likely in her late fifties or early sixties. While generally very friendly with adults, Mrs. Stevenson is very strict with students. She is quick to snap or scowl at them when she is not pleased with

what they are doing. However, when asked about how they perceive her, students generally say that they like Mrs. Stevenson.

Ms. Janwari is a 23-year-old first year teacher. She is from Pakistan and wears traditional Muslim dress, including a scarf over her hair. Ms. Janwari is energetic and easily excited. She is nearly always smiling or laughing and only ceases to do so when she is trying to maintain control of her classroom. She is a bit more disorganized and flustered than some of the other teachers, as she regularly admits to not being able to find materials in her class or knowing what she is going to do for the next activity or lesson. Ms. Janwari recognizes that she has not done as much as she would like to do with the students this year. For example, she never got around to naming the tables for countries as the other first grade teachers did. However, she maintains optimism that she will have more comfort in the position next year.

One thing that makes Ms. Janwari's room unique is a small "cozy corner" near the doorway in the back of the room. The cozy corner almost resembles a child's fort that has been constructed with bookshelves and desks. Walls on three and a half sides barricade those inside and provide a quiet, "safe" place for students to sit and get away when feeling overwhelmed. There is about enough space in the cozy corner for one or two first grade students.

Ms. Janwari has had some bad luck in maintaining a regular teaching assistant in her class. At the beginning of the year, Ms. Janwari said that Foxcroft had not yet hired a teaching assistant for her, though by the time I started conducting regular observations of her class about six weeks into school, Mrs. Cooper was the regular teaching assistant. Mrs. Cooper is a white, medium-build woman in her late 30s who has a calm and soft-spoken demeanor. She is organized and creative. Many of her activities often have an element of

“cuteness” to them befitting of first grade. For example, Mrs. Cooper was in charge of a math activity on Halloween. She created six stations of Halloween-themed lessons, one of which involved counting buttons shaped like bats (which she had purchased specifically for this activity).

Mrs. Cooper was Ms. Janwari’s teaching assistant until December, when she took over the small classroom for another teacher who had quit mid-year. Ms. Janwari was left without an assistant for much of the third quarter until Foxcroft hired Ms. Martin, a large black woman in her twenties, to finish the rest of the year with Ms. Janwari. Ms. Martin had only been working a few weeks, however, when she slipped on some wet stairs at the school and shattered her ankle. She had to have surgery and was out for much of the rest of the year, leaving Ms. Janwari alone to manage her class once again.

While I regularly observed in Mrs. Miller and Ms. Janwari’s classes throughout the school year, I also occasionally observed in the small overflow classroom of 12 students. Mrs. Diaz started the year teaching this class of students. A large phenotypically white woman in her late fifties or early sixties with a thick Brooklyn accent, she described herself once to me as a “nut” that liked to work “outside the box” with her students. I was only able to observe her teaching once or twice before she announced that she would be leaving after Thanksgiving. While she may have been more specific about her reasons for leaving with her other colleagues, she never told me why she was leaving, beyond “personal reasons.”

Mrs. Cooper replaced Mrs. Diaz for the rest of the year. Mrs. Cooper brought much of her “cute” and creative personality to the classroom. Unique to Mrs. Cooper’s classroom is an abundance of hand-drawn posters. Though Mrs. Cooper claims to have no artistic talent herself, Mrs. Cooper’s husband is an artist, and he drew all of the posters in the room. Some

of the most prominent posters displayed diagrams of the science organisms they had been studying (millipedes, pill bugs, guppies). There were also other hand-drawn posters, such as one of “Superdog,” a fictional creature created to tell the students what kind of strategies they might use when they come to a tricky word in their reading. Mrs. Cooper’s class also seemed to do a lot of art-like activities, such as making murals of terrariums, cityscapes, or even shape sculptures with various-shaped foods (i.e. marshmallow is a cylinder, graham cracker is a rectangle).

Doing Ethnography

I went to one classroom per day and observed for 1-3 hours at a time. I observed during “academic” instructional time to focus on students’ learning habits and the interaction between students and teachers during these periods. However, I sometimes observed the first graders during elective periods like music class, lunch, recess, and special programs or activities. I also volunteered to help with the talent show and twice served as a field trip chaperone at Foxcroft.

When I was observing in school, I sat among the students (on the floor, at their tables) as if I were one of them. At first, students had a hard time understanding my role. They seemed uncomfortable calling me just “Kari” as I had introduced myself, so they called me “Miss Kari” instead. They asked me if I was a teacher or a parent. I told them I was neither, and this seemed to baffle some of them. Why would I be there, then? I told them I was interested in watching them learn, and some of the students grew very excited to show me what they were doing. Many of the girls grew very attached to me, in fact. They would often vie for a seat next to me when we went to lunch or when the whole class was required to come to the floor for an activity. Some girls (and a few of the boys) would try to sit in my

lap, hang on my arms and legs, or play with my hair and clothes. While some girls' affinity for me persisted throughout the school year, eventually I became a more "natural" part of the classroom environment, and the students more easily ignored my presence.

I tried hard to not be seen as an authority figure so students would act as "naturally" around me as they would around their peers, rather than putting on the "good behavior" they might perform for a teacher or other adult authority. I did not reprimand students when they were off-task or misbehaving. I talked with them and asked questions as if they were my friends. When I wanted to know something about classroom rules or procedure, I would ask the students in "we" language, like "What do we do when someone gets locked out of the room?" In the beginning, I think this gave some of the boys license to test me. One day, two boys spent their entire writing time making fun of me. They made fun of my school, my stupidity, my name. It was amazing how much hurt first graders could cause in those moments. Some of the first graders actually even physically hurt me to test my limits. One boy took to hitting me. One time he thwacked my back so hard I actually lost my breath. Eventually all these antics stopped, though. I nonchalantly wrote the experiences in my notes and ignored the hitting enough that the boys seemed satisfied I would not tell on them.

Interviews and Participants

In addition to the ethnography, I also recruited volunteer teachers, students, and families to participate in interviews about how they view academic success and what it takes to be successful in school. Three teachers agreed to be interviewed (Mrs. Miller, Ms. Janwari, and Ms. Jennifer). To recruit family participants, I sent a recruitment form home with students after I had been in the schools for about four months. The form asked if they and their parents would be interested in participating in interviews about school habits and

strategies for success. Of the approximately 60 students I extended the interview opportunity to, about 25 families agreed to participate. Of those 25, I conducted 20 family interviews.⁶ (The remaining participants never returned my follow up calls or emails to schedule the interview.)

I surveyed these students' families, and I was able to ascertain detailed information about their socioeconomic status. In this study, socioeconomic status refers to one's economic position in relation to dominant, hegemonic class locations on the basis of education, occupation, income, and wealth. I refer to "hegemonic class locations" as those that come to be defined as "normal" or "average," so I define an individual's SES in relationship to what has become considered "normal" or "average" in terms of education, occupation, income, and wealth. In the U.S., four-year college degrees have become the average minimum educational standard required for entry into professional jobs that allow opportunity for social mobility (Brown 2001), so those students who are considered "higher-SES" in this study tend to have parents with at least a college degree or higher, and those who are considered "lower-SES" tend to have up to some college education, but no college degree.

Occupation is more difficult to define in terms of what might be considered "average," but researchers frequently cite a common divide between occupations that allow some authority and control over the content and process of work and those that do not allow such authority or control (Bowles and Gintis 1976; Lareau 2003; Calarco 2011). People who have control over the content and process of their own work activity can make decisions

⁶ Of the 20 family interviews, 13 mothers (only) participated, 1 father (only) participated, and 6 mothers and fathers (together) participated. Seventeen of the first graders also participated. In total, I talked with 26 parents, 17 children, and 3 teachers (46 total participants).

about new programs or initiatives, those who are hired or fired, or the tasks they busy themselves with, whereas people without that authority in their workplace submit to the directives of others who make those decisions for them. “Higher-SES” families therefore typically have at least one parent who works in an occupation that has some authority, while “lower-SES” families typically have at least one parent who works in an occupation that submits to authority.

The final two characteristics I use to determine relative SES in this study are income and wealth. As of 2014, the median family income in the U.S. was about \$53,000, and median household net worth was approximately \$68,000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2014). In this study, “higher-SES” families tend to have a combined income of at least or more than this median and have at least the median amount of wealth. “Lower-SES” families tend to have combined family incomes that are lower than the median and little, no, or even negative wealth.

My interview sample represents the overall sample of the classrooms that I observed. Fifteen of the families were what I call “higher-SES” white, Indian, and racially mixed families. Higher-SES students had at least one (usually both) parent with a college degree; often these students had parents with Master’s Degrees, JDs, PhDs, or the professional equivalent. These students’ combined family incomes ranged from \$85,000 a year to \$300,000 a year, which is above the median income for families in the area (\$58-\$60,000). Additionally, families had \$250,000 to half a million or more in assets, though some families (particularly children of doctors and lawyers) had hundreds of thousands of dollars in school loan debt as well. Home values for higher-SES students ranged from \$200,000 to upwards of

a million dollars—at to above the median value for homes in the area (\$229-\$263,000), and far above the median value of homes for the state in general (\$153,000).

Five students from my interview sample—all black and Hispanic—came from lower middle SES or lower-SES backgrounds. Lower-SES students had parents with a high school education or less, made \$1000-\$35,000 per year, worked in craft trades, labor, or clerical work, lived in apartment communities, and had wealth ranging from \$-5000 to \$5000. Two students in my interview sample were lower middle SES. One student's mother, while she did not have a college degree, was currently working on her Bachelor's Degree and did own her own home (valued at approximately \$120,000), though she reported no wealth. She also seemed to be raising her children herself; according to her son's teacher, the boy's dad was in prison. Another student's mother, while she did not own her own home, did have a college degree and worked as both a full time teacher and part-time bartender. She reported over \$50,000 in debt and \$15,000 in assets, leaving her with negative wealth. These students' backgrounds resemble what Newman and Chen (2007) call the "near poor" and represent the precarity of the "middle class" experience for families of color (Oliver and Shapiro 2006; Conley 1998). I generally refer to lower-middle SES and lower-SES students as "lower-SES" students because of their economic commonalities, as well as commonalities in how they "did school."

For the other 40 students who inform the analysis, I relied on less formal, but telling cues about their socioeconomic status. One student's family, for example, declined to be interviewed, but I knew that they lived in the same neighborhood as two other students I had interviewed (the parents and students I had interviewed confirmed it). The homes in that neighborhood were worth about \$300-\$400,000. On the basis of this information, I classified

that boy as “higher-SES.” Similarly, I classified other students based on their participation in the free and reduced price lunch program as well as subjective information such as the resources they possessed or their appearance. For example, one student ate free breakfast every morning before school and regularly wore tattered clothing. She also nonchalantly shared with me that she did not have crayons, scissors, or other craft supplies in her home, though she often wished for them. Her mother also forbade her from participating in the school’s “Boosterthon,” a fundraising campaign that many of the students’ parents contributed to. Every day her classmates shared a story about their parents contributing to the Boosterthon fund, she cried and complained to me that her mom would not let her participate, likely because she could not afford to pledge her income to the fundraiser. I used these cues to classify her as “lower-SES.” About five students were challenging to classify, so I relied on teacher interpretations of their socioeconomic conditions, which teachers ascertained based on knowledge of where the students lived, whether they regularly required school-provided meals and snacks, whether they received additional support through charitable school programs, or their own knowledge of parents’ economic resources or occupations.

With parent consent and student assent to participate, I conducted interviews with the student and at least one parent. As opposed to structured interviews, which follow a strict interview guide and allow little room for further development of participants’ ideas, interviews in this study were semi-structured, with open-ended questions that allowed for deeper explanations of participants’ perspectives as well as topics that I might not have anticipated being important or relevant to the research question (Foster 1996; Lofland et al

2006). With permission of the participants, I recorded interviews, which I then transcribed, to allow for more complete preservation of data and more specific, thorough analysis.

I asked the students questions about their definitions of success, their perceptions of their success in school, what they think it takes to be successful in school, and their perceptions of their teacher. Examples of questions include: “What do you think it means to be a ‘good’ student?”; “How did you learn what it means to be a good student?”; “How do you think the good students get good grades?”.

I asked parents questions about what they think success is, what is necessary to be successful in school, how they perceive their child’s efforts, and how they perceive their child’s teacher and school. Examples include questions such as “What are the standards of achievement that you have for your son/daughter?”; “What does it take for students to be successful in school?”; “Would you say your son/daughter is working hard in school, or putting forth his/her best efforts?”; and “What do you think about your son/daughter’s teacher/school?”.

Finally, I asked teachers what their expectations were for students; how they perceive success to be best attained in their classrooms; how they think they communicate those expectations; how they perceive and evaluate their students in terms of behavior, learning, achievement, and potential; and why they perceive their students in certain ways. Examples of questions include: “What do you look for from students in your classroom?” “What behaviors should they exhibit?”; What behaviors do you expect them to exhibit?” “What behaviors do you think are conducive to learning?”; “What behaviors are not conducive to learning?”; “What are your standards and scales of achievement?”; “How do you evaluate students? What criteria do you use?”; “What does it take to be successful in your class?”;

“Let’s talk about [one student who has agreed to be interviewed] in particular. What do you think about his/her performance in your class?” (For a complete interview guide for students, parents, and teachers, see the Appendix.)

All interviews were scheduled at families’ and teachers’ convenience between January and April 2014. Interviews were often conducted at families’ homes to ensure confidentiality and comfort. Because I was a stranger in these families’ homes, I did not specify whether interviews should be conducted separately (children separate from parents or vice versa) or together. Eleven families allowed me to interview their children without parent supervision, and for six families, I interviewed students and parents in the presence of one another. For two families, I interviewed parents alone, as scheduling challenges prohibited me from interviewing their children. One child declined to be interviewed once I arrived at his home, despite having parent permission. Students’ interviews typically lasted approximately 30 minutes, and adult interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 2 hours.

Analysis

While I was observing in the classrooms, I carried a notebook with me and wrote notes as quickly and as detailed as possible. When I returned home at the end of each day in the field, I typed much more detailed, chronological notes about my observations and experiences, using my notebook notes as an outline of sorts. Each hour in the field produced approximately 12-13 single-spaced pages of notes, and by the end of my observation period, I had approximately 2,000 pages of field notes. In addition to writing field notes, I (or a research assistant) also transcribed each interview. I then uploaded all the documents into Atlas ti analysis software, which I used to code thematically for patterns and themes about students’ approaches to learning and school. I began by coding for a variety of specific

behaviors, interactions, and characteristics (e.g. “student/individual/interaction/with teacher/asks a question”), and as parts of the story emerged over time,⁷ I consolidated my codes into more broad themes (e.g. “demonstrates competence” or “demonstrates procedure”). I then analyzed the text associated with some of the more frequently coded themes to look for patterns within them until the story became clear.

Inequality at Cumberland and Foxcroft

What I came to learn about Foxcroft and Cumberland through my interactions and experiences is that both schools had caring teachers and administrators, core groups of committed parents, clean and vibrant facilities, and an abundance of resources and programs available for families and students to enjoy their school community as well as gain extra support if needed. They represent the kinds of schools that many parents would strive for their children to attend. In fact, the year that I observed, Foxcroft was one of six magnet schools in the district to receive a “Magnet School of Distinction Award” by the Magnet Schools of America, an organization that bestows honors to schools for having high academic standards, “innovative” curriculum, and “successful desegregation and diversity efforts.” Foxcroft had received similar awards in the past, from 2010 to 2013 as well. Parents and students spoke highly of the schools. Personnel that I observed and interacted with were polite, engaged with parents and students, and genuinely seemed to care deeply for the education and well-being of their students. As an observer in these schools, I often felt welcome and comfortable, and was quickly embraced as part of the “natural” school community. I felt proud to be considered part of their community and would have been proud to send my own children there someday. In short, Cumberland and Foxcroft seemed to

⁷ It took approximately 8 months to code all of the data.

represent some of the most advantageous educational opportunities for students in the state of North Carolina, which many would imagine produces excellent outcomes for students in those schools. These are not the kinds of schools that would, on the surface, exude racial or socioeconomic inequality. In fact, L’Heureux Lewis-McCoy (2014) calls these kinds of schools the “promised land,” a reference for suburban schools that are highly desired by parents and assumed to provide the best quality education for their students.

However, Lewis-McCoy (2014) notes that for students of color inside these desirable schools, the “promised land” may not be so promising after all. Similarly, at Foxcroft and Cumberland, publically available school data suggests that inequality certainly exists. During the 2012-2013 school year (the year before I observed), achievement disparities by social groups were clear. At Foxcroft, the percentage of white students who passed both the reading and math standardized tests was 72%--an overwhelming majority. Yet, only 22% of black students and only 11% of Hispanic students passed this same test. Among Foxcroft students who were economically advantaged, 67% passed their standardized tests. Among those who were economically disadvantaged, only 14% passed. These are marked differences that cannot be ignored in a school like Foxcroft, which is well-regarded for quality education. The same patterns emerged for students at Cumberland, where nearly 80% of white students and 84% of Asian students pass their math and reading tests, but only 15% of black students and 38% of Hispanic students do. For students who are economically advantaged, 82% pass their tests, but only 17% of economically disadvantaged students do. Why would there be such differences?

As the rest of this research will uncover, these differences seem to derive in part from the unequal skills and resources that students bring with them to school (which is based

largely on socioeconomic status differences) and how they grow due to virtually invisible, but unequal, teacher and peer interactions inside the classroom (which is based on both socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity). Unequal teacher and peer interactions do not occur out of malice or overt prejudice, but often, as Amanda Lewis and John Diamond (2015) write, “despite the best intentions” of progressive, well-meaning educators. Teachers want their students to learn and be successful, but sometimes good intentions are undermined by interactions that position white students and white cultural norms above others (Tyson 2003; Lewis and Diamond 2015). I explore these themes more in Chapter 5.

In the next chapter, I describe the first of three key findings that could help explain why achievement inequality exists at Foxcroft and Cumberland. Specifically, I focus on how SES shapes a previously unidentified kind of cultural capital that has direct implications for achievement disparities: demonstrating academic (versus procedural) knowledge and decoding (or not) teacher instructions.

CHAPTER 4: INEQUALITY AT THE STARTING GATE
HOW AND WHY STUDENT SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS MATTERS FOR
DEMONSTRATING KNOWLEDGE AND DECODING INSTRUCTIONS

It was late morning in Mrs. Miller's class, and students were working on writing assignments. I positioned myself at the table of Tyrone (lower middle SES black boy), Sergio (higher SES white Hispanic boy), and Maricella (lower SES non-white Hispanic girl). The students had been talking and laughing together as they wrote their "small moment" stories. On this particular September day, students in Mrs. Miller's class were trying to figure out my role, so the students at the table asked me why I was in their classroom. I told them I was watching them learn. Within a few seconds, Maricella then tells me that they (the students) are supposed to "respect property, respect others, respect yourself... That's what Mrs. Miller does." Maricella's perception of Mrs. Miller telling the students to follow this school motto is correct; the students are regularly reminded to follow the "Foxcroft Way" in Mrs. Miller's and others' classrooms. After another 10 minutes of watching the students, Maricella turned to me as she reached for another blank sheet of paper. She shares that "if you put one finger in the air it means be quiet, if you put two fingers in the air, it means you have to go to the bathroom, and if you put three fingers in the air, it means you need to get water."

Over the course of about 15 minutes watching this table, Maricella twice did something that many of the lower SES students regularly did when they communicated with me, the teacher, and their peers: she demonstrated her knowledge of *classroom rules and procedure*.

This chapter explores one aspect of how students do school, specifically what they learn and how they demonstrate that knowledge. Regardless of racial background, less affluent students seem to learn the rules of the classroom better than they learn academic skills. They also tend to demonstrate their knowledge of classroom procedure regularly, as Maricella had done on that September morning. As will be shown below, though, more affluent students were better able to demonstrate *academic knowledge* in spite of how explicit or detailed teachers' academic instructions were. These patterns seem to be connected to the fact that (1) teachers give less explicit and continuous instruction for academic tasks than for procedural rules and behavior and (2) more affluent students often had prior knowledge, experience, or parent coaching they could draw upon to complete their academic tasks. I argue that this has important implications for group differences in achievement. Lower SES students are less likely to begin school equipped with the reading and other academic skills of their more affluent peers. To the degree that higher-SES students seem to understand their teachers' inexplicit instructions, teachers may continue to assume that "typical" first graders should be able to execute the tasks as they present them. This leaves lower-SES students, who have less outside-of-school experience to draw upon, to flounder or improve at much slower rates, leaving them overall more negatively impacted by a lack of clear and detailed academic instruction.

* * *

Every morning in Mrs. Miller's class, students work on a math problem that is projected onto the Smart Board. She calls this activity "math talk," and it is meant to allow students time to practice the math lessons from the week. Mrs. Miller rarely, if ever, directs students' attention to the math problem, does not read it to them, or explain how to do it. She

simply leaves it on the screen for the students to try and solve on their own or in groups before they officially begin the day. Later in the afternoon, Mrs. Miller goes over these math problems with the whole class so the students can understand how to solve it.

I arrived in Mrs. Miller's class one afternoon just as students were settling into their tables. Mrs. Miller pulled up the main screen on the Smart Board. There are three dots on the screen and the following text: "I see [three dots]. The answer is 9. How many are hidden? ___ + ___ = ___ & ___ - ___ = ___."


For students to be able to solve this problem, they would have to first, be able to read all the words in the problem, and second, be familiar enough with the language of the problem to understand what Mrs. Miller was asking. I deduced that the "answer" Mrs. Miller was referring to in the problem must have been the number after the equals sign, but a student could be fairly confused about what the "answer" to the question was since they already read that the "answer" was 9. Students would also need to understand that the 3 and the 9 in the word problem must be related to the blank spaces in the equations and that by virtue of making those spaces blank, Mrs. Miller was asking the students to fill in the missing numbers.

Mrs. Miller first called on Travis, a higher SES white boy who had been raising his hand, to answer the question. He correctly responds "6." Mrs. Miller asks how Travis knew the answer. He tells her, "once I knew that 6 plus 3 equals 9, so I switched it to 3 plus 6." Mrs. Miller asks more students how they figured out the answer, and Preston, another white higher SES boy, volunteered to show the class how he solved the problem. Preston came up to the Smart Board and drew nine circles side by side. He drew a line between third and

fourth circles, and explained that he counted after the third line and got six. This is a strategy the students had learned for solving similar problems similar six weeks earlier in class.

Mrs. Miller continued with her explanation, “The point of this is that 3 and 9 were in the equation already. My mystery number is 6. Some of you might want to write it like this.” She draws three boxes on the board, one with a 9 in it, one with a 3, and one with a “?” in it. The boxes are positioned like a triangle, lines connecting each box. This must have been another strategy Mrs. Miller had recently taught the students for solving math problems like these, though from this demonstration, it is unclear how it is any more effective at leading students to the answer than Travis and Preston’s suggestions. Mrs. Miller then asks who can reverse the equation. She calls on Olivia, a white higher-SES girl who had been raising her hand. Olivia quickly writes $9-3=6$ on the board. Neither Olivia nor Mrs. Miller offer commentary, visual clarification, or explanation for why this equation would be the correct answer to the problem.

Mrs. Miller then told the students that she was going to give them another sheet of paper with another mystery number problem on it so they could practice further. She told the students that the answer was “just like” the problem they had been doing on the board. “You’re going to have the same thing,” Mrs. Miller says, “a plus, which means add, and a minus, which means subtract. Work with your table mates, get the counters if you need them.” She shows the paper on the Smart Board. It looks something like this:

I see  **9 Total Counters**

How many total counters are there? _____

How many do you see? _____

How many are hidden? _____

Show your work:

Like the original math talk problem, Mrs. Miller offers very little instruction. She does not read the problem to the students, does not explain how or why to use “counters” for solving it, nor even refer back to some of the other strategies students had previously used. Her instructions are vague and seem to not clearly connect to the text of the word problem itself. In short, students’ success in solving this problem hinges on their ability to decode Mrs. Miller’s inexplicit instructions for this activity.

My attention is pulled away to Maricella, a lower SES Hispanic girl, for the entire five minutes that the students are allotted to solve this problem. Maricella cannot read any of the directions or the questions that she is supposed to be solving. The first thing she asks me is what the “_____” spaces mean on the worksheet. I tell her that I think those spaces are where she is supposed to write her answer, though this was not clear in Mrs. Miller’s instructions. Then, she asks me what the word “many” is in the first question, “How many

total counters are there?” I have her sound it out because I want to remain consistent with the help strategies that teachers employ—asking students to try as much as they can on their own before telling them directly what to do. However, asking Maricella to sound out the words for herself takes a painstakingly long time, and it does not seem to help her arrive at the pronunciation of the word, so I end up telling her what it is. We repeat the same process with the word “total,” for which Maricella not only needs the pronunciation, but also the definition. Eventually I read the whole question for her, because we have spent almost half the time just trying to sound out a few words, let alone the remaining words in the problem or the content of the question.

Once she understands what the question is asking, I ask her if she knows the answer. She does not. I figured that I could start to lead her to the answer by trying to get her to see that the word “total” appears in another place on the worksheet. I ask Maricella if she sees the word “total” anywhere else on the paper, and she says she does not (despite the large, bold “**9 Total Counters**” right above the question.) So, I ask if she sees the word in different parts of the paper, starting with the upper left corner and making my way to the part of the page that actually does say the word “total.” Again, Maricella does not see that the “total” in the question is the same word as the “total” in the “given” equation information. However, she seems to come up with the idea that 6 is the correct answer for the question (which is not correct, as the answer is 9), and moves on to the next one. Perhaps she remembered that Mrs. Miller had said the new question would be “just like” the first one, and since the answer to the first one was 6, she incorrectly deduced that the answer to this one was also 6. However, we are running out of time to do the worksheet, so instead of belaboring my strategy, I see what she tries next. Again, she struggles with the words in the next question, which is “How

many counters do you see?” Knowing that it is going to take a long time for her to figure out this question as well, I read the question for her and again ask if she sees the word “see” anywhere else on the paper. She does not, so I point out that the word “see” is in the upper left corner, where the four dots are illustrated.

At this point, Mrs. Miller switches off the lights and tells the students that they should have had “more than enough time to finish.” Indeed, as I glance around the room at some of the other students’ papers, I can see that several have correctly answered the problem and used number lines (similar to what Preston had demonstrated earlier) to show how they arrived at the answer $4+5=9$, five being the mystery number for which they needed to solve.

This story demonstrates several common themes that I found while observing the three first grade classrooms. First, teachers can be fairly inexplicit with their academic instructions. We saw this in Mrs. Miller’s introduction of the problem, where without any extra instruction, she relied on students to be able to interpret for themselves what the math problem was and how to solve it. Even after she had gone over the correct answer with the whole class, the process for solving the problem remained inexplicit enough that students’ ability to replicate the process required accurate decoding of Mrs. Miller’s (and their peers’) instructions.

Second, it became clear that some students were able to figure out exactly what Mrs. Miller was asking in the math problem, even without explicit instruction from the teacher. Further, they were able to explain or demonstrate how they came up with the answer. The students who were most adept at this were mostly of higher socioeconomic status. However, when I observed Maricella, a lower-SES student, try to solve the similar problem, it became clear that she had not decoded the process as the more affluent students had. Maricella’s

lower reading ability meant that she had a hard time understanding what the words in the problem were, let alone how those words formed a question that she was supposed to solve. Even with my help reading the problem, though, Maricella still seemed unable to decode Mrs. Miller's inexplicit instruction for how to solve it. This was surprising to me because I knew Maricella was good at math. In February of that year, Maricella was placed in the second-highest math ability group.⁸ There was no reason Maricella should have misunderstood the problem, but without clear, explicit guidance from the teacher, Maricella faltered. In short, she struggled to *decode her teacher's academic instructions* and, without the prior knowledge to draw on, was not able to demonstrate *academic knowledge*.

The findings in this chapter draw from my year-long ethnography of first grade classrooms at Foxcroft and Cumberland Elementary, as well as interviews with teachers, students, and their parents.⁹ It first describes the nature of different teacher expectations, starting with those pertaining to classroom rules. I then describe lower-SES students' propensity for demonstrating their procedural knowledge, connecting this propensity in part to the explicit nature of teachers' procedural instructions. I next outline the nature of teachers' academic instructions as well as higher-SES students' propensity for decoding those instructions and demonstrating academic knowledge. Finally, I describe socioeconomic differences in parent coaching that may explain how and why students demonstrate different

⁸ Starting in October, there were five math and reading ability groups that students were placed in. These ability groups met the last 30 minutes of the day for targeted activities and interventions at their academic level. Students were placed in their groups on the basis of standardized reading tests that the entire state of North Carolina uses for elementary grades. At the beginning of the year, math groups were placed on the basis of tests created by the teachers at Foxcroft, and later in the year, Common Core math assessments provided teachers with data to group students by ability. Tests were given to students somewhat regularly throughout the year (every few months), and when needed, students changed groups as well.

⁹ For more information on methods, Foxcroft, and Cumberland Elementary, see Chapter 3.

kinds of knowledge and skill in the classroom. I argue that the kind of knowledge that students demonstrate are different and previously unidentified forms of cultural capital that, like other researchers have found, are connected primarily to SES, are learned from parents, and are differentially rewarded by teachers.

Classroom Behavior and Following Rules—Explicit Instructions

At both Foxcroft and Cumberland Elementary, the teachers I observed cared about their students and wanted to be good teachers. As many experts (Gracey 1972; Garrett 2014) and anyone who has managed a large group of young people know, communicating instructions about how to be a safe, respectful, and structured classroom community is a key to effective classroom management. Learning how to become an appropriate classroom citizen is a fundamental lesson that students learn through the “hidden curriculum” of kindergarten and other early educational experiences (Gracey 1972). Like the first grade teachers at Foxcroft and Cumberland, teachers everywhere create rules for who can speak and how to signal desire for speaking to promote order and respect for others; additionally, by leading student activities and schedules, teachers establish themselves as authority figures who ought to be obeyed and paid attention to (Gracey 1972).

Teachers at Foxcroft and Cumberland therefore had certain behavioral expectations for their students, which they communicated fairly often, and in explicit terms. Teachers instructed students to listen when others (particularly the teacher, but also their classmates) were talking. They instructed students to walk quietly and slowly in the hallways. They also instructed students to use particular sets of signals to communicate to the teacher their needs or knowledge of classroom procedure. For example, at Cumberland, when Ms. Jennifer wanted the students to be quiet and actively demonstrate to her that they knew what to do,

students would raise two fingers in the air and put their index finger from their other hand over their lips. They called this signal “peace and quiet” and used it frequently when quieting themselves to await instructions from Ms. Jennifer. At Foxcroft, they used a similar set of signals for students to communicate their needs or understanding of behavior expectations. At Foxcroft, one finger in the air signaled that students knew to be quiet in the same way that “peace and quiet” did at Cumberland. Two fingers in the air signaled to the teacher that the student needed to go to the bathroom, and three fingers in the air signaled that the student wanted to get a drink of water (as Maricella had reminded me about in the first anecdote of this chapter).

Teachers were most explicit about these behavioral rules because they talked about classroom rules frequently, particularly at the beginning of the year. Teachers mentioned spending several weeks—from three to six full weeks, depending on the teacher—working to get students to understand and internalize these classroom rules. Teachers took this part of the year so seriously that I actually could not gain access to any classroom at Foxcroft or Cumberland until after the teachers felt comfortable that the students understood classroom rules and procedures.

In addition to spending time at the beginning of the year discussing these rules with the students, teachers emphasize classroom rules every day in some manner. Mrs. Miller, for example, constructed with the students a “your job, my job” chart, which was a list of student jobs and her job as the teacher. This list, which included things like “listen, follow directions, share, be nice, help, and do your best” for students and “keep students safe, share, help, be nice, and teach” for the teacher, was posted next to the window for the whole year as a reminder to the students about what they should be doing in the classroom. Additionally, in

each classroom I observed, students recited their school creeds after the Pledge of Allegiance. At Cumberland, the creed is: “Yes we *can* be respectful. Yes we *can* be responsible. Together, Cumberland *CAN!*” At Foxcroft, they have the “Foxcroft Way,” which consists of the following phrase: “Respect property, respect others, respect yourself.” A few of the teachers I observed also asked their students to recite supplemental classroom rules at the beginning of their day. Ms. Janwari asked her students to read their classroom’s five rules at the beginning of the day in part to help students practice reading and in part to reiterate classroom procedure. Her rules consisted of:

1. We will walk quietly in the hallways.
2. We will respect the teachers.
3. We will respect our friends.
4. We will use safe hands and safe feet everywhere!
5. We will HAVE FUN!!

When Ms. Janwari asked students to read these rules at the beginning of class, she also asked the students to provide an example of what it looked like to “respect teachers,” “respect our friends,” or “use safe hands and feet” to make the abstract ideas even more clear, tangible, and explicit.

Throughout the day as well, teachers regularly reminded students about classroom procedure. Ms. Jennifer reminded her students to walk quietly to home base, to “sit up straight and tall” while they were there, and to listen and respect others while the teacher or their peers were talking. Ms. Janwari reminded students constantly to “respect” her or their peers when students began talking too loudly in the classroom, and Mrs. Miller reminded students each morning and throughout the day to “make good choices,” especially when they were violating classroom procedure.

Demonstrating Knowledge of Classroom Rules and Procedure—Lower SES Students

In the classroom, there are many opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding of classroom rules and procedures. To the extent that students follow classroom rules or signal to the teacher either verbally or nonverbally (by, for example, making the “peace and quiet” sign), students are communicating their understanding of classroom procedure. All students, regardless of their background, demonstrate this knowledge to the teacher fairly regularly. However, compared to their more affluent peers, students from lower SES backgrounds more frequently demonstrate knowledge of classroom rules and procedure relative to their knowledge of academic material.

The clearest way in which lower SES students regularly demonstrate their procedural knowledge is by making the “peace and quiet” sign when teachers are trying to get their whole class’s attention.

Mrs. Miller has to excuse herself from the group when the class phone rings. While Mrs. Miller is settling some details about their upcoming April field trip, the students start to go a bit wild. Tyrone and Travis start to pinch each other. Treasure, Olivia, and Jayla giggle, and squeal loudly when Olivia loses her balance and falls over into Treasure, knocking her down. Henry, Sam, and William are talking and making goofy nonsense noises. Seth and Michael are talking amongst themselves in one corner of the carpet. Preston and Matteo are two of the only students doing the yoga activity correctly. Mrs. Miller wraps up her conversation and hangs up the phone. Shawn yells “She’s almost off the phone!” Some of the students have anticipated this and already started making the peace and quiet sign. Those students include Olivia, Jayla, Makayla, Treasure, and Maricella.

In the absence of teacher supervision, a mix of students disobey classroom rules and procedure (a pattern that will be explored further in Chapter 5). Tyrone (lower middle SES black boy), Travis (higher SES white boy), Treasure (lower SES black girl), Olivia (higher SES white girl), Jayla (lower SES black girl), Henry (higher SES white boy), Sam (higher SES white boy), William (higher SES white boy), Seth (higher SES Middle Eastern boy),

and Michael (higher SES white boy) all fail to follow various rules, including not respecting others and not being quiet during an activity that requires silence. However, when it becomes clear that the teacher is ready to turn her attention back to the students, it is mostly the students of lower SES background, and in this case, all girls (Jayla, Treasure, and Maricella, who are all lower SES and Makayla, who is lower middle SES) who demonstrate that they know they *should* be quiet and attentive to the teacher by making the quiet signal.

In addition to lower SES students regularly demonstrating their procedural knowledge to the teacher, they also regularly communicated classroom procedure to me. Sometimes they shared this information because I specifically asked what the rules were, like when Makayla (lower middle SES black girl) told me about when students could or could not sit on the stairs in Mrs. Miller' classroom:

I sit down on the stairs near the carpeted area and ask if I should be sitting on the stairs. Makayla says that I can sit there when I get a ticket. "How do I get a ticket?" I ask. "You have to have 10 green cards," she says. "How do I get a green card?" I ask. "You have to behave," she says. "Like do what?" I ask. "Listen, be a good listener, follow directions" she says.

Most of the time, however, when students demonstrated procedural knowledge to me, they did so unprompted, particularly because they often viewed me as an adult first grader. As I arrived in Ms. Janwari's class one morning, Carlos, a lower SES Hispanic boy turned to me and said, "Hey! You're here!" He then proceeded to tell me that I needed to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance, which the students were about to recite. Another day, as I was accompanying Ms. Janwari's class for a special outdoor activity, Aaliyah, a lower SES black girl, reprimanded me for walking on the sidewalk the wrong way. I had been walking on a yellow line painted on the sidewalk (the line is close to the edge near the street and parking

lot, perhaps to signal to students that getting too close could be unsafe). Aaliyah told me that I shouldn't walk on it because it's "not the Foxcroft way."

In addition to communicating procedural knowledge with me, lower-SES students also demonstrated their procedural knowledge with peers. In Ms. Jennifer's class, during writing time, the following interaction took place between Gabby (higher SES white girl), Nia (higher SES black girl), and A'kierra (lower SES black girl):

Gabby starts writing about her experience. Nia looks over her shoulder and corrects her work: "That should be uppercase, that should be uppercase, and that should be..." "Stop talking!" A'kierra says angrily.

While Nia, a higher SES student, was focused on demonstrating *academic* knowledge to Gabby (a pattern that will be explored further later in this chapter), A'kierra was more focused on correcting Nia's procedural violation, as students were supposed to be working silently for this activity.

Finally, in addition to demonstrating their procedural knowledge to teachers, peers, and even the field worker, lower SES students were more likely to fixate on violations of procedure and try to correct them, even when violations were minor or not problematic for executing academic tasks. In the following example, students in Mrs. Miller's class were taking a math quiz. When Travis (higher SES white boy) and Shawn (lower SES black boy) finish their assignments, Shawn begins to fixate on the caddy being in the "correct" spot on the table, because Travis kept moving it around.

When the boys finish their assignments, they seem to direct their attention to the caddy in the middle of the room. Travis is moving it around, and the fact that it is not where it is "supposed" to be seems to be bothering Shawn. Shawn tries to grab the caddy and move it back to the middle of the table. When Mrs. Stevenson [the teaching assistant] walks over, she tells both of the boys to stop messing with the caddy. "But it's supposed to be in the middle!" Shawn pleads. "It doesn't matter," Mrs. Stevenson says.

While Shawn was correct that the caddy should have been placed in the middle of the table per standard classroom procedure, if it had not been placed there, it would not have interfered with the more important academic task that had been occurring at the time—a math assessment. This was clear to Mrs. Stevenson, who admitted that “it doesn’t matter,” but to Shawn, the placement of the table caddy was just as important as getting the answers on the math assessment correct.

There are two key reasons why it is likely that lower SES students demonstrate more procedural knowledge relative to their more affluent peers. First, low-SES youth tend to have less academic preparedness than higher-SES youth (Downey, von Hippel, and Hughes 2008), a finding that I confirm and build upon later in this chapter. Whereas higher-SES parents can purchase books, academic resources and games, and experiences that can develop academic skills even prior to the start of school, lower-SES parents often do not have the economic capital for such resources (Morris and Grimes 1997). Further, the way that parents engage their children from birth to the start of school differs substantially by socioeconomic status. Because lower-SES parents spend less time talking with their children and developing their language skills (Lareau 2003), lower-SES youth from age 0 to 3 are exposed to 30 million fewer words than their more affluent peers (Hart and Risley 2003). Additionally, as a result of their own academic skills as well as the skills that they use in their occupations (Bowles and Gintis 1972), more affluent parents encourage their children to reason, provide detail in the stories they tell, offer opinions, and analyze everyday situations (Lareau 2003; Bernstein 1973). Because schools evaluate skills like reading, writing, spelling, and vocabulary, the student who arrives at school having experience and familiarity with books, extended vocabulary, telling stories, and opining will likely have higher achievement in reading and

language arts. Because low-SES students have fewer academic skills to draw upon, they must rely upon the skills that they do have—understanding rules. Because low-SES adults are often in occupations that require deference to authority and rule-following, low-SES adults reproduce this deference to authority in their own children (Bowles and Gintis 1972). For example, low-SES youth often hear directives from their parents (e.g. “Stop. Go to your room.”), most of which revolve around house rules and what children ought to be doing (Hart and Risley 2003; Lareau 2003).

In addition to the different sets of skills that lower and higher-SES youth bring with them to school, teachers’ instructions for classroom rules and procedures are communicated fairly frequently and clearly. Consequently, it is easy for students to master an understanding of classroom rules and procedures. When rules and expectations are easily understood, students may be more confident that they know the “correct” answer when violations of rules occur so that they can demonstrate competence and perhaps gain praise from their teachers. Next to their own parents or caregivers, the adults children tend to spend the most time with during their day are their teachers. Young people crave the care, attention, and praise of adults in their lives, including teachers. When low-SES first graders do not have the academic knowledge to gain teachers’ praise, they draw upon their understanding of classroom rules to gain this praise instead.

I have focused my attention on demonstrating the extent to which lower SES students express their knowledge of classroom rules, but all students, regardless of SES, were capable of, and did at various times, express knowledge of classroom rules and procedure. However, what separated more affluent from lower SES students, is that far more regularly, more

affluent students demonstrated academic competence and knowledge, despite how clear, detailed, or explicit the teacher's instructions were.

Academic Expectations—Inexplicit

Just as teachers had classroom rules and behavioral expectations, teachers also had academic expectations for their students, including expectations for the kind of learning behaviors, strategies, and skills students ought to employ in order to execute their academic tasks. While teachers often tried to make their expectations as clear as possible to students, often their instructions were much more inexplicit than their instructions for appropriate rule-following. Part of the inexplicitness of teachers' expectations came from the decisions teachers made about the way students' work days were structured. Because teachers did not consult students or explain to them why their activities were designed in particular ways, activities privileged certain sets of skills or strategies for learning that the students did not necessarily realize they were supposed to be exhibiting. In general, the way teachers structure their instruction and classroom activities suggests that they expect students to be independent, focused, proactive, resourceful, and quick to solve their own problems.

All four classrooms I observed are structured such that a majority of the student's day is spent at a table, working on activities or tasks meant to illustrate lessons primarily in math, reading, and writing. Teachers give students large blocks of time, sometimes upwards of an hour, to practice writing a story or a note, read independently, or try to solve a series of math problems or games. A common activity to all the classrooms I observed, for example, is "writer's workshop." In "writer's workshop," students spend around 40 minutes a day practicing different kinds of writing, including "small moment stories," or stories that allow the writer to talk about an event that happened to them or in which they participated; "how-

to's," or writing that teaches the audience how to do something that the writer knows how to do; and even "opinion pieces" that try to convince the reader why they should get something or why something is their favorite thing.

Because about 40 minutes a day are dedicated to writer's workshop, over the course of the week, students have the opportunity to practice writing for about 200 minutes a week. Teachers generally expect that students spend all 200 minutes practicing their writing and remaining focused on the task. Ms. Jennifer periodically reminds students that in writer's workshop, "writers should write the whole time;" however, most of the time, teachers are not particularly explicit about what kinds of activities constitute productive writing time, and which activities do not. In an interview, Ms. Jennifer said that it was important for students to have a "framework for prioritizing" their tasks such that they must finish one task before moving on to another and stay focused on what is important to the task, rather than constantly getting up to chat with friends, get a drink of water, and other such behaviors. Similarly, Mrs. Miller shared that ideal students are "self-motivated" and if they are given a task, they will "go sit down and they'll try. If they make a mistake, it doesn't upset them...they'll go back and try again...they're independent in a certain way."

While teachers are quick to recognize what kinds of behaviors students ought to be doing during their academic activities and generally share a common perspective about what those behaviors are, teachers rarely communicate to the students themselves what it means to prioritize tasks, to be independent, or to be self-motivated. Activities like writer's workshop are designated times for students to get up and use the bathroom if needed or talk quietly amongst themselves about their work, but teachers expect students to be able to distinguish for themselves which tasks are most important. This requires students to decode an unstated

expectation. Similarly, teachers do not regularly communicate what being independent looks like or does not look like; they also rarely communicate to students what they should do if they feel challenged or unable to execute the task as expected in order to continue making their activity time productive.

Nonetheless, there are certainly advantages to students when they follow their teachers' expectations. Students who tend to follow their teachers' expectations during writers' workshop (as well as other independent activities) tend to spend the most time practicing and developing their skills, finish their assignments on time, and are encouraged to try harder or different kinds of assignments. More challenging assignments expose students to advanced or multidimensional thinking that can lead to earlier mastery of academic material. The student who spends even five minutes of the day's 40 minutes talking to a neighbor loses 20 minutes, or half of one day's worth, of writing time and practice over the course of the week. This loss of practice over the course of the year may be a way in which some students fall farther behind their peers.

While teachers expect students to remain independent, self-motivated, and focused on their academic tasks, it is easy for students to lose practice time because of the way teachers structure these activities. In particular, activities like writer's workshop are often social ones, where student communication (intended to be about the work) is not only allowed, but encouraged, so that students can learn from and be inspired by each other. In first grade, however, very often the communication occurring at students' tables has nothing to do with the academic task. Students seem to enjoy sharing stories about what happens in movies or shows that they have watched, their family members and friends, recess, favorite toys and foods, and where they have traveled. Even when the students do talk about their assignments

(e.g. writing), they easily digress from questions like “How do you spell ‘went’?” to “We have four, no five floors [in our house]. Basement, downstairs, upstairs, attic, I guess that’s four” or “We have a secret code in our rocket ship, and no boys allowed”—conversation that has very little to do with mastering the lesson. Because there is often a soft buzz of chatter in the room at all times during these activities, it is easy for a teacher or teaching assistant standing at a distance to mistake a student talking about toys and movies for a student talking about the assignment.

Teachers, while trying to provide feedback during these activities, can at best only provide periodic and fleeting comments or assistance, for not all 20 students in the classroom can get the kind of uninterrupted assistance that will help a truly confused student master the activity. Much of the time when teachers do have to intervene beyond the casual observation or comment, they have to spend more time getting students without independent working skills to start the activity or redirect their energy back to the activity, rather than provide constructive feedback about the quality of their work. Sometimes teachers seem to grow so tired of telling the same student over and over again to *get* to work that they do not recognize that the student does not know *how* to work or perhaps how to do the work.

Students might not know how to work because teachers’ explanations for academic tasks are often inexplicit enough to warrant multiple interpretations of or questions about what students should be doing. This is not for complete lack of attempted explanation; teachers often spend time trying to communicate their directions and expectations to students at, for example, the beginning of a new assignment or activity. However, like the subtle expectations suggested by teachers’ classroom and activity structure, the expectations teachers had for academic tasks were often much less explicitly communicated to students

than were classroom rules. It is clearer to students, for example, that they are supposed to listen when others are talking than it is for students to understand what it means to “go to writer’s workshop.” For example, “going to writer’s workshop” could simply mean going to the table, picking up a new sheet of paper to start a new story or finishing an older one, talking to friends about ideas, or for some, it could mean getting a chance to tell a friend a joke or story because they have not had a chance to talk in 30 minutes. Finally, inexplicit instructions required students to channel multiple different skill sets, like reading, observing, problem-solving, or self-advocacy (some skills that students had not yet learned or mastered in class)—simultaneously. The following example demonstrates a typical moment when a teacher gives inexplicit directions that require students to self-interpret:

Ms. Jennifer tells the students that they have another math task [a “task” is the name that Ms. Jennifer uses for “test”] today and that this one is all about tens and ones. She posts an image of the math task on the board. She tells the students that they will have some cube groups of 10s and some leftovers. She reads the instructions, which says something to the effect of ‘Write the number of cubes and draw a picture to show your thinking.’ I can see that the first problem is, “4 groups of 10 and 0 leftovers,” though Ms. Jennifer does not read the first problem for the students. There is a blank space next to this problem, and it is in a large box, which I assume the students are to use to draw their “thinking.” However, Jennifer does not say this directly. Ms. Jennifer tells the students, “you might think you can use cubes and a mat that looks like this.” She puts a picture of a box with a line down the middle on the projector, though Ms. Jennifer never tells or shows us how to use this tool to help them solve the problem. “That is ok,” she adds, clarifying that students *can* use the tool, though not how they are to use it.

While it is possible that Ms. Jennifer had during a previous lesson or on another day demonstrated how to solve problems like this or use the tool she projects on the board, at this moment—one in which students’ knowledge of the math lesson will be assessed, and one in which their “achievement level” is at stake—Ms. Jennifer does not explicitly show the students how they are supposed to solve the problem. In order to solve this math problem, students must first have enough reading skill to be able to read the problem on their own

because Ms. Jennifer does not read the problems for them. At this point in the school year (October), the official first grade curriculum suggested that students were still learning the sounds of particular letters and blends of sounds, such as “bl” or “sh,” but not harder vowel sounds like “ou” (as in “4 groups of ten”). While many of the first graders in Ms. Jennifer’s class were well above average in reading and could likely have read the words to the problem for themselves, a “typical” first grader might not have the reading skill required to do this activity on their own. From there, the students would then need to deduce that they need to count four groups of tens (forty) and zero “leftovers,” or ones. They must figure out that they are to write the numerical representation “40” in the blank Ms. Jennifer had not pointed to, and then the students must draw to “show their thinking.” They might, for example, draw a picture of 40 cubes, circling ten cubes at a time, as I imagine the evaluator intended for the students to do. Or, they might just draw 40 cubes without showing them in groups of tens. They might draw the equation $10+10+10+10+0=40$ (four groups of ten plus zero “leftovers”) in that space, since this year students had been learning to count by tens from memory. “Showing” their thinking could have been demonstrated in several ways, but unless students had internalized those strategies to the point that those options were clear to the student, a student would not clearly understand how to solve the problem based on the directions from the teacher alone. Finally, students would have to have been able to deduce on their own how to use the tool that Ms. Jennifer had alluded to should they have required some extra assistance, because without clear instructions for how to use it, students would not find the tool particularly useful for solving the problem.

While students’ days were structured such that every day they practiced reading, math, and writing (students learned lessons in social studies and science a few days a week),

lessons and activities were not always designed to be completed in one period. Often, particularly in Ms. Jennifer's class, lessons and activities were continuations of previous days' lessons, which meant that students had at least a day, sometimes longer, to forget what the objective of the activity was or what they were supposed to do. While teachers did regularly communicate directions for activities to students, when lessons were continuations of previous days, teachers were much more likely to give brief, punctuated directions to students that required more student interpretation.

Similarly, if teachers had taught a particular learning strategy, they expected students to quickly comprehend the information, be able to retain it, and recognize when a future task required that information. Reading is an activity for which teachers constantly teach strategies, particularly for "tricky words." In Ms. Jennifer's class, early in the year, she taught students to try to "sound out" tricky words using their knowledge of the alphabet and the sounds in the words they were trying to read. Later, in October, she taught them to use illustrations to help them figure out tricky words from context clues. "Snap words," or words often that do not follow phonetic rules, like "the," but are common, and should be learned in a "snap," are also part of the reading and spelling curriculum. Over the course of the year, students learn hundreds of "snap words" that they are supposed to commit to memory. (At Foxcroft, there is a similar concept, though they call them "sight" words instead of snap words.) One of the strategies students can use for reading is to find "snap words" inside of larger words they do not know. In November, Ms. Jennifer taught something called "backward reading," or reading every other part of the sentence except for the word that the student did not know, and then see if they can figure out what the word probably is. While at the time of instruction, Ms. Jennifer's lessons in solving "tricky words" were fairly clear and

helpful, Ms. Jennifer rarely reminds students about these reading strategies throughout the year. I watched Ms. Jennifer's class conduct lessons in or practice reading 15-20 times over the course of the year, but I noticed that Ms. Jennifer only reminded students twice during those times what kinds of strategies they could use when they came across tricky words, and when students were left on their own to practice reading, they often failed to use these strategies as well, despite Ms. Jennifer's expectation that they could and would do so. For students who have had experience reading prior to first grade, leaving students on their own to practice probably works fine. However, for students who have had little or no prior experience reading, this practice probably works less well.

It may be challenging for a first grader to remember, recall, and use information in the way adults do, yet teachers often required first grade students to be able to understand and recall vast lists of directions. The following demonstrates the complexity of directing students through "centers," which Ms. Jennifer used all the time, and teachers at Foxcroft used more periodically. Centers are differentiated activities that illustrate similar concepts, but in different ways, so that students remain engaged and are perhaps able to learn a concept more completely through different applications. On Halloween in Ms. Janwari's class, her teaching assistant at the time, Mrs. Cooper, had created special Halloween centers for her class to practice math. The following field note describes the instructions Mrs. Cooper gave for the six separate center activities.

Mrs. Cooper stands in front of the group holding several materials and plastic bags. "The first one you will write an estimate for how many pumpkins [candies] are in the bag." She asks the class if they know what the word estimate is and calls on Aaliyah, who answers, "a guess." "Yes, you will guess how many pumpkins are in the bag, then you will get your recording sheet and match the letter to the letter on the paper. For example, write here [she points to a line on the associated worksheet] my guess is, and write here, [she points to the line below] my count is. An estimate is a guess. It is not wrong if it is different from the actual count." She reminds the students, "When

you are finished counting the candy, put the candy back in the bag. This candy is not to eat...” The next center activity that Mrs. Cooper describes features a worksheet that has images of pumpkins, bats, candy corns, and owls. The images are all mixed up and in no particular pattern. The object of this activity is to count how many of each object there are and then make a graph of the different objects on a related worksheet. Mrs. Cooper says that this center activity is very similar to their weather graph. She points out a few of the questions at the end of the worksheet, namely, “What has the most?” and “What is the fewest?” Mrs. Cooper asks the class if they know what the word “fewest” means, and calls on Zoe, who says, “less.” Mrs. Cooper says that yes, fewest means the “least.” The third activity is one that allows the students to “practice counting.” Mrs. Cooper shows the students a worksheet with different numbers of Halloween-inspired objects on it (the example that she holds up is one of spiders). She says that the students are to write the number of objects that they count on the paper. The fourth activity is “another spider activity. This one has spider counters!” She holds up a spider-web printed on a paper and tells the students to get a die. She tells them to roll the die and get the number of spider counters associated with the number they roll and put them on the first web. “Say you roll a three, then get three spiders and put them on the web.” Then, she says, you roll the die again for a second number (the example second roll was a four), and “then make up a math sentence. $3+4=7$.” Mrs. Cooper continues, “if you have time, record your math sentences here. You can work together, so if you both write $3+4=7$ on your paper, it’s ok because you did it together.” She describes the last math center as one where they are pretending to have candy, but instead of candy, they are going to use dominoes. “Isn’t it cool how dominoes make a math sentence?” She holds up a domino with five dots on one half and 6 dots on the other half. She asks the students to draw the five dots in the first blank candy bag, and the six dots in the other blank candy bag, and make a math sentence with it.

The instructions are so long and complex that it would not be hard for students to get lost in the details. I remember feeling lost myself as I listened to them. With so many different directions to keep track of, it is easy to understand how students might get confused or not remember what to do. However, despite the complexity of the teachers’ directions, few reminders for strategies they are supposed to be employing in the classroom, and vague academic instructions, some students are still better able to decode teachers’ instructions in ways that lead to academic advantages. Others are less able to decode the instructions. Socioeconomic status is clearly connected to whether and how students understand and execute academic tasks in these situations.

Decoding Instructions for Academic Tasks—Higher SES Students

Higher SES students are more adept at decoding teachers' instructions for the activities they are doing. One day when Ms. Jennifer was instructing students about ways to introduce their opinion writing, she subtly suggested two strategies:

"Turn it to the part that says Beep Beep Vroooooom," she says. "One way to write an introduction is to write a sound..." "Beep, beep vroom. One way to write an introduction is to write sounds," she repeats, this time writing it on the flip chart next to her... "If you were a bell, what kind of sound might you make? Ding! What if you were drinking a delicious milkshake? What kind of sound would you make?" The students make long slurping sounds. Jennifer writes "Slurp!" on the board, telling the students that's what sound you make when you suck through a straw. "Now turn your paper over to the other side," she says. "Sometimes it doesn't make sense to write sounds..." She reads, "Do you like superheroes? Do you wish you had superpowers?" "Yes," Marcus replies. "What does the writer do?" Jennifer asks... Jennifer says that Marcus was responding. Why? "He asked me a question, and I like all those things." Marcus replies. "Freeze," Jennifer says. "You can ask a question. Do you like...? Have you ever...? When review writers grab their readers' attention, sometimes they use sounds, and sometimes they ask a question. Ready, set, write."

While Ms. Jennifer never explicitly asked students to try starting their writing with a sound or with a series of questions, the fact that she took time to explain these two strategies as possibilities for their writing suggests that she wanted students to try them. When I looked over at Minsuh, a higher-SES Asian girl who was starting a new piece of writing, I saw her write on her paper, "Boown! Jingle!" She appeared to decode Ms. Jennifer's intention that students try introducing their writing with a sound. At another table, I saw Ian, a higher SES Asian boy write on his paper. "Do you like games? Do you like searching? If you do you need to by the iPad..." He continued to write for a few minutes, until the lined space on his page was almost entirely full. Like Minsuh, Ian also understood the cue from Ms. Jennifer to try one of the strategies she had demonstrated. Ian chose the second, asking questions to the reader, and continued to execute the assignment as directed.

Conversely, two lower SES students did not appear to decode Ms. Jennifer's intention for their writing practice:

Hannah's paper has an illustration of a blonde woman in a pink dress. She reads her text to me, "Barbies are the best toy ever. You should get it from the buddy scout store."...

"How do you spell beautiful?" A'kierra asks me as soon as I get to the table. I tell her to listen to the sounds and write what she hears. "Buh buh B?" she asks. I nod. It takes her a while to think about what she is going to write, but eventually she writes beautiful like "befall." The whole text she has written thus far is "Ilikemybhirbissitisthebefall." ("I like my Barbie because it is beautiful.")

Neither Hannah nor A'kierra were conducting the assignment in completely incorrect ways; they were both writing their opinions about certain toys and offering reasons for why they thought their toys were the best. However, by failing to try some of the new strategies that Ms. Jennifer introduced, Hannah and A'kierra had less practice employing different writing strategies that would strengthen or diversify their writing. When asked to write another opinion piece in the future, they might not think to introduce their topic in ways that are as creative as Minsuh or Ian might.

A writing activity that all the first graders at Foxcroft learned was something called a "how-to." In how-to writing, students explain to their reader how to make, build, or do something in step-by-step fashion. The how-to piece first convinces the reader they should want to do or make the subject of the piece, explains what materials one would need to do the task, and the sequential order of steps required. In an interview with Mrs. Miller, she explained that if students were to get "fours" on their how-to's (fours are the highest grade that students can earn at Foxcroft), the writing would "have the steps in there. You would use transition words like first, second. First I did this, second, next... You would... have a beginning. And then you would have an ending that kind of summed [up] everything, and

you would have lots of details in it.” Ms. Janwari added in her interview that a good how-to would include an introduction, pictures, steps, a “closing,” and one of the best how-to’s in the class even an “about the author” section (an indication that this student was very familiar with the contents of books). Importantly for Ms. Janwari, writing at least six or eight sentences is also necessary for good writing. While I was unable to observe either Mrs. Miller’ or Ms. Janwari’s class when they were communicating their expectations about how-to’s to their students, I was able to observe Mrs. Cooper’s class the day that they summarized the necessary ingredients for a “good” how-to:

“Ok, now how to writing,” Mrs. Cooper says to the students. “Last week we worked hard to figure the parts of the how to. What are some of those things we need for a how to?” Mrs. Cooper calls on Jamie first, who says that you need the “ingredients or materials.” Mrs. Cooper concurs that if they are making a recipe they need the ingredients, or the materials if they are doing something else... Logan raises his hand too and Mrs. Cooper calls on him. He says that you need “steps” for a how to. Mrs. Cooper asks what else you need, and Jamie and Logan again raise their hands—they are the only ones to do so. “Jamie and Logan will know what to do,” Mrs. Cooper says... Kayla raises her hand and adds “You have to know how to do it.” Seamus adds that you need to “write words clearly,” and Logan says “you need a title.”

It is notable that all of the students who volunteered answers to Mrs. Cooper’s questions were higher SES students (Jamie, Logan, and Seamus are white; Kayla is black).

When I interviewed students, I asked them how they knew their how-to’s were “good” or not and what it took produce a “good” how-to. My hope was that they might be able to communicate both their perception of the grading scale and their own work relative to it. Higher SES students were generally most clear about the grading scale (3 and 4 is good, 1 and 2 is not), and they were also most detailed and specific about what it took to get a 3 or a 4 on their how-to assignment.

Seth (higher-SES Middle Eastern boy) very ably deconstructed what a writer must do to get a good grade on the how-to:

Interviewer: What about if you were doing a writing assignment and you got and you did it and you worked hard on it and you got it back from Ms. Miller, how would you know if it was your best work or not?

Seth: Um...if she's put a three or a four on it. If its like a math thing that you're supposed to go and its that class cause usually the math work sheets she checks the stuff for homework that she checks and for reading when we do something but, but I think we don't do it anymore since Ms. Johnson is now the student teacher.

Interviewer: So, if I wanted...I'm a new student in Ms. Miller class and I want to make sure I get a three on my how to. What would you tell me that I need to do in order to get a three or a four on it?

Seth: You need to do the materials as the first step. Um...you need to use transition words before each um...

Interviewer: What's a transition word?

Seth: Um, like first, second, third, fourth, fifth, after that, then , um you gotta use one of those words become a different word that is also not transition.

Interviewer: and then, is there anything I need to do to make sure I do a how to really well?

Seth: um...you need to...um, so like, so like, if you um so if you got um like if you got like say if you did how to get dressed you would like say materials, under clothes which includes your underwear and t-shirt and then so and then it would have your shirt your pants and it would have socks and shoes so then you would say, first put your underwear on. Second, put your t-shirt on. Third, put your pants on. Fourth, put your socks on. Fifth, put your shoes on. And then you say now you're dressed.

Interviewer: Okay.

Seth: but you gotta have more specific so you can say put one of your underwear on the on the *white* underwear your clothes *on top of the upper part of your body*.

Second, put the lower the other underwear on the under clothes *on the bottom half* and then put your pants *on the bottom half* and now put your shirt *on the top half* but you do it with the first, second, third, fourth, at the beginning then um put your socks on. After that, um, put your shoes on and then you would say the clothing on the little book and then about the author.

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

Seth: So, if you did that then you would probably get a three on it.

Interviewer: and what would it look like if I got a one or a two on it?

Seth: um it would be like nothing on materials. Step one, step two, step three, step four, step five would say um underclothes um t-shirt, and pants, socks, and shoes. Put underclothes on. Put shirt on. Put pants on. Put socks on. Put shoes on. Something like that...it would be like that.

Seth's command of the how-to assignment was clear in his interview. He

communicated his knowledge of the elements of the how-to that teachers claimed were important for students to do, including using transition words (which he could give accurate examples of), materials, and details. With respect to using details in his writing, he seemed

not to merely parrot directions that he had once heard from the teacher. By telling the reader that one should write about certain kinds of underwear (white ones) or where to put particular articles of clothing on the body instead of just telling the reader to “put them on,” Seth demonstrates that he really understood what using details in the writing meant. Further, he could communicate, as he did later in our discussion, why those details were important—because otherwise, readers might think to “put their socks on their head” instead of on their feet. From my conversation with Seth, it was clear that he had comprehended his teacher’s instructions for how to write a good how-to to the point where it is almost second nature, or what Bourdieu (1998) might call Seth’s “habitus.” As Seth communicated later with me, his understanding of Mrs. Miller’s instructions for how-to writing was so ingrained that he could not comprehend why a student might ever get a 1 or a 2 on the assignment, unless they were not listening to Mrs. Miller or were absent from school for a long time.

Compare Seth’s interview to Aaliyah’s, a lower SES black girl from Ms. Janwari’s class.

Interviewer: Let's talk about writing for a little bit. I know that you were doing a how to a couple weeks ago, right? You were learning how to write how tos?

Aaliyah: We're done.

Interviewer: Yeah, you're done with that, but how do you write a good how to?

Aaliyah: Make sure you're not missing anything, make sure it makes sense.

Interviewer: And is there anything else that I need to know to write a good...So okay, if you -- pretend I'm a new student in Ms. Janwari's class and I don't know anything at all about how to write a how to. What would you tell me to do to write a how to for her class?

Aaliyah: You [pause]

Interviewer: Like if I had [pause]

Aaliyah: [pause] try to spell the words correctly, like look on the back wall and see did you get your works correctly.

Interviewer: So spell the words correctly. Is there anything else about writing a how to that I should know?

Aaliyah: Yes, don't skip words.

Interviewer: Don't skip words? Okay. That's important.

Aaliyah: Like some people do in class.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Aaliyah: Jasmine's always skipping words in her how to writing.

Interviewer: What do you mean, like can you tell me an example?

Aaliyah: Like I had to adventure. She like skips a word.

Interviewer: So she'll skip a word in her how to?

Aaliyah: Yeah.

Interviewer: What else do I need to know to write a good how to? Is that it?

Aaliyah: [No verbal response]

Interviewer: It could be it? Yeah?

Aaliyah: [No verbal response]

Interviewer: Okay. So how do you know what it takes to write a good how to? Is that something that...

Aaliyah: Because I listen.

Interviewer: Oh, so Ms. Janwari said it and you listened and you did what she said?

Aaliyah: [No verbal response]

Whereas Seth clearly demonstrated the elements and process required for writing highly-graded how-to, Aaliyah had a harder time identifying the elements that Ms. Janwari specifically said she wanted. While Aaliyah notes that students need to spell words correctly and write all the words that make for an accurate sentence (“don’t skip words”), she is unable to tell me anything about the introduction for the piece, the materials required, use of transition words, the step-by-step nature of its composition, or a conclusion to wrap it up. Overall, Aaliyah appears less able to articulate the specific instructions for the task than Seth, which suggests she does not yet fully understand the task. This ability to decode and comprehend complex academic tasks appears to be a key way in which more affluent students, who are likely to have had more experiences with academic related tasks than their less affluent peers, maintain an academic advantage in the classroom.

Demonstrating Academic Comprehension and Competence—Higher SES Students

In addition to their ability to more accurately and quickly decode teachers’ academic instructions, higher SES students are much quicker than lower SES students to demonstrate their academic knowledge and competence, by, for example, sharing a fact that they know

from an outside source (one that has not been covered in class), noting a connection that they've made between two concepts that they had been talking about, or sharing that they "already" know how to do something.

One way students demonstrate their academic knowledge is by sharing more than what the teacher asked for.

"We are gonna study geometry. Geometry is the study of shapes. What are some shapes?" she asks. She has already flipped the chart to the one that says "Mathematicians know that objects have shapes." She has added a chart below with several shapes listed, including circles, triangles, rectangles, hexagons, and other shapes (parallelograms, octagons). Jennifer calls on Harper, who had been raising her hand. She answers, "Hexagons, triangles, circles, squares." She looks pleased with herself, revealing a sly smile. "Let's let others have a chance to answer," Jennifer says.

While Ms. Jennifer's intention may have been for students to share just one at a time, she did not make this expectation clear, and Harper (white higher SES girl) answered with almost every example that the class had been learning about. The way Harper smiled after her answer suggests that she knows she has just done something to show off her academic knowledge.

Sometimes students share information or ideas with the teacher unprompted, as Emma, a white higher SES girl from Ms. Jennifer's class, does here after a reading lesson. The students had been learning about how to read "informational," or nonfiction, books, and Ms. Jennifer had been using a book about minerals and gemstones as an example. After Ms. Jennifer dismissed the students to practice their own independent reading:

Most of the students get up to get their book boxes. A few of the students hang back to talk to Ms. Jennifer. Emma says that "I noticed that diamonds are near the volcanoes and volcanoes shoot out lava and stuff. Maybe diamonds shoot out of them, too." Ms. Jennifer tells her that she likes her thinking and looks forward to learning more about what Emma discovers about gemstones and volcanoes.

Sometimes students are able to demonstrate their knowledge because of the way that teachers structure their instructional time. Much of the instruction is organized around teachers asking questions. Sometimes those questions are easily answered with information the students learned in class, but other times, those questions rely on students bringing their own knowledge to the classroom. Because higher SES children tend to have had exposure to much more information and experiences that would lend themselves to valued academic learning and tasks in the classroom, they get ample opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and competence (and to appear smarter than their peers):

Ms. Johnson asks the students if they know who Albert Einstein is. Several students raise their hands. Ms. Johnson calls on Sergio first, who says that “he studied a lot.” Next, she calls on Seth, who says that “he studied physics.” Ms. Johnson calls on Sam third, and he says that “I know he lived around 1955 and he was a scientist.” Travis adds “he studied a lot of math.

All four boys who answered this question were middle class. It is not likely that the students had learned about Albert Einstein earlier in the day, but rather, that these boys had learned about Einstein outside of school or in an earlier grade and were able to demonstrate their knowledge when called upon.

In addition to demonstrating their academic competence to teachers, students also demonstrate competence with each other by reciting trivia, facts, and other information that they have learned from outside sources to suggest that they are an academic authority. One day in Mrs. Miller’ class, three students conversed almost the entire reading period about rocks, minerals, space, and other aspects of nature.

Travis settles on a picture book about the moon. Shawn and Michael seem interested in the book, too, so they get up and stand next to him, looking at the pictures over Travis’s shoulders. Michael begins demonstrating his knowledge about space: “That’s a meteor shower I think.” On the next page, which features the different phases of the moon, Michael points and describes each of the moon’s phases. “That’s a full moon, that’s a waxing gibbous, that’s a waning gibbous, that’s a quarter moon....” “What’s

that?” Travis asks him. “I think Mars,” Michael says. On the next page Michael says “That’s the moon in the day and that’s the moon in the night.” “Moon in the day?” Shawn says, incredulous. “If you were here and this is the moon, it would take five days to get there,” Travis adds. Michael begins talking about the first spacewalkers. He points to one of the characters in the book and says “He’s the first one who went to the moon, ever.” “How do you know that?” Travis asks. “Because I’ve made books, I’ve read books, I’ve watched videos about it.”

While Michael (higher SES white boy) is clearly more knowledgeable about the moon than his peers, Travis (higher SES white boy) also possesses some knowledge of the moon. Travis demonstrates his own bit of academic competence by saying, “If you were here and this is the moon, it would take five days to get there.” However, Shawn (low SES black boy) is not able to add any substantive information to the discussion. Instead, he offers procedural know-how:

Shawn tells the other two boys to put their book boxes on the floor. I notice his is on the floor and the other two book boxes are on the table, essentially forming a border across the middle of the table.

While the two higher SES boys, Michael, and to a lesser extent Travis, are busy demonstrating academic knowledge, the lower SES boy, Shawn, demonstrates knowledge of classroom rules and procedures.

Parent Coaching

It is likely that the socioeconomic differences students exhibit in their ability to decode teacher instructions and demonstrate academic competence come from socioeconomic inequality between families. Because socioeconomic status is connected to the kind of resources available to families and the socialization that occurs inside of them, students develop different “strategies of action,” or what some theorists call “cultural capital,” for their social environments, including school (Lareau and Weiniger 2003).

Cultural capital theory predicts that students who occupy different social groups will not only

learn different cultures, but they will learn cultures that are more or less socially rewarded. This means that in school, having the “right” cultural capital will signal to teachers that students understand the unwritten rules and norms of the classroom. Teachers will then look upon and evaluate those students more favorably as a result (Rist 1975; Anyon 1981; Clark 1983; Hart and Risley 1995; Lareau 2003; Downey, von Hippel and Broh 2004; Collier & Morgan 2008; Kelly 2008; Condron 2009; Calarco 2011; Roksa and Potter 2011).

An example of cultural capital that is rewarded in schools is the help-seeking behavior that Calarco (2011) found in her study of fourth and fifth grade students. Calarco (2011) finds that teachers expect students to be “proactive learners,” which they say means paying attention, working hard, and seeking help if needed. Seeking help was of particular interest to Calarco, because while teachers wanted students to ask for help when they needed, they did not instruct students how to do it (raise their hand versus getting out of their seat to ask the teacher), when it was appropriate to do so (right away, or after they tried working on it for a few minutes), or what to do if a teacher was already assisting another student. Despite teachers not communicating to students how to ask for help, middle class students in Calarco’s study sought help in the ways that teachers expected—by calling out and pursuing the teacher persistently. Working class students (who rarely admitted they were struggling), if they sought help at all, raised their hands more timidly and were overlooked more often. In short, middle class students, like the students in this study, decoded teachers’ unspoken expectations, whereas working class students did not.

Cultural capital theorists tend to define middle and working class individuals in a Marxian way, separating those who own the means of production from those who sell their labor and have no influence over the means of production (Bowles and Gintis 1976). These

theorists argue that class cultures in families emerge from parents' relationship to authority in their occupations. Because of their own occupational experiences, parents tend to prepare youth for life outcomes that are similar to their own. In other words, when parents are authority figures in their occupations, they unconsciously prepare their children to become authority figures themselves. When parents submit to authority in their occupations, they unconsciously prepare their children to submit to authority (Bowles and Gintis 1976).

Evidence from recent cultural capital theorists suggests that this may be true. As might be expected of parents who have been socialized to become authority figures, parents of more affluent students tend to view their role in their children's schooling process equal to the teacher and are quick to involve themselves in their children's school affairs (Lareau 1987; Calarco 2014). Parents of more affluent students advocate on behalf of their children to authority figures in schools and make excuses or requests for special treatment or consideration (Lareau 1987; 2003; Calarco 2014). These parents also work to "cultivate" their children's talents and skills by enrolling their children in many different extra-curricular activities, engaging them in conversation with adults, and teaching them to advocate for themselves and their needs (Lareau 2003). In general, more affluent parents instill in their children an "emerging sense of entitlement" that allows middle class students to feel comfortable and confident engaging with authority figures like teachers (Lareau 1987; 2003; Calarco 2014).

Conversely, as might be expected of parents who are socialized to submit to authority, working class parents do not see themselves within the sphere of appropriate educational influence; it is teachers' jobs to teach, not parents' (Lareau 1987). Working class parents are less involved in the scheduling of their children's lives and activities and teach

their children not to make excuses for their school problems. Lower-SES parents also do not develop their children's language skills to the same degree as middle class parents do. They talk to them less, introduce fewer vocabulary words into their vernacular, and when they do communicate with their children, it is often in the form of a directive (e.g. "Stop doing that. Go to your room.") instead of inviting children to be a part of a conversation about their behavior (Lareau 2003; Hart and Risley 2003). In general, lower-SES parents instill in their children an "emerging sense of constraint" that fosters more submission to authority than comfort with it (Lareau 1987; 2003; Calarco 2014). While neither approach to institutional involvement is inherently better or worse, more affluent students tend to benefit the most in the classroom because teachers tend to expect the skills and philosophy of involvement exhibited by middle class parents and families.

Like many cultural capital theorists, I separate those of lower-SES status from those of higher-SES status. However, I do not follow a strict Marxian definition of class. The Marxian framework is limiting in that there are only two class groups and that they are defined mostly by occupational relationship to production and authority. However, few jobs can be categorized as influencing or not influencing means of production. In contemporary society, many people occupy "contradictory class locations" (Wright 1980). That is, they may have control over some aspects of their production, but very little control over others. Middle managers, for instance, might oversee a small staff, but are still subject to the control of their supervisors. It is unclear, therefore, whether we could define a middle manager as a "middle class" or "working class" profession, and for parents in this study who have similar jobs, it becomes challenging to categorize them.

Lareau (2003) and Calarco (2011) have suggested that class status is ultimately a function of both occupation and education. Parents who have at least a college degree and work in jobs that entail some authority are considered middle class, whereas parents with less than a college degree and work in jobs entailing little or no authority are considered working class (Lareau 2003; Calarco 2011; 2014). Yet, this definition is still limiting, because it fails to account for other dimensions of socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage, like income and wealth. A teacher who is college educated would be “middle class” according to Lareau and Calarco, but if that teacher owes approximately \$30,000 in college debt,¹⁰ makes about \$40,000 a year,¹¹ and has no partner to help support her family, this teacher would face many economic disadvantages that may prevent her from accruing wealth, owning a home (which is also a marker of socioeconomic advantage), or accessing social networks on the basis of wealth. In fact, her life may resemble the structural disadvantages of working class life more than her education and profession would suggest.

Further, the definition of education and occupational status as SES fails to consider the relativity of structural advantage or disadvantage due to social changes. If a parent were educated or had a more socially prestigious occupation in her home country, but those credentials or experiences may not translate to or be rewarded in her new country, what is her class status, and how might this “contradictory location” impact the transmission of particular skills or orientations to her child? These socioeconomic circumstances are fairly common and tend to disproportionately impact families of color. This study addresses this limitation of prior cultural capital studies by considering SES as one’s relative position to

¹⁰ This is about the average amount of college debt that students graduating in 2013 accrued (Institute for College Access and Success 2015).

¹¹ This is about the average salary of a teacher in North Carolina.

structurally dominant, or hegemonic class locations, on the basis of education, occupation, income, and wealth.

A final limitation of the previous cultural capital literature is its emphasis on affective, soft skills that might advantage students in the classroom rather than academic-related behaviors and skills that might directly impact achievement. Lareau's work, for example, suggests that the language development that middle class parents encourage may lead to academic advantages because schools value and evaluate students' language skills. Yet Lareau's research does not specifically show how parents coach students in particular academic assignments or tasks in ways that may matter for student achievement. Similarly, Calarco's finding that middle class students seek help in ways that are expected by teachers suggests that students may receive more instruction and feedback that could improve their assignments, but it does not take into account how and why middle class students may be more prepared than working class students to execute their academic tasks in the first place. Findings from this study address this limitation, suggesting that higher-SES parents transmit cultural capital to their children by directly teaching educational facts and skills that are evaluated in schools, providing outside educational resources to learn these educational facts and skills, and coaching their children in specific problem-solving scripts that are consistent with the instructional strategies used by teachers.

Higher-SES Parents

Like the middle class parents from Lareau's study, the higher-SES parents that I talked to described the importance of developing language and reasoning skills in their children:

Ellie's Mom: And then we also do a lot of talking at bedtime...about school and, um, and another example, she wanted to drop out of our church -- her church choir. And

so we -- we, you know, had her talk about that with us. Why? You can't just drop out because you don't want to go, you know, what are your reasons why? This is what you'll -- so just help her rationalize.

Here, the mother of Ellie (white higher-SES girl in Mrs. Miller's class) encourages her daughter to think through her reasoning for a decision she would like to make. In other words, she asks Ellie to provide specific, compelling evidence for why she would like to quit the church choir. This is a skill that Mrs. Miller evaluated in an opinion writing assignment that fall. Most of the students wrote letters to their parents explaining why they should do or get something (for example, an elevator to replace the stairs in their house or a pet hamster). As I watched Mrs. Miller give feedback to a group of students on their opinion letters, she told them that they should write more details about why an elevator in their house would be more fun than stairs, or what kind of character traits they thought they might learn if they had a pet hamster. This kind of probing is exactly what Ellie's mom does when she asks Ellie why she wants to quit the choir. Her mom is asking for more specific evidence to convince her that quitting is the best solution to a problem Ellie is having. By regularly practicing this skill, as Ellie's mom suggests that they do, Ellie will likely better understand and execute Mrs. Miller's expectation for opinion writing and other similar assignments.

Additionally, like the more affluent parents from Lareau's study, the higher-SES parents I interviewed talked about the importance of offering supplementary educational resources at home and enrolling their children in educational camps and activities that can build the kinds of academic skills that will be rewarded in schools.

Sam's Mom: I pick him up at school. Monday we go to something, it's called IMACS...It's short for...Institute for Mathematics [and] Informational Computational Sciences. And what they do...is you do this 25 questions for five minutes tops...We spend there an hour. Logical questions. He enjoys it. It's not something that uh makes him tired. It is like playing games. They play example Venn Diagrams, figure out what's the number. Uh, it's, mathematically inclined but in a

way that uh, logical thinking...I've done it with [Sam's sister] and with him as well. From the beginning. I'm just amazed at the advancement that his logical skills...Tuesday after school I take him to a um, private studio um, for art. Both of them...And then Wednesday, after school, he has, it's not a club exactly, but something like that. Science Safari...about the same kids gather and they have one hour, could be any kind of topic, could be electricity, or experiments, or, or build something.

Seth's Mom: Um, so, we do a lot of reading at home. Uh we do building projects in a way this we talk about math things like how much money would it take to do x, y, and z. We try to in the summer do a lot of summer camps...

Seth's Dad: Science camps...One of the things we learned is that you need to be a member and support the North Carolina Science Museum and the North Carolina Museum of Arts and then as a member you get first um shot at getting into the summer camps when they open in January or February...

Seth's Mom:...And one thing [for Seth's older brother] over the summer between first grade and second grade I did this reading thing with [a nearby university] and it's not for those who have reading disorder like dyslexia or anything, it's for those who have a good reading level and how to advance them and what to do. So I learned [how to help with reading from the program] and when Seth and I read...we do sentence-sentence or paragraph-paragraph, or he can be a character, I can be a character, sound out the words, chunk the words, break it down and cover part of it, read part of it, sound out part of it. And so that's why his reading level in first grade is at a second grade or higher-level.

The extra knowledge higher-SES students like Sam and Seth gain from supplementary programs and parent instruction could be what students draw on when they demonstrate their academic competence to teachers and peers at school. Recall from earlier that when Ms. Johnson asked students during class if they knew who Albert Einstein was, Sam confidently shared that "he lived around 1955 and was a scientist." Seth also shared that he "studied physics." If Sam spends time in math and science clubs outside of school every week, and Seth spends time in science camps outside of school, it is possible that they learned about one of the most famous scientists at some point in their science activities. By demonstrating this knowledge in class, Seth and Sam both earned some academic credibility that set them apart from other students.

Additionally, the extra practice at reading, math, science, and logic allows higher-SES students to be so competent in the skills required to execute academic tasks, that even with unclear teacher instructions, students can still understand the task's objective. For example, if Seth does not understand from the teacher's verbal instructions how to solve a math problem, he is equipped with enough reading skill from his extra practice at home that he can quickly read and understand the worksheet's directions. Similarly, even if Mrs. Miller's instructions for a math task are unclear, Sam might still be able to solve the problem because he benefitted from having practiced or even mastered similar kinds of math skills in his IMACS afterschool program.

Much of the advantages that stem from supplementary programs/resources and language development are outcome-based. With more practice at reading, for example, students gain more knowledge of words and grammar—outcomes that are tested in schools. With more practice at math, students learn arithmetic computation, which is also something schools evaluate. Higher-SES parents not only provide more opportunities for students to learn or practice academic skills, but they also coach them in the specific problem-solving *process* teachers use and reward in schools. This is best illustrated by the similar way in which higher-SES parents assist their children with homework assignments. All of the teachers at Foxcroft used the same homework assignments for their students. One of the math worksheets students could choose to do¹² is something called “Sunshine Math.” I brought an example of a Sunshine Math worksheet with me to each parent interview and asked if and how they would help their child solve the following two problems: 1) Draw a rectangle.

¹² Weekly homework consisted of four different choices in reading, vocabulary, writing, and math. Students could choose which option they wanted to do, but had to do at least one of the options within each subject.

Make it three centimeters wide and seven centimeters long. Start at the corner below. 2) An ant walked around the outside of your rectangle above. How many centimeters did it walk?

Here is how the mother of Preston, a white higher-SES boy in Mrs. Miller's class, responds:

Preston's Mom: Ok. I would read it. [Reading directions aloud] Draw a rectangle. Make it three centimeters wide and seven centimeters long. Start at the corner below. Well I'll get out my ruler and put it down on the paper and draw, let's see three centimeters wide, so it'd have to be this way, cuz seven—anyway, I'd follow the directions. [laughs] So three centimeters wide and seven long, and um, I don't know, I guess it might fit there. I might have to draw that on a separate piece of paper... An ant walked around the outside of your rectangle above. How many centimeters did it walk? I would just add up all the centimeters around.

Interviewer: mm hmm. And if you were helping Preston with that problem, is that basically the exact same method you would tell him, or would you alter your?

Preston's Mom: Pretty much. I would see if he understood what it wanted him to do. Um, show him the ruler, make sure he knew the centimeter side versus the inch side, and make sure he knew where the three and the seven, kind of make sure he knew what the ruler was like and start in this corner and, I would probably see if he could just do it, you know, without much help, and then if he didn't seem to know what to do I might help him a little bit, you know, say, well, where do you think you should start? Or I might start here and see if he can finish it. And then... I think he could finish it fairly easy. Um, but I would help him if he needed help, and then I would see if he could figure the second one out without me helping him at all at first and then if he really couldn't figure it out, I would say, well, you know how long one side is and try to see where he figured it out, and then let him finish it from there.

Preston's mom says that she would use supplementary resources--a ruler, specifically--to differentiate centimeters from inches and would talk her son through the problem, ensuring that he understood what he was supposed to do at each stage of the logic process. She also discusses the importance of giving Preston the freedom to try it on his own first, and if he needed help, asking him questions like "where do you think you should start?" and "how long is one side?" Preston's mom could easily assist him by telling him directly what to do. However, she is particular about letting him try it first, and if he gets stuck, asking guiding questions that can lead him to the answer himself. By instructing Preston in this way, his mom provides him with a script for how to think through mental roadblocks in

the future. It seems that Preston internalized his mother's strategy, because one day in class during silent reading time, Jayla (lower-SES black girl) was struggling to read *The Cat and the Hat* to me. Makayla, a lower-middle SES black girl who was adept at reading, had been growing impatient with Jayla's slow reading, because she wanted to read to me, too, and I had promised Makayla I would listen to her read when Jayla had finished her book. Makayla began reading the words of the book for Jayla, which upset Jayla further. "Don't tell her, help her," Preston said to Makayla. This suggests that Preston understood the difference between telling someone an answer and assisting them with a problem.

Some of the higher-SES parents I talked to were not sure how they came to understand that assisting their children in this step-by-step way was their natural or preferred method; this suggests that it is an ingrained part of their habitus (Bourdieu). What more affluent parents were able to articulate though, is what they thought success in school was, what they thought students needed to be successful in school, and why it was so important to be successful. Most parents, regardless of SES, spoke generally about success being a love of learning, but several of the higher-SES believed success in school was also being "above average:"

Ellie's Mom: I want her to be the best at everything. [Laughs]...But, yeah, I always want her to be above average...Who doesn't?

Seth's Mom: I guess, for us, and you probably have figured that out, we want to push beyond...it's not like "he's average in first grade and I'll be okay with that." To me, that's just not...not...to me he's failed. You see what I'm saying?

For Ellie and Seth's mothers, it is not enough for their children to be happy going to school and to learn at their grade level. They seem to believe that success is defined as being above average, if not the best. Many of the higher-SES parents that I talked to verbalized this sentiment, if not directly, than indirectly. Sometimes, for example, parents subtly apologized

to me that their children were not as “brilliant” as friends in their class who got fours (the highest possible grades), or if they recognized their children’s academic limitations, they were quick to share how much they helped their children improve or how quickly their children advanced to what they considered an appropriate academic level. Even parents who took a different stance altogether—to avoid the competition and foster their children’s love of learning with no attachment to achievement level—recognized how challenging it was “to not get sucked into [the idea that] they have to be excellent at everything” (Anna’s mom).

In addition to expecting above-average performance from their children, higher-SES parents also discussed fairly specific skills that students needed to develop in order to be academically successful:

Seth’s Mom: if we’re talking about academic skills...while I think reading is important...knowing that math and learning how to apply math and it’s not just one plus one is two but really seeing the numbers. I think having really good math skills is important to be successful.

Ellie’s Mom: Communication skills are very important... to kind of be able to advocate a little bit for themselves

CJ’s Mom: I think an, an ability to focus, and I know that’s kind of generic, but -- and, and the ability to just focus and finish a task, and to cooperate with classmates and...really understand what's expected.

James’s Dad: The ability to take in information. In order to do that, you have to have attention, to take your information. And then, to be able to process that information... You realize that these are building blocks... So, say if you want to be a professional hockey player. That these are still building blocks to help you in that career. Know that everything you’re learning is going to help you get toward whatever you want to do.

Anna’s Mom: Well there’s been a lot of articles and stuff about...perseverance and working hard

The idea of perseverance and hard work that Anna’s mom talked about was something many of the higher-SES parents mentioned because of an article shared through

Facebook. However, these parents also shared a range of other skills that they believed were required for success in school. Higher-SES parent responses about what students need to do to be successful in school included the academic skills required to complete assignments (reading and math), interpersonal communication skills with peers and teachers, the cognitive process of focusing on and interpreting information, and recognizing the motivation for learning the information. As James's dad alludes to above, often higher-SES parents tried to impress upon their children the importance of a skill or assignment for their occupational future.

William's Mom: [William] was very impatient with the idea of having to write...things out...he's very good with math. I think he understands and gets math and why that's important, but he was very frustrated with writing, and so when he would write, he would just scribble as fast as he could because...he kept saying over and over again, I've got to do this quickly so I can finish...and I was like, well, you need to slow down.

William's Dad:...he didn't understand that goal real well. That's why he would just scribble it down real fast...

William's Mom: And William played a mini-me with [his dad], and so we had [his dad] bring home reports that he writes for his job even though he's a mechanical engineer, and he uses math a lot, but we showed him how important writing is for what he does in his job...He learned...you need to learn how to write and communicate with people because

William's Dad: ...because if he wants to be an engineer, great, but you need to have more than just math skills

William's parents recognize that some academic skills, even if they do not appear obviously transferable for the future, are important. But not only do they recognize *that* they are important, they recognize *how* they are important and can provide William a clear, applied example of how, in this case, writing, matters for the adults in his life. If William realizes that doing work involving the math he likes to do also involves the writing he does not like to do, then William might be more invested in improving his writing.

In sum, like the more affluent parents that Lareau (2003) observed, the higher-SES parents I talked to seemed to work tirelessly to “cultivate” their children into above-average school performers. They did so by offering direct instruction, supplementary academic resources, and problem-solving scripts that were both consistent with teachers’ intervention strategies and also practical for tackling cognitive challenges in the future. Parents seemed to cultivate their children in this way so they would have the skills that would ultimately be required for the affluent job market, such as international business, academics, computer programming, science, engineering, and fashion design (all jobs that parents believed their children were capable of or ought to do). Because so many of the higher-SES parents wanted their children to be “above average,” it seems as though parents recognized how competitive the affluent labor market is, and that to adequately prepare their children for that market, they must develop their children’s academic skills as early and often as possible, lest others jump ahead.

Lower-SES Parents

In contrast to more affluent parents, who seem to be actively cultivating their children for a competitive labor market, lower-SES parents were generally more vague and less purposeful about what success is, what it takes to be successful in school, or why it is important to be successful in school.

Aaliyah’s Mom: Success is, to me in school, is you’re going to school, learning and you learn something new every day...and you strive to be the best student you can be...while you’re learning.

Cristina’s Dad: I’m not really sure how to answer, because the thing is for me, when I see that she’s in first grade they’re putting things that would be for second or third grade.

Tyrone’s Mom: mmm, just willing to learn, you know, learn. Willing to learn and not being lazy, you know. Just loving school.

Makayla's Mom: Success in school [pause] um [pause] just more or less, I mean, you don't have to be the smartest person in school, but more or less achieving a goal, like you having a goal, like I guess for her being in first grade, ok, well, want her to, you know, read a [pause] I don't know [pause] typical second, you know, year old, second level book or something like that, just accomplishing a goal...Not necessarily...have straight fours or however they grade them there. You know.

Here Aaliyah and Tyrone's mom spoke generally about "going" to school, "learning" each day, or being the "best student you can be." Both of these moms' sentiments are positive, laudable, and shared by many of the parents I interviewed. However, these parents are not concerned about their children's academic ranking compared to their peers the way higher-SES parents were. This is particularly evident with Makayla's mom, who describes success in one of the clearest ways, but still emphasizes that the highest grades and relative intelligence compared to peers is not part of her definition. Because these parents' standards for their children's academic outcomes are lower than higher-SES parents', their children will likely not be indoctrinated into the importance of being "ahead" academically either. Yet as higher-SES parents push their children to be above average, the bar for "average" shifts, leaving students for whom "grade level" is acceptable, behind. This is particularly true for students like Cristina, whose dad said he wasn't sure what success was at all because to him, school seems so much more accelerated than it used to be.

When they described what they thought it took to be successful in school, lower-SES parents again pointed to vague generalities like to "learn" and "go to school." The lowest-SES parents (Cristina and Aaliyah) emphasized the importance of following the rules, staying out of trouble, and listening to the teacher.

Aaliyah's Mom: Yeah...Based on my experience in school, I think that's what it takes to be successful in school. You go to school, you listen, and you learn.

Cristina's Dad: Um I try to tell her to study, to behave well, and to listen to what I say.

Interviewer: Do you teach um, your kids certain kinds of skills or behaviors or anything like that, that you think they're going to need to be successful in school?

Tyrone's Mom: Yeah I try to....prep em up, you know, my children, they know right from wrong, wrong from right. They, I try to keep them responsible. Keep your room clean, keep your house nice, you know. This is all we got, let's keep it nice, let's keep our car clean, let's, you know, other than that, you know, just, keep em going to school and and be there for them.

Cristina's Dad encourages Cristina to behave well so that she is successful. Tyrone's mom instills responsibility and order in her children, and Aaliyah's mom encourages Aaliyah to listen. Recall that lower-SES students, when they are in the classroom, demonstrate their procedural knowledge more than their academic knowledge. One day, Tyrone was perturbed with his table mates as they slowly put away their materials before recess. To speed them along, he cleaned up their worksheets for them, put the rest of the supplies away, and made the "peace and quiet" sign so excitedly that he could barely contain his energy. Similarly, Cristina and other lower-SES students regularly communicated their knowledge of classroom procedure with teachers and peers. Part of this may have come from the fact that at home, parents reinforce the skill of knowing and following rules. It is possible, for example, that Tyrone's propensity for valuing the cleanliness of his table came in part from the lessons reinforced at home about keeping their space clean.

Like higher-SES parents, lower-SES parents believed that success in school led to success in later life outcomes, including one's job or ownership of material goods. However, in contrast to more affluent parents, who are aware of and have experienced the competitiveness of the affluent labor market, lower-SES parents seemed less clear about exactly *how* success in school could be translated into future adult outcomes.

Tyrone's Mom: You love school, you good, you know. I tell them, stay in school. That's the, you know, your money. You know that's your money. You want this, you want this, you know, you want a nice house or a nice car, stay in school. Read. Love to read, you know. That's you know, you read, you know you go to school you read you get something from it, you get a great outcome out of it, you know...I say they don't like to read. I mean, uh, if I say read, they oh, ok, if you want money, you know, you want to be, you want to live you know, this is what you have to do. You have to read, you have to, you know, do your work or whatever. They uncle, he, he has a big house, his own company, you know, nice cars. House six bathrooms. They love to go over there. Oh I want to be like. Uh. Well you have to read, you have to you know, follow up in school. Do success and you can have the same thing. You know.

Interviewer: Um. Do you talk about how to get there, kind of, on a daily basis, with them? Like--

Tyrone's Mom: Nah, not really. Not really. I don't generally like that. Hey you gotta! No [laugh]. But I just tell them, you know, if they dread, if I tell them to do something, they dread oh I don't wanna do, well, this is, you know, you love to do this, and this is what, how income comes, or, yeah.

Tyrone's mom recognizes that school is the ticket to upward mobility. With educational credentials come more affluent job opportunities and more economic resources to purchase a nice home, nice cars, and other material luxuries. However, she seems less clear about *how* school leads to upward mobility than the higher-SES parents. She recognizes that students need to read well and be able to take new information away from the work that they read. But, she is unable to communicate or demonstrate *how* reading connects to specific tangible examples of goals or outcomes, *how* professionals use reading in their everyday life, or *how* to practice or improve reading.

While the lower-SES parents I talked to might not have been able to articulate what they thought it took to be successful or how to develop the skills required of academic success, nonetheless they seemed to have a desire to be involved in their children's schoolwork. This is a departure from past findings, which suggest that lower-class parents

believe it is teachers' jobs, and not theirs, to teach (Lareau 1987).¹³ There are, however, two structural constraints that prohibit the kind of explicit coaching I saw in higher-SES families.

First, some of the lower-SES parents simply had fewer skills to be able to help:

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay. So if she was having trouble with this homework...how would she go about getting help, and if she was asking you for help how would you help her solve the first two?

Aaliyah's Mom: Oh, I don't -- I -- I don't -- I can't help her.

Interviewer: No?

Aaliyah's Mom: To be honest. No, my oldest daughter help her.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Aaliyah's Mom: Yeah.

Interviewer: Every time she'll always help her?

Aaliyah's Mom: Um-hum.

Interviewer: Okay. Um...

Aaliyah's Mom: Like that [points to Sunshine math problems], I don't even understand it.

Cristina's Dad: There was a, a thing that happened last week where they sent a, a worksheet home and I couldn't help her with it. And so I wrote a note saying I can't help her with this and I had to send it back to the school. Because I called my daughter in [a town an hour away] and she said, dad, I can't help you with this cause this is something I'd have to be sitting with my sister to be able to do it with her. So, I just had to send it back without her having done it...[For the other homework assignments] So, there's the part that's about the math, which for me is the easier part to do, and then sometimes you have to look for these words...So the thing is um, I don't always understand this exercise and to to say how many of each drawing there are things like that, and so I take a picture of it and I send it to my daughter, and then she sends it back to me with an explanation of it. And then I try to explain it to [Cristina]. But the problem is I can only explain it to her with these words in in Spanish.

Unlike the higher-SES parents, Aaliyah's mom and Cristina's dad cannot understand the homework. Aaliyah's mom seem so intimidated by the Sunshine math problems that she would not even look at, insisting that her fourth grader would be responsible for assisting Aaliyah instead. Tyrone's mom, whose quotes are not listed here, was so confused after

¹³ This may be a function of sampling bias, because those who selected into a study about what it takes to be successful in school might be more likely to be invested in or seek advantages for their children's academic success.

drawing the three by seven centimeter rectangle, that her best guess about how far the ant walked around the rectangle was four centimeters. And Cristina's Dad, while he generally feels comfortable with the math problems, has virtually no English skill to be able to assist Cristina with her homework. He even goes so far as to enlist the help of his bilingual 20-year-old daughter who lives in a town an hour away. He sends pictures of the homework to her, and she tries to explain it in Spanish to her father, so that he can explain it to Cristina, who must then translate it back to English. However, much meaning gets lost in this process, and Cristina regularly ends up with much less guidance than her higher-SES, English-speaking peers.

Lower-SES Exceptions

Two of the five lower-SES parents did seem to share the same kind of academic coaching strategy for problem-solving that more affluent parents did. Makayla's mom, a lower middle class black woman is a teacher by day and a bartender nights and weekends. Arianna's mom was a teacher back in Mexico but currently works at McDonalds and attends what she calls "McDonald's University" to get additional education so that she may one day become a US teacher or computer programmer. Arianna's father works in construction. These two families, who are lower-SES by income, housing, and wealth standards but whose educational credentials prohibit them from fitting neatly into the "working class," described their involvement in the Sunshine Math problem almost identically to the higher-SES parents I interviewed:

Makayla's Mom: [Reads problem quickly to self] Draw a rectangle make it three centimeters wide....ok for that...[long pause] I mean personally I would tell her to just draw me a regular rectangle...Cuz first I mean it saying three centimeters, then I have to actually measure and pull out a ruler, I would think, but for her, I mean, I don't know.

Interviewer: Would you have her draw it in this space here or a separate sheet of paper?

Makayla's Mom: Oh yeah I was looking how it said, I would probably give her another sheet of paper. Right, cuz that's usually what we do for this.

Interviewer: And just free hand it or would you get out the ruler and do the whole bit?

Makayla's Mom: Well see since it says actually 3 centimeters, I would probably, because I have the rulers and glue and everything here cuz you know I'm a teacher, so yeah, I would probably have her measure it and show her these are the inches, these are the centimeters, and then have her count it. Yeah.

Interviewer: Ok. And then, the, the second problem with the ant walking around the outside of the rectangle, how would you tell her to solve that one, or how would you help her, I guess?

Makayla's Mom: The ant walks around the outside of the rectangle... Oh you know, just adding, you know, three on each side, seven on the other sides, and just add them all up. I would say just add them together. Three and seven is how many? I mean sometimes she'll do it on her finger. Sometimes she'll draw circles and little shapes, have her count.

Interviewer: And does she usually come up with the strategies or do you tend to suggest?

Makayla's Mom: Usually she's good about showing her work, like she'll draw little lines or circles or something.

Though Makayla's mom was a bit more directive in her guidance than Arianna's parents, both sets of parents demonstrated the step-by-step logic of solving the Sunshine Math problems. They used a ruler as a resource and asked guiding questions to their children to lead them to the answer instead of telling them exactly what the problem said or how to do it. This kind of problem-solving engagement resembles the same engagement of higher-SES parents. It is likely that because of Makayla's and Arianna's moms' educational and professional background, that they have acquired and regularly used these types of skills in their adult lives. These advantages position Makayla and Arianna above some of their lower-SES peers. Indeed, while many of their lower-SES peers were placed in remedial, or at best, average, reading and math ability groups, Makayla and Arianna were both placed in the second-highest reading and math ability groups, respectively. However, because of other economic and structural constraints, these lower-SES families might still struggle to transmit

to their children their cultural capital. For example, because of the time and stress demands of multiple jobs, Makayla's mom, who has no partner support and little other social support of similar educational background, may not be able to be as involved as she would like to be in facilitating Makayla's academic skills. For Arianna's family, translating each homework assignment from English to Spanish can lead to confusion and ultimately becomes unhelpful for Arianna. Additionally, her parents recognize that they do not have the resources at home to make homework or supplementary education easier, including computers or internet.

These lower-SES "exceptions," or rather, these families whose class status occupies contradictory class locations, suggests that other structural factors besides one's occupational relationship to authority, shape what cultural capital families have and how cultural capital gets passed from parents to children. Many cultural capitalists' framework for understanding how and why lower-SES parents are involved with their kids is limiting because it views two class groups within a Marxian understanding of class. But families like Arianna's and Makayla's demonstrate that socioeconomic status is more complex than that. By considering SES the relative relationship to the socio-economic characteristics of hegemonic dominance, we can understand more complex variation in the type of cultural capital different groups have, how that cultural capital is shared or transmitted between members of those social groups, and whether or not that cultural capital accrues advantages for its members.

Summary and Conclusion

Overall, I found that first grade students' understanding of teachers' instructions vary by instruction type, which themselves vary in degree of explicitness. Specifically, teachers' instructions about classroom rules and procedure are fairly clear to students, in part because teachers regularly communicate them. On the other hand, their academic instructions are

sometimes less clear and require more interpretation on the part of the student. When students' knowledge is questioned, students of lower SES backgrounds are more keen to demonstrate their knowledge of procedure. More affluent students, on the other hand, are more likely to demonstrate academic knowledge of the kind that teachers expect. While students' demonstration of different kinds of knowledge may be due in part to teachers' explicit or implicit communication of different kinds of instructions, the skills that students learn outside of school, or in other words, the cultural capital that students bring with them to school, also inform students' likelihood for demonstrating particular kinds of knowledge. Lower-SES students, whose families emphasize rule following and offer little specific guidance in the problem-solving process or its connection to future adult life, tend to demonstrate more procedural knowledge in school because this is the type of knowledge for which they can be rewarded. Higher-SES students have families who directly coach their children in the problem-solving scripts necessary for school, offer direct and supplementary academic instruction, and connect their academic skills to real-world life examples. Because of this, they have far more skills and experiences to draw upon to demonstrate academic knowledge and decode implicit teacher expectations. To the degree that more advantaged students continue to demonstrate "above average" academic skill, teachers' expectations about what "typical" first graders can or ought to be able to do upon entering school will increase, leaving those for whom "average" is acceptable, behind.

This ability to decode teachers' academic intentions and demonstrating academic competence, may be a key to understanding group differences in achievement, which is a finding that is consistent with Kelly's (2008) conclusion that substantive, or academic, engagement leads to higher grades than procedural engagement. Kelly (2008) finds that

middle school students who are “substantively engaged,” including asking and answering “authentic” and “critical thinking” questions, tend to earn higher grades.¹⁴ He finds that substantive engagement accounts for 36 percent of socioeconomic and half of the racial gap in grades. If, in first grade, students’ SES cultural capital differences impact the degree to which students can decode teachers’ instructions and demonstrate academic competence, it seems likely that by middle school these same students will be engaged in school in different ways as well. First graders who start out demonstrating procedural rather than academic knowledge may grow into middle schoolers who are more procedurally engaged, and first graders who start out decoding teacher instruction and demonstrating academic competence may become more substantively engaged in middle school. Because substantive engagement seems to matter most heavily for distinguishing A from B students and B from C students (Kelly 2008), the cumulative effect of first graders’ knowledge demonstration may have substantial impacts on socioeconomic grade gaps.

It is clear from parent interviews, along with established cultural capital research (Lareau 2003; Condron 2007; Calarco 2011; 2014), that families play a key role in shaping students’ skills that they bring with them to the classroom. Though much cultural capital research examines the effect of SES alone on outcomes, I examined students and families from a more intersectional perspective while at the same time complicating the definition of SES. The results from this study suggest that SES, in terms of one’s relationship to dominant, hegemonic class resources and cultures, seems to matter for students’ cultural capital. Neither race nor ethnicity seemed to determine the degree to which students demonstrate these

¹⁴ Kelly (2008) defines authentic questions as not having a predetermined answer, and critical thinking questions as going beyond reporting facts, recitations, or what happened and instead analyzing or generalizing unknown information based on previous facts learned.

different kinds of knowledge in the classroom because none of the four ethnic groups studied—white, black, Hispanic, Asian—shared common ethnic characteristics across socioeconomic backgrounds that pertained to the knowledge students demonstrated in school. This finding may be a function of the lack of variability in students’ socioeconomic backgrounds across race and ethnicity. While there were a few middle class black students and a few lower class white students, all of the Asian students in this study were higher SES and almost all of the Hispanic students were lower SES. This meant that black and Hispanic students were disproportionately lower SES than the white and Asian students at both Cumberland and Foxcroft, which suggests that to the extent there are average “racial” differences in skills and achievement at these schools, those racial differences may actually reflect socioeconomic differences in these settings.

Alternatively, as Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999) suggest, black and lower SES students may receive less return on their cultural capital because of “proximate evaluation by teachers” and the longer term consequences (lower track placement, for example) that occur from differential teacher evaluation. The remaining findings of this study demonstrate the extent to which students of color, particularly black students, do have a harder time turning their cultural capital into academic advantages. While the behavior and skills that students brought with them to school did not vary in clear racial ways, teachers’ and peers’ responses to students were racialized in subtle ways that reinforced racial hierarchies and segregated student social networks. These themes will be explored further in Chapters 5 and 6.

Finally, despite socioeconomic differences in family socialization and academic coaching, the findings of this study suggest that the cultural capital differences students bring

with them to school may be overcome with clearer, more explicit and detailed academic instruction. Since teachers communicate classroom rules and procedures clearly and regularly enough for students of all class backgrounds to identify them, it seems plausible that similar strategies could be employed for academic instruction as well. It is not difficult to imagine, for example, that before silent reading time every day the teacher asks the students what the three (or four, or five, etc.) strategies they can use for tricky words are, or before each writer's workshop ask the students to recall what two things they must try to incorporate into their writing today. With constant, clear communication, all kinds of information—procedural and academic—can likely be understood by all students.

CHAPTER 5: TEACHERS' UNCONSCIOUS RACIALIZED TREATMENT AND INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS

One January day I walked to Ms. Janwari's class as the students were returning from lunch. Ms. Janwari corralled the students to the carpet in the front of the room so they could listen to her read a story called "What Time is It Mr. Crocodile?" It is a fiction book that follows the tale of a crocodile's hourly schedule for the day. When Ms. Janwari invited students to share from the cover's context clues why they thought it might be a fiction, rather than an informational book, she called on several students, including Leah, Zoe, Anna, and Emory, all white girls (three of whom are higher-SES), who offered thoughts such as "alligators don't walk around town," which was depicted on the cover's illustration, and "crocodiles don't tell time." When Aaliyah, a black lower SES girl, added her own thought, "And crocodiles do not write books," Ms. Janwari corrected her, saying "We are not talking out of turn."

As Ms. Janwari began the story, she periodically called on students to ask what time the clock on each page said. The students had been practicing a unit on telling time that week, and Ms. Janwari wanted to see if the students could remember what they had learned. She called on Zoe, then Gabe, two white middle class students to explain what time it was and how they knew the answer. Both students capably explained that on the first page it was 11:00 and on the second page it was 12:00, and that they knew what time it was because the hour hand was on the 11 when it was 11:00 and 12 when it was 12:00, and the minute hand

was on the 12. As Ms. Janwari listened to the students explain their answers, her excitement as she mouthed along with their logic was clearly palpable. Then, Aaliyah asked Ms. Janwari if she could move the book's angle a bit because she could not see the picture. "I need you to stop talking," Ms. Janwari said to Aaliyah.

As Ms. Janwari continued to read, more students began to blurt out observations about the book without reprimand from Ms. Janwari. Makenna, a white higher SES girl, notices, "Everywhere he [the main character] goes, he sees the clock!" Ms. Janwari commends Makenna's observation and flips through the other pages to show the students where the clock is located. On one of the pages, Ben, a white middle class boy, blurts out, "That monkey is eating hot peppers!" Ms. Janwari calls on a few more students to share their observations, including Aiden and Jack, two white middle class boys. Aaliyah, who noticed that there were sound effects printed outside of the main text of the page, calls out, "Did you read the big words, Ms. Janwari?" "I did. Stop calling out," Ms. Janwari says to Aaliyah.

This small moment in a day during Ms. Janwari's class was fairly typical of many of the days that I observed. Ms. Janwari disproportionately called on and favored the voices of white students in her class, even when they were not following classroom procedure. Makenna and Ben, two white students, blurted out observations when they should have raised their hands and waited to be called upon. However, when Aaliyah tried to interject her thoughts, Ms. Janwari was quick to silence her and reprimand her for her behavior. Unlike some of the other lower SES students of color in the class, Aaliyah often exhibited the kinds of behavior in class that prior research has found to be consistent with "middle class" student behavior. She called out when she had a comment or question. She requested help frequently and in diverse ways (Calarco 2011). Yet Ms. Janwari did not reward those efforts or skills to

the same degree that she rewarded white higher SES students who exhibited similar behavior. It did not seem to matter whether Aaliyah was trying to *demonstrate competence*, as she had done when she noted that alligators do not write books, whether she was *advocating for her own needs*, as she had done when she asked Ms. Janwari to shift the angle of the book so she could see, or whether she was *demonstrating procedural competence* by asking whether Ms. Janwari had read each word on the page as she should have. Aaliyah was reprimanded each time.

When I spoke to teachers about their perceptions of students, I found that teachers at Foxcroft and Cumberland Elementary are cognizant of the inequality with which students come to school. Ms. Jennifer is keenly aware of the ways in which classroom structure and practice can privilege more advantaged students, even in seemingly minor ways. For example, asking students to provide their own pencils, erasers, and crayons rather than providing “table caddies” of supplies that all students at the table can share means that resource inequality—who can afford nice new supplies and who cannot—becomes clear to everyone. At Cumberland, Ms. Jennifer says that they work hard to provide an equal educational experience for all students, and she considers it part of her mission to do so as well.

Teachers at Foxcroft have similar ideas; they recognize that students come to school with different resources and support and try to accommodate, compensate for, and channel students’ unequal backgrounds into beneficial learning experiences for all students in their classrooms. Mrs. Miller, for example, recognizes that not all students have dedicated space to complete homework or parental assistance, so she encourages those students to work on their homework with her at school instead. Ms. Janwari works to integrate her students socially by

assigning tables in part on students' race/ethnicity such that at least one white and one student of color are at every table. I got the sense from teachers at both Foxcroft and Cumberland that providing equal educational opportunity and leveling the playing field for students of all racial and socioeconomic backgrounds was a priority for their own as well as their colleagues' practice. However, even among the most well-meaning teachers in some of the most progressive elementary schools in North Carolina, I saw subtle, and in some cases more obvious, racial bias in the way that teachers at Foxcroft and Cumberland interacted with students.

I argue that this bias is unconscious and not intentional, but that it can have direct impacts on the ways that students "do school." In line with previous research, students who are regularly offered the opportunity to participate, answer questions, and construct classroom knowledge tend to remain engaged with school and show academic growth; whereas students who are regularly silenced, ignored, or reprimanded tend to disengage with school or show less academic growth (Anyon 1980; Willis 1981; Ferguson 2000; MacLeod 2009). However, racial and ethnic differences in who was regularly rewarded, ignored, and reprimanded did not always follow predicted directions. The students who were invited to participate in class far above average did tend to be white, higher-SES students, a finding that would be expected (Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell 1999). However, in some classrooms, black students of all SES backgrounds were invited to participate at least or above average as well, a finding that would not be expected. Nonetheless, black students did tend to be reprimanded more often than they should have been, given their actual misbehavior, which is consistent with previous research (Ferguson 2000).

While the literature on black-white disparities in teacher treatment and expectations is somewhat established, there is less attention to teacher interactions with Asian and Hispanic students in racially diverse settings like Foxcroft and Cumberland. Contrary to what we might expect, I found that in the one classroom that had Asian students, they were more regularly ignored in whole group instruction, which is surprising given that Asian students are often considered “model” students (Lee 2009). Finally, while Hispanic students in some of the classrooms were reprimanded slightly more often than their actual misbehavior warranted, I found that most often, Hispanic students were regularly ignored altogether.

Teacher Bias

As Ferguson (1998) notes, it is often difficult to say whether teachers are racially biased or not. Teachers often have higher expectations and evaluations of white students than black students (Roscigno and Ainsworth Darnell 1999), but often expectations are attributed to real differences in achievement (Ferguson 1998). Ferguson notes that when teachers’ biases are judged according to the standard of “conditional race neutrality,” or the idea that expectations are controlled for other background factors, there is little evidence for teacher bias. Other researchers have found this to be true as well—net of other background characteristics, teachers seem not to be racially biased toward or against particular students (Madon et al 1998; Farkas 2003). However, when teachers interact with real students in real classrooms, teachers cannot “control” for other factors like statistical regression can. Researchers report that racial bias occurs in labeling students as “gifted,” in recommending students for advanced classes and track placement; and even in rates of referrals, suspensions, and expulsions, net of actual disruptive behavior (Rist 1973; Gamoran 1992; Ferguson 2000; Skiba et al 2002; Blake et al 2011; Hannon, DeFina, and Bruch 2013).

Teachers also seem to treat students differently in their everyday academic interactions. Ferguson (1998) suggests that experimental studies conducted in the 1970s suggest that black students receive briefer feedback after mistakes, less positive feedback after correct answers to questions, and less coaching toward direct answers. In a study conducted nearly 30 years later, Casteel (1998) found, based on his analysis of 400 seventh graders, that white students initiated more interactions with teachers by raising their hand, and white students received more directed “process” questions than black students (“process” questions are those without clear right or wrong answers, that require critical thinking and analysis, whereas “product” questions have short right or wrong answers). White students also received more positive interactions like praise, positive feedback, and being given more clues to answers than were black students. Black students, on the other hand, received more negative feedback from teachers. Though Casteel’s (1998) study only focuses on the interactions of white teachers, Ferguson (1998) argues that regardless of teacher race, teachers have lower expectations for black students.

While it is unclear whether teachers’ interactions with students in these studies were informed by real differences in students’ skills, behaviors, and academic engagement, students nonetheless begin to notice and be impacted by that fact that others who look like them have different expectations and treatment. According to Fisher et al (2000), 32% of black and 38% of Latino (relative to 13% of white) students reported being discouraged from taking advanced classes, disciplined wrongly, or graded unfairly because of their race. These effects seem to be compounded for stigmatized students, for whom teachers’ perceptions seem to matter more (Ferguson 1998). Black students report being more concerned about

pleasing teachers than parents, which as Ferguson (1998) argues may reflect students' underlying need to dispel negative stereotypes (Steele and Aronson 1998).

There are several limitations to these studies of teacher bias, the first of which is that few focus more comprehensively on multiple racial and ethnic group comparisons. The research on black-white inequality is fairly established, but with growing populations of immigrant and non-immigrant Latino and Asian students of different ethnic backgrounds, it is important to paint a more complete picture of the teacher bias landscape, if there is one. Second, much of the research on teacher bias examines interactions between teachers and adolescents or treatment of adolescents from middle school through high school. By adolescence, students have already had much experience in schools, and negative or positive interactions with teachers (which may inform how teachers therefore interact with students or what they expect from students) may have already been established in their earlier educational years. Third, the model of education has changed in the last few decades; now more than ever, teachers are inviting students to participate in the construction of classroom knowledge through discussion and activities (see Chapter 4). With more opportunity for students to be involved in the classroom, there is more opportunity for teachers to more equitably or inequitably interact with students. Relatedly, teachers and educational professionals are as cognizant of racial disparities in education as they have ever been, and multiculturalism is a greater part of teacher training. Since much of the teacher bias literature comes from studies conducted in the mid to late-twentieth century, it is necessary to understand whether and how contemporary classroom teachers, particularly those in the earliest grades when students are most impressionable, are biased.

Racialized Treatment in the Construction of Classroom Knowledge

There were subtle ways in which teachers at Foxcroft and Cumberland privileged the voices of white students in their classrooms. In all three classrooms I observed, instruction is a collaborative effort between teachers and students. Traditionally, education has been more unidirectional, where teachers give knowledge to students via lecture and demonstration. Students listen and absorb this knowledge, then demonstrate their understanding of that knowledge through assessments. However, the model of education I saw at Foxcroft and Cumberland was different.

“Today we are going to talk about *Owen*. We’re going to talk about the interesting words from *Owen* just like we did with *Geraldine’s Blanket*.”...[Ms. Jennifer] says that there is one more word from *Owen* that she wants to talk about: ratty. She asks which word from *Geraldine* is like the word “ratty.” She calls on Ian, who says “frayed.” [Ms. Jennifer writes this word, as well as the others the students suggest, on a flip chart next to her.] Jennifer asks what other words mean the same thing as ratty, and calls on Ethan first. He says “holes.” Emma says “patches,” (another word from *Geraldine*), and when Jennifer calls on Harper, she says that “patches” was what she was going to say. Minsuh says the word “frayed” again, and Gabby says the word “torn.” ...Jennifer calls on Eric next, who says that he has another word for essential [the word they had previously been talking about before moving to the word “ratty”]. He says that his word is “refused.” Jennifer asks how that is related to essential, and he says that in one of the stories one of the characters refuses something that is essential. Jennifer says that refuses is not exactly the same thing as essential; it’s more like the opposite and has a different meaning. She writes the word refuses on the board, but in a different color, to distinguish it from the other words that mean the same thing as essential. Jennifer then asks to think again about the word ratty. Ethan suggests “small,” and Jennifer says that sometimes things that are ratty get smaller...Jennifer says that one of the words she was thinking about was “dirty.” Hannah puts her hand up in the air, and Jennifer calls on her, but all she says is “Um, um, um...” “Remember that smart thought,” Jennifer says to Hannah.

Instead of teachers giving their knowledge to students, students are invited to construct knowledge with their teachers by offering their own thoughts, opinions, and analyses about a topic. Teachers validate these thoughts and opinions, which empowers students’ voices. Teachers also create an environment of collaborative, constructive

education by structuring their lessons around questions rather than dictating facts. In the example above, Ms. Jennifer wanted students to compare some of the vocabulary words they had been learning in the book *Owen* to the vocabulary words they had learned the previous week in the book *Geraldine's Blanket*. She could have lectured the students, showing them a list of vocabulary words, their meanings, and when they appeared in the respective books. However, Ms. Jennifer asks the students to generate the words, their meanings, and their relationship to the two books for themselves.

In this example, Ms. Jennifer called on Ian (Asian higher SES boy), Ethan (white higher SES boy) twice, Emma (white higher SES girl), Harper (white higher SES girl), Minsuh (Asian higher SES girl), Gabby (white higher SES girl), Eric (white higher SES boy), and Hannah (white lower SES girl). By calling on these students, they became the voice for the whole class, as they helped construct the class's knowledge of the books' vocabularies. Ms. Jennifer legitimized their ideas by writing them on the flip chart next to her. Even when students were incorrect, as Eric had been when he believed "refused" was a synonym for "essential," Ms. Jennifer still found a way to legitimize his idea by pointing out that the word meant the opposite of "essential" and still writing it down on the flip chart in a different color.

When teachers invite students to construct knowledge in this way, students who are called on more frequently by the teacher tend to shape the knowledge of the classroom more than others. This means that some students are given a louder and more powerful voice in the class, which could have implications for the way students view themselves and their capability as well as the way students view one another. Those who are called on more frequently may be viewed as more well-liked by the teacher or perhaps more intelligent (Rist

1973). Because these students' voices are more audible in classroom discussion, they may also be viewed as students who generally matter more than others. Indeed, Tyson (2002) finds that students attempt to create "ability shows" to influence how their peers saw them, and students became well aware that in-class performances shaped others' perceptions of who ought to be seen as smart or not.

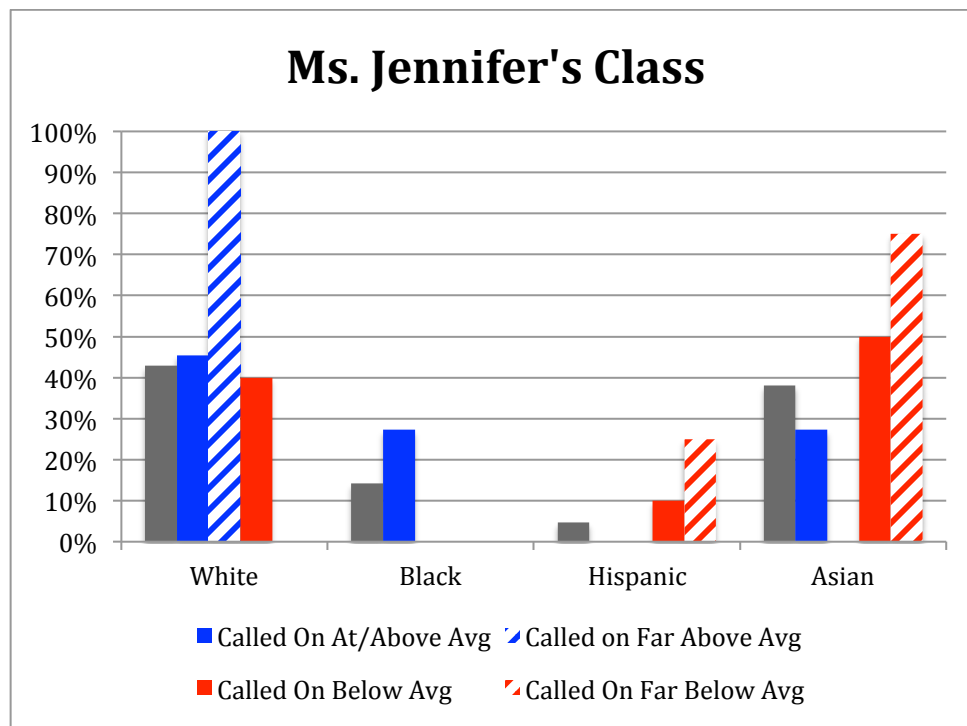
Calling on Students

To understand whether students were being given a more or less powerful voice in the construction of classroom knowledge, I counted the number of times teachers called on students to ask and answer questions in the moments that I observed their class. I am unable to distinguish whether these counts of teachers calling on students is a function of some students raising their hands more often than others, because I could not consistently capture who had raised their hand and who was called on in the fast pace of the activity. However, all three teachers regularly called on students who raised their hands as well as those who did not have their hand raised. Further, the first graders I watched were eager to be heard, and typically when teachers asked questions, many hands soared into the air to participate. I argue that teachers' propensity for calling on particular students is largely due to their unconscious preferences for particular students rather than differences in the way students behaved when teachers posed a question.

The following graphs represent the racial distribution of teachers calling on students during the times I observed the class. The far left (gray) column represents the total population of white, black, Hispanic, Asian, and other students in the class. The blue bars represent the percentage of students who were called on at or above average and far above average (1 standard deviation above the class mean). The blue bars help us understand

whether or not a particular racial or ethnic group was over- or under-represented among the group of top contributors relative to the percentage of that particular group in the class population. For example, if white students make up 50 percent of the class, but make up 75 percent of the students who were called on at or above average, then white students' voices would be disproportionately represented among those who are called on frequently. The red bars represent the percentage of students who were called on below and far below average. Like the blue bars, they can be interpreted as the extent to which students of a particular racial or ethnic group are over- or under-represented among the lowest contributors relative to their classroom population. For example, if black students make up 50 percent of the classroom population, they should make up 50 percent of the students who are called on least frequently. However, if black students make up 75 percent of the students who are called on least frequently, then black students' voices are disproportionately silenced by teachers not calling on them. Note that these counts and the percentages that I present are descriptive, not inferential.

Figure 7. Percent of Students Called on At/Above and Below Average Relative to Student Population in Ms. Jennifer's Class, by Race

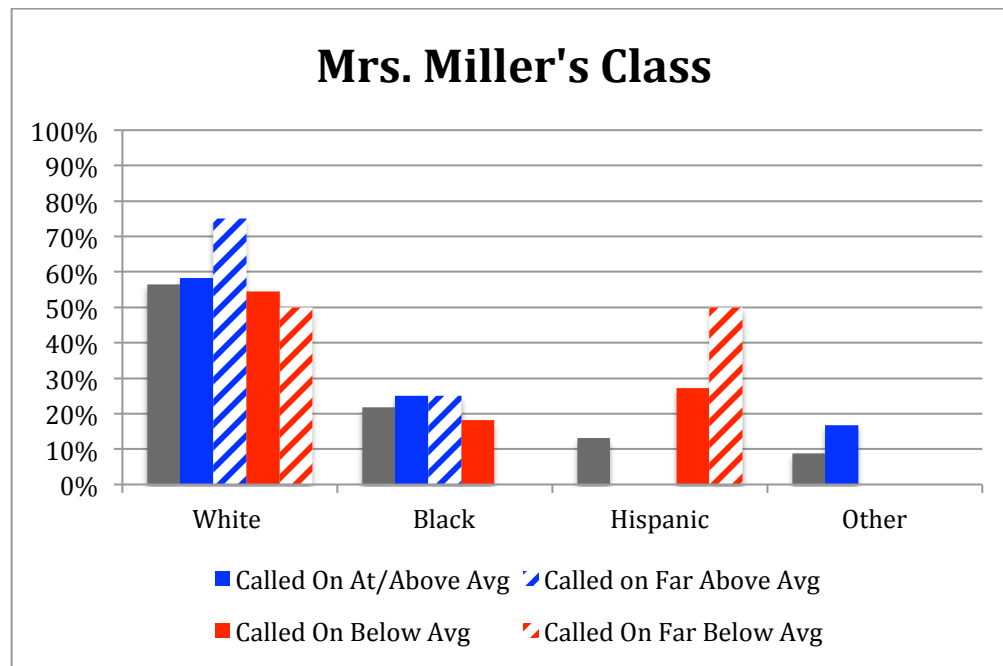


In Ms. Jennifer's class, white and black students seem to be slightly overrepresented among the students who are called on at or above average, and Asian and Hispanic students are underrepresented. Similarly, white and black students are underrepresented among the students called on least frequently in class, and Hispanic and Asian students are overrepresented. What is perhaps more clearly patterned by race and SES is the group of students who are called on far above average, or one standard deviation above the class mean (over 40 times, compared to the class average of 25). All four of the students called on far above average are higher SES white students (Emma, Ethan, Eric, and Grace).

While not depicted in the graph, SES also seems to matter for students who are called on at or above average in Ms. Jennifer's class. Most of the students who are called on at or above, but not far above average, are black and Asian higher SES students. Of the four white

students called on below average, two of them are lower SES (Hannah and Hailey), and the students who are called on far below average are all non-native English speakers of various SES and ethnic backgrounds (Lucas, Lily, and Claire).

Figure 8. Percent of Students Called on At/Above and Below Average Relative to Student Population in Mrs. Miller's Class, by Race

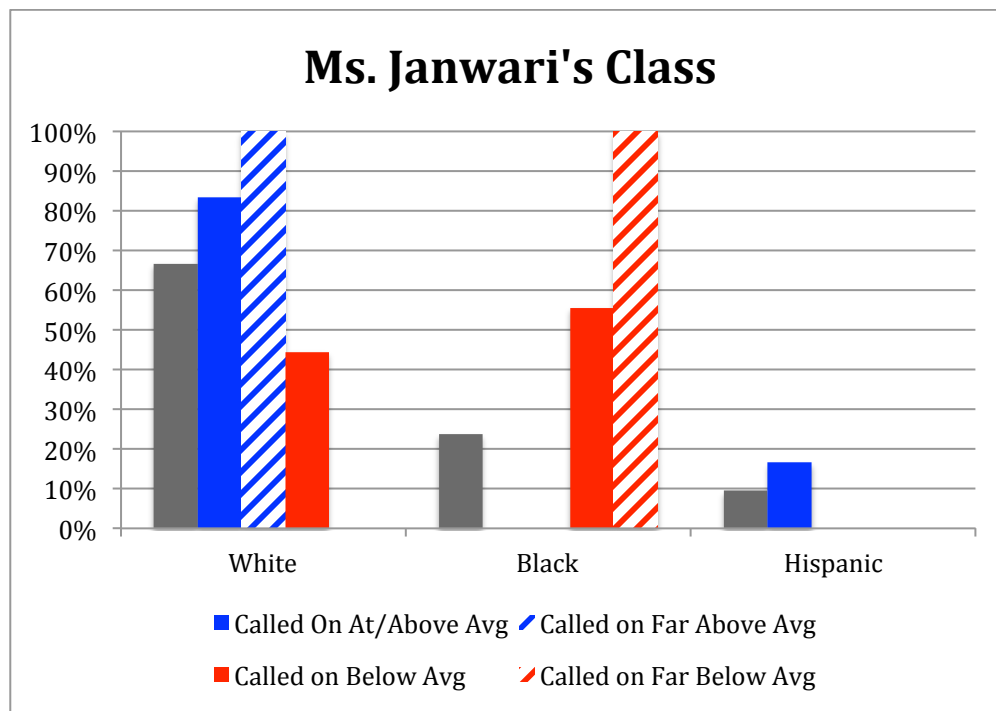


In Mrs. Miller's class, students who are called on at or above average, as well as below average, seem fairly evenly distributed among some racial groups. Though three of the four students Mrs. Miller called on far above average were white higher SES boys, the percentage of black students called on at or above average is nearly identical to their classroom population. This suggests that white higher SES students are slightly favored at the top of the distribution, but that black students are not disproportionately under- or over-represented among average, above average, and below average contributors. Makayla and Tyrone, two lower-middle SES black students, were called on 18 times (far above average)

17 times, respectively. Jayla, a poor black student, was called on 16 times, just below Tyrone. These three black students were called on more frequently than 10 of the white higher SES students in Mrs. Miller's class, and the rest of the five lower SES students of color. Shawn and Treasure, two poor black students, were also called on more than five of the higher SES white students.

However, Mrs. Miller calls on Hispanic students very infrequently. Arianna was only called on 6 times, half as much as the class average (class average was 12); B was called on 4 times, and twice he was called on by a random name generator instead of being called on intentionally by Mrs. Miller. Maricella was also only called on twice. Taken together, the evidence suggests that Mrs. Miller's propensity for calling on particular students was least racially motivated among all three teachers, yet she still seemed to silence the voices of her Hispanic students (all of whom spoke English capably) more than others.

Figure 9. Percent of Students Called on At/Above and Below Average Relative to Student Population in Ms. Janwari's Class, by Race



Ms. Janwari was perhaps most blatant in the way race and ethnicity played into her patterns of calling on students. With the exception of her two Hispanic students, Carlos and Cristina (who were called on the average of 7 times), every single student whom Ms. Janwari called on at or above average was white. All three students she called on far above average were white. Only four white students were called on below average, and every single black student in her class was called on below average. The two students who were called on far below average were also black.

Other Ways Students Are Invited to Construct Knowledge—Contributing More and Blurting Out Without Reprimand

In addition to teachers calling on students, there are also other ways in which some students' voices become privileged. One way is when teachers invite students to "tell me

more,” or expand upon a comment that they had just made. In this example, Mrs. Miller was asking students to name characters in the fiction books they had been reading by the author Jan Brett.

Mrs. Miller continues, “All of his books are fiction. They all have characters. What about Hedgie’s Surprise?” She calls on Fr. who exclaims “Hedgie the Hedgehog!” Mrs. Miller calls on Seth next, who says “The Tompkin.” Mrs. Miller seems confused. “Who?” “The tompkin,” Seth says again. One of the other students says that it’s the little boy. Seth picks this up and continues, “The little boy who got tired of having porridge and took the eggs from the hens.” Mrs. Miller writes “The Tomkin” on the board, admitting that she’s not sure how it’s spelled. “And who were some of the other characters?” Mrs. Miller asks. “The chicken,” Sergio says. “And who was the chicken?” she asks. “The bad boy,” Sergio says.

Both Seth and Sergio are invited to give follow up answers to help explain their comments, which privileges their voices in the construction of classroom knowledge. The same is not done for the next group of students who continue to name characters from the Jan Brett books they had been reading:

[Mrs. Miller] calls on Ellie next to list the name of a character in the story about Daisy, and she says “May May”... “And the fisherman!” Henry blurts out. “The fisherman, the fisherman!” lots of students say. Next, she pulls up an image of the cover of the *Three Snow Bears*. She calls on Jayla, who says that one of the characters is “the little girl.” Tyrone adds “the bears.”

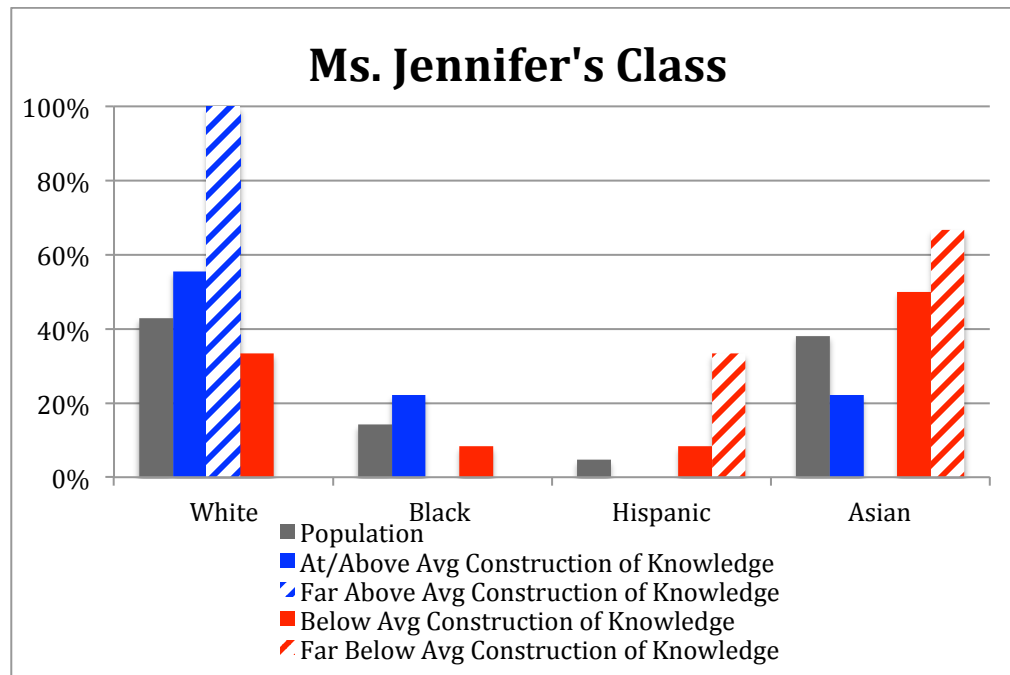
Mrs. Miller could have asked the students who these characters were, what their role in the plot was, or any number of additional follow up questions. However, she chose to move on from each person quickly, affording them only one chance to answer the question.

Allowing students to continue or expand upon their ideas is one way in which students’ voices were heard in the construction of classroom knowledge. Another way in which students’ voices were heard was blurting out thoughts and questions without being called upon. Even though all three teachers generally preferred students to raise their hands so they could call on them, students still regularly blurted out (as Henry and others had done

in the previous excerpt). Sometimes teachers reminded students that they needed to raise their hands instead, but sometimes teachers would carry on the discussion without any negative feedback to the student. To the extent that the teacher continued to engage with the student positively (i.e. answer their question, comment on their observation) even though he or she failed to follow classroom procedure, I argue that the student was participating in teacher-sanctioned construction of classroom knowledge.

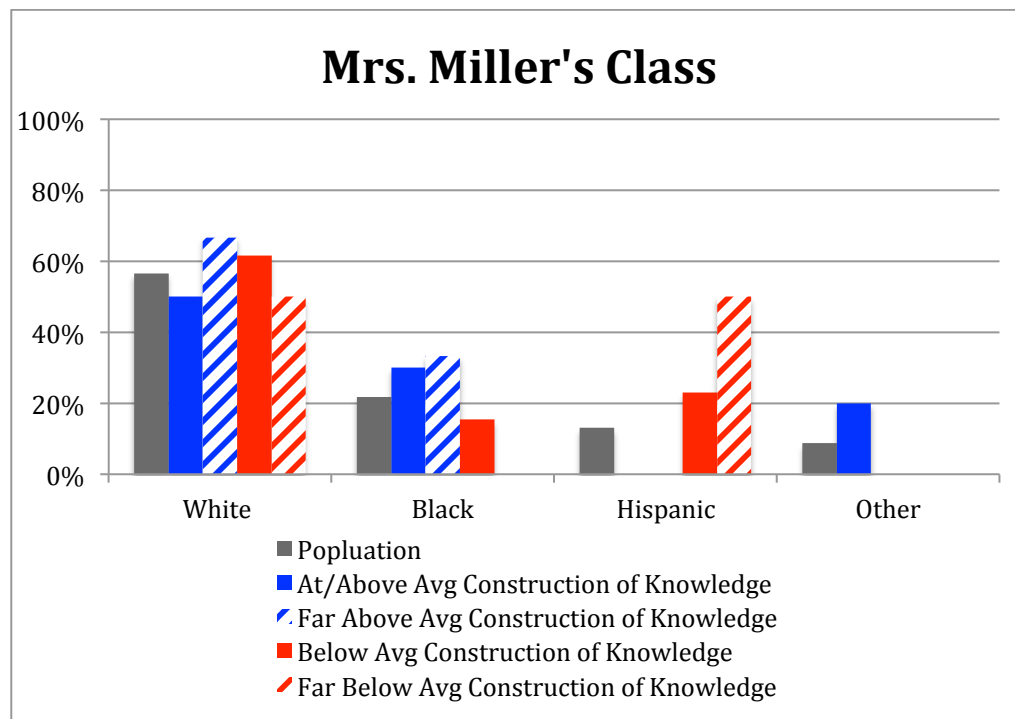
To get a sense of students' total teacher-sanctioned contributions to classroom knowledge, I counted and combined the number of times teachers called on a student, with the number of times a student was invited to continue expanding upon their idea, with the number of times a student benefitted from blurting out through positive response from the teacher. The counts for invitations to follow up and positive response from blurting out were too low to warrant their own separate analyses, but together with teacher call-ons, they offer insight in which students' voices are privileged in total contribution to classroom knowledge.

Figure 10. Percent of Students Invited to Construct Knowledge Relative to Student Population in Ms. Jennifer's Class, by Race



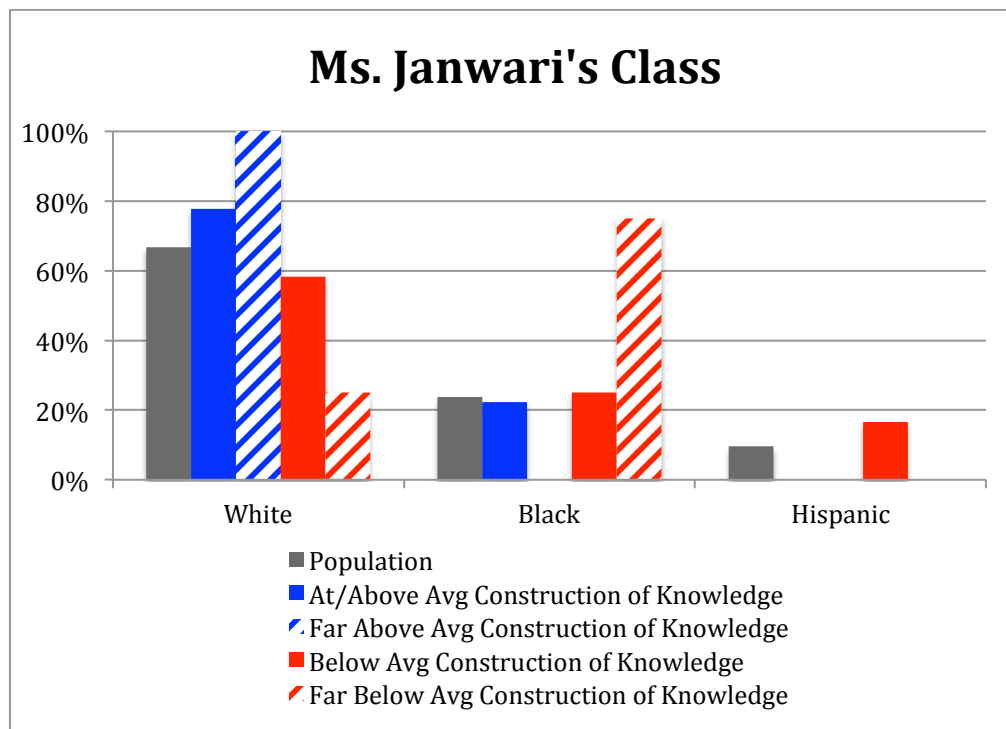
In Ms. Jennifer's class, white and black students have a slight advantage in the construction of classroom knowledge relative to their classroom population size, but white students still have a sizable advantage at the top end of the distribution, where all of the students who contribute to classroom knowledge far above average are white. The percent of Asian students who contribute at above average is disproportionately low, and the percentage of Asian and Hispanic students who contribute below and far below average is much higher than should be expected given their classroom population. This seems to suggest that in Ms. Jennifer's class, white students are privileged as the highest classroom contributors, black students' voices are privileged higher than average, but not as high as the top white students, and Hispanic and Asian students are disproportionately silenced in the construction of classroom knowledge.

Figure 11. Percent of Students Invited to Construct Knowledge Relative to Student Population in Mrs. Miller's Class, by Race



For black and white students in Mrs. Miller's class, the percentage of students contributing at, above, below, or far above/below average is fairly equal to the percentage of their population in the class. This suggests that for black and white students (as well as the two multiracial students in the class), Mrs. Miller does not privilege particular voices in the construction of classroom knowledge over others. However, Mrs. Miller does seem to disproportionately silence Hispanic students, as they comprise a disproportionately high percentage of students who contribute below and far below average in the construction of classroom knowledge.

Figure 12. Percent of Students Invited to Construct Knowledge Relative to Student Population in Ms. Janwari's Class, by Race



In Ms. Janwari's class, white students have the highest advantage among top contributors to classroom knowledge, as all three students whose contributions are far above average are white. Black students are most disproportionately represented in the bottom of Ms. Janwari's distribution, as three of the four students who contribute to classroom knowledge far below average are black. This is particularly meaningful given that there are only five black students in the class altogether. These findings suggest that in Ms. Janwari's class, inequality in classroom construction of knowledge (particularly black-white inequality) occurs at the top and bottom of the distribution, but in the middle, there is slightly more equal racial and ethnic representation in number of times students of particular racial and ethnic groups are permitted to construct classroom knowledge.

In sum, all three teachers I observed have at least some preference for calling on white (higher SES) students. Though not all teachers always call on white students over students of color, when teachers call on a subset of students far more than others, those students tend to be white and higher SES. Because Asian students are often viewed similarly to or even more positively than white students, we might expect teachers to similarly privilege Asian students' voices in the construction of classroom knowledge (Lee 2009). However, Ms. Jennifer (the only teacher I observed with Asian students in her class) did not seem to grant the same privileges to Asian students in calling on them or allowing them to construct knowledge as she did to white students. While much research has been dedicated to detailing the degree of black-white inequality in education (Ferguson 2000; Jencks and Phillips 1998), in these two schools, two of the three teachers I observed did not disproportionately silence black students. However, all three teachers I observed did disproportionately silence Hispanic students, and it is unclear why this might be. All of the Hispanic students in this study spoke English well, so it was not a matter of limited English capability or comfort speaking in front of others. While I cannot provide an exact count, my fieldnotes suggest that the students in Mrs. Miller's and Ms. Jennifer's class did seem to raise their hands less frequently than other students. However, teachers could just as easily have called on these students as they did others in moments where students had not been raising their hands.

Perhaps the southern contexts of these schools could provide insight into teacher-student interaction dynamics. All three of the teachers I observed have lived in North Carolina for most of their lives and are likely attuned to the history of (and perhaps personal experiences with) race relations in the South. That history revolves heavily around the black-

white dichotomy, and to the degree that these teachers feel it is part of their mission to create a more racially equal learning experience for students, teachers might be more attuned to the importance of providing the same opportunities to black students as they do their white students. However, Hispanic immigration to the South is a relatively new phenomenon, increasing by about half a million people in recent decades (Kasarda and Johnson 2006). Similarly, people of different Asian origins have not historically had population strongholds in the South, and this has resulted in limited systematic interaction between Asians and members of other racial or ethnic groups. It may be the case that these teachers are not particularly attuned to the needs, experiences, or issues these students face and might therefore unintentionally ignore these students as they work toward providing a more equal learning environment for others.

Racialized Behavior or Racialized Teacher Responses to Student Behavior?

Privileging particular voices in the construction of classroom knowledge is one way in which teacher-student interaction can be racialized. Another way that teacher-student interaction can be racialized is through discipline. A long line of research suggests that teachers may be more likely to reprimand black students more often than white students (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, and Peterson 2002; McFadden, Marsh, Price, and Hwang 1992), even when those reprimands are unwarranted or other students are similarly misbehaving. Additionally, how teachers reprimand students—their tone, body language, the kinds of punishments teachers use for different kinds of misbehaviors—also can be racialized in academic contexts (Ferguson 2000).

The degree to which reprimands are racialized first requires analysis of the degree to which student misbehavior is racialized. As discussed in Chapter 4, learning how to become

an “appropriate” classroom citizen is a fundamental lesson that students learn through the “hidden curriculum” of kindergarten and other early educational experiences (Gracey 1970). The ability to behave as expected maintains classroom order and also translates into life skills that will one day be rewarded in the labor market (Bowles and Gintis 1976). Schools therefore tend to evaluate students who exhibit the behavioral skills of appropriate classroom citizens more favorably than students who do not (Miech et al 2001; Duncan et al 2007; Georges et al 2012). Net of academic knowledge (i.e. the ability to add or subtract, understand vocabulary words, etc.), students who are more “attentive” to teachers in class tend to have higher test scores and academic gains, particularly in the early elementary years (Georges et. al. 2012; Duncan et al 2007). This likely stems from the fact that more attentive students are able to avoid distractions, focus on academic tasks, and persist through academic challenges (Miech et al 2001).

While it is clear that behavior consistent with teacher expectations advantages students in the classroom, what is troubling is that “better behaved” students, according to teacher reports, tend not to be black or Hispanic (Voight et. al. 2014; Farkas 2003; West, Denton, and Reaney 2001). To the extent that better behavior leads to academic advantages, black and Hispanic students may disproportionately suffer. Indeed, while approximations vary, researchers argue that disparities in student behavior between white and black students in particular could account for between 10 percent to nearly all of the achievement gap¹⁵ (Harris and Robinson 2007; Farkas et. al. 1990).

¹⁵ Though it is difficult to disentangle the independent effect of student behavior on the racial gap from students’ cognitive skill level, which is measured simultaneously with behavior in Farkas et. al.’s (1990) statistical models.

Some argue that structural conditions of the schools affect the degree to which students of color are more or less likely to misbehave. When students are part of a numerical minority, they may be more likely to experience racial “misfit” and therefore engage in less “prosocial” behavior (sharing, helping, and comforting) and instead engage in more misbehavior (Nadeem and Graham 2005; Vervoort, Scholte, and Overbeek 2010). Voight, Gellar, and Nation (2014) argue that in middle school, as the racial composition of black students increases in a school, the “gap” between black and white students in prosocial behavior becomes insignificant. Since black students are racial minorities in both Foxcroft and Cumberland, it would be expected that black students would engage in less prosocial behavior, and more misbehavior.

Some argue that cultural differences between particular ethnic groups might matter for classroom behavior and achievement. Wade Boykin and colleagues (1983; 1986) have argued that “movement” and “verve” are cultural orientations that are specific to African Americans that may be negatively evaluated in the classroom. “Movement” refers to the “premium placed on...movement, polyrhythm, dance, percussiveness, and syncopation,” whereas “verve” refers to the preference for “high levels of physical or sensate stimulation” (Tyler et al. 2008: 285). Vervistic African American students, according to Boykin (1983; 1986), thrive in environments that are lively and have a large number of constantly changing stimuli. Because schools tend to not to value these types of activities or the behaviors that make one successful in movement, verve-based activities, black students may be seen to have a cultural disadvantage in the classroom.

Conversely, Asian American students—particularly those with immigrant parents (Kao and Tienda 1995)—are seen to have the extreme deference and respect for authority,

self-control, humility, and family recognition through academic achievement that leads to academic advantages (Tyler et al 2008). These cultural values, therefore, might lead to lower propensities for misbehavior, as Asian students would have greater self-control than the average student. Additionally, Asian students' respect for authority would lead to higher propensities for compliance. In short, those who support a cultural advantage for Asian American students suggest that Asian students¹⁶ have more cultural compatibility between the behaviors and skills that are valued in their homes and the behaviors and skills required for success in school.

Finally, it is possible that teachers are biased against some and toward others. The “racialized patterns” of student behavior that researchers identify could be a function of inflated or deflated survey estimates. In other words, teachers' ratings could be colored by conscious or unconscious stereotypes rather than students' actual behavior. Some research indicates that students' race indeed affects teachers' assessments of students' classroom behavior. Even after controlling for other background and achievement characteristics, teachers, often regardless of the teacher's own racial background, hold white and Asian students in higher regard than black and Hispanic students (Alexander, Entwisle, & Thompson 1987; Downey & Pribesh 2004; Kozlowski 2015). Because these assessments cannot be attributed to other confounders, these researchers conclude that unconscious teacher bias best explains the residual effect of systematic positive assessment of white and Asian student behavior and systematic negative assessment of black and Hispanic student behavior.

¹⁶ Researchers suggest that the outcomes, and likely the academic behaviors associated with those outcomes, tend to reach parity with the average (white) American student beyond the third generation. The academic advantages of Asian students seem to be limited mostly to first- and second-generation Asian Americans (Kao and Tienda 1995).

As I show below, I found no consistent racialized differences in the type or degree of behavior/misbehavior among first graders at Foxcroft and Cumberland, suggesting that any racialized perception of behavior or disparity in discipline is due to unconscious teacher bias.

Following (Or Not) Classroom Rules

As may be expected from first graders, some students were more compliant and followed these classroom rules regularly, and others constantly pushed boundaries to see how far they could get with breaking rules. Students who followed classroom rules almost all of the time tended to behave like Matteo, a middle class white boy from Mrs. Miller' class. The following describes Matteo's typical reaction to Mrs. Miller' instruction to finish an activity, clean up, and get ready for the next activity:

Though the other students are taking a while to clean up their materials and make their way to the front of the room, Matteo is the first to clean his materials, put his books away, and come to the front of the class.

Every day I watched Matteo, he consistently followed directions without hesitation, listened intently to the teacher, respected and was kind to other students, and behaved much like the kind of ideal student most teachers dream about. In fact, Mrs. Miller says as much as she praises Matteo one morning for his consistent good behavior:

Mrs. Miller is excitedly announcing that Matteo is receiving two "globetrotters" for being ready to learn. "Every time, Matteo follows the directions, does exactly what he needs to do, and is ready to learn. I am so impressed that I'm going to give you two globetrotters." ["Globetrotters" are blue pieces of paper that students put in a plastic baggie at the front of the room and serve as a reward for student behavior.] Apparently receiving two of these things is very uncommon, because other students are saying "2?! Wow" and other such things. Matteo is smiling ear to ear as he takes the two pieces of paper and puts them in the baggie. He doesn't stop smiling as he sits, waiting for the next activity.

While students like Matteo consistently and predictably follow the rules, other students, were more unpredictable. One day they might be perfectly compliant in following

directions, and other days (or even later in the same day) they would violate classroom rules. In the following moment, all three boys avoid working on their 100 day of school worksheet packet, which the students had been assigned to work on during math time. Ms. Jennifer had just come over to check on the students' progress, then as soon as she left the table:

Ian turns to Eric and asks him if his face is red. Ian and Sanjivan remain facing one another, and Eric is sitting next to Sanjivan, leaning into the pair of them, having a conversation about something that had nothing to do with their 100 day packet...After I finished helping [two other students] on their packets, I got up to get closer to them to hear what they were doing. As I walked toward them, Ian hushes the other boys and says "She's looking at us! She knows we're not working!" At that point, all three boys picked up their packets and began to read the questions.

Like Ian, Eric, and Sanjivan above, some students from Ms. Jennifer's class, including Ethan (white higher SES boy), Claire (Asian girl of unknown SES background), Avni (Asian higher SES girl), and Hannah (White lower SES girl) were fairly inconspicuous in their rule-breaking.

Ethan starts [his silent reading time] by picking up a book. "Best Friends," he recites from the title, then almost immediately puts it down. He picks up another book, flips through a few of those pages as well, and almost immediately puts it down again. He stares into space, around him, and at the books in his box for some time before once again picking something else up.

[It is writing time, and] at the table where I am sitting, Claire has flipped over the piece of paper with the list [she had been writing]. She is not doing anything. Avni is also staring into space. Hannah is looking at Claire and her unfinished list.

In both examples, the students were being quiet and not obviously breaking any rules of the silent reading or writing period. However, upon closer inspection, the students were not practicing their silent reading or writing at all. Because they were not talking or otherwise breaking rules in a conspicuous way, the fact that they were not abiding by the rules went unnoticed by the teacher.

Some students, like Marcus (black higher SES boy) and A'kierra (black lower SES girl), both from Ms. Jennifer's class, and Hunter and Carter, two white higher SES boys from Ms. Janwari's class, were more conspicuous in their rule breaking:

Marcus comes over to the table and starts moving A'kierra's chair around. She is telling him to stop and he continues to laugh impishly. Marcus sits on his own chair as if it is a horse and begins to "ride" it as such. He is snorting and yelling. A'kierra turns around and "rides" her own chair in a similar way, though she does not move it around the room the way Marcus is doing. She does squirm around though, seeming as if she cannot get comfortable. The substitute comes over and tells Marcus to stop moving his body and chair around. The substitute leaves, and Marcus continues to sing "ba ba ba" and make fart noises. A'kierra continues to squirm around in her chair... Now they are both making nonsense noises. "A'kierra look at me. Look at me," he says to her. He makes a fart noise. A'kierra hops over the back of her chair as if back-mounting a horse.

Carter walks by the table and asks Hunter if he (Hunter) thinks that he (Carter) can jump from the orange table to the red table. Carter holds himself up by his hands—hands supported by each of the tables between the orange and red ones, and swings his legs through the middle of the tables to the other side. Hunter seems to like this idea, and joins Carter in swinging back and forth between the two tables, charting where their feet landed and who got farther on the last try... They do this for at least a full minute before Ms. Janwari tells them to stop.

Marcus, A'kierra, Carter, and Hunter are more conspicuous in their rule-breaking because they are loud, take up a lot of physical space, and use classroom property as props in their non-sanctioned play. This draws enough attention from the teacher to warrant reprimand, whereas inconspicuous rule-breaking often goes unnoticed by the teacher.

Most importantly though, what all of these examples demonstrate is that rule-breaking or –abiding was not consistently patterned by SES or race such that particular kinds of students were more or less likely to follow or break rules.¹⁷ Across all three classrooms together, higher and lower SES students of all different racial and ethnic groups were just as likely to follow rules as they were to break them, however conspicuously. Students also

¹⁷ Boys were slightly more likely to violate rules than girls, however, and they tended to do so a bit more conspicuously.

varied in behavior such that one day they might misbehave inconspicuously and another day it might be more conspicuous. Other students over time showed clear trajectories in their behavior, such that they started off the beginning of the year misbehaving frequently and by the end of the year misbehaved less, or vice versa.

To more clearly show just how little SES and race seemed to be consistently connected to following or not following rules, I counted each incident in my field notes where a student misbehaved according to the teacher's expectation. I counted who committed the infraction, regardless of whether or not the teacher noticed their misbehavior, and regardless of whether or not those students were reprimanded for them. I counted each time a student talked out of turn, played with their friend instead of working on a task when told to do so, fought with or otherwise physically engaged another student, ran instead of walked in the hallway, and so forth. In all, there were approximately 2,500 moments in which I spotted a student not following the teacher's procedural expectation, a little over 800 incidents per classroom over the course of the entire academic year I observed.

I then calculated the average number of infractions per classroom on the days that I observed,¹⁸ and the following tables represent the percentage of students by socioeconomic and racial group who failed to follow teacher expectations at or above average. I compare this to their population percentage in the classroom to provide context. If, for example, middle class students comprise 50 percent of the classroom population, they should also comprise 50 percent of those students who misbehave at or above average. To the extent that

¹⁸ Note that these calculations represent only the portion of the academic year that I personally witnessed. It is possible that that these patterns could have looked different on the days that I was not there.

middle class students may be disproportionately over- or under-represented among the top half of misbehaviors, propensity for misbehavior may be classed.

Figure 13. Percent of Students Misbehaving Relative to Student Population in Ms.

Jennifer's Class, by SES

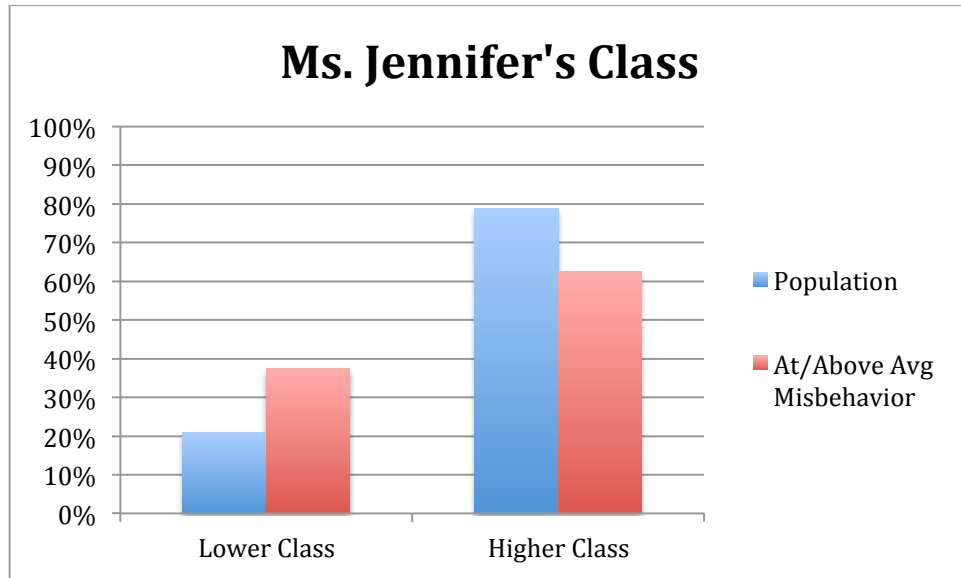


Figure 14. Percent of Students Misbehaving Relative to Student Population in Mrs. Miller's Class, by SES

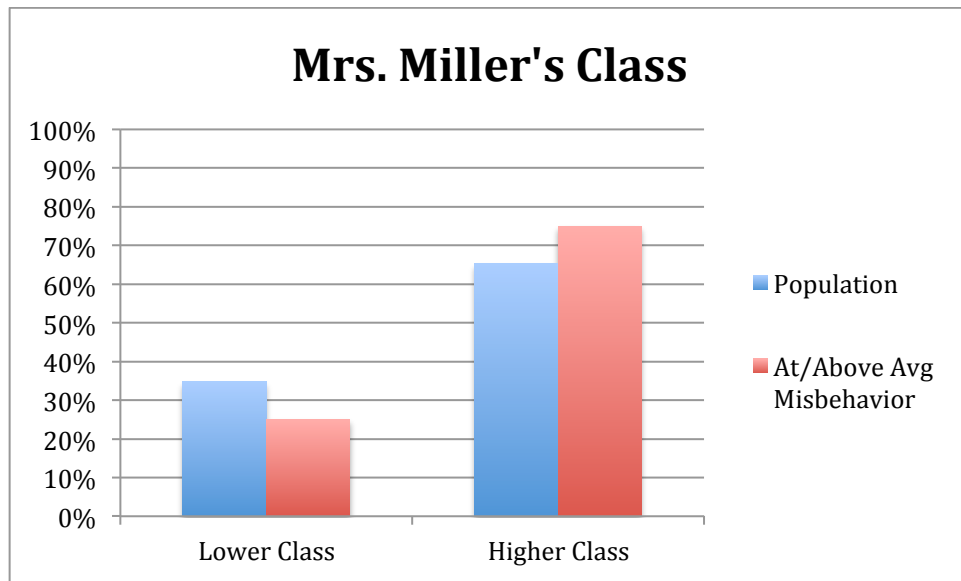
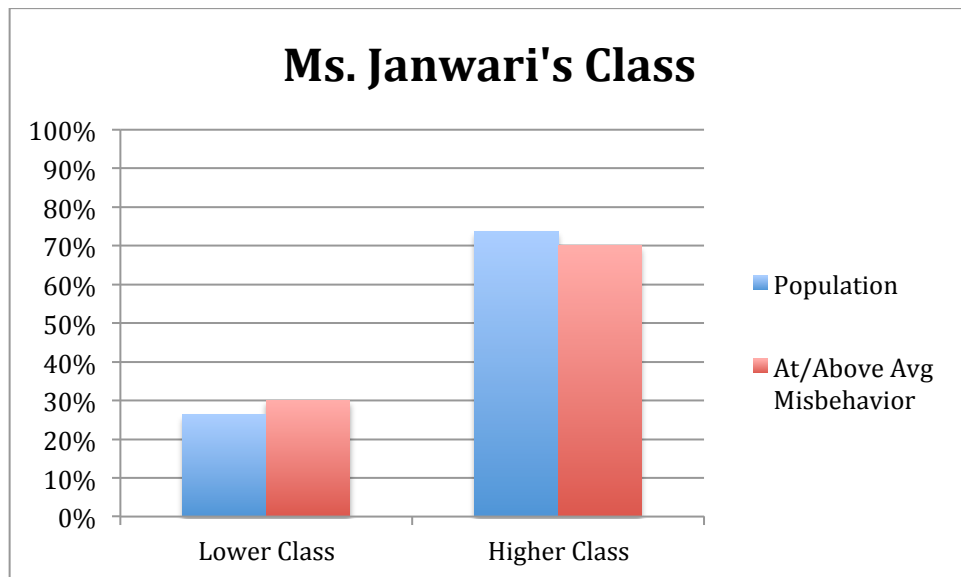


Figure 15. Percent of Students Misbehaving Relative to Student Population in Ms. Janwari's Class, by SES



The first three graphs suggest that there are no consistent connections between socioeconomic status and classroom misbehavior across the three classrooms. In Ms.

Jennifer's class, lower-SES students were slightly more likely than higher-SES students to break classroom rules at and above average, relative to their class population. In Mrs. Miller's class, lower-SES students were more likely to follow rules than break them, and finally, in Ms. Janwari's class, students of different class backgrounds fairly equally followed and broke rules at or above average.

Patterns are a bit more consistent for race in all three classrooms such that white and black students both tend to misbehave at slightly higher rates than their classroom populations would suggest. This is particularly true for Ms. Jennifer's class, where Asian students, who make up almost 40 percent of the class, all misbehave below average. In all three classrooms, Hispanic students also seem to misbehave at disproportionately lower rates, given their classroom population.

Figure 16. Percent of Students Misbehaving Relative to Student Population in Ms. Jennifer's Class, by Race

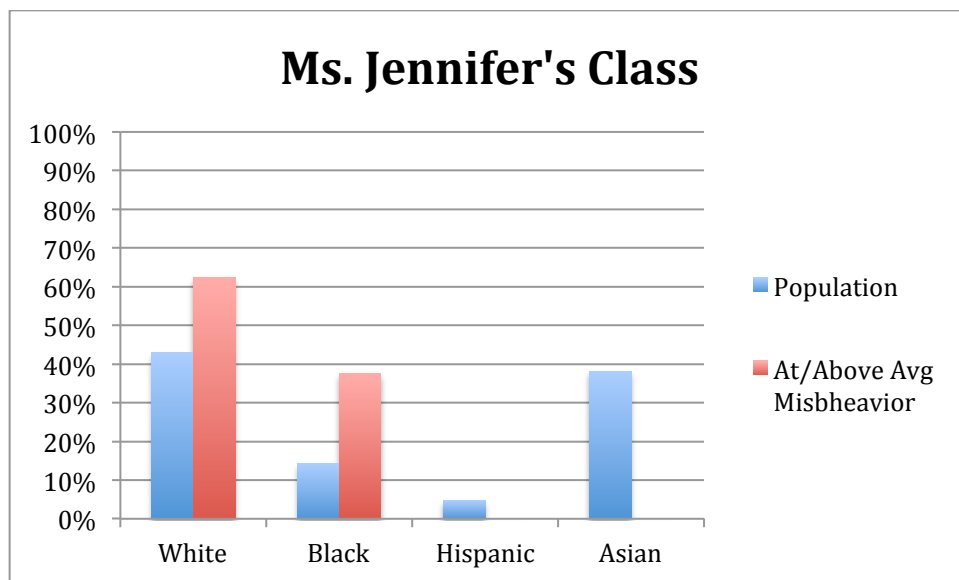


Figure 17. Percent of Students Misbehaving Relative to Student Population in Mrs. Miller's Class, by Race

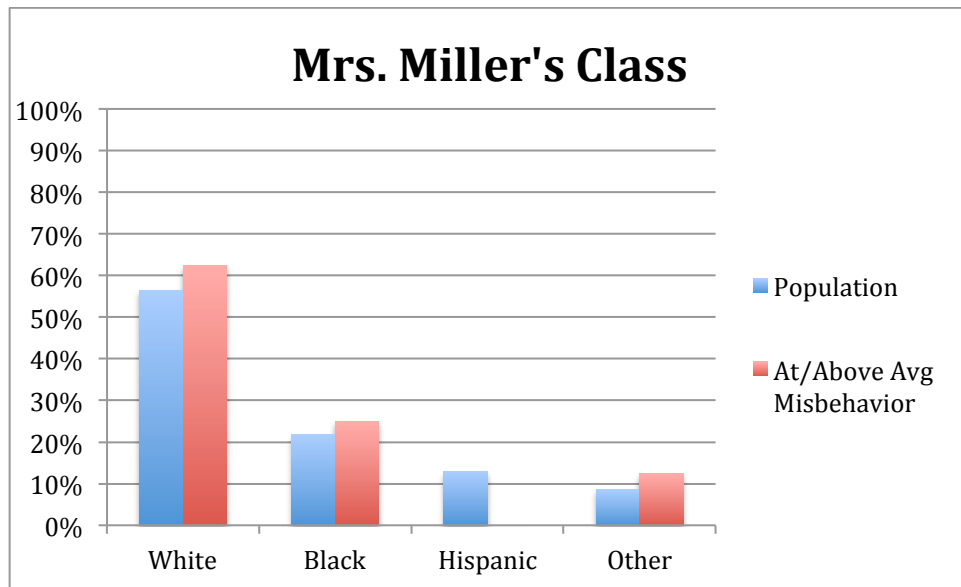
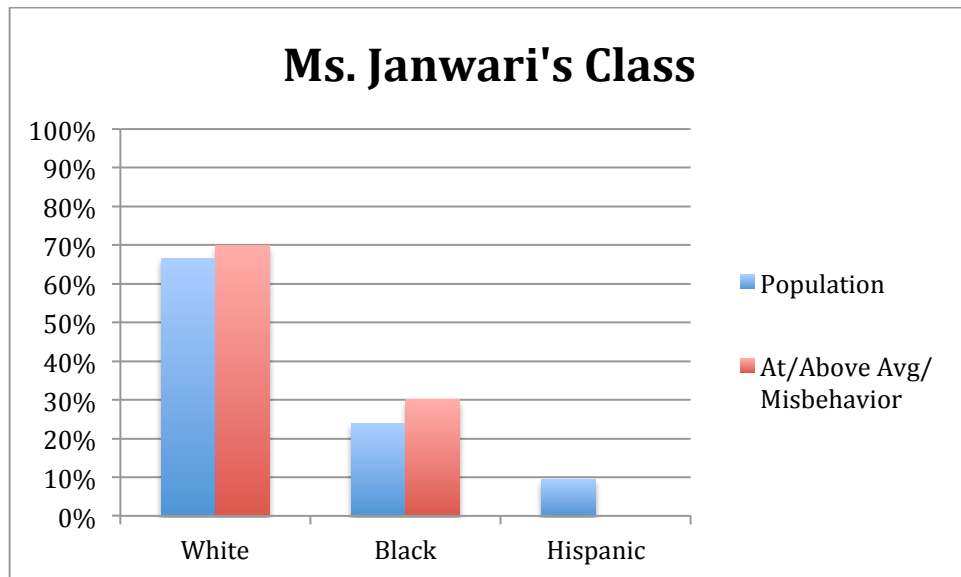


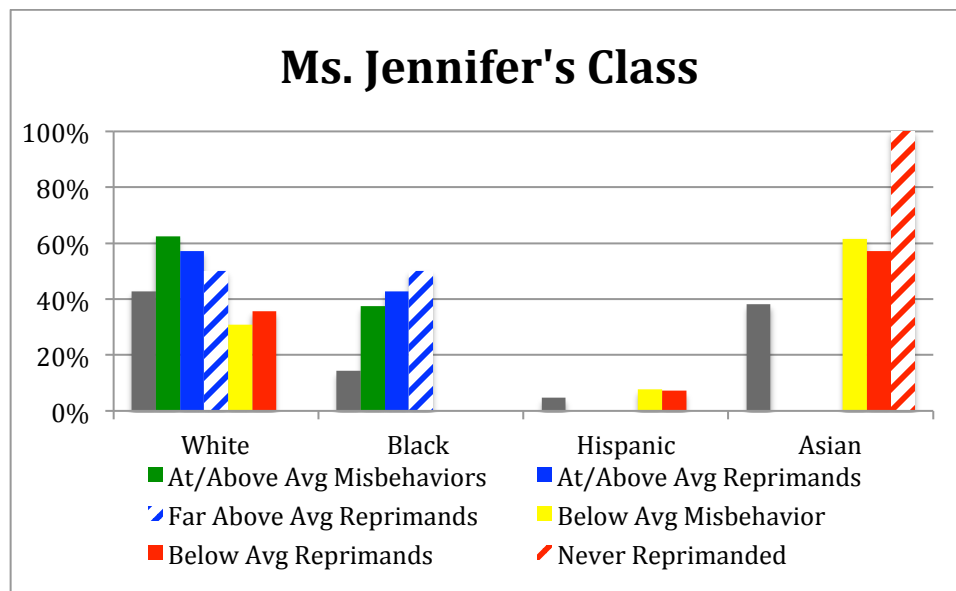
Figure 18. Percent of Students Misbehaving Relative to Student Population in Ms. Janwari's Class, by Race



Racialized Discipline and Unconscious Teacher Bias

Even though I found few consistent patterns between race and student behavior, at least in terms of following classroom rules, teachers at Foxcroft and Cumberland Elementary disproportionately privilege some white students who regularly misbehave and reprimand some black students who may or may not regularly misbehave. I counted the number of times students failed to follow teacher expectations from my coded data, which included such behaviors as students talking when they should have been listening, playing with their clothing or other classroom materials instead of listening or working, fighting with or being disrespectful toward peers or the teacher, or even (rare moments) when students physically assaulted teachers, peers, or classroom property.

Figure 19. Percent of Students Reprimanded Relative to Student Population in Ms. Jennifer's Class, by Race



In this graph, the gray line represents the percentage of the student population by ethnic group. The green line represents the percentage of that ethnic group comprising the students who were at or above average in misbehavior. Of the 8 students who misbehaved at or above average in Ms. Jennifer's class, about 63 percent of them were white, which is disproportionately high given that they make up approximately 40 percent of the students in the class. The blue lines represent the percentage of that ethnic group comprising the students who were reprimanded at/above and far above average. Of the 7 students who were reprimanded at or above average, about 57 percent of them were white. The blue bars help put into perspective how over- or under-represented particular racial groups were reprimanded given their level of misbehavior in the class. The yellow bar represents the percentage of the ethnic group comprising those who misbehaved below average. The red bars represent the percentage of the ethnic group comprising those who were reprimanded below average as well as those students who were never reprimanded at all. The red bars can

be compared to the yellow bars to see how over- or under-represented particular ethnic groups were in their lack of being reprimanded given their low levels of misbehavior.

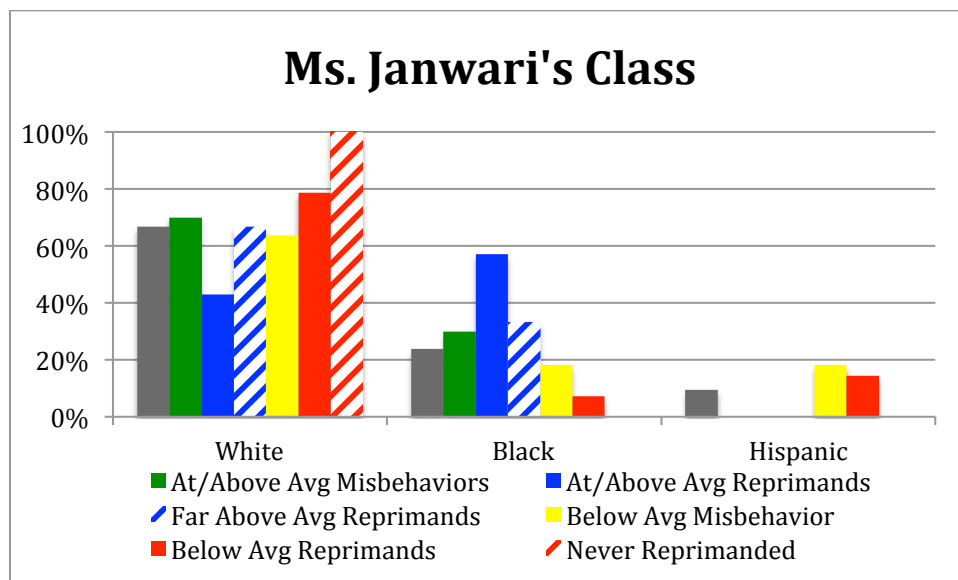
In Ms. Jennifer's class, white and black students were both slightly overrepresented among misbehavers, considering their proportion of the class population. However, the percentage of white students who were reprimanded above average in the class seems to be slightly lower than the percentage of black students who were reprimanded above average. Of particular interest is Eric (white higher SES boy), who failed to follow teacher expectations 82 times while I observed him in class (the average amount of times students did not follow expectations was about 32 times over the course of the year I observed). In fact, next to Marcus (black higher SES boy), Eric misbehaved the second-most frequently among all of the students in the class. However, I only saw Eric reprimanded by Ms. Jennifer four times, which is below the average of six reprimands. In fact, A'kierra, a black lower class girl who I saw misbehaving 72 times, which is 10 fewer times than Eric, was reprimanded 16 times over the course of the year, which is quadruple the amount of Eric's reprimands. Similarly, Nia, a black higher SES girl who misbehaved 35 times, which was not quite half as much as Eric, was reprimanded 7 times, or almost twice as much as Eric. Perhaps an even more telling example of the extent to which Nia seemed to be disproportionately punished is by comparing her to Gabby, a white higher SES girl in the class who I also saw misbehave 35 times—the exact same number of times as Nia. Though Nia was reprimanded 7 times for her misbehavior, Gabby was only reprimanded twice.

Though not visible in the graph above, I saw another pattern of disproportionate reprimands relative to misbehavior for Lucas, the only Hispanic boy in Ms. Jennifer's class. Lucas was not a regular misbehaviorer in class; he only failed to follow teacher expectations 23

times over the course of the year, which is well below the class's average of 32. Yet Lucas was reprimanded five times, which is once more than Eric (who misbehaved almost 60 more times than Lucas). In fact, Lucas was reprimanded more than every Asian student in the class, even though three of Ms. Jennifer's eight Asian students misbehaved more than Lucas did. Lucas was also reprimanded more than five white students, four of whom misbehaved more often than he did.

Taken together, these patterns all suggests that despite Ms. Jennifer's best intentions of creating an equal learning environment for students of all races in her class, she still seemed to unconsciously favor or look past the misbehavior of particular white and Asian students while disproportionately reprimanding the black and Hispanic students in her class relative to their actual incidents of misbehavior.

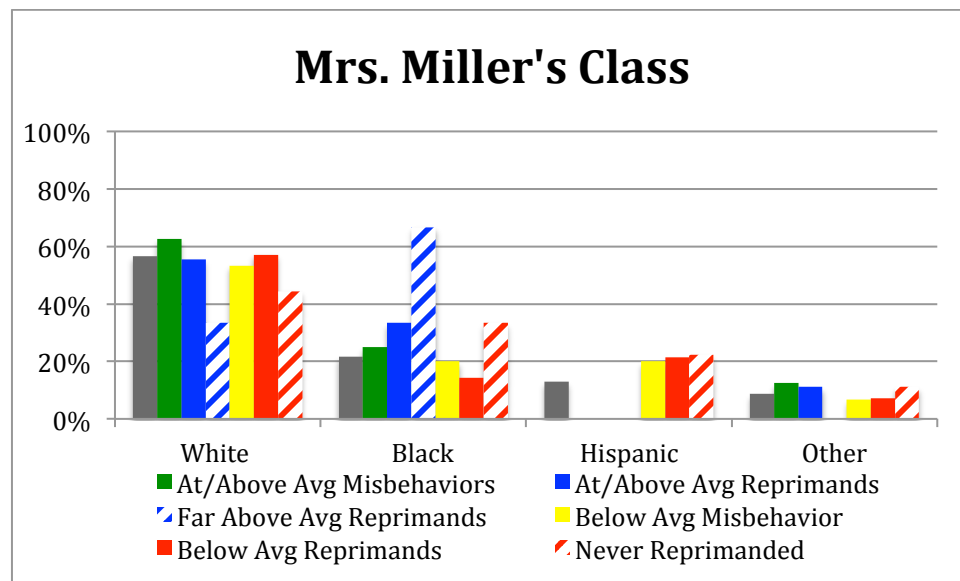
Figure 20. Percent of Students Reprimanded Relative to Student Population in Ms. Janwari's Class, by Race



Ms. Janwari perhaps was most blatant in her racialized responses to students. In Ms. Janwari's class, 7 of her 14 white students (50%) misbehaved at or above average, yet only 3 of those 14 students (21%) were reprimanded at or above average. Instead, four of the five black students in her class were reprimanded at or above average and the last of the five black students was still reprimanded as much as or more than a majority of the white students, six of whom misbehaved more than she did. These patterns can also be seen in the graph above, where the percentage of students who are reprimanded less than average or never are mostly to all white. Conversely, the percentage of black students who are reprimanded at or above average is disproportionately higher than the percentage of black students who misbehave at or above average in her class.

Of particular interest in Ms. Janwari's class is the dynamic between Ben (white higher SES boy), Carter (white higher SES boy), and Aaliyah (black lower SES girl). These three students were the top misbehavers in Ms. Janwari's class, all misbehaving far above average at 78 times each for Ben and Carter and 75 times for Aaliyah (class average was 42). While these three students were relatively equal in their misbehavior, Aaliyah was reprimanded far more than either Ben or Carter. Aaliyah was reprimanded 26 times (class average for reprimands was 5), and Ben and Carter were each reprimanded 13 and 11 times, respectively.

Figure 21. Percent of Students Reprimanded Relative to Student Population in Mrs. Miller's Class, by Race



Mrs. Miller was probably the most fair teacher when it came to reprimanding legitimate misbehavior, and she was also the least-heavy handed when it came to reprimands in general. In fact, the average number of times a student was reprimanded in her class was 2.4 during the time that I observed (compared to 5 and 6 for Ms. Janwari and Ms. Jennifer, respectively), and 9 of the 23 students in Mrs. Miller's class were never reprimanded while I observed. Five of the 13 white students in Mrs. Miller's class were at or above average in misbehavior, and Mrs. Miller reprimanded 5 white students at or above average as well (though only three of them were consistent with the top misbehavers). However, even Mrs. Miller at times seemed to show signs of some racial bias in reprimands. In particular, Mrs. Miller seemed to reprimand Makayla, a black lower middle SES girl, slightly more heavily than some of the white middle class boys who misbehaved more than she did. Makayla was reprimanded five times, which was the fourth highest number of reprimands in the class over the course of the year when I observed, but she misbehaved right at the average of 35 times.

Conversely, Henry, a white higher SES boy who misbehaved 50 times and Sergio, a white Hispanic higher SES boy who misbehaved 45 times, were each reprimanded only three times.

Prior research suggests that teachers identify both black and Hispanic students as “poorer classroom citizens” than white and Asian students (Downey and Pribesh 2004: 277), but there are debates as to why some students of color tend to be reprimanded more often than others. In Ms. Jennifer’s class, I found that black students of both higher and lower SES backgrounds got reprimanded more frequently than their misbehavior warranted. And while Lucas, the only Hispanic student in the class, was reprimanded below the class average, he was still reprimanded more compared to some of his white peers than his misbehavior would warrant. I found that Ms. Janwari and Mrs. Miller, on the other hand, both tended not to reprimand Hispanic students frequently. In Mrs. Miller’s class, B (Hispanic boy) was only reprimanded once and Maricella and Arianna (Hispanic girls) were never reprimanded in the times that I observed the classroom. In Ms. Janwari’s class, Carlos (Hispanic boy) was only reprimanded 3 times and Cristina (Hispanic girl) was only reprimanded once.

Were Reprimands Warranted?

In every class, I saw students misbehaving more often than they were reprimanded. It is possible that when students were disproportionately reprimanded, they happened to get caught legitimately misbehaving more often than others. To assess whether students’ reprimands were fair, I coded incidents of misbehavior as “warranted” or not. When students’ reprimands were warranted, they were misbehaving according to classroom rules. When students’ reprimands were unwarranted, the student tended to exhibit extraordinary, often well-intentioned energy that was not particularly negative or disruptive. Here is an

example of an unwarranted (though subtle) reprimand toward Alexis when she celebrated a class victory too rambunctiously for Ms. Jennifer:

Ms. Jennifer has been counting down from 10 [to herd students toward home base after finishing an activity at their tables]... When she gets to number 1, a few of the last stragglers have made it to home base. “That was a little too close for comfort,” Jennifer says. “But, I’m going to give you one big fuzzy—“ “Yes!” Alexis says, pumping her arms as if she has just won a race. Jennifer stares at Alexis, then does not put a fuzzy in the bucket.

It is arguable as to whether Alexis was actually failing to follow classroom rules in this moment. Ms. Jennifer is very inconsistent when it comes to students blurting out, but she is often more lenient when they are showing engagement with or excitement for classroom material. However, in this instance, when Alexis was merely celebrating having accomplished a task well enough to receive a reward, Ms. Jennifer’s glare and subsequent decision to not reward the class (i.e. put the fuzzy in the bucket) subtly communicated to Alexis (and by extension, to the rest of the class), that Alexis had not followed class procedure and was therefore being punished.

In addition to coding reprimands as either warranted or unwarranted, I also kept track of incidents in which students were reprimanded for doing a behavior that another student in the class had also been doing at that moment. I noted the race of the student who was not reprimanded to see if students of color, for example, were more likely to be reprimanded even when a white student was also misbehaving in the same way. For example, in the following field note, I coded Blake as having been reprimanded when at least one other white student, who had not been reprimanded, had been doing the same behavior:

Blake [black boy] and N [white boy] are still talking, though as I glance in their direction, they keep eyeing me and pretending that they are reading. Their giggles are sputtering out of their mouths though, and their eyes are not focused on their books, but rather, on each other as they glance sideways between each other and me. CJ

[white girl], who has since returned to her seat at the table with them to read, looks up to see what they are laughing at. “Blake!” Ms. Janwari calls out.

In Ms. Jennifer’s class, Marcus (black boy) and Alexis (white girl) were the only students who regularly had unwarranted reprimands. In particular, of Marcus’s 74 reprimands, 8, or 11 percent, were unwarranted. Additionally, 15 percent of Marcus's reprimands occurred when other students were doing the same behavior but did not get in trouble for it. Approximately 9 percent of Marcus's reprimands occurred when white students were doing the same behavior and approximately 5 percent of Marcus's reprimands occurred when black students were doing the same behavior. I never observed Alexis getting in trouble for doing something while others were doing it too, but 16 percent of her 19 reprimands were unwarranted.

While unconscious teacher bias may not be a natural conclusion to draw from a black boy and white girl similarly getting reprimanded when it was not warranted, I contend that unconscious bias, some of it racial, some interpersonal, did motivate Ms. Jennifer’s propensity for reprimanding these two students. In an interview that I conducted with Ms. Jennifer, she talked about how Marcus was her biggest “problem” student, some of which, she concluded, was based on his undiagnosed sensory disorder, and some of which she believed to be a cultural difference between African and American education. Marcus had lived in Mozambique prior to immigrating to the United States with his family. Ms. Jennifer believed that culturally, education was much different for Marcus than it was for another student in the class, Lily, who had recently immigrated to the U.S. from China:

Marcus, here now, is a great example. He struggles with that. And some of it is a cultural context. You know, he comes from Africa, like, where the rules are really different. Um.... And so, yes he’s still growing developmentally, but he, needs the social context of like, but you can compare him to a kid like Lily, like Marcus has some other, he has some additional challenges, so...I *do* have to be really explicit

with him all year long because that same rate of growth isn't happening like it is for a kid like Lily who sort of comes from a similar situation in that, she spent her whole, like Marcus spent his whole life in Africa, now he's here. She spent her whole life in China and now she's here. But she culturally understands some of the context better than Marcus does. Now some of that is because they're correlations between like the Chinese and American school culture in terms of sitting and being quiet, but some of it is, like she is a more typically developing first grader than he is.

Ms. Jennifer is drawing on a common narrative that “cultural differences” between Africans (and African Americans) and whites account for differences in behavior (Tyler et al 2008), which therefore may justify differential expectations and treatment. At the same time, Ms. Jennifer draws more on the “model minority” cultural stereotype for Lily, an Asian student from China who was very well-behaved and compliant in class (Lee 2009). Ms. Jennifer seemed to believe that the Mozambiquan education Marcus received was less strict and required students to sit still and be quiet less than what Lily may have been exposed to in China. When I conducted an interview with Marcus and his mother, however, they painted a very different picture of Mozambiquan education than the one Ms. Jennifer imagined. Both Marcus and his mother described a very strict, ordered classroom, where desks were lined up in rows, and education was learned more by rote. A student growing up in this environment likely would have *more* experience sitting still and being quiet than Ms. Jennifer might have thought. However, by drawing on a “cultural differences” narrative, Ms. Jennifer has unconsciously stereotyped Marcus, which likely impacts the way that she treats him in class.

Alexis, though white, also may suffer from Ms. Jennifer's interpersonal biases. When I asked Ms. Jennifer about her perception of Alexis, Ms. Jennifer compared her to Marcus in terms of poor behavior and was quick to explain that she was a “retained” student, meaning she is repeating first grade for the second time. I noticed early on in my field notes that Alexis seemed to get a lot of unnecessary attention from Ms. Jennifer. Alexis's “spot” in

home base was one of the closest to Ms. Jennifer. Those spots are typically reserved for the biggest misbehavers so Jennifer can keep a closer eye on them and physically restrain or reposition them if she deems necessary. Alexis seemed to get reprimanded heavily, particularly at the beginning of the year, for very minor things like facing sideways instead of toward the front in home base. It is possible that because most of the first grade teachers know all of the first graders in the school by name, Ms. Jennifer would have known Alexis, would have talked to her previous teacher, and would have already developed a preconceived notion of what she would be like in her class because she was repeating first grade. Ray Rist (1973) refers to this process as teacher “labeling,” and contends that teachers’ labels can produce in students a self-fulfilling prophecy. If teachers label students based on their assumptions, they will unconsciously expect and treat them differently, which will impact the student’s understanding of herself, affect her behavior, and will ultimately produce the kind of student the teacher predicted with the label. While Alexis may not have suffered from a racialized label, Ms. Jennifer’s assumptions about Alexis as a retained first grader may have impacted her disproportionate punishment of Alexis.

In Ms. Janwari's class, Aaliyah (black girl) was the only student who regularly had unwarranted reprimands or who got in trouble when others were doing the same behavior. Approximately 19 percent of Aaliyah's 26 reprimands were unwarranted, and 23 percent of the time Aaliyah got reprimanded, other students were doing the same behavior and did not get in trouble for it. Approximately 15 percent of Aaliyah's reprimands occurred when white students were doing the same behavior, and 8 percent of Aaliyah's reprimands occurred when other black students were doing the same behavior. Here is an example of a moment in which

Aaliyah was reprimanded for misbehaving even when a white student had been doing the same behavior.

Carter gets up and moves to sit [near Aaliyah]. Once positioned, he asks Aaliyah, “heads or tails?” She responds and Ms. Janwari says again, “Aaliyah! Your friends are trying to listen.”

Not only did Carter fail to listen to the teacher, but he in fact was the driving force behind Aaliyah not listening either. He engaged her in conversation, and perhaps out of politeness or instinct, Aaliyah responded. Yet Aaliyah, and not Carter, was reprimanded for failing to pay attention to classroom instruction. This is not to suggest that Aaliyah fell victim to other students’ distractions every time she was unfairly reprimanded, but it did happen at least half of the time Aaliyah was unfairly reprimanded.

It is important to note that while I observed her class, none of Mrs. Miller' students were reprimanded without warrant. Additionally, only three students ever got in trouble for misbehaving when another student who had been doing the same thing did not get reprimanded. This only happened once for each of the three students.

Misbehavior and Reprimands: Differences in Practice

All three teachers I observed reprimanded students differently and for different reasons, and their methods may have had unintentional impacts on their students. Ms. Jennifer reprimanded students for more minor or banal behaviors than did Ms. Janwari or Mrs. Miller. Though the graphs of Ms. Jennifer’s reprimand counts suggest that the level of disproportionate racial punishment was fairly mild, the quality of her punishments, particularly those directed at Marcus (higher SES black boy), A’kierra (lower SES black girl), Hannah (lower SES white girl), and Hailey (lower SES white girl), clearly signaled to the students themselves and the rest of the students in the class, that these students were

classroom deviants. Because almost all of the lower class students, and almost all of the black students (regardless of SES) were both more frequently and more extremely reprimanded than many of the other students, clear class and racial lines about who was deemed “appropriate” and “inappropriate” were drawn. Yet, Ms. Jennifer seemed mostly unaware of how these lines were drawn in her classroom. In a formal interview with me, for example, Ms. Jennifer claimed to not particularly care how the students sat in home base:

How do I want them to sit at home base? Like, I personally don’t care if you sit criss cross applesauce or if you sit with your like, knees up on the step or if you sit with your knees down on the step. That doesn’t bother me or make any difference to me. But I do expect you to be still. So I have to teach to that. Do you know what I mean, like I don’t care how you sit, just as long as your body isn’t imposing on anyone else’s body. You want to sit with your legs to the side, have at it. You want to sit criss cross applesauce? Ok fine. But your body has to be in your space, and you have to be still.

However, despite Ms. Jennifer’s claims that she was fairly lax about how students sat in class, she was quick to correct students if they were not “sitting up straight and tall” or if they did not have their feet flat on the ground and hands in their lap when sitting at home base:

Jennifer stands up and walks to the front of home base again. “I hope you’re ready for math,” Jennifer says. “We are” Marcus says loudly. Jennifer stares at him. He is curled up, holding his knees to his chest. “I’m going to wait until your feet are on the floor. Sit up (she says this directly to Hailey this time, who is hunched over her own lap), and put your hands on in your lap.”

When students were not following expectations in Ms. Jennifer’s class, it often had to do with the way they were (not) controlling their bodies or voices to Ms. Jennifer’s specifications. Ms. Jennifer had very little patience for students blurting out answers or comments while they were in a large group at home base, though she tended to be less consistent about enforcing hand-raising when the student blurting out was showing clear engagement with the lesson.

Jennifer says that she is going to do the last three things at once. “Is it a credit card?” Eric asks. “That might measure how much money you do or don’t have,” Jennifer says. She pulls out a couple of thermometers. One of the students, I think Ian, asks if it is a thermometer. “Yes, and what does it measure?” Jennifer asks. One of the students says it measures how sick you are. “There are so many measuring tools I didn’t even know measured!” Nia observes. Jennifer calls on Ian to tell us what a thermometer measures, which he correctly says is “temperature.” “Fahrenheit and Celsius,” Eric adds.

Here, Eric (white higher SES boy), Nia (black higher SES girl), and Ian (Asian higher SES boy) all blurted out ideas about the tools that Ms. Jennifer was showing to the class for their unit on measurement. However, none of them were reprimanded for blurting out. Compare to the following excerpt, where Marcus is reprimanded for doing essentially the same thing:

“How many people are supposed to be up trying to get paper?” “One?” Marcus blurts out. “Raise your hand.”

Ms. Jennifer was particularly quick to reprimand Marcus more than any other student in the class. To be fair, Marcus tended to not follow expectations more than any student in the class. He struggled to sit still, blurted out comments in large group discussion even when reminded not to, and was easily distracted by other students (especially those who are willing to laugh at him when he makes faces at them). Marcus was also quick to make fun of, make sarcastic comments about, or cackle disrespectfully at other students. As alluded to previously, Ms. Jennifer believed this behavior stemmed from some kind of “sensory” disorder, which for him means that:

...he has a hard time zeroing in on things when everything else is so big. It’s like, he [pause] gets in a lot of trouble frequently in the playground or the cafeteria. But think about those spaces. There are unlimited boundaries to those spaces. When there aren’t physical boundaries, he has a hard time creating a physical boundary for himself, where most kids understand and they know the rules or they have that [pause] they have that ability to, to bring it back in. It’s like if you [pause] they do a spinning test when they’re diagnosed for sensory integration where like they spin you and they spin you and they spin you. And you know how when they do that you’re typically developing in your eyes, like go back and forth because they’re trying to readjust. Ok, his don’t. Because his world is like that. Do you know what I mean? Like, all the

time. When you spin and spin and spin and spin and spin him, his eyes don't joggle. [With respect to behavior, he] needs a lot of support.

However, the kind of "support" that Ms. Jennifer seems to give to Marcus tends not to be very supportive. She reprimands him publically so frequently that my field notes each day I was in the classroom seemed littered with moments when Ms. Jennifer was telling Marcus to "stop" something or even physically reposition or restrict his body. Ms. Jennifer rarely intervened with other students to the point where she physically held them or repositioned their bodies. Much of the time, Marcus was doing behavior that was fairly mild or could be easily ignored:

As she reads "the skull is the hardest bone," and "there are 206 bones in the body," Jennifer reaches behind her to yank Marcus's chair around so it is facing the chart instead of facing his table. She seems annoyed with something that he is doing, since she is clenching her jaw as she yanks the chair, glares at him, and tries to keep reading at the same time.

Aside from Marcus facing his table rather than the projection screen, I did not even note what behavior Marcus was doing that seemed to annoy Ms. Jennifer, because whatever it was seemed mild enough to me not to even note or remember it later. In fact, Ms. Jennifer often found herself so annoyed with the blurting out, the laughing, or the sarcastic remarks that he made that she excused him from the group altogether. Marcus spent a fair amount of time removed from the class (and therefore missed instruction) as he sat in the corner of the room or at a faraway table by himself with his head down. During one social studies lesson about houses, holidays, and games in different countries, Jennifer stopped her instruction to remove Marcus from the group:

Marcus also must have done something else to draw Jennifer's eye, because at the end of her summarizing of what students have said about where they were in their social studies lessons, she looks at him and tells him to "stop." Marcus replies by laughing, and Jennifer tells him to go to the "cozy corner."

Marcus remained in the “cozy corner,” a space in the corner of the room away from the rest of the class, for the duration of the lesson.

Ms. Jennifer was not the only adult in the room to adopt the strategy. Ms. LaToya, the teaching assistant for the class, also resorted to removing Marcus from the environment when his misbehavior became too hard for her to handle. During a lesson about how to share and compromise while playing with friends, Ms. LaToya found herself so distracted by Marcus while trying to facilitate discussion with the rest of the class that she asked him to leave the group altogether.

Ms. LaToya, in likely her best attempts to ignore Marcus, eventually appears to get tired of his antics, so she tells him “goodbye” in the middle of the students’ discussion. Marcus gets up and pulls his chair toward the projector to sit down... Marcus has been making more noises and clears his throat loudly. I think he was doing this with another student as well, but I couldn’t see where the second noise was coming from. Again Ms. LaToya says “goodbye” to Marcus, and says that he is to go to his own table.

Marcus stayed at his table for the rest of the lesson, which marked him as an obvious deviant and outsider to the rest of the class. It also seems meaningful that Ms. LaToya, a black woman, was just as dismissive of Marcus as Ms. Jennifer, a white woman. Some research suggests that the primary culprits of teacher bias against black students are white teachers (Downey and Pribesh 2004), but Ms. LaToya’s persistent treatment of Marcus in the same manner as Ms. Jennifer seems to suggest that stereotypes about particular kinds of students can run so deeply in our subconsciousness that teachers of all racial and ethnic backgrounds may unintentionally draw on those stereotypes as they interact with students of particular backgrounds (Ferguson 1998).

Ms. Jennifer has stricter discipline standards and methods compared to Mrs. Miller’s style of discipline. Unlike Ms. Jennifer, Mrs. Miller reprimanded students far fewer times in

general than the other teachers. Mrs. Miller corrected behavior that was inconsistent with her expectations, but more than the other teachers, she asked students to take control of their own behavior through what she called “conscious discipline.” At the beginning of each day before starting any academic work, she asked students to reflect about what they might work on for the day, like listening, following directions, sharing, or even ignoring other students that are distracting:

Ms. Miller says that yesterday the students did a really good job of listening like they said they were going to. She said that when she turned the lights off, they froze like they were supposed to. She asked the students what they are going to be conscious of today? What are you going to work hard on? First she called on Sergio. Sergio says that he is going to work on ignoring others when they’re distracting. Miss Miller says that’s a good one to work on today. Remember yesterday, when there was an incident, and it was hard to ignore, but two people worked hard to ignore it. She said that that was good work. She then called on Jayla, who said that she was going to work on being nice today. All of a sudden Travis stands up and starts walking across the circle to the other side of the room. He blurts out that Tyrone is whispering and clapping and he wants to ignore him. Ms. Miller says “Travis” firmly and with her eyes told him to go back to sit next to Tyrone. Tyrone continued to make noises, but Travis sat next to him, seemingly trying to ignore it. Ms. Miller called on a white girl next, who says that she is going to work on helping others and respecting others. Miss Miller then called on Ellie, who said that she was going to work on helping and doing her best work. She then called on Preston, who said that he was going to do the best that he could. Ms. Miller herself said that she was going to be conscious of looking at the students’ work and sharing what they did with them.

Mrs. Miller often holds students accountable by asking them to “make good choices” when they are doing something they should not be instead of directly telling them to “stop” doing something.

She asks the students to sit down on the carpet as she pulls up a screen that says “Realistic Fiction” with several bullet points listed below. She turns around and says, “I can tell that Makayla is ready. Tyrone take a seat. Make a good choice.” He wanders around the group, sits down, and then when Mrs. Miller asks him to “make a good choice,” he gets up and sits down right under the Smart Board near her. “Thank you,” she says.

Tyrone was a particularly interesting case in Mrs. Miller's class, because he was one of the worst-behaved students I saw between all of the classes that I regularly observed. Tyrone was frequently and easily angered. It was not uncommon for him to yell or even be physically violent when he was frustrated. It also did not take much for him to be angry. One time, another student borrowed his chair for a moment, but Tyrone was so angry that he snatched the chair from the other student and yelled violently. When Mrs. Miller came over to intervene, Tyrone refused to let go of the chair, and he and Mrs. Miller ended up getting into a tug-of-war over the chair to the point where Mrs. Miller feared he might throw it at her. In the time I observed the classroom, I had watched Tyrone smack Mrs. Miller's face with books, slam doors, and throw other classroom property like pencils around the room and at other people.

Compared to Marcus in Ms. Jennifer's class, Tyrone's level of misbehavior is much more extreme and certainly could warrant more reprimands and intervention. However, Mrs. Miller is patient with Tyrone. She often ignores his outbursts and encourages the other students to do the same. In the entire time that I observed Mrs. Miller's and Ms. Jennifer's class, Ms. Jennifer reprimanded Marcus for fairly mild (albeit distracting) behavior 74 times. Mrs. Miller only reprimanded Tyrone, whose behavior was comparatively much worse than Marcus's, 10 times.¹⁹ The following represents a typical interaction between Mrs. Miller and Tyrone after he had misbehaved:

Mrs. Miller is working with Tyrone at the South Africa table. She asks him what happened to Mr. Bear at the end of the story, and he throws the book at her. "I don't want to do it," he says. Mrs. Miller says calmly that she wasn't asking him to do it, just what happened to him at the end of the story. She picks up the book, puts it back down on the table, then walks away.

¹⁹ Note that this is not a function of my observing Mrs. Miller's classroom fewer times than Ms. Jennifer's.

Mrs. Miller could easily have reprimanded Tyrone and sent him to a corner of the classroom by himself until he calmed down (as Ms. Jennifer might have), but Mrs. Miller instead chose to ignore Tyrone's misbehavior and subtly correct it by placing the book where it was supposed to be.

Mrs. Miller dedicated a lot of her energy to figuring out what to do about Tyrone. At the beginning of my observation period in September, she regularly talked to me about him. In fact, during recess and other informal times that we chatted, Mrs. Miller initiated conversation with me about Tyrone before discussing anything or anyone else. Early in the year, Mrs. Miller showed me a binder that she had dedicated to his anger outbursts—what happened, what she did, what worked, and what did not. She talked about how important it was for her to have Tyrone in class instead of removing him from the classroom the way his Kindergarten teacher had done. She seemed to regularly communicate with Tyrone's mother about strategies that she found worked for him at home, and discovered through her own trial and error that Tyrone particularly enjoyed making his own choices rather than being told what to do (which may be why she was so keen to adopt the “make good choices” strategy with all the students).

It became clear to me early on that Tyrone would be on Mrs. Miller's mind often. In my first meeting with Mrs. Miller as I was describing my project and interest in how students “did school,” one of the first things she mentioned for me to watch was the social dynamics between students. While not mentioning Tyrone specifically by name, she said that students knew that particular students were in trouble often in Kindergarten, and they would try to blame those past troublemakers for their own misbehavior. Mrs. Miller said that she quickly picked up on it and thought I might, too. Because Mrs. Miller had noticed this and had

become so protective of and committed to improving Tyrone's ability to be a productive member of the classroom community, she often reprimanded *other* students for failing to ignore Tyrone instead of reprimanding Tyrone for being distracting:

Mrs. Miller tells Tyrone he can go ahead, and in a high, loud voice, Tyrone loudly announces that today is Friday, yesterday was Thursday, and tomorrow is Saturday. The students giggle and laugh, and Mrs. Miller asks everyone to stop. Olivia protests, "No it's Tyrone!" "No, you were laughing," Mrs. Miller says seriously. She pauses. "If he is distracting you, ignore him. Some people have already moved." Mrs. Miller asks Tyrone to start again. He again starts to share in goofy voices that it is January 24th and that it is a birthday party today. He is so energetic that it seems like all of his energy is trying to escape his body at one time. He is animatedly moving his arms and swaying back and forth as he does his calendar duties. The students giggle as he makes his presentation, but the giggling subsides as he continues along.

Mrs. Miller did not reprimand Tyrone at all for his silly voices and instead blamed the other students for their own giggling. She flipped the responsibility from Tyrone to control his voice to the other students to control their propensity for being distracted. Perhaps Mrs. Miller's philosophy about Tyrone was that if he had no audience, his antics would diminish. Over the course of the year, Tyrone's misbehavior did indeed reduce substantially, and with continued support, he seemed to grow quite a bit academically, as well.²⁰

I found that Mrs. Miller's students were, as a group, some of most well-behaved students I watched that academic year. It seemed as though Mrs. Miller's discipline philosophy (and her 30 plus years of teaching experience to figure out that philosophy) might have had something to do with it. While she was patient in responding to misbehaving students, she was also stern when the situation warranted, and she rarely minced words to obscure her expectations. Recall also that Mrs. Miller was one of the fairer teachers when it came to reprimanding and calling on students. For the most part, Mrs. Miller did not seem to

²⁰ Tyrone's mom reported that at the beginning of the school year, Tyrone was earning 1's and 2's on his assignments. By the time I interviewed her in February, Tyrone was earning 2's and 3's, which is slightly below to at, grade level.

disproportionately reprimand students of color, and even for the most extreme cases, she dealt with misbehaving students with care and concern. Unlike some of the other teachers I observed, Mrs. Miller seemed to actually reduce incidents of misbehavior among her students. Because she did not disproportionately reprimand students of color either in frequency or quality of punishment, Mrs. Miller did not seem to draw the kinds of classed or racialized lines that defined classroom deviants in other classrooms.

Ms. Janwari's discipline style was mostly nonexistent. As a first-year teacher, Ms. Janwari regularly seemed overwhelmed with curricular and administrative requirements, and often appeared flustered and underprepared for her lessons. Since much of her attention was dedicated to keeping afloat in her job requirements, she did not have a consistent or effective approach to classroom management. The students in Ms. Janwari's class as a group were the most ill-behaved of all the students I watched, and I regularly noted in my field notes that watching the class felt chaotic and overwhelming. In fact, just writing the field notes from days that I observed Ms. Janwari's class—even for just an hour—was often far more taxing for me than writing field notes from Mrs. Miller's class because of all the activity constantly happening in Ms. Janwari's room at any given time. I regularly found myself writing about “very few” students listening to or responding to Ms. Janwari and “a lot of students” chatting or not paying attention when they were supposed to be.

Ms. Janwari experimented with many different ways to manage her students. One of her early tactics was to call students out by name when they were not doing what they were supposed to be doing:

“Hunter!” I hear Ms. Janwari say. “Boys and girls! Letter land slip [a class activity she was trying to direct students' attention to]. Leah, no you are sitting over here. The letters are up here [above the Smart Board]. B's and D's are up here. If you find that

you mess up, look up.” Al gets up to sharpen his pencil. “Al, it is not time to sharpen your pencil now. Leah! Sit! Cristina, you need to stop. I need to start.”

By the time Ms. Janwari called out students individually like this, it often tended to invite more misbehavior, rather than mitigate it. Part of the reason this tactic seemed not to work was that Ms. Janwari was constantly calling out names, and there were no consequence for it. There also seemed to be very little shame for students to be called out in Ms. Janwari’s class either, because students were called out individually for things all the time, like lining up for or participating in an activity:

“If you want, you can take your shoes off and hold them. If you are Makenna you can take your shoes off. If you are Sa, Milo, or J, you can take your shoes off...” Ms. Janwari starts.

As it became clearer to Ms. Janwari that her methods of classroom management were not working, she tried more coercive tactics. In the middle of the year, Ms. Janwari began threatening students with “reflection forms,” which was essentially similar to being “written up” for misbehavior. Parents would receive documents outlining what the student had done, and it seemed like Ms. Janwari’s intention for the reflection form was for the threat of parental punishment to incite enough fear in the students to behave in class.

Ms. Janwari begins to pass out sheets of paper to the students. There is a lot of talking and what feels like general chaos. Jamie is complaining about something as he walks up to Ms. Janwari. She tells him that he has a choice to take it with Mrs. Miller or here, but that it is his choice. “I’m going to switch some of your seats, so listen!” Ms. Janwari yells over the already-loud room. “Ben, blue table.” “Can I sit on the back?” someone asks. “Milo, sit in Zoe’s seat.” CJ is up walking around the back table and, after examining some of the materials back there, announces to Ms. Janwari, “Someone wrote on my star!” “The minute the next person talks...mouths closed!” Ms. Janwari yells over the students. “Carlos. Bring your paper to the rug. Jack, rug. Put your caddy in the middle of the table. Aaliyah, come back here.” “Can I go on the rug?” she asks. The students bustle about, moving if they have been asked to. Others are moving around the room as well, even if they haven’t been directed to do so. “Reflection forms are in my hand!” Ms. Janwari threatens.

Note how chaotic this moment feels as Ms. Janwari tries to pass out some paper to the students, and though I do not note it in the excerpt here, when Ms. Janwari threatens with the reflection forms, it does not change the feeling of chaos in the room.

The reflection forms did not last long, but I noticed Ms. Janwari trying other coercive tactics with the students, like threatening to take away a large globetrotter (classroom rewards used by all of Foxcroft to encourage and reward good behavior) or threatening to not give them a special surprise that she had promised earlier in the day.

All of a sudden Ms. Janwari calls out, “Pizza pizza kangaroo!” Some of the students repeat the phrase, but Ms. Janwari has to yell the phrase again for all the students to copy it. “Cristina, do you hear a teacher talking?” Ms. Janwari asks, waiting for Cristina to give her the attention Ms. Janwari is looking for. “I’m going to wait until everyone is respecting me,” she says. She waits a few seconds, then says, “Aiden has super kindly organized our games. When I call your table, he will give you your games.” She dismisses the following people to sit at the carpet: Makenna, CJ, Emory, Gabe, Carlos, Cristina, Anna, Zoe, Leah, Milo, Carter, Hunter, Ben “Oh we’re still waiting!” she calls out again. “We might not earn that surprise...”

Here Ms. Janwari tried one strategy—having students repeat a phrase that she had said to get their attention—but very few students respond to it. She then starts reprimanding students by name to try to get their attention, and when they begin to talk again after hearing the directions and being dismissed, Ms. Janwari tries a new strategy—threatening to not give students the “surprise” she had promised them earlier (the surprise, I later found out, was ice cream sandwiches).

What is perhaps most significant in these examples, is that Ms. Janwari’s strategies for reprimanding students seemed fairly consistent across all students. No subgroups of students were disproportionately threatened, or coerced, or sent away to the corner more than others. However, even though Ms. Janwari’s quality of reprimand was fairly consistent across all students, the fact that she more frequently reprimanded certain students based on

their race became a clear way that white students were privileged in her class over students of color. All students, regardless of race or SES background, misbehaved a lot in Ms. Janwari's class, and much of the time students were fairly conspicuous in their misbehavior—yelling, fighting with others, using classroom property as props for play, etc. Yet regardless of Ms. Janwari's students misbehaving in fairly equal racial distributions, she most obviously of all three teachers reprimanded students of color disproportionately higher relative to their incidents of misbehavior and reprimanded white students disproportionately lower relative to their incidents of misbehavior.

Summary and Discussion

Teachers at both Foxcroft and Cumberland Elementary understood that inequality in education remained a problem for students in their schools and for students across the country. They seemed to believe that they could and should work to reduce that inequality; essentially, these teachers seem to represent the most ideal practitioners in some of the most ideal (well-resourced) educational contexts of the state of North Carolina. Yet a closer look at the day-to-day interactions between students and teachers reveals that teachers tend to preference the voices of white higher SES students in the construction of academic knowledge. These teachers tend to call on white higher SES students more and reward moments when they blurt out, particularly if their comments are framed as academic observations or contributions. At the same time, teachers disproportionately reprimand black students who or may or may not have been regularly misbehaving. For some teachers, like Ms. Janwari, the disproportionate reprimands occur more frequently, but not necessarily more severely, and for other teachers, like Ms. Jennifer, the disproportionate reprimands are harsh.

Even teachers who are viewed as most effective and equitable can at times demonstrate subtle bias in their interactions with students. Mrs. Miller was most fair in calling on and reprimanded students. Yet even Mrs. Miller, like several of the other teachers I observed in this study, called on white higher SES students far above average relative to their classroom population and virtually ignored the Hispanic students. The “invisibility” of engagement with Hispanic students—either by inviting them to construct classroom knowledge or by reprimanding them—was a pattern I observed in all three classrooms with Hispanic students. And in Ms. Jennifer’s case, Asian students also seemed to be treated as if they were more invisible than others.

The findings of this study offer three important contributions. First, they complicate the idea that student behavior (and misbehavior) is racialized. For white and black students, there appeared to be no difference in the propensity for students to misbehave, which is in line with the findings of Ferguson (2000), Casteel (1998), and others who challenge assumptions and stereotypes about “black” and “white” student behavior.

However, I did find that every Asian student in Ms. Jennifer’s class broke rules at lower-than average rates, and in all three classes, Hispanic students tended to fall below average on misbehavior as well. This pattern is likely related to the self-selectivity of the students at these schools. Nearly every Asian and Hispanic student who attended Foxcroft or Cumberland was an immigrant herself or a child of at least one immigrant parent. Immigration researchers argue that all immigrants are not random samples of their home country’s population, but rather, are positively selected on the basis of ambition, willingness to work hard, and education (Portes and Rumbaut 1996). These immigrants, particularly first and second generation immigrants, tend to exceed educational outcomes compared to non-

immigrant peers (Rumbaut 1997) because of their optimism (Kao and Tienda 1995), willingness to accommodate to the requirements of educational institutions without fully assimilating (Ogbu 1987), and willingness to put forth the extra work effort (Rumbaut 1997). If students' parents exhibit these immigrant characteristics, it may be that they socialize their young children toward "working hard" in a way that emphasizes deference to teacher authority.²¹

Some have argued that particularly for Asian students, there are "cultural" factors that might explain their propensity to excel in school, which may also extend to classroom behavior. However, the "Asian" students I observed included students from India, Korea, and China. Culturally, there is little that connects this disparate group of students, in terms of language, religion, history, or ideology. It is not likely that "cultural" explanations, for either the Asian or Hispanic youth in this study, explain their lower propensities for misbehavior.

Other researchers may argue that structural factors outside of ethnicity or immigration status impact these students' behavior. Several of the Asian students in particular benefit from the economic and educational resources of their parents' socioeconomic status, which is traditionally thought to affect school behavior and outcomes. However, SES seems an unsatisfactory explanation because the economic resources that benefit most of the Asian youth are not shared widely across all of the immigrant students in the study (i.e. Asian students had access to these resources, but not all Hispanic students did). Further, higher-SES white and black students were far more likely to misbehave in class than were higher- *and*

²¹ An exception to this pattern is Marcus, who is an immigrant from Mozambique. What makes Marcus unique is that his mother believes that the sensory disorder Ms. Jennifer described is a real problem for him. In fact, this sensory disorder is what caused her to bring Marcus to the U.S. (she is from the U.S. originally), in the hope that American schools could provide resources and support for him that in her view, Mozambiquan schools could not.

lower-SES Asian and Hispanic youth. The only characteristic that most of the Asian and Hispanic youth in this study share is that they or their parents are not originally from the United States. What we may see at Foxcroft and Cumberland then, is not a “racialized” pattern of behavior, but rather, a behavior dichotomy between U.S.-born students and those who benefit from immigrant selectivity.

Second, the finding that teachers ignored Hispanic and Asian students in their classrooms much more than students of other racial and ethnic groups is new and unanticipated. I expected teachers to discipline Hispanic students more heavily, as nationally representative research suggests that Hispanic students are perceived more negatively (similar to black students) than white students (Downey and Pribesh 2004; Kozlowski 2015). Further, I expected teachers to praise and involve Asian students more in construction of classroom knowledge and other related academic processes because of the perception that Asian students are more intelligent and generally exhibit “model minority” qualities (Lee 2009). Some teachers, like Ms. Jennifer in particular, did involve Indian and Korean students’ culture to some degree in the classroom. For example she dedicated a day to learning about Diwali (Indian festival of lights), and during a lesson on housing and transportation, she asked students from India and Korea to share how homes and transportation looked different in their home countries than in the U.S. Ms. Jennifer showed this kind of interest in students fairly frequently. Yet for everyday academic instruction, Ms. Jennifer scarcely called on Asian and Hispanic students to participate in the construction of classroom knowledge, and Mrs. Miller and Ms. Janwari hardly ever called on the Hispanic students in their classes either.

This finding may also be related to these students' status as immigrants. Because all of these students were more compliant and well-behaved, they can more easily go unnoticed compared to other students who regularly commanded the teacher's attention, particularly frequent or severe misbehavers like Marcus or Tyrone. More research on teachers' interactions with immigrant and non-immigrant Hispanic and Asian youth may clarify whether this pattern exists broadly beyond these three classrooms, and how or why teachers may unintentionally ignore these youth in racially integrated classrooms.

Finally, the findings of this study confirm a long line research finding teacher bias. It is perhaps not surprising that racial bias may be found in the U.S., a country with centuries of tumultuous racial history, systematic racial exclusion, and systematic unequal treatment (Desmond and Emirbayer 2009). However, by this point in the twenty-first century, decades have passed since the period of legal discrimination; awareness of racial inequality continues to increase in social media and other public forums; and attempts to reduce racial inequality through better teaching training and attention to multiculturalism are growing. Amidst these social changes, there is reason to be optimistic for more equitable educational experience. Yet even among the most well-meaning, progressive teachers I observed at Cumberland and Foxcroft, there were subtle (and at times virtually invisible) ways that unconscious racial bias impacted their engagement with students. If, in some of the most desirable schools in the state, teachers can be unconsciously biased against students of color and toward white higher SES students, how much more biased might teachers with more overt prejudices be?

This is particularly important because teachers matter for students. Unconscious biases can inform teachers' evaluations of students, which might directly lead to group achievement disparities. But, even beyond the direct impact teachers have on achievement,

teachers matter for students. They can dramatically affect student skills and behaviors (Jennings and DiPrete 2010), as well as students' attachment to school and perhaps other important social outcomes for students, including their stress, health, or general attitudes toward others. Because some disadvantaged students (particularly black and lower SES youth) are even more impacted by teachers (Ferguson 1998) than are white students, the role of teachers in shaping not only achievement, but the social aspects of students' lives, is essential to disentangle.

In Chapter 6, I examine how teachers' racialized interactions with students, in combination with the socioeconomically-patterned ways students demonstrate knowledge, publically signals to all students their particular roles, talents, and weaknesses. Through these signals, students begin to sort themselves into racially and socioeconomically segregated social groups, which, I argue, has implications for students' future achievement.

CHAPTER 6: I GET BY WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF CULTURAL CAPITAL DIFFERENCES AND RACIALIZED TEACHER INTERACTIONS

It was a rainy day outside. At Foxcroft, when it rains, students have recess inside their regular classrooms. Mrs. Miller stocks her classroom closet with Legos, figurines, craft materials, and other toys for students to play with during indoor recess. Because she believes so avidly in kids needing free play, Mrs. Miller virtually becomes invisible in the classroom during indoor recess and other free play times by busying herself with computer work, lesson plans, or emails. The students have complete freedom to play whatever games they want with whomever they want. It is during these free play times that students' social networks and preferred friendship groups become most clear.

On this particular rainy day, students were segmented into four distinct play groups. Most of the boys were playing together with a large tub of Legos, though smaller friendship factions seemed to break away from the large group frequently. The only two boys not playing with Legos were Matteo and Preston, two white higher-SES boys who were playing by themselves in the back of the room with stuffed animals. Maricella and Arianna, two lower-SES Hispanic girls, were sitting at a table by themselves making paper airplanes. Makayla and Treasure, two lower-SES black girls, were sitting at a table by themselves pretending to order and make fast food. Charlotte, Amelia, and Ellie, who are all higher-SES white girls, were at their own table playing with animal figurines.

I decided to watch a few of the girls play. At a table near the window's edge sat

Charlotte and Amelia. They were each playing with a pile of small figurines in front of them, and between them sat a blue plastic lid from the container that houses the animals. Charlotte referred to the lid as the “water” for the sea animals. They were both quiet as they marched or flew the animals around the table, scarcely interacting with each other, but seeming perfectly complacent.

A few minutes later, Ellie, a white higher-SES girl came over to the table to ask if she could play with Charlotte and Amelia. Amelia told Ellie she could, so Ellie grabbed a few of the animals near Amelia and shared character stories about who the animals were and how they connected with other animals in the pile. A few seconds after Ellie joined the table, Treasure, a lower-SES black girl came over to share something with me about what she had been doing at her table with Makayla. Treasure lingered near Amelia, Charlotte, and Ellie, watching them play with their figurines. Amelia had positioned a large dinosaur near herself, and Treasure picked it up. “I’m playing with him,” Treasure announced, grabbing the dinosaur and some of the other animals from the pile of figurines sitting in front of Amelia. “*I’m* playing with him,” Amelia replied to Treasure. Amelia then swept her hand over the entire pile of animals in front of her and told Treasure that it was all hers. Treasure shoved the few animals she had started to play with back toward Amelia and told her, “Fine, I don’t want them.” Treasure left the table, and the three remaining girls—Amelia, Charlotte, and Ellie—continued to hold the animals, moving them around as if they were walking, swimming, and flying through the sky.

“Doing school” is not just about the ways that students execute their academic tasks. I argue that students “do” a social part of school as well. They develop friendships; learn how to get along with, work with, and respect others who are similar and different from them; and develop their own identity and conception of self in the process. This story demonstrates how

in diverse classroom settings, one way that students “do school” is by separating themselves into social networks based on race, ethnicity, and SES. Though friendships are forged in many different things, like shared interests, experiences, or proximity to one another, I regularly saw friendship networks segregated by race, ethnicity, and/or SES in the classrooms I observed at Foxcroft and Cumberland.²²

In this example, groups segregated themselves at the start of free play time, and remained that way through most of the indoor recess period. When Treasure, a black lower-SES girl tried to play with a group of white higher-SES girls, she was shunned, and frustrated, she returned to “her” table with Makayla, another black lower-SES peer. The same result did not occur when Ellie, a white higher-SES girl, tried to join the group. Ellie, despite at times being an overbearing child with impish tendencies, was welcomed by Amelia and Charlotte, two of the quietest, shyest girls in the class. Perhaps it is possible that Amelia extended Ellie an opportunity to play because she *asked* to play with them, rather than *telling* them she was going to play, as Treasure had done. However, the vigor with which Amelia denied Treasure the opportunity to play—especially given her mild-mannered nature—suggests that there was something more to it than Treasure’s breach of politeness.

Why might students segregate themselves by race, ethnicity, and/or SES? Teachers—at least those I observed—did not intentionally segregate students into particular groups or assigned spaces. In fact, students seem to segregate themselves during times when teachers have the least control over student interaction (e.g. recess, lunch, free-choice play). I argue in this chapter that “doing” the social part of school in a racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically segregated way occurs in part because of social signaling that comes from SES cultural capital differences students bring with them to school (Chapter 4) as well as

²² Friendship networks were also regularly segregated by gender, though I do not focus on this aspect of their segregation in this chapter.

racialized student-teacher interaction that occurs in classrooms (Chapter 5). Social segregation itself is certainly unequal, but it also has implications for achievement inequality, as well. I find that when students segregate themselves on the basis of SES, race, or ethnicity, an understanding of the way to “do” school successfully becomes concentrated in the most privileged social networks, because students tend to share information within their friendship networks more than with those who are not. Ultimately, this segregation allows more privileged students to benefit from, and less privileged students to be divested of, the cultural academic resources of their peers.

Peer Segregation

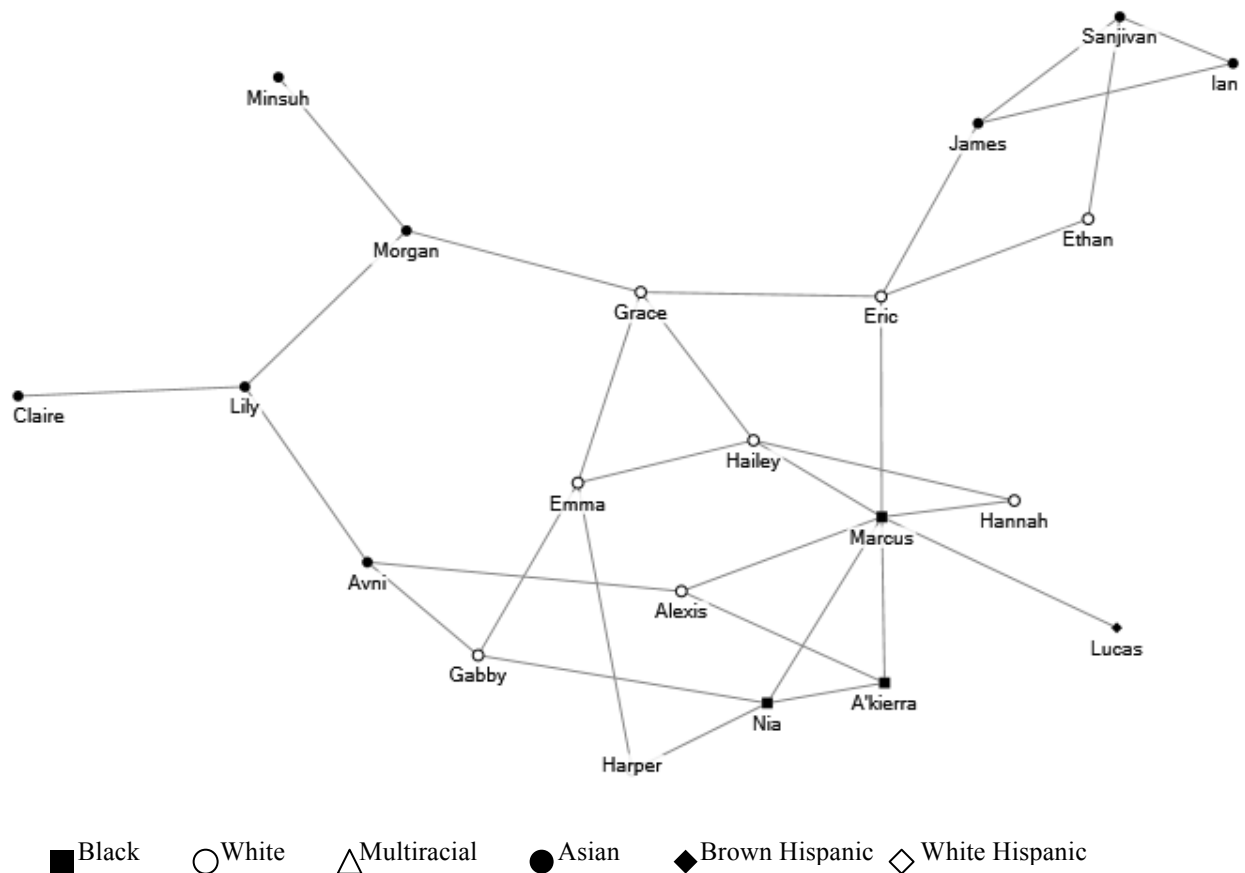
Student segregation is not a new phenomenon. Ever since diversity has existed in schools, students have tended to forge friendships with same-race, rather than cross-race peers (Hallinan 1982; Hallinan and Williams 1989; Quillian and Campbell 2003). Much of the early work on student segregation examined segregation patterns of black and white students. For example, Hallinan and Williams (1989) found that black and white students are so racially segregated in schools that they are 1/6 as likely to choose a friend of a different race as they are a friend of their own racial background. Outside of the black-white dichotomy, Hispanic and Asian students tend to have more racially-mixed friendships (Stearns Buchmann, and Bonneau 2009), but their friendship patterns are still relatively homogenous as well. Quillian and Campbell (2003), for example, find that Hispanic students tend to be friends with other Hispanic students, regardless of immigrant generation, but that race was also a salient organizing factor in friendships. White Hispanics were much more likely to be friends with other white Hispanics as well as white non-Hispanic students, whereas black Hispanics were much more likely to be friends with other black Hispanics and black non-Hispanic students (Quillian and Campbell 2003). Similarly, Asian students tend to

befriend other Asian students, though they also tend to befriend whites more than other non-white students (Quillian and Campbell 2003).

Which Peers Tend to Be Friends?

Like the students of previous studies, students at Foxcroft and Cumberland also seem to show signs of early peer segregation. The first graders I observed were generally cordial to one another and interacted with each other to some degree fairly regularly. The cliques that are characteristic of middle and high school have not yet been solidified by age 7, but signs of more closed friendship groups did start to emerge.

Figure 22. Friendship Network, Ms. Jennifer's Class²³



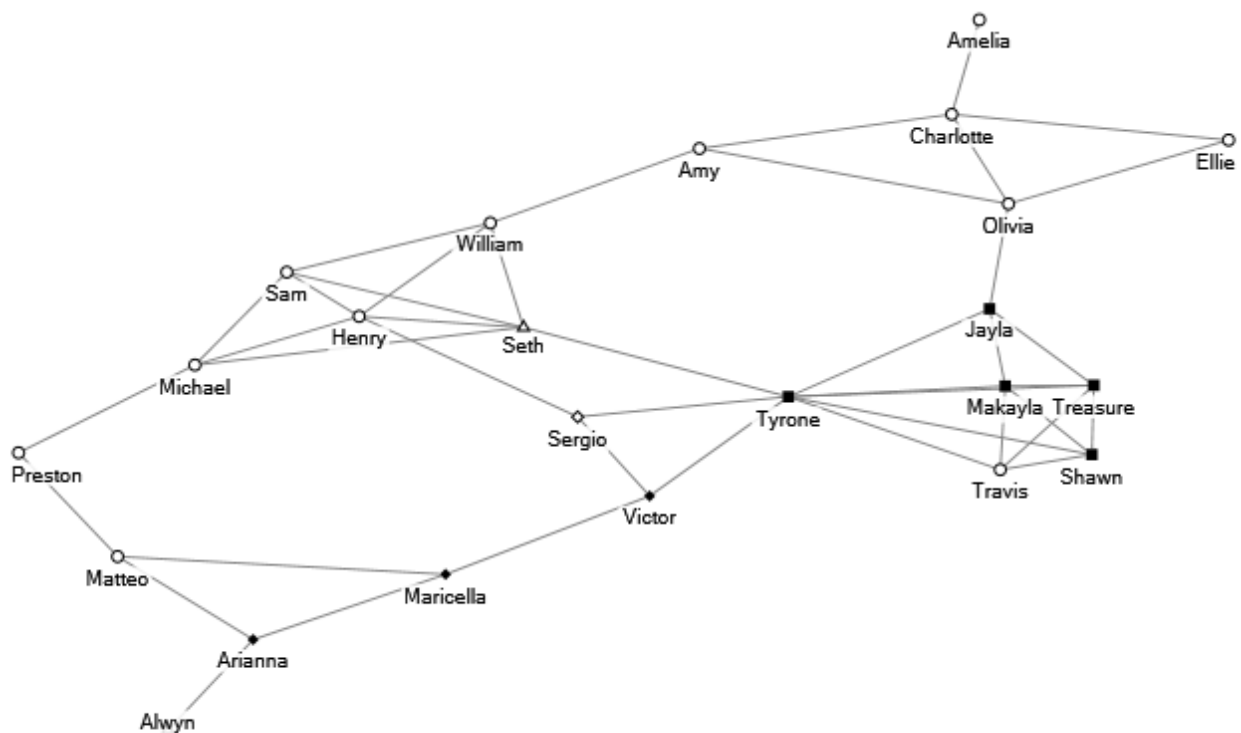
In Ms. Jennifer's class, for example, James, Sanjivan, and Ian (all Asian, higher-

²³ From my field notes, I determined which students most commonly spent free, unstructured time together and used NodeXL software to create this network map.

SES), are one of the clearest friendship networks. Nia and A'kierra (both black, Nia higher-SES and A'kierra lower-SES) regularly play and interact together, though Nia also seems to spend quite a bit of her time with white, higher-SES girls like Harper and Gabby, too.

Morgan and Minsuh, two Asian higher-SES girls, spend quite a lot of time together, though Morgan in particular also spends much time with Lily (also higher-SES and Asian) and some of the other higher-SES girls as well, like Grace and Emma (both white). Avni (higher-SES, Asian) intermingles with many of the students, but spends most of her time with Alexis (higher-SES, white), Hannah (lower-middle SES, white), and Hailey (lower-middle SES, white). Eric and Ethan (both white, higher-SES) are close friends, though Eric also spends a lot of time with Marcus (higher-SES, black), and Ethan spends a lot of time with James and Sanjivan. Lucas (lower-SES, Hispanic) seems to have very few consistent friends, though he does seem to gravitate toward Marcus more frequently than others.

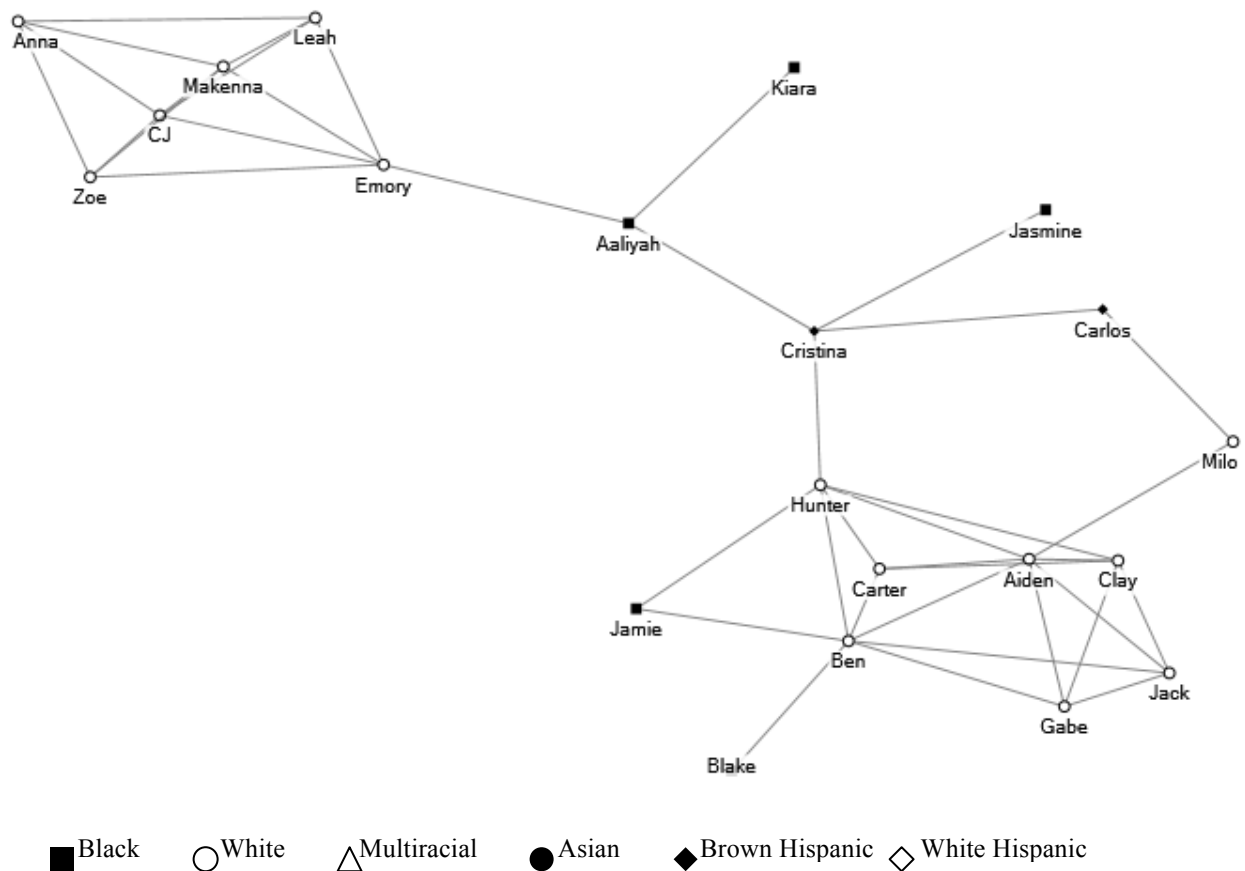
Figure 23. Friendship Network, Mrs. Miller's Class



■ Black ○ White △ Multiracial ● Asian ◆ Brown Hispanic ◇ White Hispanic

In Mrs. Miller's and Ms. Janwari's classes, the friendship groups seem to be a little more clearly delineated. Henry, Sam, Seth, Michael, and William (all higher-SES and white except for Seth, who is Middle Eastern, but visibly white) all seem to solicit each others' company regularly. Travis (higher-SES, white), Shawn (lower-SES, black), and Tyrone (lower-middle SES, black) seem to interact and play with one another frequently, and Preston and Matteo, who are both more shy, isolated boys, solicit each others' company when they do not want to be alone. Treasure, Jayla, and Makayla (all black and lower-SES except Makayla, who is lower-middle SES) spend most of their time together, though Jayla also likes to spend time with Olivia, a higher-SES white girl who sits at her table and therefore interacts with frequently. Olivia also regularly interacts with Amy and Ellie, two white, higher-SES girls. Charlotte and Amelia, two white higher SES girls, spend most of their time together. Arianna (lower-middle SES) and Maricella (lower-SE), two Hispanic girls, spend most of their time together. Sometimes Alwyn (higher-SES multiracial) is included, though Alwyn seems not to have a regular friendship group and at times is alone. Amy, a white higher-SES girl, also seems to have inconsistent friendships and spends much of her time alone. Victor (lower-SES Hispanic), who was new midway through the first semester, seemed to spend most of his time with Sergio, Shawn, or Tyrone by mid-year. Sergio, a higher-SES white Hispanic boy originally from Spain, seemed to bounce in and out of friendship groups seamlessly, at times spending time with higher-SES white boys like Seth, Henry, and Sam, and at times playing with lower-SES boys of color like Tyrone and Victor.

Figure 24. Friendship Network, Ms. Janwari's Class



In Ms. Janwari's class, the clearest friendship group was a group of white girls, including Makenna, CJ, Leah, Anna, and Emory. At times Zoe was also included in this group, though Zoe was very quiet and shy and spent a lot of time alone as well. All of these girls, except for Emory, who is lower-middle SES, are higher-SES. The boys were just as segregated. Aiden, Jack, Gabe, Clay, Hunter, Carter, and Ben—all white and higher-SES—spent time together in various combinations. Sometimes Milo was included as well, though like his twin brother Matteo in Mrs. Miller's class, he was so quiet and shy that he often spent a lot of time alone or with his brother out at recess. Aaliyah and Kiara (two black, lower-SES girls) seemed to spend quite a bit of time together, though their friendship was so antagonistic that it sometimes seemed like they were the last two people left alone and were

forced into friendship. Cristina (lower-SES, Hispanic) seemed to have no consistent close friends, though she interacted with other students in the class fairly comfortably. Jasmine and Jamie (lower-SES, black) also seemed to have no consistent close friends. While Jamie seemed unbothered to be left alone, Jasmine seemed aware that she did not have many friends, because she would become upset when other students refused to work with or interact with her.

Students signal to one another who their friendship networks are by telling each other who their best friends are, calling on particular students regularly when presented with the opportunity to “call on a friend” for help or a question, sitting with particular students regularly at lunch, or playing with particular students at recess or free choice activities.

“You’re my best friend.”

In Ms. Jennifer’s class, one of the clearest friendship groups is James, Sanjivan, and Ian—three higher-SES Asian boys. These boys signal friendship exclusivity to other classmates in very public ways. For example, each morning in Ms. Jennifer’s class, one student is invited to share a short “secret message” with the group. Secret messages can be about virtually anything—one’s favorite sport, something someone did over the weekend, something a student is excited about. The person with the secret message writes a number of blank spaces on the board, each blank space signaling a word. The rest of the students then guess which words comprise the secret message. On a day when it was Sanjivan’s turn to share a secret message:

Mr. Jay [the student teacher] tells the students that it is a short word that ends in Y. “What do you think that word could be?” he asks. About eight or so students have their hands in the air, and Sanjivan chooses Ethan to answer. “My,” Ethan says. Sanjivan smiles and nods his head yes...Sanjivan calls on James for the next word, and he says “best.” Sanjivan smiles and James comes up to the front to write the word “best” in the second blank space. As James walks up front I hear someone whisper “My best friend is James.” Sanjivan turns over his shoulder and smiles upon hearing this. For the next word, Mr. Jay hints that it starts with F and ends with the “zzz”

sound. Sanjivan chooses Eric to answer. “Friends!” Eric says, excitedly. He comes up to write the word friends on the board next to “best.” Mr. Jay says to the group, “I wonder what the next words are.” Sanjivan calls on Marcus to answer next. “Is,” Marcus says. Mr. Jay tells him that friends ends with s and that we use a different word when we talk about multiples. “If we have one friend we say my best friend is but if we have multiple friends we say my best friends are.” He looks at Sanjivan and says “Who in the world are your best friends?” Sanjivan says that two people know the answer...Mr. Jay says that the next words are the names of Sanjivan’s best friends. Mr. Jay asks if we need to give a hint, and Grace asks, “Are they in our class?” Sanjivan nods yes. Many hands go into the air, and Sanjivan calls on Harper. “Marcus and James?” she asks. Sanjivan looks to Mr. Jay. “Just one guess,” Mr. Jay says. “Was she right about James?” he asks Sanjivan. He nods yes. Harper comes up to the front to write the word “James” in the next blank space...Mr. Jay asks the students what the next blank is, and he tells Sanjivan to call on Ian. “And?” Ian says. “Yes,” Sanjivan answers. Mr. Jay asks the class who Sanjivan’s other best friend is, and he urges Sanjivan to call on A’kierra. “Ian?” she asks. He nods, and A’kierra comes up to write Ian’s name on the board. James and Ian are smiling; James is swaying back and forth like he is listening to music no one else can hear.

In this example, Sanjivan intentionally signaled to every other student in the class who his best friends were. Additionally, since this signaling was part of a five-minute academic activity in which the whole class participated, students may have been more likely to be cognizant of Sanjivan’s friendship exclusivity in the future. Despite this being one of the first times Sanjivan communicated his friendship group so overtly to the whole class, it was not particularly challenging for several students to recognize who Sanjivan believed his best friends were, which is likely due to the fact that Sanjivan regularly communicated to smaller groups of students that his best friends were Ian and James. On a previous day, Sanjivan was talking with his table (Emma, Minsuh, and Marcus) as they worked:

Sanjivan starts talking about his friends...“Ian is not my friend,” Sanjivan says. “He’s my best friend. James is also not my friend. He’s my best friend.”

Even if students do not utter the exact words, “You are my best friend,” the sentiment becomes clear when students preference the needs or perspectives of particular people over others. For instance:

During reading time, Minsuh and Morgan seem to be pretty inseparable. When Morgan and Hailey were ready to read a book that Hailey was excited about, Morgan

wouldn't read it unless Minsuh wanted to. Minsuh was still looking for another one, and when Hailey suggested that they just read the one they had, Morgan said, "No, I'm waiting for Minsuh."

Selecting Partners and Friends During Class Activities

Students also signal who they prefer by selecting particular friends more regularly than others for classroom activities. The kinds of activities that required students to select peers tended to occur most often in Ms. Janwari and Ms. Jennifer's classes. One activity that Ms. Janwari allows the students to do everyday is a "dance" at the beginning of class to "get the wiggles out."²⁴ Ms. Janwari played YouTube clips from the video game "Just Dance," as well as other child-friendly dance-clips, to let students dance along to choreographed music. For some of these dances, students had to dance with a partner. One day while I observed the students dancing, I noticed the following:

Makenna and Zoe partner together, and CJ and Emory partner together. Hunter and Carter are partners, and Jack and Aiden are partners as well. Milo seems to have no partner (despite there being a variety of other people to partner with available), so he does jumping jacks by himself. Cristina, Kiara, Carlos, and Jamie also have no partners to dance with.

Makenna, Zoe, CJ, and Emory are all white girls (and except for Emory, higher-SES) who selected one another to dance. This is not an isolated incident either; the group of white girls in this class are virtually inseparable when students participate in group or partner activities. Hunter, Carter, Jack, and Aiden select one another as well. All four of these boys are white and higher-SES. Milo, who is a white higher-SES boy, seemed to work and play by himself much of the time, as can be seen here. However, what seems most significant here is that all of the lower-SES students of color who were present that day—Cristina, Kiara, Carlos, and Jamie—had no partners.

²⁴ More often than not, however, it seemed that dancing made the students more wild and uncontrollable than they had been before.

Jasmine and Aaliyah, two lower-SES black girls in Ms. Janwari's class who happened to be absent for the previous example, are also regularly ignored when it comes to partner activities. One day, Ms. Janwari asked the students to turn to "one of their friends" and give them a high five as part of a class activity:

Cristina refuses to give Jasmine a high five, so I give one to Jasmine. "You're the only one that would give me a high five," Jasmine says, sounding hurt.

It is clear that Jasmine is deliberately passed over, because when Jasmine attempted to give Cristina a high-five, Cristina turned away. It is also clear that Jasmine recognizes she has been ignored and is hurt by it. Looking sad and close to tears, Jasmine seems grateful that I would interact with her, but she is not likely to forget the hurt that she demonstrates in this moment. This seems especially true for Jasmine because she regularly demonstrated this kind of hurt when she felt personally ostracized or limited.

Unlike Jasmine, Aaliyah appeared (at least on the surface), less bothered by her loneliness, particularly when she was around me. In fact, I suspect that her loneliness is one reason she had a propensity for attaching herself to me (literally hanging on me, playing with my clothes and hair, stroking me, talking with me at all times, even during instruction, etc.) while I was in the classroom. On one particular day, the class went outside for a special "walk to school" day meant to celebrate outdoor activity, fitness, and environmental friendliness. In practice, this meant that students walked around one of the school's grassy open spaces for about 30 minutes. During this activity, students were supposed to walk with a "buddy" so that despite people's different walking paces, no one became completely separated from the class.

When we walk outside, Aaliyah puts her arm through mine and tells me that we are best friends forever and ever. Later, Ms. Janwari asks the students to pick a buddy to walk with so that they won't get lost from the group (the students were supposed to walk with their class, but many of the students got separated from the group at one point or another.) Aaliyah put her arm through mine and said that I was her buddy. I

asked her if I could watch her be buddies with one of her classmates and she said no. I asked why, and she said she had no friends. I asked if she really had no friends in the class, and she said that she was friends with Emory, but that's it.

When I next asked Aaliyah where Emory was, Aaliyah pointed to her across the open space. She was walking arm-in-arm with the other white girls in the class—CJ, Leah, Zoe, Anna, and Makenna. Like Jasmine before, Aaliyah appears to be socially isolated from others, and it does not seem coincidental that Aaliyah, like Jasmine, is lower-SES and black. Emory, who is lower-middle SES, seems to be able to connect with other white girls in the class despite being less affluent than they are, but Aaliyah does not seem as welcome in their social group.

In addition to selecting partners and groups for class activities, Ms. Jennifer's class in particular offered many opportunities for students to "call on a friend" or "pass the marker to a friend" during whole-class instruction at home base. In the morning, Ms. Jennifer or a student writes a message on the flip chart, and there are always spelling and punctuation mistakes that the students are invited to correct. Ms. Jennifer will start the morning message session by calling on one student to correct a mistake, then ask that student to pass the marker to someone else so they can participate, too. Similarly, when Ms. Jennifer offers whole group instruction, there are times when she calls on students to read something out loud or solve a math problem out loud or explain their reasoning for an answer they have given. When students stumble, seem confused, or pause long enough that it is apparent they need some help, Ms. Jennifer invites students to call on "a friend" to help them.

In every class I observed, it was common practice to refer to all classmates as "friends," so students should not have felt limited to their best or preferred friends when they passed the marker or asked for help. However, some students clearly demonstrated preference for calling on particular people. Gabby (white, higher-SES), for example,

regularly called on Grace, Emma, and Ethan—all white higher-SES students. Gabby was perhaps the most blatant of all students in her selections. Much of the time, other students in Ms. Jennifer’s class selected a mixture of people inside and outside of their close friendship groups for whole class instructional activities. However, some students still seemed to have slight preferences for calling on particular students that aligned with their segregated friendship groups. Of the 11 times I observed A’kierra (black, lower-SES) call on another student, she called on Nia (black, higher-SES) 4 of them. A’kierra never called on any other student more than once. Marcus also seemed to have a slight preference for calling on Nia; he called on her 3 of the 11 times I observed him selecting a student for an activity. Eric also showed a clear preference for calling on Sanjivan and Ethan (both higher-SES, though Sanjivan is Asian and Ethan is white), because he called on those two students almost exclusively when given the opportunity. Most students called on at least four, five, or more different students over the course of my observation period.

It is clear that students not only demonstrate a preference for calling on particular people, but they also seem to understand which students do get a chance to participate more often than others, either because students call on them more regularly or because the teacher does. In Ms. Janwari’s class, Leah draws our attention to this inequality by intentionally calling on Cristina. During “share time,” which is akin to “show and tell,” Leah had been sharing that she had gone to Disney on Ice. Per classroom procedure, she invited two questions about her experience. She first called on her friend Emory, then:

Leah looks around the room and announces that she wants to call on someone that “probably won’t get called on.” She calls on Cristina. Cristina does not react to the suggestion that she wouldn’t get called on. She asks, “When did you go?” “The night before last,” Leah replies. “Sunday?” Ms. Janwari asks. “No, Saturday. I mean wait, Sunday,” Leah says.

Here, it is clear that Leah has picked up on the fact that Cristina does not get to

participate regularly. This is not for Cristina's lack of trying. Cristina seemed very engaged with her work, loved to raise her hand, and loved to share her work with me, other students, and adults in the room. Recall from Chapter 5 though, that Ms. Janwari called on the black and Hispanic students in her class much less frequently than she did the white students. It seems plausible that Leah's analysis of Cristina's likelihood to get called on could have been due to the fact that Ms. Janwari called on her less frequently than others. Another interpretation could have to do with the fact that Cristina is not perceived to be in Leah's friendship group, which is composed entirely of white girls. Perhaps Leah was signaling to Cristina here that she is an outsider. Either way, it is clear that Leah is calling on Cristina precisely because she is different from her rather than genuinely soliciting her participation or feedback.

Segregation at Lunch and Recess

In addition to publically recognizing who someone's "best friends" are or selecting particular students for an activity, students also regularly signal to one another inclusion into a social group by sitting with particular students at lunch or playing with particular students at recess. Lunch and recess are two of the activities in which students can act most freely, because their bodies are not restricted to confined teacher-designated spaces, nor are their activities restricted to certain tasks that must be accomplished with particular people. It is therefore during lunch and recess that students are most telling about who they want to spend time with, and how they want to spend their time interacting. While I was observed Ms.

Janwari's class one day at lunch, I observed the following pattern:

When we get to the seating area of the cafeteria, I notice that all the white girls in the class are sitting nearest the window. CJ's mom is eating lunch with her today since she is "star of the week," [an activity that every class at Foxcroft participates in] and her mom is something of a local celebrity, so I can see the girls looking gooey eyed at her and asking if they can come over to their house. All the white boys, minus Milo

and plus Jamie, are sitting at the middle table. All the minority students, minus Blake, who is sitting at a table alone with Milo, are sitting at the third table, with me.

The racial segregation that occurs in this example did not just happen one time; this kind of segregation happened almost every time I observed a lunch period, in every teacher's class I observed. Even when students of different racial groups were sitting at the same table, there was a clear separation of students by race into particular sections of the table:

I sit with several of the girls at lunch—Ellie, Amy, Olivia, Charlotte on one side, and Treasure, Jayla, and Makayla on the other.

Ellie, Amy, Olivia, and Charlotte are all higher-SES white girls, while Treasure, Jayla, and Makayla are all black (Treasure and Jayla are lower-SES, and Makayla is lower-middle SES). It was clear in the space that these girls were occupying that race shaped their friendship groups. However, segregation is not just about the physical space that particular people occupy; it is also about the interaction that occurs in those spaces, even when people are close to one another. As we sat at lunch that day, the white girls seemed to have a conversation with one another, and the black girls seemed to have a conversation on their own, though both groups were vying for my attention as they talked, which gave the appearance of more cross-group talk than there actually was. In fact, at one point when Ellie and Treasure (indirectly) interacted with one another, Ellie intentionally tried to pit Olivia against Treasure:

At one point we were laughing about what it would be like if apples could talk to us, and I ask what the apple would say if it could talk. Treasure tells me her apple would tell me that I was the best observer ever. I tell her apple that "I don't want to say it's the best because there are so many good apples, but this is a really good apple." Ellie whispers to Olivia [who is also eating an apple] that I think Treasure's apple is better than hers. "That's not what I said," I say.

As a neutral observer not wanting to appear biased toward or against particular students, I tried my best to validate all students' thoughts and experiences without elevating them over others. In this moment, Treasure indirectly shared with me that I was the "best"

observer, but because there are so many students in the class, I did not want to say that Treasure, or anyone else, was the “best” student. However, Ellie twisted my words to indicate to Olivia that I *had* actually said Treasure was, at the very least, better than Olivia. While I cannot be sure why Ellie had tried to intentionally hurt her friend, it seems meaningful that Ellie would hurt Olivia by juxtaposing her against a black girl who was clearly not part of “their” friend group.

Just as segregation regularly occurred in the lunchroom, segregation also regularly occurred at recess and during free-choice centers. The same rainy day recess from the opening story in which (black, lower-SES) Treasure had been shunned by (white, higher-SES) Amelia, Maricella and Arianna (both Hispanic—Maricella lower-SES and Arianna lower-middle SES) had been playing together:

I decide to get up and watch Arianna and Maricella, who are sitting together at a table by themselves, folding paper airplanes. As I approach the table, I can hear that the girls are conversing with each other in Spanish. When I sit down, they switch to English. Arianna is finishing folding a paper airplane and then hands it to me. I ask if it is for me, and she tells me that it is. Maricella hands Arianna a sheet of paper to fold for her, because she says she doesn’t know how to do it. Then Maricella leaves the table and takes a few minutes before coming back...Finally Maricella returns to the table carrying two manila folders, one for Arianna and one for herself. They are both excited about the prospect of drawing on it, and Arianna tells Maricella in Spanish she is going to draw something for me. At least I think that’s what she says, because she begins to point to me. Arianna also asks me how I spell my name, and I spell it for her. I see her write “To: KaRi” on her folder, and then she starts to draw a pumpkin. Maricella begins to draw the same thing.

It is clear that these two girls are close friends. They were segregated into their own physical space (a table by themselves) and willingly asked for and received help from one another on the crafts they were making. Maricella was thoughtful of Arianna in retrieving more materials (she could have just gotten a folder for herself), and when Maricella “copied” Arianna’s idea of drawing a pumpkin, Arianna did not accuse Maricella of stealing her idea (as often occurred between non-friends in similar situations). Finally, the two shared a

Spanish language connection, though when non-Spanish speakers like me wished to interact, they were just as comfortable conversing in English together and with others.

In Ms. Jennifer's class, racial and ethnic segregation occurred at recess as well. The following excerpts are drawn from one day that I observed the students:

I follow the students outside to watch a bit of recess. Most of the students elect to play some form of tag. Marcus [black, higher-SES], A'kierra [black, lower-SES], Nia [black, higher-SES], and Alexis [white, higher-SES] play together exclusively for most of the recess.

Morgan [Asian, higher-SES], Gabby [white, higher-SES], Hailey [white, lower-middle SES], and Harper [white, higher-SES] isolate themselves far away, digging in the dirt near the edge of the playground.

Avni [Asian, higher-SES], Lily [Asian, higher-SES], and Claire [Asian, unknown SES] tend to hang out together, underneath the jungle gym primarily.

While race and ethnicity do not always map perfectly onto the groups of friends that interact in a particular moment, race and ethnicity do seem to matter in the construction of these friendship groups to some degree. In the first excerpt, for example, Marcus, A'kierra, and Nia are all black students of various SES background, and while they did not always play together exclusively, I found that these three students did play together fairly frequently throughout the year. Yet Alexis, a white higher-SES student from the first excerpt played with all the black students in the class on this particular recess period as well, which blurs the racial lines of friendship somewhat. I do not think it is a coincidence, however, that Alexis, like Marcus and A'kierra, is one of the most avoided students in Ms. Jennifer's class; for some reason other students just do not like her. Her playing with the black students in the class might be just as much about more well-liked students maintaining interpersonal boundaries as it might be for white students to maintain boundaries from black students. In other words, students of all backgrounds who tend to be more regularly rejected by others stick together.

Why Certain Students “Flock Together”

Theory suggests two primary reasons why segregation seems to occur in schools. One argument suggests that students seek out friendships with others who are similar to themselves, an idea known as “homophily.” Those who argue that friendships are homophilous suggest that students intentionally select same-race friends, perhaps out of shared social identity (McPherson et al 2001), shared perceptions of discrimination (Hallinan 1982), and other social support (Quillian and Campbell 2003; Stearns et al 2009). There is ample support for the idea that friendships are racially homophilous, from elementary school through college and beyond (Hallinan 1982; Stearns et al 2009), especially when students are members of a minority in a racially diverse setting (Quillian and Campbell 2003; Stearns et al 2009).

Others argue that students develop same-race friendships as a result of “propinquity,” or opportunity to interact with others who share the same social conditions. Those who support this theory suggest that structural conditions, like which kinds of schools students are sorted into, what kinds of tracks or classes students are sorted into, or opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities, dictate likelihood of developing same- or cross-race friendships. Because students often attend racially segregated schools (Logan et al 2012), are segregated into racialized tracks in more diverse schools (Tyson 2011), and have different opportunities to participate in extra-curricular programs (Ream and Rumberger 2008), propinquity supporters would argue that students cannot help but forge friendships with same-race peers. Propinquity does appear to explain some patterns of racial peer segregation. For example, Moody (2001) found that in very racially diverse schools, increased contact with diverse peers increases cross-race friendships. Similarly, when tracks and extra-curricular activities are more racially integrated, racial segregation is less pronounced

(Moody 2001). Stearns et al (2009) also found that college students who were assigned roommates of a different racial background seem to develop more cross-race friendships.

However, research is mixed about whether increased exposure to diverse peers increases or decreases racial segregation. Though some do find positive effects of racial diversity on reduced segregation, it seems as though in some cases increased exposure to racial diversity does little to impact desegregated friendship groups. Stearns et al (2009), for example, find that when college students take classes that are more racially heterogeneous, they are no more likely to develop cross-race friendships than students who take racially homogeneous ones. Sometimes increased exposure to diversity can actually increase segregation. When increases in school heterogeneity are small, racial segregation actually increases, perhaps to provide protection and support for minority groups (Hallinan 1982; Moody 2001; Stearns et al 2009). Additionally, for propinquity to be most effective in reducing racial segregation, three context conditions must be met: 1) members of different racial groups must have equal status when they interact 2) the context must foster working together toward a goal that cannot be reached on one's own, and 3) there must be explicit support for racial mixing from recognized authority figures in the setting (Stearns et al 2009). In many cases where propinquity seems not to produce desired decreases in segregation, racially diverse students seem to occupy different social statuses, compete rather than collaborate for grades, and are not given explicit support for racial mixing by teachers and administrators.

In the first grade classrooms I observed, it is plausible that propinquity could have decreased racial segregation because it seemed to meet the three requirements for successful racial integration. 1) First grade student social status is not as obvious or as much of a concern as it may be in adolescence, when students are more attuned to their own identities

and relationships to others, so students may have perceived themselves to be more similar in terms of social status. 2) The activities teachers designed tended to encourage collaboration and communication. Further, grades are not clearly explained or dwelled upon by the teachers I observed, so competition for grades should have been limited in these schools. Finally, 3) teachers seemed to express support (albeit subtle) for racial intermixing by assigning students to racially integrated tables (Ms. Janwari), encouraging mixed-race reading partners (Ms. Jennifer and Mrs. Miller), and even celebrating other cultures through the formal curriculum (all teachers).

Yet, despite the structural opportunities to connect with racially diverse students, I found that students at Foxcroft and Cumberland tended to segregate themselves into more homophilous friendship groups. Other studies of homophilous friendships argue that students intentionally select friends based on their race, but many of those studies are based on older students and adolescents who are more aware of their own and others' social identities (Hallinan and Williams 1989; Quillian and Campbell 2003; Stearns et al 2009). First grade students do not see race in the same way that older students do (Wood 2007), and it seems unlikely that these first graders segregated themselves so intentionally by race. Other research suggests that racial segregation may be a byproduct of homophily on other characteristics that happen to be correlated with race. For example, students seem attracted to friends who share the same achievement levels (Flashman 2012), the same value or disgust for school (Kindermann and Skinner 2009), and even opinions about the same cultural or extracurricular tastes and activities (Stark et al 2012). These findings seem to be most useful for interpreting the segregation patterns of students at Foxcroft and Cumberland.

From the students' perspective, they played with or avoided particular students for many reasons. Students shared with me that they liked certain students in their class because

they were “nice” to them, but very few students in any class I observed were regularly mean to others. Why, then, would friendship networks be so clearly connected to race in Foxcroft and Cumberland? At the same time, what accounts for variation in friendship networks, such that some students within racial groups or between racial groups, were more likely to want to play together? I argue that the students at Foxcroft and Cumberland unconsciously constructed friendship groups because of the way they signaled academic competence (see Chapter 4) and because certain students had a higher propensity for being in trouble as a result of teachers’ racialized treatment of particular students (see Chapter 5).

Academic Competence and Peer Segregation

In terms of academic competence, the friendship networks I observed seem to connect to achievement in addition to race and SES. This introduces some variation into students’ social networks such that not *all* students of a particular racial or ethnic group spend time exclusively with one another. The highest achieving students—for example, Sanjivan, Ian, and James in Ms. Jennifer’s class; or Charlotte and Amelia in Mrs. Miller’s class—all seem to spend most of their time together. However, among middle- and lower-achievers, there tends to be slightly more variation. In addition to spending time with Ellie and Amy, two middle-achieving white girls of higher SES background, Olivia, a white higher-SES girl of average achievement, likes to play and talk with Jayla, a low- to middle-achieving, low-SES black girl. Nia in Ms. Jennifer’s class is an average to above-average achiever, which facilitates her friendships with other average-achieving white girls of higher-SES background, like Gabby and Harper.

Achievement is not the only characteristic that seems to connect students beyond demographic characteristics. The propensity for getting in trouble also seems to be common ground for friendships. In Mrs. Miller’s class, for example, Travis is a higher-SES white boy

who spends much of his time with Shawn and Tyrone, two lower-SES black boys. From a demographic perspective, it might make little sense for Travis to solicit Shawn and Tyrone's friendship, but Travis is also a low to average achiever like Shawn and Tyrone are.

Additionally (and perhaps even more importantly in this particular group's case), Travis has a high propensity for causing and getting into trouble, just as Shawn and Tyrone do. Tyrone, Travis, and Shawn led the class in the number of times I saw students misbehaving in Mrs. Miller's class, and even though Mrs. Miller scarcely reprimanded students compared to other teachers, those three boys topped her reprimand counts.

How Students Become Friends: Similarities Based on Demonstration of Competence

One of the subtle ways in which students seemingly began to identify one another as potential friends was by sharing similar academic competence and demonstration of it. This was particularly true for James, Ian, and Sanjivan, three of the highest-achieving students in Ms. Jennifer's class. One day, as students were writing their own "books" for writer's workshop, Sanjivan turned to me and said, "Some people write 10 chapters or 30 chapters. Some books are 200 pages. Me and James both read a book 'this big' once." As he said this, he made a gap of about an inch or two between his thumb and forefinger to demonstrate just how thick the book was that he and James had read. It was clear to me in this comment that Sanjivan valued both his and James's ability to read so well and that their friendship was centered in part around the fact that they were so academically advanced.

Earlier in the academic year, I witnessed a moment when these students started to bond over their demonstration of academic competence:

By now all of the students have gone to their center groups, so I decided to watch the green folder group, or the unfinished work group. Two Indian boys, [Sanjivan and James] Ian, N'Dia, another Hispanic-looking girl whose name I do not know, and Grace are in this group. One of the Indian boys is standing up, but the rest of the students are sitting down. One of the Indian boys says to the other, "I finished all of it. Just in one day." Ian chimes in, "it's too easy." The Indian boy says to the other

one, is it easy for you? The other Indian boy nods. He says, “all the people at my table thought it was so hard, so I had to tell them what to do. I didn’t have time to finish any of my work.”

The conversation about how “easy” the work was for Sanjivan, James, and Ian only occurred between these three students and occurred in a clearly visible way to the three other students at the table who might not have found the work so easy. Therefore Sanjivan, James, and Ian not only bonded together over their demonstration of academic competence, but they also effectively *excluded* the other three students and constructed a boundary based on academic ability between themselves and others that continued to be reified for the rest of the year.

A similar moment occurred in Ms. Janwari’s class:

CJ is talking with the white girl at the table next to her. She seems to have noticed that this girl has glued her number line the same way that she has. “We’re sisters!” she says excitedly.

Like the three boys above, CJ bonds over having executed an academic task in a similar way to another white girl in her class—to the point where she calls this girl her “sister,” one of the most intimate relationships two girls can have.

As students tried to navigate their academic commonalities with others, I also saw moments when peers who were not at the same academic level failed to connect with others. One day I watched high-achieving Michael (higher-SES, white) try but fail to bond with lower-achieving Shawn (lower-SES black) and low- to average-achieving Travis (higher-SES white). Travis, Michael, and Shawn all sat at the same table for part of the year, and one afternoon after a math lesson, the teacher allowed students to wrap up their designated math time with “math books.” When students read math books, they read books having to do with numbers or mathematical problem-solving. Here is how the interaction between Michael, Travis, and Shawn played out:

Shawn picks out an M&Ms book, but decides to put it back in favor of “24 Robbers.” Travis picks out a book about crocodiles. He sings “crocodiles, crocodiles, crocodiles” many times. He turns a page and animatedly tells the other two to look at the crocodiles’ eyes. Michael, who has picked up Shawn’s discarded M&Ms book, tries to get the boys to look at the M&Ms on his page, but they are more interested in Travis’s crocodiles. He sings “duh duh duh duh DUH” in a similar suspenseful cadence to the Jaws theme song. “Look at that,” he says. All three are now looking at Travis’s pictures. Now Travis has started beat-boxing as a backdrop to what the characters in the book are doing. Michael, seems to lose interest in Travis’s book and says that he is going to look at the M&Ms instead. He flips through his own book by himself. Travis and Shawn continue to look at the crocodile book... Travis and Shawn go back and forth, claiming to be “this” crocodile or “that” one...

Shawn says that he is going to get another math book. Travis asks Shawn if he wants the crocodile one. Shawn says yeah. Travis flips through a couple more of the pages, then gives his finished book to Shawn. “There you go. I’ll get 24 Robbers,” Travis says. Shawn and Travis flip through their new books until Travis comments about the bows and arrows of the robbers. Shawn leans over to look. “Let me see.”... Michael tells Travis that there is something neat in his book that he wants to show him, and opens up two fold out pages in his book that feature hundreds of elephants. “Holy guacamole!” Travis says. “Wait, are those elephants?” he asks. Michael confirms that they are. “Oh,” Travis says flatly. “I want my men to ride horses.” Shawn asks if they could ride crocodiles. “What if they get dry?” Travis replies. “They’re like boats, they have to stay wet,” he says. “You’re the king of crocodiles,” Travis tells Shawn. “All 24 robbers can ride the king of crocodiles!” Shawn says. Michael tries to command the attention of the other two once more by trying to dazzle them with a large number. He has turned to the back of the page of his book, and recites the following number: 536,870,912 (he says the right amount of millions, thousands, and hundreds). Michael tells Travis that this number represents all the grains of rice (though from where, is unclear). Travis’s response is “I can’t take this already!” He closes his book and talks to Shawn. Michael tries again, this time with Shawn. “Look again Shawn!” he says three times. Finally Shawn looks over at Michael’s book. “Do you want to hear a large number?” he asks Shawn. He again recites 536,870,912. Shawn seems not to be too interested in the large number either...

During this activity, students were allowed to read together if they wanted. Travis and Shawn clearly bonded over the books they were reading, largely because they seemed not to be reading them at all. Instead, they made up stories about characters, pretended to be “this” one or “that one,” and added sound effects to the story they believed to be going on. Travis and Shawn are much less adept at reading than Michael is, so it is not surprising that they would dedicate their “reading” time to creative play-acting or story construction, but Michael seems to lose interest in these antics after a while and returns to his own book to read by

himself. In an attempt to bond with Travis and Shawn, Michael tries to get the two boys to look at some of the things he finds interesting in his book. Travis is interested at first, until he realizes that the contents of Michael's book are not consistent with the story he and Shawn are making up together. Michael tries again to demonstrate his competence by reciting a large number to the boys, though neither is interested. Higher-achieving students might recognize the signal that Michael is sending about his academic ability and bond over the fact that they know how to read the number; they might even try to outperform each other by reciting even bigger numbers or making a connection to another time when they heard about or saw a large number of something. However, Travis and Shawn do not share this academic ability or interest with Michael, and in response to Michael's demonstration of competence, Travis and Shawn ignore him.

There were also moments in class when students seemed to gravitate away from students who did not share their academic ability in more disdainful ways. Take, for instance, this moment between Emory and Cristina during "share" time. Emory had been sharing with the class a doll that she had brought from home and had just asked whether anyone had questions for her:

Cristina, who had been sitting next to me with her hand up almost the entire time Emory had been sharing, is called on. Cristina says softly, "I like dolls." Emory asks the class, more forcefully than she had been while sharing, "Does anyone have a *real* question?"

During share time in Ms. Janwari's class, students are not supposed to offer comments, just ask questions. It is clear in the way Emory responded that she recognizes Cristina has not decoded the expectation about asking questions for share time. The fact that I never saw Emory playing with Cristina suggests that Emory did not see herself sharing commonalities with Cristina, some of which may have stemmed from a perceived lack of academic compatibility.

On two different days, the same thing occurs between lower achieving, low-SES students of color and higher-achieving, high-SES white students in Ms. Janwari's class:

"Pairs," Cristina says. "Don't you mean doubles," one of the boys says in a condescending tone to Cristina. "What is the mathematical word for pairs," Ms. Janwari asks. "Doubles," Cristina quickly corrects.

Ms. Janwari calls on Jasmine to answer what they had been working on in math. "Habitats," Jasmine says from her table on the side of the room. "That's science, close," Ms. Janwari says. Some of the boys, namely Hunter and Aiden, snicker.

In the first example, Ms. Janwari had just begun math instruction for the day and asked the students what they had been working on the previous day. The students had been memorizing the sums of simple addition for equations like $1+1$, $2+2$, $3+3$, and so forth. Recognizing the symmetry of those equations, Cristina answered "pairs," though technically the word teachers had been using to describe these equations was "doubles." Despite Cristina clearly understanding the concept, several of the higher-SES, higher-achieving white boys derided her for mis-remembering the "technical" name of the concept they had been learning. By doing this, they are elevating themselves in relation to Cristina. When Hunter and Aiden (both higher-SES white boys) snicker at Jasmine's similar mishap in the second example, it is clear that they are bonding over the fact that they have decoded the answer to Ms. Janwari's question more capably than she.

Judgment about and bonding over students' academic ability (or lack thereof), does not just occur between students of different demographic characteristics. Students who are not in the same friendship groups but share similar demographic characteristics also bond over perceived academic competence.

Mrs. Miller switches the screen to the one that says "Today is...., Yesterday was....Tomorrow is..." Mrs. Miller tells the class that Ellie didn't get a chance to write on the board because it wasn't working this morning. This prompts some chatter among the students about how "dumb" the Smart Board is. The students continue to talk as they wait for Ellie to write "February 3, 2014" on the board. Mrs. Miller seems to get frustrated with Ellie as she hesitates in her writing of the date. "Ellie it was just

right here honey,” Mrs. Miller says, clicking back to the screen that showed February 3rd on it. Sam, Seth, and Henry are snickering among themselves as the class waits.

Sam, Seth, Henry, and Ellie are all higher-SES, visibly white students who regularly demonstrate academic competence and decode teacher instructions more capably than lower-SES students. However, Sam, Seth, and Henry are some of the *most* academically adept students in Mrs. Miller’s class. Ellie is much more average academically. This is clearly demonstrated here, as it takes Ellie a longer time to figure out how to execute her academic task than it would for more advanced students like Sam, Seth, and Henry. What is most significant in this example, though, is that by snickering together, the three academically advanced boys recognize their perceived academic superiority and bond over how much less academically advanced Ellie is in this moment.

A similar moment occurs between Aaliyah and Kiara, two lower-SES black girls in Ms. Janwari’s class:

I head to the corner red table first, where Hunter and Jamie are teasing Aaliyah about “still” being “on the first one” (worksheet). Kiara joins the jeer as well, and Aaliyah defensively yells that “at least I got a three or a four on it.” She seems to say this mostly to Kiara.

Hunter is a high-achieving, high-SES white boy who seems to be somewhat of a leader among his table. One of the more dominant boys in the class, Hunter often dictates conversation and activity in a way that causes others to follow his lead. Here, Hunter began to tease Aaliyah, a lower-SES black girl for her slower pace on a math activity. This is perceived by the students to be indicative of low achievement. Even Jamie and Kiara, two lower-SES visibly black students (Jamie is mixed-race) who are also low achievers and not part of Hunter’s friendship group, join the jeer against Aaliyah, perhaps to gain some sort of favor with Hunter or to feel good about not being the target of negative attention. As Aaliyah comes under attack, she tries to turn the negative attention to her “friend” Kiara by

suggesting that even though she (Aaliyah) might be slower, she gets better grades than Kiara does. Kiara and Aaliyah seem to be friends at times, but they also seem to have an antagonistic relationship with one another. This moment is an example of that. These two girls argue about which person's house is bigger or who understood an assignment better often. Additionally, they often try to force unwanted "help" with an academic task on each other when they can to demonstrate their academic superiority. If there were more low-SES black students at Foxcroft, I suspect that Kiara and Aaliyah would not elect to spend much time together. However, because the white, higher-SES girls regularly avoid Aaliyah and Kiara, it seems like Aaliyah and Kiara are forced into this antagonistic relationship with one another because they have no one else who wants to spend time with them.

A similarly antagonistic relationship seems to exist between A'kierra and Nia (both black girls, though Nia is higher-SES and A'kierra is not) from Ms. Jennifer's class. I suspect this antagonism derives in part from A'kierra's lower academic achievement than Nia's. One day right after I arrived to observe the class:

A'kierra comes up to me to ask if I will read the packet to her. "Why?" I ask. "Because," Nia [who is standing behind her] says, sounding annoyed, "she just wants you to tell her the answers instead of using the strategies to figure out the answer for herself." A'kierra does not deny it; she stares at me with puppy dog eyes.

Nia is not necessarily incorrect about A'kierra's propensity for wanting an adult to tell her the answers. Here, Ms. Jennifer engages with A'kierra in precisely the way Nia had predicted to me:

Miss Kathleen turns her attention to A'kierra. She has written "9+ ____ = 10" on A'kierra's paper and is trying to get her to think about which number fills in that equation correctly. She asks A'kierra at least three times in several different ways to get her to say "1," but she never does. Kathleen, who seems to want to move to either help another student or get to another part of the activity, fills in the "1" for her as she leaves, telling A'kierra to work on it some more.

A'kierra is indeed one of the lowest-performing students—if not *the* lowest

performing student—in Ms. Jennifer’s class. She is also one of the most regularly-avoided students in the class. There are very few students who seem to welcome her company. When A’kierra asks for help, a resource (like a pencil or marker) from a table, or tries to interact with students, she is often told to “go away” or ignored altogether. Yet A’kierra seems to be drawn to Nia, and the two girls do spend some time together. I suspect, though, that A’kierra solicits Nia’s company far more than Nia solicits A’kierra’s, because Nia also seems to work to maintain boundaries with A’kierra that signal to others A’kierra is not her equal: On a day when students were participating in “free choice centers,” Harper, Nia, and A’kierra were making a “book” with arts and crafts supplies:

A’kierra is trying to use some glittered paint, but is having trouble squeezing it out properly. “No!” Nia says to A’kierra. “You’ll have to take the top off. Harper, show her,” she says, as if she is a mother fussing over her children. Harper stops working on her own piece of paper, which she has attached scraps of fabric in horizontal lines to, to take the cap off the glitter paint and extend it to A’kierra....“I’ve got the gold on the thing,” A’kierra says from the floor. “This is amazing. It will be a lot of cleaning, but it’s so worth it!” Harper says, buzzing around the table. Nia agrees that it will be “worth it.”...Harper tells A’kierra to use the red glitter paint “carefully, carefully. Good.” Then she says to Nia, and to anyone around us, “This is amazing! I love it so much!”

James, who has up to this point not shown much interest in what A’kierra, Nia, and Harper have been working on, suddenly says, “Can I help you guys? I want to be a part of this.” Nia and Harper tell him that he can work with them. “Here’s the gold,” Nia says...“Do you have red?” James asks. Nia asks A’kierra to give James the red glitter paint she had been using. A’kierra is squealing about her own progress on her work from the floor next to the table. “Sh, A’kierra,” Nia says. “You don’t want to scare the teacher,” Harper adds. “This is the best!” Harper announces...“We could do [this project] again, but we couldn’t have the mess on the ground,” Harper says. “A’kierra, clean the ground,” Nia says to her. “Problem solved,” Nia says innocently to Harper.

Here it seems clear that Nia and A’kierra occupy two different statuses, much of which is constructed by Nia. First of all, A’kierra is relegated to the floor while Nia and Harper work on the project from the table. A’kierra is literally below the other two in this sense. Second, it is clear that Nia is annoyed with A’kierra as they work on this project. When A’kierra

struggles to figure out how to use the glitter paint, Nia outsources helping A'kierra to Harper. When James joins the group, Nia tells A'kierra to give her paint to James, leaving A'kierra with no job on the project. Finally, when they realize that they are going to need to make less of a mess with their project in order to be allowed to do it again, Nia quickly assigns A'kierra to clean up the ground—a task no one wants to do. The way she says “problem solved,” suggests that she would likely not consider taking shared or personal responsibility for any undesirable activity so long as A'kierra is around to do it for her.

In sum, students seem to bond with one another by virtue of having similar academic abilities. Because the likelihood of decoding academic instructions, demonstrating competence, and achieving at higher levels all correlate with SES and in these schools, race as well, the racial and SES segregation that seems to emerge in friendship groups may actually be an unintentional byproduct of the skill and achievement differences that students bring with them to school.

How Students Avoid Becoming Friends: Peer Avoidance Based on Regular Reprimands

In addition to signaling to one another friendship commonality based on demonstration of academic competence, students also signal to one another friendship group inclusion or exclusion based on whether or not students regularly get in trouble. Sam, from Mrs. Miller's class, seemed to demonstrate this connection well in an interview when I asked him who the “good” students were in his class.

Good students. Well of course me, and the person I used to sit next to and pretend he's my friend, Travis, do you know him? And there are a couple of girls. Charlotte, Alwyn. Since I said a couple, only two... Henry. He used to not be my friend. Now he's my friend. He's behaving better...

Here Sam specifically equates being a “good student” with behaving well, and it is only if students behave well that he considers them a potential friend. With Travis, who is a lower-achieving boy regularly in trouble, Sam only “pretends” to be his friend, perhaps because

Travis is so much physically bigger and stronger than the rest of the students; it is in their interest to be friendly to them. It is also not a coincidence that most of the students Sam named here tend to be students he appears to consider good friends and academic equals.

While students regularly seem to identify their friends as “good students,” the students I observed also seemed to clearly avoid particular students based on whether or not they got in trouble. In Ms. Jennifer’s class, the most regularly-avoided students are Marcus, Alexis, A’kierra, Lucas, and Nia. Two of these students are lower-SES (A’kierra and Lucas), but almost all of these students, (everyone but Alexis), are students of color who are regularly reprimanded.

One day as I was watching independent reading time in Ms. Jennifer’s class:

Avni holds back to read a book with Marcus and Eric. They are talking very loudly. Avni is doing most of the reading, and to compete with the decibel level of the boys, she is raising her voice increasingly to be heard and maintain their attention. Avni asks the boys if they want to read and one of them says loudly, “blah blah blah!” They all laugh together. Ms. LaToya comes over and reprimands Marcus, Eric, and Avni. She separates all three of them, making each of them go sit at separate tables in the class...A few minutes later Eric, Marcus, and Avni all came back to the library area. As soon as Avni came over, she went straight to Minsuh and asked if she could read with her. The fact that Avni did not return to reading with Marcus and Eric after getting in trouble did not go unnoticed to me. Minsuh, Morgan, and Avni all started reading a book of Minsuh’s selection together. As they were reading, Marcus tried to come in behind Avni to be with them, and Avni blocked him with her shoulder. “Sorr-rry,” Marcus said.

In this example, Avni had originally been “reading” with Marcus and Eric, two regular misbehavers in Ms. Jennifer’s class. Avni was not bothered to participate in their loudness and silliness at first—until she got in trouble for it. After spending a few minutes in isolation, Avni no longer wanted to work with Eric and Marcus, and instead solicited the more mild-mannered, compliant Minsuh and Morgan to read with instead. Even when Marcus tried to read with Avni again, Avni nonverbally signaled to him that he was not welcome.

Other students are also quick to note that Marcus in particular gets in trouble a lot,

making him a less desirable friend and student in Ms. Jennifer's class. In an interview with Grace (white higher-SES girl), for example, she said that "Marcus, he's a bad student. He always does not listen to the teacher. And he picks his nose and eats his booger [pause] that [pause] that really distracts me...and, he's like, really mean to me, he once pushed me down on the playground." Here Grace recognizes that not only has Marcus interacted with her personally in a negative way, but the fact that he always gets in trouble makes him a "bad" student. It is likely not coincidental that Grace does not spend much time playing with or working with Marcus if given the option.

Grace is not the only student to feel this way. James told me that Marcus was not a good student because he did not listen or pay attention. Ethan (white higher SES boy) thinks that Marcus is not a good student because "he might he usually shouts out and he might not look at the teacher when she's talking." When I asked about a specific time this happened, Ethan went on to say, "so it was Reader's Workshop and he was making silly faces and trying to make me and Hailey and Lucas laugh. So we would get in trouble, and we know why." Like Avni earlier, Ethan seemed resentful to be connected to Marcus when he would get him in trouble. I suspect that this resentment toward Marcus is part of why Ethan will at times intentionally anger Marcus. One day, Ms. Jennifer had made Marcus (as she does with all students) a balloon for Marcus's half birthday that said "Happy Birthday 6 ½!" While the thought was well-intentioned, Ms. Jennifer had mistakenly noted Marcus's age. Marcus was actually 7 ½ years old, and when Marcus tried to tell his other classmates—particularly Ethan—that he was not 6 ½, Ethan told Marcus he was lying and elevated himself to higher status because he was already 7 years old. This argument went on for weeks. Ethan prodded Marcus, reminding him he was 6 ½ to exert some power over him, and Marcus would get more and more furious to the point where his mother had to intervene with Ethan's mom on

his behalf. But the damage was done. Ethan saw Marcus as an enemy, and Marcus felt none too fondly for Ethan, either.

Interestingly, when I interviewed Eric (who regularly played with Marcus), he said that he thinks that Marcus is not a good student. Recall from Chapter 5 that the frequency of Eric's misbehavior in the class is second only to Marcus, and in fact, I suspect that the two of them enjoy playing with each other because they both like to misbehave so much. But, Eric does not get in trouble to the same degree that Marcus does for his misbehavior, and as a result, Eric thinks that Marcus is not a good student. Marcus did not feel the same about Eric. In fact, when I interviewed Marcus, he did not seem to think that any of the students in class were bad students.

Grace, Eric, and James also mentioned that Lucas was not a good student, mostly because he “was talking to Marcus,” “interrupting and being rude,” “getting Marcus in trouble” and “doing the same stuff Marcus did.” I found in Chapter 5 that, at least when I observed him, Lucas was not a particularly avid misbehavior in class. In fact, his counts of misbehavior were some of the lowest. Yet, the rate at which Ms. Jennifer reprimanded him was far higher than would be expected, given his actual level of misbehavior. This suggests that when students evaluate peers, their perception of misbehavior as a result of teacher reprimands is at least as, or perhaps even more important than, students' actual misbehavior. What the testimonies of Grace, Eric, and James indicate, is that they see misbehavior, they see who gets in trouble, and they either avoid or solicit each others' company on the basis of those evaluations.

I interviewed four students from Ms. Janwari's class—Anna, a white higher-SES girl; Gabe, a white higher-SES boy; Aaliyah, a black lower-SES girl; and Cristina, a Hispanic lower-SES girl. Gabe was so shy during his interview that he offered virtually no information

at all, and Cristina did not seem to think any of the students in their class were bad students.²⁵ However, when I asked Anna which students in her class were not very good students, she insisted that Blake and Jamie were two of the least well-behaved students in class. When I asked her what she meant, she said, “Well, Blake talks a lot to people...Blake [and] Jamie...talk while the teacher’s talking. Not follow some of the rules like pick up.” Recall from Chapter 5 that I reported seeing Blake misbehave ten fewer times than the average misbehavior count for a student in Ms. Janwari’s class. I am sure Blake talked to his tablemates from time to time (as others in the class frequently did), and it is possible that Blake spent more time talking and distracting his peers at times when I was not observing. However, I also observed Blake trying to get other students to follow Ms. Janwari’s rules from time to time, like many of the lower-SES students did in the classes I observed. One thing that was very clear though, was that Ms. Janwari reprimanded Blake above average, and in fact, when I asked her about her perception of Blake, Ms. Janwari admitted that she found him to be a challenging student, particularly when he was not “taking his medicine.” While it is possible that Blake really did bother Anna, she may also be picking up on Blake’s propensity for being reprimanded and using it as an excuse to avoid him.

While I was unable to interview CJ herself due to scheduling issues, when I interviewed CJ’s mom, she also specifically said that CJ found Blake distracting. This is meaningful because few parents spoke with me about other students in their child’s class because I did not ask questions about their kids’ peers. If I had interviewed CJ, she likely would have confirmed her mother’s perception, because the afternoon after I interviewed

²⁵ Note though, that Aaliyah, Anna, and Cristina will all in near-agreement about who they perceived to be the “good” students in Ms. Janwari’s class: Zoe, Milo, Jack, CJ, Leah, Aiden, Emory, and Anna. Every single student named by these three are white, and all of them are reprimanded below average, despite the fact that many of them (CJ, Aiden, and Leah in particular) misbehave above average.

CJ's mom, I spent time in Ms. Janwari's class. Even though students are supposed to work at their own tables, I saw that CJ decided to participate in a math activity at Zoe, Makenna, and Milo's table (all white, higher-SES students) instead of her assigned table with Jack and Blake. This struck me as significant in light of what I had learned from CJ's mom, though it is possible that CJ's mom had instructed her to stay away from Blake when possible.

While Aaliyah did not seem to find Blake problematic, she did note that Jasmine, Jamie, and Ben were "bad students" for not following the rules in class. When I asked how she knew they were bad students, she said:

First Jamie was in [my kindergarten] class with me; he was very, very, very bad. He had to keep going to different classes. And Ben, he's in my class now, and when Ms. Janwari told him to get off the rocking chair he did, and then he got back up there and he got wrote up for it... Nobody's allowed to sit in the rocking chair unless you're supposed to.

Since earlier in the interview Aaliyah told me it was important to listen and behave to be successful in school, it is not surprising to me that she did not regularly seek the company of students like Ben whom she associated with breaking rules and getting in trouble. Aaliyah is not incorrect in her perception of Ben being a troublemaker. Ben was one of the top three misbehavers in Ms. Janwari's class, according to my count data, and I regularly saw him rolling on the ground instead of listening to instruction, playing with students instead of doing the activity he was supposed to be doing, escaping to a hidden corner to talk with friends, and even sleeping. Yet Ben was reprimanded far less often than students of color—including Aaliyah—in Ms. Janwari's class. Aaliyah might be more attuned to Ben's misbehavior in light of her own propensity to misbehave and be reprimanded, but other students did not recognize Ben to be a bad student at all. In fact, Cristina even suggested that Ben is a "good" student. I argue that this speaks to the influence teachers have over students' perceptions of each other—perhaps even more influence than students' actual behavior.

Based on the severity of Tyrone's misbehavior in Mrs. Miller's class, it was not surprising to find that some of Mrs. Miller's students identified Tyrone as a bad student that they wanted to avoid. Arianna (lower-middle SES Hispanic), Sam (higher-SES white), William (higher-SES white) and Seth (higher-SES Middle Eastern) all spoke about Tyrone being a bad student. Arianna noted that "He fights a bunch. He uh he's kind of mean... Today he did it...he pushed Alwyn in the floor... She started to bleed... Tyrone got sent up to the office. For the rest of the day." William also shared that Tyrone "just climbs on the steps that we're not allowed to go on, unless we have permission from the teacher, and then he plays around and stuff [inaudible] not supposed to do." Finally, Sam said that Tyrone "knocked over a bunch of chairs because he was so angry, and he got sent to the principal's office." Several students were quick to cite exactly how and why Tyrone was misbehaving. When I asked Sam more about what he and others who were "good" did to demonstrate that they were good, he shared: "we don't throw chairs around. We listen to the speaker even if it's Tyrone. And most of all we don't accuse Tyrone. Some people accuse him even when they know he hasn't done anything." Tyrone becomes Sam's benchmark for judging his own behavior, and it is clear that Sam wants nothing to do with Tyrone because of Tyrone's misbehavior and propensity for getting in trouble. In other words, Sam works to separate himself from Tyrone to elevate his own status and preference for particular people.

Despite several students citing Tyrone as a problem student in their class, what was more surprising was that despite Tyrone's clear misbehavior and at times dangerous angry outbursts, not everyone seemed to identify Tyrone as a bad student. For example, Charlotte and Makayla did not think anyone in the class was a bad student, though they were able to name at least three or four people that they thought were good students (it is no coincidence, I think, that the students they identified were their friends). Preston recognized that Tyrone

“used to be kind of a bad student, but not he, um, is starting to get the hang of being a good student so he’s good.” When I asked Preston what he meant, he said that Tyrone “used to, um, hurt people when he was mad, um, but right now, he, the teacher told him to stop a lot, so he got, hurt him and kinda stopped doing it.” Finally, when I asked Seth who the bad students in the class were, he offered a clear example of how Tyrone had recently misbehaved during the Star of the Week activity; nonetheless, he also shared, “but he’s doing good right now... because he’s in my class and I almost always want him to...to do Sochi Olympics with me.” According to Seth, “Sochi Olympics” is an activity that students had been doing in gym class to celebrate the 2014 winter games. Unlike Sam, who earlier seemed to construct very strict boundaries against Tyrone, Seth recognizes that when Tyrone is behaving better, he can be a friend and asset in class.

Recall from Chapter 5 that Mrs. Miller seems to control her classroom very effectively, reprimands students infrequently, reprimands them in non-severe ways, and seems not to reprimand particular kinds of students more often than others. I do not think it is a coincidence that in Mrs. Miller’s class, Tyrone—the most ill-behaved student I watched that year—is less consistently perceived to be bad than other students in Ms. Jennifer’s and Ms. Janwari’s classes who are regularly, disproportionately, or more severely reprimanded in class. This suggests that teachers have some influence over the way that students perceive one another and may impact the construction of racially segregated peer networks in salient ways, particularly since reprimands tend to fall along racial lines. However, even in Mrs. Miller’s class, students found ways to segregate themselves during free play and other unstructured time. This suggests that the tools and skills students bring with them to school, and the social signaling that they do about having or not having those skills—matters quite a lot to the construction of socioeconomically segregated peer networks in diverse classrooms.

Because race and achievement are so closely connected to SES, SES-based social signaling also has implications for racially and academically segregated friendship groups. Most importantly, however, this matters because when student peer networks are segregated, more privileged students tend to hoard the cultural resources of academic success, while less privileged students are divested of those resources.

Student Segregation and Information-Sharing About “Doing School”

In 1988, James Coleman introduced the idea of “social capital” to explain why peers, friends, and other members of our social groups matter to us. Coleman (1988) argues that students who are friends with one another create and hold one another accountable to norms about behavior and outcomes, share information (including information about academics and other experiences or resources that could impact academics), and impose obligations and expectations of social exchange. To the degree that those networks are “closed,” or the idea that all members of the network know and are obligated to one another, processes about social exchange, information-sharing, and accountability become insular to the social group. Like Coleman predicted, I found that at Foxcroft and Cumberland, when students are friends with one another, they are more likely to help one another and share academic resources.

Sometimes, that means that students give one another the answers directly, as the following two examples demonstrate:

Sam looks at his paper for another second, then looks at me and says. “I don’t know what to do. I need help. I don’t know what to do next.” Before I have an opportunity to figure out what to say or how to interact, Henry leans over Sam’s paper, and gives him the answer. “42, 43, 44, 45, 46.”

Jayla and Makayla are talking together. As I listen more closely I can hear that Makayla is dictating to Jayla the story she has written, and Jayla is copying it word for word. Makayla spells out each word for her. Jayla seems to think Makayla has not spelled her name correctly (Jayla is one of the characters in the story), so she leans over to erase something on Makayla’s paper.

In the first example, students had been working on math problems at their tables. Sam

reached a point in the problem where he was unsure what to do next, and instinctively looked at me—the nearby adult—for help. However, because Henry is a close friend of Sam’s he was not bothered to stop his own work for a second to tell Sam the answer to the problem. Similarly, in the second example, students had been working on stories during writer’s workshop. Makayla and Jayla had chosen to write stories about one another (which is itself a signal of their friendship), but more importantly, Makayla, who is a more adept reader and writer than Jayla, gives her the answer to assist her rather than letting Jayla flounder on her own.

Other times, students are less direct in their academic assistance. Instead of giving their friends the answer, they also offer clues to their friends about how to figure out an answer. For example, while Gabe and Milo were reading a book together:

Gabe is busy trying to match the different pumpkins on the last page of Milo’s book. Gabe does not understand what he is supposed to do with it at first, but Milo shows Gabe what to do—“No you have to find the same thing over here. Let me show you.” (He identifies two matching pumpkins from opposite pages.) Gabe points to the matched pairs as Milo nods along. “You’re missing one!” Milo says, and when Gabe finds it, Milo excitedly says “You’ve done all of them!”

Instead of merely pointing to all of the matching pumpkins for Gabe, Milo shows Gabe an example of how to solve the problem, then invites Gabe to do the rest for himself. Milo prods Gabe along, offering tips along the way, like “You’re missing one,” and then celebrates Gabe’s success when he finishes.

Teachers encourage students to work together often, particularly when they sit at the same table, so how do we know that these examples are not just demonstrations of students following normal classroom procedure? Students seem to be more inclined to help one another when they are friends, and when they are not, they tend to ignore their tablemates or sometimes even intentionally mislead them. For example, one day in Mrs. Miller’ class, students had been working on a science project. A week earlier, the students and teachers had

constructed aquariums and terrariums with different plants, animals, rocks, and other earth materials. On this day, students were observing their aquariums and terrariums and asked to write in their science notebooks what had changed since last week. Despite the fact that the student teacher, Ms. White, had given verbal instructions, Treasure's limited reading ability made it hard for her to decode the written instructions that the teacher had passed out about writing down what had changed in the aquarium or terrarium:

Treasure has her notebook open. "What do I say?" she asks Olivia. She taps her on the shoulder and Olivia ignores her. Treasure turns to me and asks me what to write. I tell her I'm not sure because I don't know what's changed in the aquarium. Olivia asks me if I am going to ask her to figure it out and I shrug. Olivia tells me that I'm not supposed to tell Treasure what the question says because I am supposed to make her guess. This makes Treasure angry. "Now you're just being a bad friend," Treasure says. Ms. White repeats the questions that the students should be answering in their notebooks. When she turns the lights back on, Treasure is oblivious to the fact that Ms. White has just read the question she is concerned about not being able to read. She starts sounding out the words for herself, then gets tripped on the word "organisms." "Henry, how do you..." Treasure starts. Then Olivia leans over, pointing to each word and reading them for her. Now that Treasure knows the question is asking about what changes have happened in the aquarium, she thinks for a second. "Because it has fish?" she guesses aloud. "How has it changed," Olivia emphasizes. "I said foggy water," Preston says. "How do you spell died?" Treasure asks. No one tells her. She writes "1 bide" in her notebook. I glance over and see that Henry and Preston each have written a couple of changed features in their notebooks. Henry is no longer writing (his page is virtually full), but Preston still is. "What else?" Treasure asks. She sounds like she is starting to get frustrated, not knowing what to write.

Here, Treasure struggles with the assignment because she cannot read the instructions that everyone else can (see Chapter 4 about lower-SES students' challenges decoding academic instructions). Treasure turns to me for help right away since her first plea for help is rejected by Olivia. When Treasure asks me for help, Olivia seems to want to make sure that Treasure does not get the advantage of a direct answer, because she makes a point of demonstrating to me that normally, adults would not give students answers. This angers Treasure, likely because students—particularly when they are friends—share with one another answers fairly regularly. The fact that Olivia is keeping Treasure from an answer

signals to Treasure that they are not friends. Once the student teacher reads the directions for the whole class, Olivia seems to find it acceptable to at least read the directions again for Treasure. However, Treasure still does not know the answer. Preston is kind enough to share one of his ideas with Treasure, but for the most part, Treasure falters. Preston, Henry, and Olivia have all written several ideas in their notebooks (in fact, Henry's page is almost full), but when Treasure asks for help, she is almost completely ignored by all three of them.

In Ms. Janwari's class, I noticed that Kiara was ignored by her tablemates in a similar way:

I decide to start by watching the orange table with Carter, Kiara, and Emory. (It's 12:55, for reference, and the following transpires over five minutes.) Carter is writing "Frans" in the first "place" blank. At first I thought he was misspelling and miscategorizing "friends" until he tells Kiara that he has been to France. Kiara looks up at Carter but does not respond to this information. He continues to write "dad, mom," and "sister" in the "people" column. Emory quietly writes Foxcroft and Raleigh in "places," just as Ms. Janwari had done on her own chart. She continues to write "books" and "art" in her "things" column. Kiara spends the full five minutes essentially doing nothing. She looks at Carter's paper and asks, "What are you supposed to write? Things?" He doesn't respond, as he seems focused on his own ideas. She looks around the room. Her pencil is poised above the paper as if she is writing or ready to write. At one point, she cups her hand over her pencil as if she doesn't want anyone to see what she is writing. However, when she uncovers her writing hand, it is clear that her paper remains blank.

In this example, students had been working on brainstorming ideas for a writing project. They were writing ideas about people, things, places, and ideas that they could eventually elaborate about in a longer essay. Like many of the lower-SES students in Chapter 1, Kiara struggled to decode the intention of the activity. Her higher-SES tablemates, Carter and Emory, seemed to have no trouble decoding the intention of the assignment, and Carter even demonstrated competence (and his own social status) by sharing that he had been to France before. Kiara clearly understood that these two students knew what they were doing and tried to ask for help, but both students ignored her.

Not only did students ignore their non-friends, but sometimes they seemed to

intentionally mislead them. One day during writer's workshop in Ms. Jennifer's class:

"How do you spell want?" Nia asks. "I want to..." Grace starts to say, but no one directly answers Nia... "How do you spell little?" Nia asks the group. "L I T T E," Ethan says, though glances sideways as if knowing that he is missing a letter.

Here Nia is ignored the first time she asks how to spell a word. It is particularly noteworthy that Grace did not step in to assist because Grace loved to help others. In fact, she loved to help so much that at times, she scarcely got her own work done. Yet Grace ignoring Nia seems consistent with other students' patterns of ignoring those who they do not consider to be friends. The second time Nia asks for help, however, Ethan seems to intentionally mislead her by misspelling the word "little," a word he should have known how to spell. His mischievous sideways glance belies what might otherwise be considered an innocent mistake.

It was clear to me that students' likelihood of helping another student increased when the other person was considered a friend. Students' motivation for helping their friends and not others was not something I specifically sought to uncover, so I cannot be sure why students were so selective with their assistance. However, when I asked Arianna what it looked like to be a good student in class, she offered some insight into how savvy academic shortcuts might benefit friends:

When you go to your table you have to share papers. Cause there might not be too much papers... I had to share with a girl, and her name was Alwyn... Well we, there's no really no problems. We (laughs) just put our both names and both dates and then both answered the questions. Since they were six questions, she did 3 and I did 3, and then we finished way earlier than the rest. So we got to play something for math aaaannd it took long to play it, because we finished early, and it was about to be languages and electives and people were still not finished... And then we get to do something else. For math we get to do something, get these strips, and its like answer the question, and then when you finish you can play with some cards that she has...

In this example, Arianna explains that by working with her friend Alwyn, they could each do part of the assignment and finish much more quickly than others who work on the task by

themselves. When friends are able to finish academic tasks quickly, there is more time to play together.

In each example presented here (as well as those not presented), help seemed to flow from racially and socioeconomically segregated peer networks. More affluent, white, and higher-achieving peers tended to offer and receive academic assistance from one another more regularly, while less-affluent, lower-achieving, and minority youth seemed to offer and receive help from one another. When lower-SES, lower-achieving students of color tried to get help from more affluent, white, and higher-achieving peers, they were often ignored and left to falter on their own. This occurred even when students shared the same table space and could easily have assisted one another. The implication here is that by segregating themselves, more advantaged students hoard their cultural and academic resources within their own social groups, and less advantaged students fail to benefit from the cultural capital of peers who have more successfully learned how to “do” school.

Alternative Explanations

It is certainly possible that students come to select certain friends because of other reasons. Parents, in particular, may play a central role in providing students more or less opportunity to interact and bond with one another. Parents, like students, are sorted into homophilous social networks based on shared background, interests, and experiences (Lozares, Verd, Cruz, and Barranco 2014), and it is likely that this influences children’s exposure to one another as well. Parents may select into neighborhoods with similar families to themselves, so to the degree that children meet friends and play in those neighborhoods, they are likely to be more exposed to children who are similar to them, too. Parents may organize “play dates” for their children with families they select specifically on shared characteristics or interests, so children with similar backgrounds end up spending more time

together than they otherwise might.

To some degree, this does seem to happen among the children at Cumberland and Foxcroft. The day I interviewed Seth's family, they were on their way to Michael's birthday party. Both boys are higher-SES and high achievers in Mrs. Miller's class. Charlotte's mom regularly watches Anna and her brother after school because their families are friends. While Charlotte and Anna are not in the same class at Foxcroft, they share very similar demographic characteristics and tend to have similar achievement levels as well. The evening I interviewed Anna, she was having a "play date" with Zoe from her class. Anna and Zoe are both higher-SES and higher-achieving students in Ms. Janwari's class. Sam's mom and Seth's parents talked about sharing resources about camps and activities with other parents that they knew—parents that were likely very similar to them and had children who were very similar to Sam and Seth.

While I do not discredit the role that parents may have played in the reinforcement of students' friendship groups, it seemed that play dates and invitations to parties in particular occurred *after* students identified friends in their classes. At the beginning of the year, when students were bonding with one another, they would ask each other for their parents' phone numbers so they could arrange play dates. If parents had been the key orchestrators of these friendships, students would not have had to ask for family contact information. Several of the parents I talked to also seemed to become closer to the families of their children's friends *because* their kids became friends in class first. This is particularly true for Foxcroft, because magnet students come from neighborhoods that are not assigned to the school, and therefore magnet families know very few others (at least from their local neighborhood) prior to enrollment at the school. William's parents, for example, said, "we just wish we felt more connected to the people" at Foxcroft, and continued to say that "we're coming out of our

shell” *because* William recently got invited to three birthday parties of classmates—something that had not happened when William was in kindergarten. In other words, William’s parents have begun to feel connected to other families this year as a result of their son being invited to more social events of his friends.

Nonetheless, it is important to recognize that parents may be creating or reinforcing opportunities for students who share common characteristics to become friends. Because social networks of all people, including parents, tend to be homophilous (Lozares, Verd, Cruz, and Barranco 2014), parents may inadvertently create or reinforce social networks that are segregated along racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic lines for their children, too.

Summary and Conclusion

Overall, I found that in all the classrooms I observed at Foxcroft and Cumberland, students seemed to forge friendships with other students in racially and socioeconomically segregated ways. Students did so by signaling to one another who was an insider or outsider to the friendship group by publically noting who their best friends were, selecting particular students for academic activities, choosing to interact with particular students during less restricted free time like lunch and recess, and avoiding particular students in various activities. While it is possible that students could have bonded with particular students for many reasons, I found that two of the most salient factors to influence student peer network construction were 1) ability to decode academic instructions and demonstrate academic competence and 2) propensity for misbehaving and being reprimanded for it. In other words, common cultural capital and shared propensity for misbehavior (both real and imagined, according to racialized teacher perceptions), seemed to have direct impacts on who students chose to be friends with and how those friendship groups further impacted each others’ ability to “do school.”

Many have suggested that students find themselves in racially segregated friendship groups because of homophily—humans naturally select social peers who share the same characteristics as themselves. Those who support this theory generally tend to suggest that it is race itself which draws members of a particular group together in friendship (Hallinan 1982; McPherson et al 2001). While this may be the case among older students and adults who are more cognizant of racial identity and its impact on other social outcomes (Stearns et al 2009), first graders seemed less attuned to selecting particular friends on the basis of race and more attuned to selecting friends on different homophilous characteristics—like academic ability, propensity for misbehaving, and likelihood of being reprimanded for it. This finding is in line with other research that suggests that the racial segregation we see is not necessarily racial per se, but because other characteristics, like achievement, fondness for school, or other tastes and preferences that connect people together are so highly correlated with race (Flashman 2012; Stark and Flache 2012).

Context also seems to matter here. Research on the degree to which diversity in a school increases or decreases racial segregation among peers is mixed (Hallinan 1982; Moody 2001; Stearns et al 2009). Most studies seem to indicate that diversity must reach near- or actual parity among subgroups for students to develop more cross-race friendships (Quillian and Campbell 2003). In schools where diversity is marginally increased such that one subgroup is still a clear numerical minority, segregation seems to increase instead (Quillian and Campbell 2003). Though Foxcroft and Cumberland are both racially diverse schools, white, higher-SES students still make up the majority of students in those spaces. In contexts like these, where dominant academic standards and norms are white and higher-SES, it may be more obvious to both the members of dominant as well as non-dominant groups who most adeptly decodes those standards and norms and who does not. When this

happens, members of non-dominant groups may be more likely to cling to one another for support, as Hallinan (1982) suggests. At the same time, when recognized authority figures like teachers subtly preference dominant groups in other ways, like discipline, non-dominant groups may begin the process of internalizing a deviant identity or recognizing the injustice of what they will come to call discrimination. These shared experiences may also solidify the need for social support among non-dominant groups in diverse settings where there is still a clear dominant majority.

Many have argued that racial segregation both between and within schools is problematic because it is associated with lower academic achievement and may actually contribute to the achievement gap. (Coleman 1966; Rumberger and Willms 1992; Condrón, Tope, Steidl, and Freeman 2013). To the extent that (as these findings suggest) cultural capital and knowledge of how to “do school” effectively is concentrated in already-advantaged social networks, this logic makes sense. More-advantaged students will likely share information with one another and hold each other accountable to norms and expectations, while less-advantaged students who are separated from these networks will be divested of the social and cultural capital they need to successfully navigate education (Coleman 1988).

Yet these findings suggest that at least in the earliest grades, segregation may not *cause* achievement gaps, as supporters of desegregation have argued. Rather, the achievement disparities that students bring with them to school as a result of differential coaching and preparation may cause initial segregation in racially diverse schools. But, as students age, racial segregation that may have started from initial achievement differences may then exacerbate later achievement differences because academic cultural capital for how to successfully “do school” will remain concentrated in the most privileged student networks.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

It is a strong cultural belief, as well as an empirical fact, that being successful in school is instrumental for success later in life. Though most parents I interviewed did not explicitly connect “success” to achievement per se, parents suggested that love for learning and school would be necessary ingredients for the achievement required to fulfill their expectations for their children: to one day go to college, pursue a graduate or professional degree, and/or secure the kind of socioeconomic status they themselves had attained or they wished they could attain.

But wishing for students to love learning or to love a particular subject does not naturally lead to academic achievement. Children must learn how to think, act, and interact in school in ways that lead to achievement. Children must learn how to navigate the unspoken norms of the classroom, to decode expectations and instructions for academic tasks and assignments, to interact comfortably with teachers and peers, to solidify their understanding of academic concepts, to solve problems for themselves and with others, to maintain optimism when they make a mistake or misunderstand, and to find value in their work. In other words, children must learn how to “do school” effectively.

This study argues that not only is doing school important for academic success, but the degree to which students are able to effectively do school falls along socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic lines. Higher-SES students tend to understand teachers’ inexplicit academic instructions to the point where they can still successfully demonstrate enough academic

competence to be considered at to above grade level. Lower-SES students, while they are adept at demonstrating procedural knowledge (like rules of the classroom), are less able to understand teachers' inexplicit *academic* instructions and therefore have trouble demonstrating the same level of academic competence.

“Doing School” as Cultural Capital

The “cultural capital” framework is useful for understanding this result, because it suggests that students from different socioeconomic backgrounds learn different kinds of skills in their homes that are more or less advantageous for an academic setting. While the idea of cultural capital is not new to sociology, Annette Lareau’s classic study of how class culture matters for approaches to child-rearing is foundational to the findings of this study. Lareau argues that higher-class families are more invested in “cultivating” their children’s unique talents and skills through enrollment in extra-curricular activities, language development, and comfortable engagement with authority figures like health care providers and teachers (Lareau 2003). Lower-class families, on the other hand, are committed to providing love and basic needs for their children, but allow them to “naturally grow” through unstructured time and play as well as submission to and respect for authority (Lareau 2003). While she argued that neither child-rearing style was inherently better or worse than the other, it has become clear that children raised by “concerted cultivation” develop a lifetime of entitlement and institutional savvy that allows them to effectively engage with and be accommodated by bureaucratic organizations and institutions, including, but not limited to schools (Lareau 2015).

While Lareau’s early work did not explicitly connect how these child-rearing strategies would develop specific academic skills that would be rewarded in classrooms,

other work has attempted to fill this void. Calarco (2011), for example, argues that higher class students who are raised via “concerted cultivation” are so comfortable engaging with authority figures that they regularly ask for and secure extra help from teachers. Lower-SES students are so uncomfortable demanding this same attention from their teachers that they often fail to voice their struggles in the first place. Nonetheless, teachers expect students to advocate for their needs and communicate when they are struggling, so to the degree that students feel stressed by the prospect of asking for help, those students may inadvertently get left behind or become misunderstood as disengaged (Calarco 2011).

I find that the cultural capital students bring with them to school is not just about affective orientations toward authority figures or about the way they spend their extra-curricular time. The way that students interpret teacher instructions, decode academic tasks, and execute them, are all forms of cultural capital that are primarily learned at home and subsequently rewarded (or not) in the classroom. Just as middle-class parents “cultivate” their children’s unique talents in Lareau’s (2003) study, I found that higher-SES parents tend to cultivate their children’s academic skills. Higher-SES parents encourage their children to ask and answer their own questions; they encourage them to share their ideas and provide reasoning for them. These skills are directly translated to the classroom, especially when students are required to write about something they experienced or an opinion they have. Generally, students who come from families that practice this kind of academic cultivation do well on their writing assignments.

Lower-SES families do not always encourage their children to ask or answer their own questions in the same way that higher-SES families do, and there is a clear skills gap in writing that seems to result. Lower-SES students at times have a harder time generating ideas

about what to write, use less detail in their writing, and get stuck trying to spell words (even when teachers tell them not to worry about their spelling). This means they end up with lower grades on their assignments relative to their more skilled peers.

In addition to developing language skills that have direct impacts on student achievement, another aspect of institutionally-valued cultural capital is the coaching of children in the step-by-step problem-solving strategies that teachers themselves use when they offer assistance. It looks something like this: Let's re-read the problem. What is it asking us to do? What do we need to do or know first to solve the problem? What tools can help us do this? Then what do we need to do? (And so on and so forth, until the final answer is reached.) When parents and teachers share the structure and language of problem-solving, students who are familiar with the language will have a more intuitive sense of what teachers are asking them to do and what outcome is expected. Additionally, these students will have a script for problem-solving such that when they encounter a similar challenge, they will be able to approach it in smaller, manageable steps instead of feeling overwhelmed or powerless. Students who are less practiced in this language of problem-solving (because their families do not use it) can find themselves more mentally taxed as they try to figure out what the teacher is trying to get them to do, and they are also less likely to effectively replicate the script in the future.

This cultural capital seemed closely connected to parents' own educational, occupational, and skills background, likely because they had effectively navigated educational institutions before and were able to pass those skills on to their children. What was surprising about this particular type of cultural capital, though, is that SES did not perfectly map onto propensity for using institutionally-adopted problem-solving language.

The highest-SES families did, by and large, coach their children in problem-solving similarly to teachers, but some of the lower-SES families I interviewed did also. Though the number of lower-SES families who adopted “higher-SES” patterns of problem-solving coaching was too small to make large claims about how and why certain people may come to possess this kind of cultural capital, I suspect that there might be some connections to structural circumstances that ought to be explored in further research.

One immigrant family from Mexico, for example, happened to have more educational experience than their U.S. socioeconomic status would indicate because the mother had been a professional teacher back in Mexico. To the degree that professional practice of teaching is similar in Mexico to teaching in the U.S., it is possible that this mother’s step-by-step academic problem-solving could have been connected to her profession in her home country. Arianna, her daughter, was certainly one of the more academically advanced Hispanic students I observed (at least at grade level; in some subjects, above grade level). It is possible that her mother’s cultural capital was therefore shaped by home country skills not typically factored into the calculation of SES, and she was therefore able to pass those skills on to her daughter.

This finding is similar to what Valenzuela (1999) discovered about a subset of Mexican immigrant students that she studied in a Texas High School. This group of students was relatively more socioeconomically advantaged (at least in their home country) than other Mexican immigrant students because they had come from an urban area in Monterrey with higher quality schools. Additionally, one student’s parent in particular had been very involved in education and hosted regular tutoring and study nights at their home for her daughter and friends. Valenzuela credited the relative academic success of this student and

her friends to the “social capital” that she and her family provided—a common theme in many Mexican immigrant communities because of strong social ties and sense of obligation to one another. While not discrediting the importance of social capital, perhaps something worth considering is the degree to which this student’s parent also had the educationally-specific cultural capital to help her daughter and friends decode teacher expectations for assignments. Social connections are only helpful when the information, or cultural capital, that is shared within those networks is advantageous (Coleman 1988).

Very little research in cultural capital and class culture considers how other aspects of families’ structural background can impact SES. This is particularly important because much of the cultural capital research claims that SES, and not race or ethnicity, shapes these class cultures. Yet it is clear that ethnicity and race are connected to SES, especially when educational or occupational opportunity in a new country is contingent upon having transferable credentials, experience, or language familiarity. Perhaps future research in cultural capital should more carefully consider the role of other structural characteristics, especially for immigrants, that can impact the cultural capital that families have for navigating particular institutions like schools.

Other structural characteristics can impact the cultural capital of non-immigrant families as well. Makayla’s mom, for example, is “middle class” by education and occupation, at least according to some cultural capital researchers’ classifications (Lareau 2003; Calarco 2011). However, since she is a single parent, has a lot of debt, and must work a second job to supplement the income from her teaching job, her life resembles the economic conditions of a “working class” family rather than a “middle class” one. If Makayla’s mom had more wealth reserves or more support from a partner or other family

members, she might not have to work a second job. If she didn't have to work a second job, she would be able to more effectively pass on her cultural capital about how to do school to Makayla. Because of her education and occupation, Makayla's mom uses the same step-by-step problem-solving coaching that higher-SES families in this study also used. However, she was quick to note that she felt she did not have the time to regularly help Makayla because of her multiple jobs and resulting fatigue. This means that even though Makayla's mom *has* the cultural capital to pass on to Makayla, she cannot always *actually* pass it on effectively.

As Coleman (1988) once said, the quality of parent-student interaction is a key mechanism by which information gets shared in intergenerational social networks. It is likely that many families find themselves in the same situation as Makayla's family, because parents are too spread thin, for example, or too tired. However, it seems especially important to note that Makayla's family is black, because the financial precariousness that makes "middle class" life resemble working class or "near-poor" (Newman and Chen 2007) life seems to affect families of color more than white families (Oliver and Shapiro 2006). When families of color are disproportionately subject to economic constraints or structural conditions that affect SES categorization or ability to transmit cultural capital, we cannot ignore race as a key factor in how students may come to "do school" differently.

"Doing School" and Teacher Bias

Race and ethnicity of students also seem to matter for how teachers interact with and respond to students. "Doing school" is not just about the skills that students bring with them to school, but it is also about how teachers interact with and evaluate them, which could in turn impact how students continue to "do school." While cultural capital theory helps explain how students come to school with different sets of skills, teacher bias may help explain how

teachers come to evaluate students differently, even when they share the same skills or propensities for certain behavior.

In general, this study found that most teachers tended to allow white, higher-SES students more opportunity to answer questions and construct classroom knowledge more often than students of color and lower-SES students. Because much of the classroom instruction I observed tended to be driven by students (teachers ask students what they think first, then offer clarification afterward), students' voices are fairly powerful in these first grade classrooms. When some students are given the opportunity to command this conversation more than others, it is likely they will think of themselves as more academically competent, and others may too.

While it was not particularly surprising that white, higher-SES students were called on so frequently, it was somewhat surprising that in Ms. Jennifer's class, Asian students were fairly silenced. Research on the model minority stereotype might lead to the hypothesis that teachers would be more likely to call on Asian students because they are seen as academic superstars (Lee 2009; Lee and Zhou 2014). Some Asian students in Ms. Jennifer's class were much quieter and deferential than other students in the class, leading them to raise their hand or blurt out answers less. Morgan, Minsuh, Lily, Ian, and Claire were all fairly quiet students, though since their parents declined to be interviewed (I suspect in part because of language discomfort for some parents), I cannot say for certain whether ethnic culture played a role. However, not all of the Asian students were quieter or more deferential. Siddharth, James, and Avni, were very talkative and engaged—at least no less talkative and engaged than other students in the class. Additionally, all of these students but Lily and Claire were at to well-above grade level, which may have provided additional incentive for Ms. Jennifer to call on

them frequently. Yet, on the days I observed class, Ms. Jennifer called on four white, higher-SES students 2 to 4 times more often than she called on most of the Asian students in the class, which seems to reflect Ms. Jennifer's unconscious preference for white students.

Like Asian students, Hispanic students also seemed fairly silenced in the construction of classroom knowledge, at least in Ms. Jennifer's and Mrs. Miller's classes. (Note that for Mrs. Miller's class, this applied only to non-white Hispanic students. White Hispanic students—Charlotte and Sergio—were called on at to above average.) Ms. Janwari seemed to prefer calling on Hispanic students to black students, but she still called on white students far more frequently. Some students, like Victor in Mrs. Miller's class and Lucas in Ms. Jennifer's class, were clearly less comfortable speaking English than others. These two students often passed on the opportunity to do "share time," which required students to speak in front of the others as they shared a story or fact about an object or experience they had. However, other students, like Maricella, Arianna, Carlos, and Cristina were very talkative. Arianna, as I noted earlier, was also fairly academically advanced. There should have been no reason for teachers to systematically ignore this group of students the way they often appeared to.

Because I did not realize how silenced this group of students was until well after I had left the field, I never asked the teachers how they decided who to call on during large group instruction or what they thought about the participation of the Hispanic students in their classes. I suspect that some teachers figured these students, all of whom spoke Spanish as their first language, would be uncomfortable communicating in English (despite the fact that most were quite comfortable speaking English). One day Mrs. Anderson (Mrs. Miller's teaching assistant) had been commenting on an answer from one of Maricella's math quizzes

about shapes, suggesting that she had gotten it incorrect because she was “limited English proficient.” The student teacher in the room, Ms. White, nodded knowingly, as if resigned to the fact that Maricella might never understand enough English to know the correct features of a rectangle. However, this teacher’s assistant and student teacher were fairly secondary characters in these students’ classroom lives, and their opinions certainly might not have been shared by the main teachers I observed.

In Chapter 5, I suggested that teachers in new immigrant destinations like these communities in North Carolina simply might not know much about the background or skills of students like Maricella, Arianna, and Cristina. The teachers I observed do not seem to have obvious, negative perceptions of or treatment toward these students, but they also do not seem to actively engage them, either. Future research ought to explore more how small populations of ethnic immigrants become incorporated into diverse schools so we have a better understanding of why attention to and engagement with Hispanic and Latino students in these contexts might be more muted and what that means for the academic success of these students.

While white, higher-SES students tended to dominate classroom construction of knowledge and Asian and Hispanic students tended to be relatively ignored, the story for black student construction of knowledge is a bit more complex. In Ms. Jennifer’s and Mrs. Miller’s classrooms, black students—particularly those of at least lower-middle SES—tended to be called on fairly frequently. In fact, all three black students in Ms. Jennifer’s class (two of whom were higher-SES, one of whom was lower-SES) were called on at least an average number of times. Makayla from Mrs. Miller’s class was called on far above average (one standard deviation above the classroom average), and three of the five black students (two of

whom were lower-middle SES, one of whom is lower-SES), were called on at or above average. It seemed then, for Ms. Jennifer and Mrs. Miller at least, that teachers did make a concerted effort to ensure that black students were participating in the construction of classroom knowledge.

Does this mean that racism against black students has finally ceased in schools? Certainly not. The black students that Ms. Jennifer and Mrs. Miller regularly called on tended to be students of relatively higher socioeconomic status, perhaps because they had marginally more academic skill than their lowest-SES counterparts. The lowest-SES black students, with the exception of A'kierra in Ms. Jennifer's class, tended to be ignored. Further, even academically adept, chatty, higher-SES black students like Nia in Ms. Jennifer's class were still called on far fewer times than the academically adept, chatty, higher-SES white students, suggesting a slight unconscious preference for white students, even when student characteristics seem otherwise equal.

Ms. Janwari's bias toward white students and against students of color (all students of color, but particularly black students) was a bit more obvious. Whether she meant to or not, the only students Ms. Janwari ever called on above the average number of times were white students. Every black student in the class was called on a below average number of times. This is particularly meaningful considering that Ms. Janwari is herself a woman of color and the youngest teacher I observed, straight out of teacher training. One might assume that if any teacher would be likely to be most racially and ethnically equal in treatment, it would be Ms. Janwari. But even among the youngest cohorts of teachers, and even among teachers

who themselves are likely subject to some discrimination,²⁶ unconscious biases can linger enough to impact interaction with students.

Teacher bias also seems apparent in the degree to which teachers reprimand some students of color, but let the same behavior slide among white students. Every teacher I observed reprimanded at least one black student of color more than should have been warranted, given the number of times I observed them misbehaving. In Ms. Jennifer's class, Nia, a higher-SES black student was reprimanded almost twice as many times as Eric, a higher-SES white boy, even though I observed her misbehaving almost half as often as Eric. I observed Nia misbehaving 35 times over the course of the year. Eric misbehaved 82 times. Yet Nia was reprimanded 7 times, and Eric only 4. Another white higher-SES girl who had misbehaved the exact same number of times as Nia was only reprimanded twice over the course of the year. Why the difference? In line with Ferguson's (2000) analysis, I suspect that some unconscious preference and tolerance for white student misbehavior occurs because it is seen as "normal" childhood shenanigans, whereas black student misbehavior is unconsciously seen as activity that must be curbed. While Ms. Jennifer did not explicitly discuss her perception of Nia or of black students' misbehavior in general, Ms. Jennifer did mention several times to me (unprompted) how much she "loved" Eric. She found his impishness charming and regularly laughed or sighed in amusement when he misbehaved.

This is not just one isolated case from one classroom, either. Mrs. Miller seemed to disproportionately reprimand Makayla for misbehavior, even though I observed Makayla misbehaving far less than Olivia, Henry, Seth, Sam, or Sergio—all white or phenotypically

²⁶ I never asked Ms. Janwari if she had experienced discrimination in her daily life, but her concern for students feeling comfortable with her, especially since she does wear a hijab, suggests that she had likely experienced some ethnic discrimination in the past (which would not be surprising post-9/11 America).

white students²⁷ who were reprimanded less often than she. And finally, Ms. Janwari was again most blatant in her tolerance for white student misbehavior and intolerance for black student misbehavior. Every black student in the class was reprimanded more often than almost every other white student in the class, except for the most frequent misbehavers (Ben, Carter, and Leah). Aaliyah was reprimanded twice as much as Ben or Carter, both of whom misbehaved almost exactly as much as she did. Jasmine, Jamie, Blake, and Kiara were reprimanded more often than seven white students who misbehaved more often than they did. It seems that after almost 20 years of increased attention to remedying racial inequality in the classroom (Ferguson 2000), unconscious biases, even among some of the most well-meaning teachers, can linger in the classroom.

When teachers interact with students in racialized ways, it can have repercussions. Much of the research on bias in student-teacher interaction suggests that students will become increasingly disengaged from school when their teachers do not have high expectations for them or treat them unequally in the classroom (Willis 1981; McKown and Weinstein 2008; MacLeod 2009). When students become disengaged from learning, they will not reach their full academic potential. They may not be encouraged to take advanced or college-preparatory curriculum (Oakes 2005). They may make lower grades (Ferguson 1998; McKown and Weinstein 2008). Their investment and ability to connect education to future life outcomes will diminish (MacLeod 2009). And when this cycle can start as early as first grade, it is perhaps more likely that this trajectory will be set too early to be remedied by middle or high school, when grades, achievement, and course selection are most important for sifting students into the labor and post-secondary education markets.

²⁷ Seth is phenotypically white, but his mother reports his race as “Middle Eastern.”

While I was only in these classrooms for one academic year, I could see that teachers' interactions with students did seem to impact individuals' engagement over the course of the time I observed. Marcus, a black higher-SES student from Ms. Jennifer's class, seemed to disengage the most from school, which I argue stems in part from Ms. Jennifer's propensity to frequently, harshly, and publically reprimand him. Marcus was certainly a student with behavioral challenges. He had a much harder time maintaining focus and bodily control compared to his other classmates. He snickered and cackled at others when they made mistakes. He found that his class-clown-like behaviors would garner attention from some students, which only made his antics increase.

Marcus's mom recognizes that he has behavioral challenges above and beyond the normal first grader, and part of why she moved him from school in Mozambique to the United States was to see if she could get more specialized attention for him. Ms. Jennifer, who has a master's degree in child development, believes she recognizes an audio-sensory disorder that Marcus displays, and when either adult discusses Marcus's challenges and interventions, it seems as though they are in unified agreement that the practices Ms. Jennifer uses in her classroom to "help" Marcus are sound.

However, when I watch Ms. Jennifer interact with Marcus, I cannot help but think her techniques are not "helping" Marcus at all. She reprimands him *much* more frequently than every other student in the class—in the time I observed, I counted 74 times over the course of the year. Ms. Jennifer only reprimanded the other students an average of 6 times. This is an extreme difference in the negative attention that Marcus receives from Ms. Jennifer. Further, Ms. Jennifer gives Marcus qualitatively different kinds of negative attention. She restricts his body movement by holding him. She forces him to go away to a different part of the

classroom where he cannot participate in instruction. These kinds of techniques are reserved mostly for Marcus, whereas other students receive glares or simple directives (“stop”) for their misbehavior.

To be fair, Ms. Jennifer did try to implement some positive interventions for Marcus. She ordered three “wobble” chairs—soft foam pads—for students to sit on in home base when they were feeling “wiggly.” Ms. Jennifer invited all students to use this chair when needed, and while Marcus was encouraged to use one almost every day, other students regularly vied for one of the wobble chairs as well (probably because sitting on the hard floor of home base for a long time was uncomfortable for everyone, even me). Additionally, Marcus was encouraged to use noise-cancelling headphones in class when he needed to avoid distractions from classmates. Despite Marcus clearly looking “different” than other students when he used the headphones or wobble chair, I did not hear other students make fun of him or otherwise draw negative attention to these resources.

While these techniques may have been somewhat helpful for Marcus at times, they were used far less often than direct reprimands and punishment. And I watched Marcus change from a mild class-clown to a hellion who was mean, who disliked (sometimes hated) other kids, who refused to listen to his teacher, and who disliked school. I cannot help but think some of this had to do with the way Ms. Jennifer engaged with him, and I wonder what kind of attitude or behavior he will have toward school as a second grader.

Marcus’s transformation was exactly the opposite of Tyrone’s transformation in Mrs. Miller’s class. From my perspective, Tyrone’s behavior was quite bad—at times appalling. Whereas Marcus would smirk and cackle at other students, Tyrone was at times physically aggressive with other students. He would hit and yell forcefully. Sometimes I felt afraid of

him myself, because I watched him hit the teachers and other adults from time to time, too. But instead of regularly reprimanding Tyrone, Mrs. Miller would encourage other students to ignore Tyrone and gently invite Tyrone to make a different “choice” so he could continue to participate in class. Despite Tyrone’s propensity for misbehavior, Mrs. Miller only reprimanded him 10 times—a far cry from the 74 that Marcus received for much milder misbehavior.

Mrs. Miller was cognizant of what she was doing. She knew that Tyrone and his kindergarten teacher “buted heads,” and that the kindergarten teacher’s solution was often to remove Tyrone from the classroom altogether. Mrs. Miller found that to be an unproductive solution and worked all year to figure out what made him excited, angry, comfortable, and violent. She realized at some point in the year that Tyrone was a very literal child, and would have a hard time when adults used idioms and other non-literal language to instruct or direct them (for example, if a teacher were to say “go ahead and jump in when you’re ready,” when she really meant, “add an idea when you can,” Tyrone would literally jump up and down and instead of adding an idea). Mrs. Miller also realized that Tyrone liked having choices, so if he was not behaving as he should have, Mrs. Miller could offer two alternatively acceptable behaviors to replace the bad behavior. The choice seemed to empower Tyrone.

Whereas Marcus transformed from a class clown to a hellion, over the course of the year I saw Tyrone transform from a hellion to a mild-class clown. He became more well-received by his classmates. His grades and academic skills improved. He seemed to like school. He especially enjoyed writing and science. His mom credits the growth she saw in her child to Mrs. Miller, and I cannot help but think she might be right.

How Cultural Capital and Teacher Bias Shape Peer Perceptions, Interactions, and Resources

While these findings seem to confirm the fact that teachers can impact the engagement of students who are the target of preferential or non-preferential treatment, I also argue that teacher bias, along with the cultural capital differences that students bring with them to school, can impact students' perceptions of one another and likelihood of becoming friends. As I discuss in Chapter 6, cultural capital differences between students are particularly important in organizing student social groups. Students who come to school with academic skills and advantages (associated largely with SES) quickly identify others with those skills and become friends with them. Consider James, Sanjivan, and Ian—all higher-SES Asian students in Ms. Jennifer's class—who quickly realized that their academic achievement was much higher than their classroom peers. They bonded over the fact that they could read chapter books like *James and the Giant Peach* or when classroom assignments were "too easy." As they bonded over their own academic prowess, they excluded others around them who may not have found the academic tasks so easy or who were not reading the same level chapter books.

Essentially, the cultural capital these students brought with them to school, much of which could be attributed to SES-based parent coaching, facilitated the construction of students' social networks such that academic skills are concentrated among the most academically privileged. These three students, for example, regularly shared with one another tips for academic success, pointed out when a worksheet looked like it had a spelling error, consulted with one another about how to solve problems, and so on. In other words, the students who were able to "do school" the most successfully tended to share with one another

continued tips for how to “do school.” This is meaningful because the most adept at “doing school” tend to be the higher-SES students, so when SES shapes not only cultural capital, but social networks (or what sociologists call “social capital”), cultural resources for how to “do school” become hoarded by higher-SES students.

This became particularly clear when higher-SES students did not share their understanding of how to “do school” with those who most needed it. Recall the moment when Treasure from Mrs. Miller’s class did not know how to articulate how the aquarium had changed from the first day they observed it to the way it looked a week later. She asked her higher-SES tablemates what she was supposed to do and write several times and got little to no assistance. The same thing happened to Kiara when she was trying to brainstorm about things, people, and places that she could write for an “all-about” paper (i.e. mini-research paper). Her higher-SES tablemates were so engrossed in their own brainstorming that they did not assist her at all in the task, even when she specifically asked for help. When lower-SES students did get assistance, it tended to come from other students who were less able to “do school.” Kiara, for example, regularly got “help” (even when it was unwanted) from Aaliyah, who herself was a lower-academic achiever. In sum, while higher-SES students tended to hoard the academic and cultural resources required for “doing school” successful, lower-SES students tended to be divested of those resources.

Yet it was not only SES that seemed to correspond to these processes. Hispanic and black students also tended to be somewhat divested of these same academic resources, even when they were higher-SES students. Nia, a black higher-SES student from Ms. Jennifer’s class, for example, tended to be more ignored than white students of similar SES and achievement background, leaving her to forge friendships with lower-achieving white

students and some of the lowest-achieving students of color. Marcus, a higher-SES black student in the same class, found himself regularly hanging out with some of the lowest-achieving students of color and lower-SES students as well. Arianna, a lower-SES student who happened to have cultural capital and achievement levels more consistent with those of higher-SES students, almost exclusively hung out with other Hispanic and multiracial students. Why might these patterns have emerged, if SES-based cultural capital and achievement tended to shape friendship groups? I argue that propensity for misbehavior and racialized student treatment by teachers on the basis of real and imagined misbehavior could help explain the discrepancy.

Students like Nia and Marcus were disproportionately over-reprimanded in class relative to how often they actually misbehaved. During moments of free choice to associate with any student they wished, students like Nia and Marcus often found themselves surrounded by others who also regularly misbehaved or were disproportionately reprimanded for it (like A'kierra, Eric, or Lucas). The students themselves seemed to be aware that they drew these barriers. When I asked students which students were “good” or “bad” in class, interviewees were quick to note exactly who fit which category and why. It is not surprising that many of the interviewees claimed that their “friends” were good students and that those they didn’t like were “bad,” but what is perhaps more meaningful is that when interviewees recognized students as “bad,” it was because those students misbehaved.

Much of this perception of misbehavior seemed to be constructed by teacher attention to misbehavior and reprimand style. The students I interviewed in Ms. Jennifer’s class, for example, all recognized Marcus as a “bad” student because of his regular misbehavior, classroom distraction, and punishment. Yet students in Mrs. Miller’s class had more mixed

reactions about whether Tyrone—a qualitatively worse behaved student by comparison—was a bad student. I cannot help but think that the two teachers’ interactions with their respective students shaped their classmates’ opinions. Ms. Jennifer was comparatively more frequent and harsh in her reprimands, whereas Mrs. Miller reprimanded students far less often and less punitively. Because teachers have great power over the construction of students’ perceptions of others (Weinstein, Marshall, Shaprl, and Botkin 1987), teachers can perhaps influence students enough to shape who they deem to be appropriate friends for themselves.

This is not only true for reprimands, but true for positive interactions between teachers and students. When teachers regularly privilege the voices and actions of certain students and (advertently or inadvertently) silence others in the process, it becomes clear who is deemed most “valuable” in the classroom and who is not. By the end of the year, friendship groups in all the classrooms I observed seemed to correspond closely to students’ propensity for being called on in class, constructing classroom knowledge, causing trouble, or being reprimanded.

Prior research suggests that cultural capital *or* teacher bias might explain achievement disparities because cultural capital largely claims that SES, and not race, matters the most, whereas teacher bias claims that race largely determines teacher perception, and therefore achievement, of students. I found that cultural capital *and* teacher bias matter in the kinds of skills that students bring with them to school, as well as how teachers respond to students on the basis of those skills. Further, both processes impact how students engage with one another, which not only has long-term implications for skills sharing and achievement, but is also a theoretical connection that has not been forwarded explicitly in the current research.

Doing School, Achievement, and Moving Forward

Achievement gaps based on race and socioeconomic status are persistent problems in the U.S., and even though other studies have found that “approaches to learning,” or work habits, seem to account to some degree for these gaps (Farkas et al 1990; Jennings and DiPrete 2010), it has up to this point been unclear exactly what, how, and why “approaches to learning” matter. Further, because many of these studies look at the relationship between work habits and achievement for middle and high school students, it has been unclear up to this point how approaches to learning might differentially develop early in students’ educational experiences, when achievement gaps grow the most.

In the end, “doing school” is about more than the work habits others have found to matter. “Doing school” is cognitive, psychological, and social. It’s about learning and mastering academic and communication skills that teachers reward in classrooms. It’s about cognitively decoding teacher communication and instruction. It’s about comfort trying to solve problems, even when the steps or answer are not immediately apparent. It’s about finding value in the work and recognizing that education is a stepping-stone to long-term life goals. It’s about demonstrating knowledge to teachers and knowing which knowledge is most valuable to demonstrate. It’s about teachers and others helping students to feeling good about themselves at school: appreciated, valued, and excited instead of silenced, invisible, or unimportant. And finally, it’s as much about peers as it is about oneself, because peers reinforce how one “does school,” however effectively.

When students differentially learn how to “do school” early in their educational experiences, their academic trajectories quickly begin to diverge. Higher-SES and students of privileged racial backgrounds tend to more effectively navigate the educational system than

lower-SES and students of color. As peer groups begin to segregate on the basis of these skills, gaps may continue to grow because information-sharing about how to “do school” successfully remains concentrated in the already-privileged peer groups.

However, recognizing these important mechanisms of inequality can help educators work to remedy some of the disparity. Because it is clear that students can and do learn when information is presented explicitly (see Chapter 4), educators can practice presenting academic instructions as explicitly as they do procedural information. Teachers regularly remind students of the appropriate time to use the bathroom or when it is appropriate to talk with friends about their “share” item. It is not impossible to imagine a teacher taking the same care to remind and give examples of five or six strategies they should be using to sound out unfamiliar words before each silent reading time or the three things students should be sure to include in a “how-to” paper assignment. In other words, educators can work toward making their own instruction as explicit as possible by assuming that students may not know exactly what they mean or what they are looking for. While skills differences will still emerge among students (after all, schools cannot control the supplemental instruction or coaching that parents may or may not do or the natural ability of students), teachers can at least be confident that they are providing the most explicit instruction possible.

Additionally, if teachers recognize that information-sharing about how to successfully execute assignments occurs mostly in friendship groups that are themselves organized by how effectively students “do school,” teachers can more explicitly instruct students in how to help others. The work students do in first grade is often collaborative, and teachers do encourage students to help one another from time to time, especially during writing workshops and partner reading. However, teachers are not always clear about *how* students

should help one another or *when* it is appropriate to do so. For instance, collaborative efforts are at times undermined by students having to take independent assessments and getting grades on them. As Bowles and Gintis (1976) suggest, assessments and grades introduce a competitive achievement hierarchy that begins to socialize students into the alienation from others that they will inevitably experience in the capitalist work structure. In other words, competition with others (for grades now, and for jobs/status/wages later) will decrease the likelihood of cooperation and collaboration. While it is not necessary to do away with grades and achievement hierarchy altogether (after all, this is a necessary function of schools for society), it may be possible to more clearly explain, offer examples of, and encourage when and how students *can* work together to share ideas, strategies, and feedback during designated collaborative times. Additionally, it might be useful to strategically assign students to partners or groups where students who are better able to “do school” work with those who are less adept at “doing school.” This may work to normalize idea-sharing and peer-coaching with students other than friends.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

It is important to recognize that these suggestions may be relevant for schools like Foxcroft and Cumberland, which already have teachers who are committed to best practice. Much of the inequality I observed at the schools was virtually invisible, and generally seemed unintentional. Despite the assumed advancement America has made in twenty-first century race relations, other academic contexts are plagued by deep and long legacies of racial prejudice or discrimination. In these contexts, teachers may require more concerted effort in dispelling overt stereotypes so that more equal treatment of and value for particular students can grow.

Context also matters in the way I have identified how first graders in this particular study “do school.” The schools that I observed are racially diverse, but majority non-poor. Teachers’ standard for what is “typical” or “at grade level” for students may therefore be influenced by the higher-SES majority of students who come to school coached for classroom success. In other contexts where a majority of students may come from more disadvantaged backgrounds, teachers’ expectations for what it takes to be successful in school (or at the very least, for what “typical” students ought to be able to do to demonstrate competence) might be different, or there might be more variation in how students “do school” as the norms of a particular school context dictate.

Future research ought to explore other contexts to see how consistent patterns of “doing school” effectively or ineffectively are. Further, future research should explore how “doing school” changes as students grow and which aspects of “doing school” in students’ earliest educational experiences remain pertinent for academic success. By shedding light on these processes from a longitudinal perspective, we might better crack the code of long-term educational success and/or failure so that all students can achieve at their highest potential, regardless of personal background.

Finally, future research ought to consider how well teachers “do school,” too. Every teacher I observed in this study came from a relatively advantaged socioeconomic background. It is possible that this impacted the way they communicated their lessons, how they handled student questions—it could even impact their own academic knowledge and skills.²⁸ In order to fully understand what it takes for students to “do school,” we must also

²⁸ While this is purely anecdotal, a colleague shared with me a story of an experience her son had in his (not very highly-regarded) school. The students had taken a quiz about a poem they had read, and one of the questions asked which phrase best described a particular noun

have a deeper knowledge of how teacher variation in skills, expectations, or communication and interaction with students could shape the process and its outcomes.

This study reveals just how important and multidimensional “doing school” successfully is, how students come to different understandings and practices of it, and how teachers engage with students on the basis of these skills. As we continue to work toward understanding and remedying racial and socioeconomic inequality in the U.S., it will be increasingly important for intervention to occur in education. Unequal life trajectories begin with unequal educational experiences and outcomes, and “doing school” more or less successfully seems to play a role in students’ divergent educational paths. The more educational stakeholders and practitioners can instill in young children how to successfully “do school,” the greater the chance of providing truly equal opportunity to be academically successful.

in the poem. The correct answer was “cold, blue” because, as the teacher explained, those two words “came before” the noun. However, my colleague’s son was not satisfied with the answer because other words “came before” the noun as well. Why would “cold, blue” be the answer and not any of the other adjectives? His mom later realized that the answer probably reflected a literary device called “synesthesia,” which is a bond between different senses (the “feel” of the cold, the “sight” of the blue) that the author of the poem was trying to evoke. Because the teacher did not have the skills or knowledge to make this connection for the students, she likely did not effectively communicate the lesson as it had intended to be communicated. And therefore the students also failed to fully benefit from the lesson.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

A.1: Interview with Student Script

Interviewer: Hello, my name is Kari, and I am going to talk with you about your school and school work. Is it ok with you if I use this tape recorder so I can listen to us talking again? You can skip any question, ask me to turn off the tape recorder, or stop talking with me. Do you understand? Ok, let's get started.

Definitions of Success

What do you think it means to be a "good" student? What do you think it means to be a "bad" student?

PROBE: Who is a good student in your class, and who is a student bad student in your class?

PROBE: What kinds of grades do good students get?

PROBE: What do the good students do at school? What do the bad students do at school?

PROBE: How do you know that they are good or bad students?

How did you learn what it means to be "good" at school?

PROBE: Did someone tell you what it meant to be a good student? Who?

PROBE: What did your mom/dad/teacher say?

PROBE: When do you remember learning what it means to be a good student?

Perceptions of Own Success

Do you think you are a "good" student?

PROBE: Why? How do you know? What makes you a good student?

PROBE: What do you do that makes you a good student? Can you describe some of the things you do at school that show you are a good student?

PROBE: How do you show that you are not a bad student?

How To Be Successful at School

How do you think the good students get good grades?

PROBE: What do they do in class to get good grades?

PROBE: How do they work on assignments in class?

PROBE: Do they do anything outside of class to get good grades? Do you think they do homework?

PROBE: How do you think they get their homework done?

Let's talk about [an in-class assignment inspired by classroom observation]. How did you work on this assignment?

PROBE: What was the first thing you thought about when you got the assignment?

PROBE: What was the first thing you did when you got the assignment?

PROBE: Then what did you do?

PROBE: Did you ask for help? When? What did you say?

PROBE: Did you work on the assignment with friends or classmates? What did they do? Did they help?

PROBE: How long did it take you to finish the assignment?

How did you know what to do to complete the assignment?

PROBE: Did you get instructions from your teacher? What did s/he say? Did s/he show you how to work on the assignment?

PROBE: Have your parents shown you how to do assignments like this before? When? What did they say?

PROBE: Have your friends shown you how to do assignments like this before? When? What did they say?

Do you think you did your best on the assignment?

PROBE: Why?/Why not?

PROBE: Would you do the assignment differently if you had the chance, or will you do another assignment like that the same way? What would you do differently? How so?

Let's talk about [a homework assignment inspired by classroom observation]. How did you work on this assignment?

PROBE: What was the first thing you thought about when you got the assignment?

PROBE: What was the first thing you did when you got the assignment?

PROBE: Then what did you do?

PROBE: Did you ask for help? When? What did you say?

PROBE: Did you work on the assignment with friends or classmates? What did they do? Did they help?

PROBE: Did you work on the assignment with your parents or siblings? What did they do to help?

PROBE: How long did it take you finish the assignment?

How did you know what to do to complete the assignment?

PROBE: Did you get instructions from your teacher? What did s/he say? Did s/he show you how to work on the assignment?

PROBE: Did your parents show you how to do assignments like this?

PROBE: Did you friends show you how to do assignments like this?

Do you think you did your best on the assignment?

PROBE: Why?/Why not?

PROBE: Would you do the assignment differently if you had the chance, or will you do another assignment like that the same way? What would you do differently? How so?

Perceptions of Teacher

What do you think about your teacher?

PROBE: How would you describe him/her?

PROBE: What did s/he do to make you feel this way?

Do you think you know what your teacher expects from you at school?

PROBE: What do you think s/he expects?

PROBE: How do you know?

How does s/he treat the "good" students? How does s/he treat the "bad" students?

PROBE: What does s/he do? What does s/he say?

PROBE: How do the students feel when she does/says this?

PROBE: How does it make you feel?

How do you think your teacher treats you?

PROBE: Can you describe a specific time s/he treated you [well/badly]?

PROBE: How did that make you feel?

Does your teacher tell you how well you're doing in school?

PROBE: When?

PROBE: How? What does s/he say? What does s/he say about the work that you do?

What does s/he do?

Does s/he tell you how to improve?

PROBE: What does s/he say to do?

PROBE: How does s/he tell you to improve?

PROBE: Have you done those things?

PROBE: Why/why not?

Is there anything else you want to tell me about school? Those are all the questions I have.

Thank you for letting me talk with you.

A.2: Interview with Parent Script

Interviewer: Hello, my name is Kari. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I'm going to ask you some questions about your son/daughter's experience and efforts in school. Is it ok with you if I tape record this interview? You may skip any question for any reason, ask me to stop tape recording, or stop participating at any time. Ok, let's get started. First I would like to ask you a little bit about yourself.

Background Information

How long have you lived here in town?

PROBE: What brought you to [this city]?

PROBE: How long have you lived in your current home?

What brought you to [this school district]?

PROBE: Did you have a choice of school for your child, or does s/he go to the school assigned to the local neighborhood?

Generally, what do you think about your son/daughter's school?

PROBE: Why?

Definitions of Success

How would you generally define "success" in school?

PROBE: Can you provide an example?

PROBE: What would your son/daughter do to be "successful" in school?

What are the standards of school achievement that you have for your son/daughter?

PROBE: What kind of grades do you expect?

PROBE: What kind of work do you expect from your son/daughter?

What kind of future do you expect for your son/daughter?

PROBE: What kind of job do you want them to have?

How to Be Successful in School

What does it take for students to be successful in school?

PROBE: What do students have to do at school to get good grades?

PROBE: What do students have to do outside of school to get good grades?

PROBE: How do they learn these skills?

How do you know what it takes to be successful in school?

PROBE: How did you learn these skills?

PROBE: When did you learn these skills?

PROBE: Can you describe a specific experience that helped you learn these skills?

PROBE: Can you describe a specific time that these skills came in handy in your educational, personal, or professional life?

Do you teach your son/daughter the skills you think they need to be successful in school?

PROBE: How so?

PROBE: What do you teach him/her?

PROBE: How often do you teach him/her these skills?

PROBE: How influential do you think your skills lessons are?

PROBE: Can you describe a specific time that you helped your son/daughter learn skills that are necessary for educational success?

Let's talk about [a homework assignment inspired by classroom observation]. What role did you play in your son/daughter's completion of the assignment?

PROBE: Did you initiate help or did your son/daughter?

PROBE: What did you do to help?

PROBE: How do you think your son/daughter responded?

PROBE: How well do you think the process of completing that assignment went?

PROBE: Do you feel your son/daughter learned from your help? What? Why?

PROBE: Do you feel it was your job to help with homework? Why/why not?

Perceptions of How Child is Doing

How well do you think your son/daughter is doing in school?

PROBE: How do you know?

PROBE: What does your son/daughter do or say that makes you think s/he is doing [well, fine, not well]?

PROBE: How does your son/daughter talk about school?

Would you say your son/daughter is working hard in school, or putting forth his/her best efforts?

PROBE: Why/why not?

Perceptions of Teacher

How well do you think you know your son/daughter's teacher?

PROBE: What kind of opportunities are available to get to know your son/daughter's teacher?

PROBE: Have to taken advantage of those opportunities? Why/why not?

PROBE: Do you think it's important to know your son/daughter's teacher? Why/why not?

What do you think about your son/daughter's teacher?

PROBE: Why do you feel this way?

PROBE: What does the teacher do or say to make you feel this way?

What do you think the teacher expects from his/her students in his/her classroom?

PROBE: What kinds of behaviors, habits do you think the teacher expects?

PROBE: What do you think it would take for students to get good grades in his/her class? Why?

Is there anything else you would like to share about your perception of your son/daughter's approach to learning or your perception of his/her school? Those are all the questions I have. Thank you very much for your time and for talking with me.

A.3: Interview with Teacher Script

Interviewer: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I'm going to ask you some questions about your students and their work habits. Is it ok with you if I tape record this interview? You can skip any question for any reason, ask me to stop tape recording, or stop participating at any time. Ok, let's get started.

Background

How did you become a teacher?

PROBE: What inspired you to be a teacher?

PROBE: Did you always want to be a teacher?

PROBE: Where did you go to school?

PROBE: Why did you go to [school name]?

How did you become a teacher here at [school name]?

PROBE: Did you have any friends who already taught here?

PROBE: Did you know any of the administrators or faculty here?

PROBE: Why did you want to teach here?

What is a typical day like for you?

PROBE: What is your routine before the students arrive?

PROBE: What does a typical morning/afternoon look like?

PROBE: How often does the routine vary?

PROBE: When are you usually done for the day?

Expectations

What do you look for in students in the classroom?

PROBE: What behaviors should students exhibit?

PROBE: What behaviors do you expect them to exhibit?

PROBE: What behaviors are conducive to learning?

PROBE: What behaviors are not conducive to learning?

How do you communicate those expectations to students?

PROBE: When do you establish your expectations?

PROBE: Do you remind students throughout the year, or do you talk about them once at the beginning of the year?

PROBE: What do you say to students?

How do you know if students understand your expectations?

How do you communicate those expectations to parents?

PROBE: When do you communicate your expectations?

PROBE: What do you say?

PROBE: Why do you communicate your expectations this way?

How do you know if parents understand your expectations?

Achievement and Success

What are your standards and scales of achievement?

PROBE: What is the highest grade a student can earn?

PROBE: What kind of work or behavior would merit a high grade?

PROBE: What is the lowest?

PROBE: What kind of work or behavior would merit a low grade?

How do you evaluate students?

PROBE: What kinds of things do you take into consideration when you are grading a student?

How do you communicate your evaluations to students?

PROBE: What kind of feedback do you give?

PROBE: When do you give feedback?

What usually happens when you give students good evaluations?

PROBE: How do students react?

PROBE: Can you give an example of a time that you gave a student a good grade, and what happened?

PROBE: How do you feel when you give good evaluations?

PROBE: Does your opinion of your students change after a good evaluation?

What usually happens when you give students bad evaluations?

PROBE: How do students react?

PROBE: Can you give an example of a time that you gave a student a bad grade, and what happened?

PROBE: How do you feel when you give bad evaluations?

PROBE: Does your opinion of your students change after a bad evaluation?

What It Takes to Be Successful

What does it take to be successful in your class?

PROBE: If you could offer a step by step guide for the things students would need to do to be successful in your class, what would those things entail?

PROBE: How often do students need to do these things?

PROBE: Are there other things that matter for success in your class, like dress or language?

Let's talk about [an assignment inspired by classroom observation]. What would be the most effective way to approach and execute this assignment?

PROBE: What steps would a student need to take to do this assignment well?

PROBE: How long would a student spend on an this assignment?

PROBE: What would a student be expected to do if s/he was confused or struggling?

How?

Perceptions of Students

Let's talk about your students. Who would you say are the "good" students?

PROBE: What makes them good?

PROBE: Have they been good all year, or have they changed over time?

PROBE: Why do you think they are good? What causes them to be good students?

Who would you say are the "bad" students?

PROBE: What makes them bad?

PROBE: Have they been bad all year, or have they changed over time?

PROBE: Why do you think they are bad? What causes them to be bad students?

PROBE: What would they need to be do become better students?

Let's talk about [one student] in particular. What do you think about his/her performance in your class?

PROBE: What makes you think that?
PROBE: What specific things does s/he do in class that are [good or bad]?
What grade would you give him/her?
PROBE: Why?
PROBE: What kind of things do you think affect his/her achievement in school? Why?
What do you think about this student's parents?
PROBE: What are they like?
PROBE: Are they involved?
Have you communicated with them?
PROBE: What have you talked about?
PROBE: How do they talk with you? What is their language and tone like?

APPENDIX B: SURVEY

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. This survey will help the researcher understand more about you and your child's background. Please mark the answer that you feel best describes you and/or your first grade student. If you do not wish to answer certain questions, feel free to leave those answers blank.

Part I. Marriage, Family, and Children

1. What is the name of the first grader in this study?

2. What is your relationship to this child?

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| a) Biological mother | i) Girlfriend/partner of child's parent/guardian |
| b) Biological father | j) Boyfriend/partner of child's parent/guardian |
| c) Adoptive mother | k) Grandmother |
| d) Adoptive father | l) Grandfather |
| e) Stepmother | m) Other female relative (Please specify) _____ |
| f) Stepfather | n) Other male relative (Please specify) _____ |
| g) Foster mother | o) Other female guardian (Please specify) _____ |
| h) Foster father | p) Other male guardian (Please specify) _____ |

3. Do you have a spouse or partner who lives in the same house as you and the first grader in this study?

- a) Yes b) No (If no, mark "Does Not Apply" for Question 4)

4. What is your spouse/partner's relationship to the first grader in this study?

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| a) Biological mother | i) Girlfriend/partner of child's parent/guardian |
| b) Biological father | j) Boyfriend/partner of child's parent/guardian |
| c) Adoptive mother | k) Grandmother |
| d) Adoptive father | l) Grandfather |
| e) Stepmother | m) Other female relative (Please specify) _____ |
| f) Stepfather | n) Other male relative (Please specify) _____ |
| g) Foster mother | o) Other female guardian (Please specify) _____ |
| h) Foster father | p) Other male guardian (Please specify) _____ |
| | q) Does Not Apply |

5. How much of the time does the first grader in this study live with you?

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a) All of the time | d) Less than half of the time |
| b) More than half of the time | e) None of the time |
| c) Half of the time | |

6. How many siblings does the first grader in this study have?

- a) 0 b) 1 c) 2 d) 3 e) 4 f) 5 or more

7. Not including yourself or your first grader, how many of the following people currently live in the same household with you and your first grader?

Full Brothers	a) 0	b) 1	c) 2	d) 3	e) 4+
Half Brothers	a) 0	b) 1	c) 2	d) 3	e) 4+
Step Brothers	a) 0	b) 1	c) 2	d) 3	e) 4+
Full Sisters	a) 0	b) 1	c) 2	d) 3	e) 4+
Half Sisters	a) 0	b) 1	c) 2	d) 3	e) 4+
Step Sisters	a) 0	b) 1	c) 2	d) 3	e) 4+
Grandparents	a) 0	b) 1	c) 2	d) 3	e) 4+
Other relatives under 18	a) 0	b) 1	c) 2	d) 3	e) 4+
Other relatives over 18	a) 0	b) 1	c) 2	d) 3	e) 4+
Non-relatives under 18	a) 0	b) 1	c) 2	d) 3	e) 4+
Non-relatives over 18	a) 0	b) 1	c) 2	d) 3	e) 4+

8. What is your current marital status?

- a) Married
- b) Not currently married, but living in a marriage-like relationship
- c) Widowed and not living in a marriage like relationship
- d) Separated and not living in a marriage like relationship
- e) Divorced and not living in a marriage like relationship
- f) Never married and not living in a marriage like relationship

9. In what year were you born?

10. In what year was your spouse/partner born? (Write “Does Not Apply” if you have no spouse or partner.)

Part II. Race

11. Are you Hispanic or Latino/Latina?

- a) Yes (If “Yes, answer question 12)
- b) No (If “No, skip question 12)

12. If “Yes” for Number 11, From which country or territory do you claim heritage?

- a) Mexico
- b) Cuba
- c) Dominican Republic
- d) Puerto Rico
- e) Central America (e.g. Guatemala, El Salvador, Panama)
- f) South America (e.g. Colombia, Argentina, Peru)
- g) Other _____

13. Is your spouse or partner Hispanic or Latino/Latina?

- a) Yes (If “Yes, answer question 14)
- b) No (If “No, skip question 14)

14. If “Yes” for Number 13, From which country or territory does your spouse/partner claim heritage?

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| a) Mexico | d) Puerto Rico |
| b) Cuba | e) Central America (e.g. Guatemala, El Salvador, Panama) |
| c) Dominican Republic | f) South America (e.g. Colombia, Argentina, Peru) |
| | g) Other _____ |

15. How do you identify racially? (You may choose more than one race)

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| a) White | d) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander |
| b) Black/African American | e) American Indian or Alaska Native |
| c) Asian | f) Other _____ |

16. If you marked “Asian” or “American Indian/Alaska Native,” with which country or tribe do you specifically identify?

17. Which race do you identify with most?

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| a) White | d) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander |
| b) Black/African American | e) American Indian or Alaska Native |
| c) Asian | f) Other _____ |

18. How does your spouse/partner identify racially?

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| a) White | d) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander |
| b) Black/African American | e) American Indian or Alaska Native |
| c) Asian | f) Other _____ |

19. If you marked “Asian” or “American Indian/Alaska Native” in the previous question, with which country or tribe does your spouse/partner specifically identify?

20. Which race does your spouse/partner identify with most?

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| a) White | d) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander |
| b) Black/African American | e) American Indian or Alaska Native |
| c) Asian | f) Other _____ |

21. How do you identify your child racially (may be one or more races)?

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| a) White | d) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander |
| b) Black/African American | e) American Indian or Alaska Native |
| c) Asian | f) Other _____ |

22. Which race do you identify your child with most?

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| a) White | d) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander |
| b) Black/African American | e) American Indian or Alaska Native |
| c) Asian | f) Other _____ |

Part III. Education, Work, Income, and Wealth

23. What is the highest degree you have completed in school?

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| a) Less than high school | e) College Degree |
| b) High School Degree | f) Some graduate school |
| c) Some college | g) Master's Degree |
| d) Associate's Degree | h) Ph.D., JD., MD., or other professional equivalent |

24. Which of the following best describes your job?

- a) Clerical (example: bank teller, secretary, typist, mail carrier, ticket agent)
- b) Craftperson (example: baker, auto mechanic, machinist, painter, plumber, carpenter)
- c) Farmer, farm manager
- d) Homemaker
- e) Laborer (example: construction worker, car washer, sanitary worker, farm laborer)
- f) Manager, administrator (example: sales manager, school administrator, buyer, restaurant manager, government official)
- g) Military (example: career officer, enlisted in Armed Forces)
- h) Operative (example: meat cutter, assembler, machine operator, welder, bus driver)
- i) Professional Category A (example: accountant, artist, registered nurse, engineer, librarian, writer, social worker, actor, athlete, politician)
- j) Professional Category B (example: clergy, dentist, physician, lawyer, scientist, professor)
- k) Proprietor or owner (example: small business owner, contractor, restaurant owner)
- l) Protective service (example: detective, police officer, sheriff, fire fighter)
- m) Sales (example: salesperson, advertising or insurance agent, real estate broker)
- n) School teacher (elementary or secondary)
- o) Service (example: barber, beautician, practical nurse, private household worker, waiter)
- p) Technical (example: draftsperson, medical technician, computer programmer)
- q) Other _____

25. Is your profession full time or part time?

- a) full time b) part time

26. How much do you make annually in your profession?

- | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| a) \$0 | e) \$10,001-\$15,000 | i) \$35,001-\$50,000 |
| b) \$1-\$1,000 | f) \$15,001-\$20,000 | j) \$50,001-\$75,000 |
| c) \$1,001-\$5,000 | g) \$20,001-\$25,000 | k) \$100,001-\$200,000 |
| d) \$5,001-\$10,000 | h) \$25,001-\$35,000 | l) \$200,001 or more |

27. Which of the following best describes your spouse/partner's job? (answers continue on next page)

- a) Clerical (example: bank teller, secretary, typist, mail carrier, ticket agent)
- b) Craftperson (example: baker, auto mechanic, machinist, painter, plumber, carpenter)
- c) Farmer, farm manager
- d) Homemaker
- e) Laborer (example: construction worker, car washer, sanitary worker, farm laborer)
- f) Manager, administrator (example: sales manager, school administrator, buyer, restaurant manager, government official)
- g) Military (example: career officer, enlisted in Armed Forces)
- h) Operative (example: meat cutter, assembler, machine operator, welder, bus driver)

- i) Professional Category A (example: accountant, artist, registered nurse, engineer, librarian, writer, social worker, actor, athlete, politician)
- j) Professional Category B (example: clergy, dentist, physician, lawyer, scientist, professor)
- k) Proprietor or owner (example: small business owner, contractor, restaurant owner)
- l) Protective service (example: detective, police officer, sheriff, fire fighter)
- m) Sales (example: salesperson, advertising or insurance agent, real estate broker)
- n) School teacher (elementary or secondary)
- o) Service (example: barber, beautician, practical nurse, private household worker, waiter)
- p) Technical (example: draftsman, medical technician, computer programmer)
- q) Other _____

28. Is his/her profession full or part time?

- a) full time
- b) part time

29. What is your spouse/partner's annual income?

- | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| a) \$0 | e) \$10,001-\$15,000 | i) \$35,001-\$50,000 |
| b) \$1-\$1,000 | f) \$15,001-\$20,000 | j) \$50,001-\$75,000 |
| c) \$1,001-\$5,000 | g) \$20,001-\$25,000 | k) \$100,001-\$200,000 |
| d) \$5,001-\$10,000 | h) \$25,001-\$35,000 | l) \$200,001 or more |

30. Thinking about all the money you have saved and all the things you own which you could sell for money, about how much in assets do you have?

- | | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| a) \$0 | e) \$10,001-\$15,000 | i) \$35,001-\$50,000 | m) \$500,001 or more |
| b) \$1-\$1,000 | f) \$15,001-\$20,000 | j) \$50,001-\$75,000 | |
| c) \$1,001-\$5,000 | g) \$20,001-\$25,000 | k) \$100,001-\$250,000 | |
| d) \$5,001-\$10,000 | h) \$25,001-\$35,000 | l) \$250,001-\$500,000 | |

31. Thinking about all the money you owe, either for loans, on credit cards, or just money you owe another person, how much would it be in total?

- | | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| a) \$0 | e) \$10,001-\$15,000 | i) \$35,001-\$50,000 | m) \$500,001 or more |
| b) \$1-\$1,000 | f) \$15,001-\$20,000 | j) \$50,001-\$75,000 | |
| c) \$1,001-\$5,000 | g) \$20,001-\$25,000 | k) \$100,001-\$250,000 | |
| d) \$5,001-\$10,000 | h) \$25,001-\$35,000 | l) \$250,001-\$500,000 | |

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